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EDITORIAL
THE GOD DIMENSION IN LEADERSHIP

The universe of leadership books is staggering. A search on Amazon gave 188,543 results. I am not quite sure how the search engine arrives at that number, but in the last few years this number has reached tsunami levels. If you are in the market for leadership wisdom, this is your time. That’s why our collaborators at JACL select a few titles each issue and review them for you.

What makes the topic of leadership such a seemingly inexhaustible theme? Is it because leadership is a constant companion of modern life? We all have experienced its sway either as agents or addressees of leadership. For you, perhaps, leadership has been a life-giving force that illuminates, energizes, and invigorates, allowing you to take risks for new possibilities or pursue a fresh path, where before you had seen only the jungle of obstacles and bulwarks like the Berlin Wall. Or maybe you have lived through leadership as an oppressive gloom that snuffed the joy out of life, putting you on guard until it had suffocated any thoughtful initiative in you, giving you a taste of hell.

What makes leaders potentially so life-giving or live-taking is the fact that leaders create spaces, physical or in many other ways, in which people have to live the errands of life. In our change-rattled, hectic urban world, the best of these spaces are places that keep us focused on our mission, inspire strength, and bring us together to aggregate our efforts into achievements never possible on our own. Or they are places where even our best efforts seem to lose their luster in the banality of the moment.

Many contemporary leadership books seem to struggle with the issue of how to mobilize the best of human nature and engage it towards worthwhile human endeavors. This issue is especially critical in the Christian church, which is called to live life as a sign and instrument of God’s purpose in a world struggling to find its bearings in the face of overwhelming challenges that have escaped human solutions. But it is not only the world which is struggling; the church has its struggles, too. While the voices of Christian
leaders in the parts of the world where Christians are in the majority are still influential in their communities, where do these leaders go to refill their energies in the exhausting face of never-ending need? And in the places where the church has been relegated to irrelevancy status in the public sphere and church buildings are converted to more “useful” spaces at an alarming rate, where does the Christian leader go to keep courage and new vision?

In the face of the enormous challenges the Christian leader faces in the different circumstances around the world, typical leadership appears strangely impotent. Most leadership theories assume contexts that are fairly predictable and stable, that can be addressed with good “strategic plans” but that seem powerless in the face of pervasive hopelessness, established obstacles, or relentless evil. As I leaf through many of the leadership models found in my library, I seem to find countless approaches that promise to help leaders to bring order into the chaos of messy problems—but they have little to say about what to do when you have tried all the approaches and the light is still out.

In this issue, the Journal of Applied Christian Leadership celebrates 10 years of serving the Christian leadership community. During those years we have tried to publish articles that challenge you to explore the many facets of servant leadership as a never-ending source for leadership wisdom in real life. One of the most challenging insights of the servant leadership approach for Christian leaders is the fact that God Himself chose to approach humanity that way. Christian theology has long maintained that who God is determines how He acts. Jesus dying on the cross for humanity reminds us of the inexhaustible mystery that by His very nature God is a servant.

The nature of God—more specifically His Trinitarian nature—is the central paradigm of thought in this issue of JACL. Does God’s Trinitarian nature have anything to say to Christian leaders about leadership? Get ready for some meaty reading. We look at this question in several ways. First, Justin Bowers explores how the creation act of the triune God might shape a deeper understanding of how teams of leaders collaborate to create. Brian Ruffner and Russell Huising then look at the remarkable transformation of the apostle Peter as a leader who experienced God the Father as a God of grace through Jesus Christ, a God who reshapes people into His image and character through the Holy Spirit. If leadership derives from God’s action of recreating His image in humanity, what might this mean for human leadership? It is a remarkable vision that treats leadership as an activity that at its core leads to a deeper knowledge of God.

While the church is meant in God’s eyes to be a community where this transformation towards God’s image takes place, real life in society and in the
Church is often plagued by self-interest that is destructive. Even trusted leaders like David left a miserable trail of moral failure and folly, immersing a community into scenarios of death and tragedy. How does a Christian leader face the destructive power of unethical behavior? In “Diabolical to Dialogical,” Brian Ruffner highlights the nature and role of redemptive confrontation and dialogue and the role of communal watchfulness.

You will see a new name in this issue. Petr Cincala has joined our team as Managing Editor. He will fill the shoes of Shirley Freed, the Executive Editor of JACL for the last five years, who has retired to her beloved Canada. Petr has been a missionary pastor in the Czech Republic, where he led a community center reaching out to post-communist atheists. Recently Petr became the Director of the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University and the American Director of Natural Church Development, a parachurch organization that resources the American Church through diagnostic and educational revitalization tools. In this issue Petr introduces himself in an inspirational article. He also interviewed the founder of Natural Church Development, Christian Schwarz, who as a remarkable world voice from Germany has helped tens of thousands of churches around the world to become more effective centers of Christian influence. I hope that you will find inspiration and challenge to be a better leader.
THE LEGACY OF GOD’S LEADERSHIP

Introduction

We are living in times when organizations of all kinds are striving to build high-performance teams. Glenn Llopis (2012), author of an article entitled “5 Ways Leaders Must Build a Family Environment to Achieve Excellence,” makes a rather surprising statement in Forbes magazine:

[Organizations should consider] a family approach to business that emphasizes trust and values. A teamwork environment where camaraderie means having each other’s back and not judging one another. A workplace culture that celebrates opportunities, transparency, and the opinions of all to enrich conversations and diversity of thought. (para. 1)

According to Björnberg, Dias, and Elstrodt (2016), research shows that family-operated businesses outperform their competitors. There are many benefits, including greater revenue, employment growth, stability, trust, commitment, strategic long-term thinking—the list could go on. A family type of informal leadership provides generous career opportunities, inspires employees with a sense of involvement, and encourages personal responsibility. Most importantly, it provides emotional connectedness and ownership. On the other hand, an authoritarian leadership style, formal policies, and rules are linked with the least healthy business organizations (Björnberg et al., 2016).

As you can see, the notion of shared leadership is seriously explored by secular businesses. With this in mind, it may be beneficial to look at this topic from the perspective of the triune Godhead in the light of Scripture. Although there are numerous texts in the Bible relating the Trinity and leadership, we will limit our focus particularly to two of the most vivid places dealing with God in His three persons: the first letter of John and Matthew 28:18–20.
God’s Business According to 1 John

The first epistle of John is a summary of what it means to be Christian as it was revealed to and experienced by the beloved disciple of Jesus. Toward the end of his life (at 96 years of age), the apostle John wrote a letter in which he summarized the nature of God’s “business” of dealing with humankind and how humans can participate in it. John attempted to describe the essence of a Christian worldview. Based on his writings, we would like to explore the implications for leadership.

At the beginning of his epistle, John starts (perhaps echoing Gen. 1:1) with a reference to the beginnings of God’s plans with this earth (1 John 1:1), similar to the way he starts the book of John. Some Christians like to call God’s original plan with humans the Story of Redemption. Long before our world was created, the Godhead met and roles were assigned to each of the three “team” members. The plan of One becoming Messiah—the Redeemer—was laid out so that under every possible circumstance, God could continue to give life not only as the Creator but also as a Redeemer. Running the universe is a cosmic leadership responsibility, and on top of that God handles our rebellious world. How does He do that?

John describes God giving us life so that we have a good time with each other, perhaps even having a “party time” of sorts with God the Father and Son, as they seem to be having a good time of fellowshipping together (1 John 1:2–3). The joyful socializing with ever-fellowshipping God has a deeper purpose—it draws us out of darkness to Him who is light (1 John 1:5–7)! And here is the amazing part: when we fellowship with Him, He does His business—He cleanses us from sin, from all unrighteousness, and from rebellion (1 John 1:7, 9).

We have, however, fallen out of loving harmony with God, and sin has become our reality. John repeatedly warns in his epistle not to sin. One of his primary concerns is that we overcome sin (1 John 2:1). Interestingly, in the brief letter there are 28 references to the issue of sin. As a matter of fact, the rest of John’s letter can be summarized in two main topics: (a) Admit you are a sinner. If you claim you are not, you are a liar, fooling yourself (1 John 1:8, 10; 2:4, 9; 4:20). (b) Focus on loving God and loving others (1 John 3:14, 18; 4:7–12, 19–21; 5:2–3), and not on loving the world or idols (2:15–17; 3:1, 13; 4:3–5; 5:21). You can do that by coming to Jesus and following the lead of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:2; 3:24; 4:2, 13; 5:6).

So how exactly is God going about doing His business of saving the world and stopping us from sinning? According to John, God wants us to keep His commandments and His Word (1 John 2:2–7), live in His truth (1 John 1:6), walk in His light (1:7; 2:9–10), and get to know Him more (1 John 2). We
Christians are familiar with these “requirements,” as they are foundational to what being a Christian is all about. God is our “boss,” and He has certain expectations from us. If we want to be part of His business, we simply need to fulfill His expectations, right? This model is so common in our world that no one questions its validity and effectiveness.

**The Bottom Line: God Is Love**

However, the context of John’s letter brings a slightly different twist to this idea. A frequency test of keywords used in 1 John reveals that when John speaks of God or when he addresses the readers, he uses family terms (son—22 times, brother—15 times, children—14 times, father—12 times, dear—6 times). Approximately every 20th word in John’s epistle is a term that comes from a family/community circle and is relational/interpersonal.

John speaks in his letter a lot about God. When he does, he often refers to each of the three divine Persons in particular (Father—12 times; Son, Jesus or Christ—59 times; Spirit—7 times). Clearly, John portrays a communal (triune) God. One can summarize the whole letter in three words: “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). The three most frequently used words—“God” (64 times), “is” (103 times), and “love” (46 times)—permeate the whole epistle.

When John speaks about the new command, he refers to loving each other (1 John 2:7–10); when he talks about walking in the truth, he refers to love (1 John 3:18–19); when he discusses walking in light, he means to love others (1 John 2:9–10). The absence of love results in fear and hatred, turns us into liars, and causes us to live in darkness. By using these contrasts (love versus hate, love versus fear, light versus darkness, truth versus lies), John clearly wants to make a sharp distinction of what fuels God’s operation and also what makes God’s business of salvation work so powerfully.

God created us in His image to start with (Gen. 1:26), and He wants to restore His image in us at the end. Therefore, when John describes the qualities of Christian life in his pastoral letter, he repeatedly uses an expression “born of God” (1 John 3:9, 10; 4:4, 6, 7; 5:1, 4, 18). He also repeatedly mentions that we should “remain in God” (1 John 2:5, 6, 27, 28; 3:24; 4:13, 15, 16). John also talks a lot about knowing God, emphasizing the importance of loving God and having an intimate personal relationship with Him (1 John 2:3–5, 13–14; 3:1–2, 6; 4:6–8).

**God’s Operating System**

The emphasis here is on operating under God’s value system. This is apparent in the profound Great Commission text as recorded by Matthew (Matt. 28:18–20). Jesus’ final words to the disciples are very well known. It is
striking that of the three tasks of the Great Commission—making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them—baptism is linked with the three persons of God, and it is through baptism that new believers are incorporated into the church to start their journey of faith (Andiñach, 2014, pp. 45–46). Baptism is a communal act. “Baptism marks our birth into the family of God. This is the context where I am made a disciple” (Chester & Timmis, 2008, p. 112).

But there is more to it. We understand that the biblical form of baptism is by immersion. To be baptized is as if someone has died and been shut in a casket. But then, in a moment, they come out, alive, but in a different way—with a clean record, relieved from all ailments (Rom. 6:1–10), to live a new life in Jesus. Baptism represents the beginning of a new reality, with God’s worldview installed into our operating system. We are symbolically immersed in God’s reality, dying to our former ways of life. Paul referred to this in Galatians 2:20 when he said, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20, NIV).

Baptism according to Jesus was done “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19, NIV). We understand that in the times of Jesus, a name referred to a character, personality, nature, or one’s authority. Could we say that, through baptism, disciples were immersed into God’s character so they could reflect that character in their lives? Can we say that baptism symbolizes a moment in life when Trinitarian mentality gets embedded into our way of thinking? If yes, what implication does it have for a Christian leader?

**God as a Leader**

Let’s think for a moment about God as a leader. What kind of leader is He? According to 1 John, God is love. But love requires at least two or three to be activated. Love could not exist without relating well to one another. The Triune God exists in perfect harmony due to love and unity. The three persons of the Godhead are loving each other, and thus are the source of love for the whole universe. Not only is God a social being (relating leader), He is a community in and of Himself (shared leadership of three leaders). So, to follow the pattern of God’s leadership (i.e., to be in His image) means that a Christian leader is not leading alone, but is part of a communal/shared leadership group. Moreover, should not Christian leaders who are “in God” act in and on love? What would happen with a company/organization if the leadership was heavily centered on simply loving?

God created humans in His image, and it would be very difficult to argue that He would not want Christian leaders to function in His image. In the
same way the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit “exist in and for each other, in a relationship of intersubjectivity, mutuality, and reciprocity” (Hill, 2012, p. 233), so are to live the beneficiaries of the communion of love and intimacy between the persons of the Godhead. John’s letter is trying to say to us that love is not an enhancement or bonus of the Triune God; rather, it is fundamental and inseparable to His being and His leadership. Could “the interior life of the Trinity . . . , the love, intimacy, unity and embrace of the members of the Trinity” (Hill, 2012, pp. 233–234) therefore be an inspiration, guide, and perhaps a model for Christian leaders to shape the nature and dynamics of their leadership?

**The Dynamics of God’s Leadership**

We know from Scripture that each member of the Trinity has been actively involved in “God’s business.” It was true from the beginning when our world was created. God the Father set forth the idea, Jesus the Word executed the plan, and the Spirit filled the newly created space with God’s presence. As a group, They invested Their collective attention in the creative process to maximize the outcome.

And it did not stop there. God’s Trinity has had characteristics, roles, and functions throughout the history of implementing the plan of salvation (Hill, 2012, p. 231). God the Father expressed His love by sending His Son to die for us (John 3:16) so that the Son could speak to the Father in our defense (1 John 2:1), and the Spirit could testify the truth by making God’s union evident (1 John 3:24; 4:13; 5:6).

When dealing with leadership, we talk about having a mission statement, often not realizing where this concept came from. Mission (missio = sent) is derived from the very nature of God. One of the core values of His leadership was “to send.” The Father sent the Son; the Son sent the Spirit and us. Each member of the Trinity has been uniquely involved in accomplishing a mission. The differences in the roles of Father, Son, and Spirit are rather complementary. We know the Father through His Son (John 17:3), and the Holy Spirit enables that knowledge in us (John 15:26; 16:13–15). There is a deep underlying unity among Them as They are “in” one another and They are one (John 10:30, 38; 14:10–11). Their identities have been bound together in “a profound and mutually determining way” (Köstenberger & Swain, 2008, pp. 19–21).

God’s Trinity makes an amazing shared leadership team. We find Them submitting to each other without any hint of establishing power over each other. Jesus submits all to the feet of His Father (1 Cor. 15:24). The Father submits all to the feet of Christ (Eph. 1:17–23), and the Spirit bows before
Them and intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26, 27). Their unity in being, will, and work are equally affirmed in the Bible.

The shared leadership of the Triune God therefore has the following attributes:

- It exemplifies group creativity.
- It is relational rather than hierarchical.
- It has three distinct personal identities, which
  - lead together
  - each have their mission (i.e., are sending in nature)
  - demonstrate unity in being, will and work
  - complement each other
  - make an equal team
  - display mutual submission

After reflecting on these attributes of the Trinity, we can see a correlation with three major points made by Llopis (2012) in his research (mentioned at the beginning of this article) on future success of family businesses:

- Build emotional connections (= love one another)
- Develop responsible shareholders (= make disciples, baptize, teach)
- Establish clear rules and career paths (= the legacy of God's Triune leadership)

Conclusion

Christians are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That has serious and tangible implication for the way we think, act, and do our business. “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. . . . We know that we live in Him and He in us: He has given us of his Spirit” (1 John 1:3; 4:13, NIV). Through this biblical reflection, we see evidence from Scripture as to how this has profound implications for Christian leaders.

Just think, what would change in our leadership practice should the implication of Trinitarian leadership as described in 1 John and Matthew 28:18–20 be taken more seriously? What if Christian leaders were to never operate in isolation as single leaders? What if Christian leadership was centered solely in love? The way the Godhead transforms humans and how They go about leading the process is quite amazing and simply changes the rules of the game. Relational and shared leadership reflects the community of the Triune God in their relationships, priorities, decisions, and actions, and brings in a tremendous potential in empowering, participative, serving, and community-centered leadership. As various (even secular) organizations are
currently seeking for excellence in their businesses, they are—perhaps unintentionally—embracing a wisdom that comes from the Bible and that reflects the leadership of the Godhead. Are we, as Christian leaders, falling behind?

References


INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN A. SCHWARZ ON THREEFOLD REVELATION OF GOD

Christian Andreas Schwarz is a German author, lecturer and researcher. He is the founder and president of Natural Church Development (NCD International). He started his journey towards natural church development early in his life, influenced by the ministry of his father, a Lutheran church superintendent. On his 18th birthday he was diagnosed with an incurable disease, which has had a strong influence on his priorities, plans, and the intensity of activities in the years to follow. An unexpected healing eight years after the diagnosis intensified his decision to invest the rest of his life into the cause of helping churches get healthy.

Schwarz has written various books focused on church development and life transformation. His most popular books have been published in the NCD Discipleship Resources series, with five titles so far (The 3 Colors of Leadership, The 3 Colors of Ministry, The 3 Colors of Your Spirituality, The 3 Colors of Community, The 3 Colors of Love). His books have been published in 40 languages. The major strategic building blocks of NCD are the eight quality characteristics of healthy churches, the six growth forces, the minimum-factor strategy, and the Trinitarian Compass.

A central part of NCD is a diagnostic tool called the NCD Church Survey, a resource that enables churches to precisely assess their present quality and to identify the area of greatest need (“minimum factor”). As a second step, the church conducting a survey is supported by specifically designed tools and coaching to increase its quality in the respective area. After a given time, the church conducts a repeat-profile to monitor the actual progress. According to NCD theory, this investment in the quality or health of the church is the factor that has the strongest correlation to numerical growth.

JACL: At some point in your career as a Christian writer, you have made a ground-breaking discovery about the triune God. Would you like to tell us about it?

Schwarz: I wouldn’t relate this discovery so much to me as a Christian writer, but to my ongoing work with leaders of diverse cultural and denominational backgrounds. The writing about it came only secondarily. After having studied tens of thousands of pages with theological explorations on the Trinity, I
was puzzled by the fact that the majority of theologians would consider the Trinity as the central Christian doctrine, but I could never detect that the respective teachings had any visible impact on practical issues. Most would regard the doctrine of the Trinity as theologically extremely important, but practically not overly relevant. High and dry, we could say.

In the midst of preparing for a complicated conference—complicated because it encompassed people from very different, even contradicting, theological backgrounds—I saw in front of my inner eyes a representation of how the triune God relates to us. This image instantaneously explained the struggles we encounter in our churches, and it also served as a compass to constructively deal with these struggles. God has revealed Himself in three different ways—in Creation, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit—and each of these three revelations corresponds to a specific dimension of our lives, encompassing head, hands and heart. When we get connected to God in all three areas, we will think differently, we will act differently, and we will feel differently. Connecting to God in a Trinitarian way shapes everything that we do on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and all the other days of the week, and not just at the moment we enter church.

**Since I have spoken and written about the balance that a proper understanding of the triune God brings to our personal and corporate lives, some people assume that I am personally a perfect model of the spiritual balance we are talking about. But I am not.**

**JACL:** How has this new understanding changed your personal life?

**Schwarz:** Since I have spoken and written about the balance that a proper understanding of the triune God brings to our personal and corporate lives, some people assume that I am personally a perfect model of the spiritual balance we are talking about. But I am not. I am just as imbalanced as everyone else. However, the crucial point is this: Rather than teaching about my own state of “unbalancedness,” in other words, defending my own deficits, I have started to continually bring more balance to my life, by becoming more radical in each of the three areas mentioned.

**JACL:** Balanced and radical—that sounds like a contradiction.

**Schwarz:** That’s exactly the point. Radical in the biblical sense means to con-
nect back to the *radix*, to the “root,” and this root is the triune God. There is no problem in being “radical,” but there is a problem in the pursuit of being radical in an imbalanced way. When we strive to become radical in all three areas simultaneously, we are shaped by the kind of radicalness that has been modeled by Jesus. Balance without radicalness—that could result in foggy compromises, in the attempt to formulate ecumenical agreements on the basis of the least common denominator, which kill all passion and make every participant less effective. Radicalness without balance, on the other hand, results in living out a part of biblical truth—which is great—but then positioning that partial truth against other biblical truths, with all of the disastrous effects that inevitably follow from such an approach. In Natural Church Development (NCD) we consistently teach the goal of “radical balance,” another way of rendering spiritual health or maturity.

**JACL:** There are some Christians today who claim that the Trinitarian view of God is unbiblical and deceitful. How would you respond to that?

**Schwarz:** I would respond in two ways. First, I can understand some of that criticism. Neither the term “Trinity” nor the doctrine of the Trinity as it was formulated in the fourth century—God as one substance and three persons—are to be found in Scripture. This doesn’t mean that they are contrary to the Bible—I am convinced they are not!—but in biblical times these categories were basically absent. People simply *experienced* God in three different ways, without having a sophisticated system for interpreting these experiences. Those with a Jewish background knew that the Lord is one, and they prayed to this one God, the Creator of heaven and earth. At the same time they found themselves praying to Jesus, and they experienced God in the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit as God. Only later they started to reflect on how all of these plentiful experiences relate to each other: What does all of that mean? Are we praying to three different Gods? Certainly not! But what is it, then? How do Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to each other? These processes finally lead to the fourth-century formulations of the doctrine of the Trinity. However, much of what has been written about the Trinity, starting with the fourth century, has become increasingly speculative, abstract, and sometimes self-con-
traditional, if not confusing. So I do understand people who have problems with the doctrine of the Trinity as they have encountered it in the past.

However, in my books I do not contribute to any speculations on how the three entities of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—relate to each other. This is an important topic, but it is not the topic we are called to explore in the process of church development. Rather, we ask, “How do Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to us?” Or put the other way around, “How do we relate to the triune God?” With that focus, we are not only on solid biblical ground, but we have at the same time a helpful compass of bringing health to our individual and corporate lives.

The fragmentation in Christianity is chiefly the result of individuals and whole churches opting for their “favorite God” within the Trinity, so to speak.

**JACL:** What is the point of believing in an eternal, equal triune God?

**Schwarz:** Let me put it into rather drastic words: It is a question of whether we pray together with the Jews and the early Christians—“The Lord our God, the Lord is one”—or whether we create and nurture a mental image of a small pantheon of three Gods, from which every group, based on theological preferences, can choose their respective favorite God. And this is what actually has happened. The fragmentation in Christianity is chiefly the result of individuals and whole churches opting for their “favorite God” within the Trinity, so to speak. While *theologically* sticking to the oneness of God, psychologically we have destroyed this oneness. Of course, none of us can destroy the one God, but what we can destroy is the possibility for us humans to experience God as one. We communicate fragmented images of God that result in fragmented churches, and finally in fragmented human lives. Sometimes we have become so much accustomed to that fragmented way of living that we start to defend it theologically. We seriously believe that this is what Christianity should be like.

**JACL:** One thing is a confessional view of the matter and/or an intellectual proposition, and the other thing is everyday life and its issues. What practical difference does living in the reality of the triune God make in the life of a leader?

**Schwarz:** Confessional and intellectual propositions are important. We find them in Scripture, they have been produced throughout church history, and
they can be helpful in our churches today. What we have to focus on, however, is the relationship between these doctrinal statements we believe in and the challenges of our daily lives. The understanding of the one God who has revealed Himself in three different ways is not just the recital clause, so to speak, that is cited in the beginning, then becomes irrelevant at the moment we move on to practical issues. It is just the other way around. The threefold revelation of God is the basis of all of our practical tools in Natural Church Development. How do we deal with conflicts? How can we grow in love? How can we improve the team dynamics in our leadership? How can we better relate to the needs of people outside of the church? How can our small groups become relevant and inspiring?

The threefold revelation of God is the basis of all of our practical tools in Natural Church Development. How do we deal with conflicts? How can we grow in love?

JACL: In your writings, you are offering not only universal principles of spiritual health, you are also providing some practical tools (such as the Trinitarian Compass). Can you tell us more about this tool and its practical use?

Schwarz: It is difficult if not impossible to communicate the dynamics related to a Trinitarian understanding of God in mere words. What we call the Trinitarian Compass is a graphical representation of these dynamics, related to specific topics at stake. Many people may have a hard time reading and understanding the 15 books of Augustine’s work on the Trinity—regrettfully, I would like to add, because it is such a rich teaching. But almost everyone can relate to the Trinitarian Compass, immediately and without years of study. A weekend’s introduction can lay such a solid foundation that years if not decades of our lives will be shaped by that experience, and they will be shaped in a highly fruitful way.
Some people are puzzled why many of my books have almost identical titles: *The 3 Colors of Leadership, The 3 Colors of Spirituality, The 3 Colors of Love,* and so on. However, these titles reveal the approach that each of these books follows. I am not writing about my own favorite ideas or the things that happened to become important to me in my personal pilgrimage. Rather, each of these books starts with a presentation of the Trinitarian Compass, related to the topic at stake. We have opted to use the language of the colors of light to communicate this truth: In order to produce pure white light, the colors green, red, and blue must be displayed simultaneously. The absence of all colors results in darkness; the full presence of all colors is the presence of God. The absence of one or two of the colors leads to a blurred view of reality, an indication of a decay in spiritual health.

*JACL:* Why is the reality of a Trinitarian understanding of God so important for leaders?

**The most important thing that distinguishes leaders from non-leaders is that leaders are responsible for other people.**

**Schwarz:** The most important thing that distinguishes leaders from non-leaders is that leaders are responsible for other people. Leaders cannot afford to limit their focus to themselves and their own favorite theologies shaped by their biographies, including both highly personal traumata and eureka experiences. They must be able to serve people according to the spiritual needs of these people, which should not be confused with the spiritual needs that the leader may have himself or herself. People without leadership responsibility are free to simply project their own spiritual experiences on others; for a leader, this would be highly immature, even irresponsible.

If we approach the triune God as we try to do through the Trinitarian Compass, we have a way of assessing the spiritual needs of the people we are responsible for, and to address these needs in a fruitful way. We also have a way of monitoring the progress that people make in their endeavor to radiate increasingly all the colors of light through their own lives. And the same dynamics that apply to the lives of other people apply to the lives of the leaders themselves. The Trinitarian Compass helps them to radiate God’s power, wisdom, and love, better than before.
**JACL:** What are the key values of Trinitarian leadership?

**Schwarz:** Appreciation of diversity, appreciation of unity, and appreciation of balance. Diversity is good, but not all forms of diversity are fruitful. Unity is essential, but not all procedures to get united are constructive. Balance is absolutely biblical, but not all approaches featuring that term are based on Scripture. Trinitarian leadership helps us to contribute to health based on biblical standards. This includes addressing defects, errors, and heresies as well. Do you know what a heresy is? Many people would answer that it is the opposite of the truth, but things are usually a bit more complicated. Just look into Church history. Most of the major heresies were not simply the opposite of the truth, but something far more delicate—they were the representation of a partial truth. Most heresies have not been anti-biblical, but were based on some biblical insights that were placed at the center, while other—usually complementary—biblical insights were ignored, if not suppressed. Trinitarian leadership enables us to recognize this trap and, what is more, provides us with mechanisms to address it.

Diversity is good, but not all forms of diversity are fruitful. Unity is essential, but not all procedures to get united are constructive.

**JACL:** If you were to summarize the essence or legacy of Trinitarian leadership, what would you say?

**Schwarz:** It is no more nor less than representing God by modeling Christ to the people under our leadership. And even more, empowering people under our leadership to represent Christ themselves. Strictly speaking, they don’t follow us—by imitating our strengths and replicating our mistakes—they follow Christ. They increasingly reflect all the colors of God’s light.

You know that in Natural Church Development we speak about the “all by itself” principle, which is the very heart of NCD strategy: Rather than trying to pursue church growth in our own human strength, we focus on reducing human-made obstacles that hinder God from doing what He has promised to do. If we wanted to use precise theological language, we shouldn’t actually speak about “all by itself” growth, but about “all by Himself” or “all by Godself” growth. This God has revealed Himself to us in a threefold way. If we get connected to Him in each of the areas addressed by His threefold revelation, we will experience God Himself working in us. What else should be the chief task of a Christian leader, if not that?
Abstract: The need for organizations to rely on individual members and their collective creativity to thrive in the 21st century has greatly increased. Today, the words of Bennis and Biederman (1997) ring true:

The organizations of the future will increasingly depend on their members to survive. Great groups offer a new model in which the leader is an equal among Titans. In a truly creative collaboration, work is pleasure, and the only rules and procedures are those that advance the common cause. (p. 8)

The growing literature surrounding group creativity reveals a thriving area of interest among group theory scholars. Questions abound regarding the processes of effective group creativity, the differences between group and individual creativity, and factors affecting group creativity. While scholars focused on biblical research have engaged the idea of creativity (Liesch & Finley, 1984; Owolabi, 2012), the research is limited at best. Aside from generalized conversations about God as Creator and the agency of humanity in creative acts, exegetical research has basically ceased at this point. For this reason, I seek to broaden the base of biblical research considering creativity by exploring the creation act of the Trinity in Genesis 1 and the relationship of the Trinitarian creative process to theoretical foundations of group creativity. This study will draw further understanding of group creativity from a biblical perspective, and also expand the vision of group creativity as a force for greater effectiveness in today’s ecclesial contexts. Finally, I ask how leaders may benefit from group creativity modeled in biblical ways.

Keywords: Trinity at Creation in Genesis, group creativity, Trinitarian creative process, creative leadership

Introduction

The 21st century continues to see an expansion of literature surrounding teams and group processes (Kim, Choi, & Park, 2012). With the continued development of new social networks and online learning communities,
research exploring the connectedness of groups forms an explosive realm of study today (Harvey, 2013). One area of focus that continues to garner attention from researchers pertains to group creativity (Bennis & Biederman, 1997; Boer, 1990; Goncalo & Duguid, 2012; Harms & van der Zee, 2013; Harvey, 2014; Paulus, 2000; Pluut & Curseu, 2013). Understanding the increased value placed by organizations toward innovative and creative ideas in the 21st century, group creativity stands as a critical research area for organizational theorists today (Paulus & Dzindolet, 2008).

Given this context, this paper seeks a biblical understanding of group creativity in light of the Trinitarian creation act in Genesis 1. While there is a base of literature seeking to understand creativity in light of the biblical narratives, the research tends to be based only on God as Creator (Liesch & Finley, 1984) and the agency of humanity in the creative process (Owolabi, 2012). Helpful as this may be, it is also important to develop further understandings of biblical passages related to creativity. Through a socio-rhetorical exegetical approach to the narrative of Genesis 1 (Robbins, 1996), my goal is to pursue a richer understanding of the Trinitarian act of creation as a process of group creativity.

Understanding Group Creativity

The most widely agreed upon definition of creativity is the “generation of novel and useful ideas” (Harvey, 2014; Paulus & Dzindolet, 2008). It is important to understand the delineation of creativity from innovation. Whereas creativity is about idea generation, innovation regards the implementation of creative ideas (Paulus & Dzindolet, p. 228). While this definition of creativity is helpful, Harvey (2014) expands the definition of group creativity as “a bounded and recognizable collection of individuals who work interdependently toward a shared goal of developing output that is both novel and useful” (p. 324).

Harvey (2014) presents an in-depth model for group creativity—specifically for what the research identifies as the creative synthesis process. Harvey’s model sees the composition of a group working toward creative synthesis bringing (a) cognitive resources at the individual level, (b) social resources built from group composition, and (c) environmental resources based on the support and motivation of the external environment (p. 325). Emerging from these three levels of resources, idea generation comes from the enactment of ideas (i.e., individual ideas, healthy group interaction, and group energy), collective attention (what Harvey calls “cognitive engagement with ideas” or group momentum), and the ability to build on similarities (elaboration, connection, and beginning phases of idea selection) (p. 325). These factors draw collective energy to a central process of creative synthesis and the development of creative exemplars that increase the chances of “breakthrough ideas” (Harvey, p. 327).
Harvey points out that much of this model stands against common theories of group creativity built from evolutionary models of random selection (p. 325). Rather than the survival of the fittest ideas, Harvey theorizes that attention given to multiple levels of idea generation and awareness of exemplary models of creative synthesis provide a greater likelihood for breakthrough ideas such as those seen in organizations like Pixar (p. 328).

**Group Creativity and the Trinity in Creation**

The question of the current article is simple: How do the Trinitarian actions at Creation in the first chapter of Genesis intersect with the theoretical foundations of group creativity? This study was designed to gain an understanding of not only the clear Trinitarian theology undergirding Genesis 1 but also how God’s act of creation in the first seven days encompasses clear facets of creativity and group creativity theory. Conclusions are drawn regarding God’s creative mandate to humanity (specifically seen in Genesis 1:27–30) and how that mandate entails a biblical foundation for group creativity based on analysis of the inner and ideological texture of Genesis 1.

**Triune God in Genesis 1**

In Robbins’ (1996) socio-rhetorical method of exegesis, the inner texture of a text “concerns relationships among word-phrase and narrational patterns that produce argumentative and aesthetic patterns in texts” (p. 46). Five levels are considered in the inner texture analysis: (a) repetitive-progressive, (b) opening-middle-closing, (c) narrational, (d) argumentative, and (e) aesthetic (p. 48). I will briefly consider each of these in analyzing Genesis 1 and the Creation account.

Without a doubt, there lies a poetic structure to the text of Genesis 1:1–2:3. The opening-middle-closing structure of this passage offers a rich understanding of the poetry. Framing this passage, the opening (1:1–2) portrays the goal of the passage (God’s creation work) emerging out of nothingness. The “formless and void” nature of the cosmos is the scene where God begins His work. At the end of the passage (2:1–3), the beauty of what has been created stands out. Void is replaced with the “vast array” of God’s cosmos, and the work that God completes now paves the way for the seventh day of rest and continuing enjoyment in which God dwells.

The middle of this passage (1:3–31) reveals the order to God’s Creation. It is possible to trace a forming and filling trajectory of the middle part of the narrative by examining what was created during each day. Treier (2005) and Coloe (1997) both suggest a structure to the middle section of Genesis 1 built on this forming and filling (see Figure 1).
The six days of Creation in the Genesis narrative consist of forming and filling.

With this structure, Days 1 and 4 correspond as God creates (forms) and separates the light and darkness (Day 1) and then fills them with the great lights and stars (Day 4). Day 2 reveals the formation and separation of water into the expansive sky and the waters below and then the filling of those expanses with birds and fish (Day 5). Finally, on Day 3 God forms the land, seas, and vegetation, then fills them with the kingdom of animals and ultimately mankind (Day 6).

The tight structure of the Creation account reveals a highly ordered and intentional nature to the text through the opening-middle-ending analysis. Sailhammer (1984) notices that not only does the structure point to intentionality, but so does the use of terms that are familiar to the original audience. Phrases such as “the deep,” “the expanse,” “formless and void,” “signs,” and “seasons” all reflect familiar terms common to the audience of the Torah (Sailhammer, p. 79). However, these were not strictly Jewish words. Instead, the phrasing of this passage spoke to ancient Near Eastern audiences familiar with other creation accounts. God’s reign over the vast and formless chaos hearkens to what are known as the *chaoskampf* (struggle against chaos) origin stories, in which the gods brought order to chaos (Waltke, 1975; Walton, 2008).

These familiar terms pave the way for the culturally unfamiliar phrase “image of God” (1:26–27). Sailhammer (1984) points out that in this poetic structure, the rhythmic repetition of 1:3–25 and God speaking into creation (“Let the . . . and it was so”), followed by a recognition of value (“. . . and God saw that it was good”) is suddenly interrupted in 1:26 by divine deliberation (Sailhammer, p. 74). The pause is filled with Trinitarian conversation (“Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,” emphasis mine) and reveals this
unique moment of God creating in His own image. It is only after His creation of male and female—followed by the divine cultural mandate to fill and subdue the earth—that the rhythm returns, this time with an enhancement: “God saw all that he had made, and it was *very* good” (1:31, emphasis mine). Only now is the sixth day complete; and at this point the divine Creator experiences a seventh day of rest.

Drawing from the text itself, Sailhammer (1984) perceives the Creation narrative in connection to the larger Pentateuch. God, in Creation, is dealing with Himself, humanity, and the land of His people—the very pervasive theme of the Mosaic corpus (Sailhammer, p. 74). Waltke (1975) suggests that the familiar understanding of ancient Near Eastern creation mythology so common to this audience could now be seen in a monotheistic sense. This does not occur merely as the divine triumphs over some chaotic and equal being, but rather creates a world where the formlessness of chaos is overtaken by the beauty of one God’s creation (p. 28). Walton (2008) perceives Genesis 1 as “ancient Near Eastern Temple cosmology” in which the movement of the passage transitions the formless and empty existence from a “nonfunctional and nonproductive condition” to a rich and fruitful existence under the creative hand of God Himself (pp. 56–57).

Before drawing conclusions regarding the inner texture of this passage, it is important to deal with one specific question related to a Trinitarian understanding of the Creation account: Is the reference to the Trinity even to be found in this passage? Murphy (2013) helpfully handles this question. First of all, it can generally be accepted that Trinitarian theology is supported outside of Genesis, especially in the New Testament (i.e., Matt. 28:18–20; Rom. 15:16, 30; John 17; Matt. 3:17; Matt. 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17). More than this, the Johannine prologue makes plain that the “Word”—Jesus—was present at the creation of the world. However, what can be gleaned from the text of Genesis 1:1–2:3 in regards to the Trinity?

Murphy (2013) states that two arguments have been made regarding the Trinity in Genesis 1. The first utilizes the reference to God as *Elohim* (1:1). This term is commonly understood with two definitions. The first refers to a plurality of gods, while the second is specifically used for Yahweh, the God of Israel (p. 168). Murphy suggests that *Elohim*, in this passage, is used in an “honorific or majestic way” to refer to Yahweh rather than to reflect a Trinitarian understanding consistent with the New Testament (p. 172).

The second Trinitarian argument in the Creation narrative centers on the use of the plural pronoun in 1:26. “Let us make mankind in our image,” as discussed above, represents a break in the poetic rhythm as God deliberates before the final act of Creation. While it has been argued that God could have
been speaking to angels, this argument holds little weight. It is not only God the Father creating (1:1), but also the Spirit hovering (1:2) and the Word speaking into existence (1:3). This combination of efforts is where divinely creative acts happen. Surely, then, as Murphy (2013) suggests, the “plurality of persons in 1:26 are reflective of the Godhead “three in one” (p. 173).

At this point, it is essential to summarize several points from the inner texture of Genesis 1 and the Creation narrative. First, that this passage stands as the opening of the Torah is no coincidence. This is the first brick of the Jewish (and Christian) theological understanding of God’s work in the world. From the formless and void chaos God Himself—three in one—has divinely created the beauty and richness of the cosmos. God is King from the beginning—powerful, mighty, and honored Elohim—He is not a created being but rather the ultimate Creator. The repetitious rhythm to this passage—“God said let there be . . . and there was . . . and it was good”—reflects an order to the beauty of this artist—a process bathed in beauty and rhythm, structure and creativity—and all points to the majesty of God Himself.

Second, from the start this text presents a monotheistic and Trinitarian theology consistent with Jewish and Christian traditions. One God, three in one, creates the cosmos and reigns over His creation. He is sovereign and is unlike the other gods of the world at this time. The climax of the passage is not the exceptionality of humanity but rather the God who rests as He surveys His cosmos and recognizes that all that is created is very good.

Finally, it is essential to notice the role of humanity in the created order. Clearly, the creative deliberation and Trinitarian conversation in 1:26, followed by an extended mandate to humanity in 1:27–30 to not only exist but actually subdue and fill the earth, reveals what the writer of Hebrews would say so many millennia later as he reflected on humanity’s position: “You made him a little lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:8). Humanity, in relationship to the rest of God’s formed and filled world, stands as image-bearer, tasked with the job of vocation and creation, to carry on the work of God in the world. Humanity is not only God’s work, but rather is also a part of what Moltmann calls the “ecology of creation,” the very household of God’s indwelling Spirit (as cited in Molnar, 1990, p. 673).

**The Nature of Creating in Genesis 1**

Robbins (1996) identifies the ideological texture of a text as the overarching pattern of biblical discourse and how it communicates “patterns of cognitive and moral beliefs about humans, society, and the universe” (p. 192). At the simplest level, ideological texture deals with the “politics” of a theology (p. 192). Thus, the ideology of a text emerges from the underlying worldviews of
the people located in the historical setting of the text (p. 194). In this texture of analysis, there are four levels of ideological analysis: (a) individual locations of writers and readers, (b) the relation to groups, (c) modes of intellectual discourse, and (d) spheres of ideology (p. 195).

The word used in Genesis for “create” is the Hebrew phrase bara. Liesch and Finley (1984) were among the first to study this in relationship to biblical creativity. They point out that this is a unique word, with nearly 50 occurrences in the Hebrew Scriptures and almost 40 occurrences of the corresponding Greek term ktizo in the New Testament (p. 189). Both of these terms refer specifically to God’s work, and never that of humans (p. 189). God, in His bara activity, has created not only the cosmos (Gen. 1), but also Israel (Isa. 43:1), the Church (Eph. 2:10, 15), righteousness and justice (Isa. 45:8), praise and joy (Isa. 57:19; 65:18), as well as the work of regeneration and cleansing from sin (Isa. 45:8; Ps. 51:10) (p. 190). The work of bara carries two primary dimensions. First, the term can imply construction, as is seen in Genesis 1 (p. 190). Second, bara can also reflect a dimension of performance, as in the case of God performing miracles (p. 190). Finally, Liesch and Finley draw attention to the fact that bara always leads humanity to worship the Creator (p. 190).

Owolabi (2012) builds on the theology of bara creativity by suggesting that God’s mandate to humanity to be fruitful and multiply while subduing the earth (Gen. 1:28) “implies taking creative responsibility for our environment and all creatures as the delegated authority of God in creation” (p. 100). Owolabi goes on to say that, as humans, in the creative process “we attempt to give life to our understanding and experience of existence.” In fact, the “impulse to create is regarded as our yearning to live” (p. 101). For Owolabi, the ability to create is central to what it means to be a part of God’s created humanity.

All of this raises a potent question regarding the ideological texture of Genesis 1 and the creation narrative. If bara lies only in the work of God in the Scriptures, is it possible to call humans biblically creative? Is human creativity a biblical concept? Specifically, can human creativity, as Liesch and Finley (1984) ask, be accurately compared to divine creativity (p. 194), and if so, to what extent?

Liesch and Finley (1984) suggest that while several answers to this question have been proposed, two primary views currently exist. The first is the Sacramentalist view, which perceives art as the act of creation (p. 194). Sacramentalists, including the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican streams, consider humans as sub-creators of God—lesser but nonetheless creative. The Reformed tradition, on the other hand, considers art and creativity acts of work; the human creator, in his or her complete depravity, is ultimately...
dangerous and self-seeking of glory (p. 194). Offering a bridge and perhaps a third way forward for understanding biblical creativity, Liesch and Finley propose the biblical concept of “newness” for understanding human creativity (p. 195). Newness, they suggest, is common for understanding human activity in Scripture (1 Sam. 6:7; Deut. 20:5; Pss. 33:3; 96:1; 98:1). These passages, and others like them, point the way forward for a theology that recognizes God as the source of creation deserving of praise, but also of humans as reflective of His image and created with the potential for new works.

With that said, we must return to the term *bara*. Given biblically only to the things created imaginatively by God Himself, it is essential that Genesis 1 and the creation narrative point to the fact that in some semblance the ability to create has been divinely passed on to the life and impulse of humanity. It could be said that while men and women are never given the full creative and creating capacity of God Himself as seen in Genesis 1—we will never create *ex nihilo* and we will never deserve the worship that goes with that ability—part of what it means to be fueled by the divine deliberation in Genesis 1:26 as unique to God’s creation is a gift for creative potential. The “image of God,” so mysterious and so long discussed in theological circles, must at least imply that God breathed a breath of imagination that humanity today still carries.

**Applying God’s Creativity at Creation to Christian Leadership**

At the start of this article, I noted that biblical understandings of group creativity and their connection to ecclesial leadership are limited at best. So, from the exploration of the creation narrative in Genesis 1, what can be said about the creativity of the Trinity and its implications for modern Christian leadership? In this section, three critical conclusions can be drawn for Christian leaders today.

**Biblical Creativity Is Part of the Mandate of Humanity**

Near the end of the Creation narrative in Genesis 1 is God’s simple mandate to humanity to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). Both Moltmann’s “ecology of creation” (as cited in Molnar, 1990, p. 673) and Owolabi’s “yearning to live” (2012, p. 101) as the understanding of God’s image seen in humanity reveal the gift and call of creativity as a mandate to humanity. To be fruitful and increase is a creative act. Filling the earth is about more than biological reproduction. It also entails the God-breath carried in each individual that allows the parts of creation that have not experienced life and creativity to be filled in a lesser way with what C. S. Lewis called the weight of glory (Lewis, 1949).
For the Christian leader, then, understanding God’s mandate to bring life and creativity into the world is as central as understanding the call to grow spiritually. It is all too common to hear individuals—and often leaders—make the claim that they just are not creative people. Perhaps these leaders have a faulty theological understanding rather than a limited intellectual muscle. Perhaps the understandings of creativity among leaders could expand not only to novel ideas but also to the great work of transformational leadership that enables followers to grow in their own creative capacities of adding fruitfulness to their own world.

**Biblical Creativity Is a Missional Endeavor With Eschatological Implications**

Next, it is imperative to understand the mandate to create as not simply a human-centered endeavor. Instead, the narrative of Genesis 1 reveals the first act of God’s eschatological purposes of bringing life to the world. Because of this, Christian leaders today taking up the mandate of creativity are enacting a missional task that continues to participate in God’s work in history of bringing the final consummation of the Kingdom with creation.

Sailhammer’s (1984) exegesis of Yahweh’s Creation dealing with Self (Trinity), humanity (Adam and Eve), and land (the Cosmos) offers a framework for a missional understanding of biblical group creativity today. Ecclesial leaders enacting group creativity in their own settings are functioning within those same realms. Creative leaders must be reconciled to themselves enough to believe and trust God’s work in bringing life from their sinful being (a total work of grace). Second, creative leaders deal with humanity in the groups they lead. The creative process and the creative leader coexist with humans (groups) to model God’s creative work as the Trinity—a community of mutual submission. Finally, the creative group—ecclesiologically—deals with “the land” by engaging the larger world in missional ways. The creative act, among Christian leaders and Christian groups, is always about bringing the mission of God to places and people where it has not yet reached. This echoes Walton’s (2008) “Temple cosmology” language of bringing life and hope to formless and void lands (pp. 56–57). Thus, the creative Christian leader and her group will further the mission of God with biblically creative efforts.

**Biblical Creativity Is a Movement of Worship**

Finally, we must return to Liesch and Finley’s (1984) description of bara as the biblical foundation of creating. Critical here is their concept of newness as a third road to understanding human creative capacity. Rather than perceiving creativity through the Sacramental (humans are sub-creators) or Reformed
(humans are workers) lenses, Liesch and Finley conceive of human creativity as capable of newness because of the newness God works in humans (2 Cor. 5:17).

Ultimately, *bara* is a creative work of God that without fail brings worship and glory back to God Himself. In humans, then, men and women have been given a capacity to create—to make new—and ultimately point glory back to God in the same *bara* way. It is only when they are made new in Christ that humanity recognizes in the fullest earthly way possible the great creativity that goes into being made new in God’s image.

**Weaving the Tapestry of Biblical Creativity**

These conclusions offer a clearer path forward for Christian leaders concerned with creativity from a biblical viewpoint. Understanding creativity as a human mandate and a missional effort connected to the Christ-community and intended to bring glory to God, creativity becomes not simply a peripheral task for church leadership teams and worship leaders seeking to bring more spunk to their worship service gatherings. Instead, group creativity practices within Christian leadership becomes an opportunity for leaders and team members to bring life to self, to each other, and to the world. Recognizing the formless and void portions of our own hearts, as well as the empty regions in the hearts of those we work beside and the great hopelessness of a fallen world, group creativity is a way of carrying out the work of God seen in Jesus Christ by bringing newness to old hearts. We could say simply that biblical creativity is a matter of Gospel faithfulness.

**Conclusions**

I wish to close this study with conclusions from the analysis of Genesis 1:1–2:3 and how they relate to the theoretical framework of group creativity. To do so, I ask several questions. Is it possible to identify group creativity theory at work in the Creation account and demonstrated in the Trinitarian action of creation? How does God’s work in the seven days of Creation mirror or diverge from group creativity literature? Is it possible to even define the Trinitarian work at Creation as a work of group creativity?

First of all, the last question I asked is perhaps of first importance. It is essential to understand that the Genesis 1 narrative can absolutely be viewed through the lens of group creativity theory. Paulus (2000) defines a group as two or more who function with “interdependence and have influence through their actions” (p. 238). As discussed above, the Genesis narrative (1:1–3; 1:26) clearly portrays a Trinitarian theology in which three distinct persons compose one God who function together in dependence and influence toward each other. Paulus later identifies group creativity as a “bounded and recognizable
collection working interdependently toward a shared goal of novel and useful output” (p. 239). While I am not as comfortable with labeling the Creation narrative as a novel idea, it is clear in Genesis that the Trinity moved toward a shared goal of something that had never been achieved before. If novel is the word, then so be it. The resulting cadence of “and God saw that it was good” uttered again and again from God’s perspective becomes “it was very good” at the conclusion of the passage when humanity in relationship to the cosmos is seen. What had been formless and void is now complete and entwined in the Shalom establishment of God’s created cosmos. All this makes clear one fact—the work of the Trinity at Creation is not only an act of group creativity; it is the first and original act of group creativity.

The second connection I wish to make with group literature pertains to the processes of group creativity. Paulus (2000) points out that group creativity entails idea generation, selection, and execution (p. 238). It is through both divergent and convergent thinking that ideas emerge with fluency (large numbers), flexibility (variance), originality (uniqueness), and elaboration (building on each other) (p. 238). It takes little effort to examine the beauty of Creation surrounding the world today and see that every one of these characteristics occurred through God’s handiwork in Genesis 1. There were perhaps no official Trinitarian brainstorming sessions, but the very reflection of mutual submission seen in the Trinity reveals a relationship of idea generation (God the Father), selection (the Spirit), and execution (the Word) that effectively demonstrated resulting fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

Finally, I wish to consider Harvey’s (2014) model of creative synthesis as demonstrated in Genesis 1. This model paints most clearly the Trinitarian actions at work in Creation. Harvey says that creativity at the group level comes through individual, social, and environmental resources. What emerges from this is that the theology of the Trinity—three separate beings unified as one—represents both the individual and social resources of Harvey’s model. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit serve each other in mutual submission, bringing the fullness of their own personalities (for lack of better words to define the Trinity) to the table of Creation. Fully as individuals, and fully as a group, the ability to enact ideas and give collective attention to the creative process serves to allow for the fullest potential of group creativity. As Harvey makes clear, it is not a survival of the fittest mentality for creativity here but rather the emergence and selection through collective effort (pp. 324–325). Perhaps a different Darwinian conversation than has surrounded Genesis 1 for so long could be launched after this study.

All of this paves the way for future exegetical and ecclesial research regarding the nature of group creativity in our modern context. What can be gained
from an understanding of Genesis 1 and the Creation narrative as a Trinitarian work of group creativity is not only a foundation for further creativity research rooted in solid theology, but also a call for leaders today to pick up the mandate of God’s bara breath and continue the work of creativity in our current ecclesial settings.

References


Abstract: The integration of biblical principles with leadership theory has proven a monumental undertaking. Can such principles actually guide Christian leaders even though they are sometimes in tension with current concepts of leadership? It might seem like a difficult balance to achieve. However, by delving into Peter’s basic and presuppositional commitments, a clear picture of biblical leadership emerged. Using 1 Peter 5 as the investigative platform, thorough analysis revealed a Trinitarian belief structure underpinning Peter’s concept of leadership.Significantly, the transition from simple fisherman to apostle demonstrated a radical transformation in both thought and application of leadership principles. Ultimately, a precise understanding of God’s eternal character forms the bridge between theology and leadership theory, offering a glimpse of Trinitarian leadership as a paradigm for future study.

Keywords: Trinitarian theology of leadership, leadership theory and practice, incarnational model of leading, character development, worldview analysis

Introduction
What does Christian leadership look like? Imagine a Christian leader who is able to move forward in the midst of formidable risk; not because he ignores the hazards facing him, but because he is able to assess these hazards and act wisely. Just as important, picture this Christian leader as someone who can pragmatically provide direction and guidance that manages competing alliances. Naturally, such a leader considers the future impact that team members will have on outcomes. He recognizes the world as it is, maneuvers between diverse groups of relationships, and has an eye for the future of individuals and the organization. Would this not be the type of leader that we want

Brian Ruffner is currently a doctoral student in the Strategic Leadership program at Regent University’s School of Business and Leadership. He holds a master’s degree from Reformed Theological Seminary and has served in various leadership roles within the fields of operations and project management for nearly 20 years. Brian is currently a senior advisor for strategic services development in the telecom industry.

Russell L. Huizing, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Toccoa Falls College. He is also an adjunct instructor at Regent University in Biblical Studies and Christian Ministry, the Doctor of Strategic Leadership, and the Doctor of Organizational Leadership programs. He has diverse leadership experiences including ecclesial environments, a global Fortune 50 corporation, and as a family business owner.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Russell L. Huizing at rhuizing@tfc.edu.
heading our churches and faith-based organizations? For that matter, would not any organization—Christian or otherwise—benefit from this approach of leadership?

Yes, indeed—until we place these scenarios into their actual contexts. Without question, risk assessment is a valuable leadership asset. However, when the apostle Peter attempted to walk on water, his prudence nearly drowned him. Most leadership models today encourage pragmatic planning in the midst of contentious groups. However, when Peter conscientiously attempted to deter Christ from His fateful confrontation with the religious and political authorities in Jerusalem, his initiative was met with stern rejection and was labeled a satanic attack. Of no less concern, understanding how team members contribute to outcomes remains a vital dimension of leadership, and yet when Peter questioned the future role of the disciple whom Jesus loved, he was admonished to keep his inquisitiveness in check.

Has the integration of these principles into Christian leadership, then, been carried out in vain? Of course not. All truth originates with God and to the extent that leadership principles reflect God’s inherent qualities, those same principles can be considered helpful to Christian or secular leaders. However, that very axiom suggests there is something prior—a presupposition. Contemporary leadership presupposes that understanding effective leadership requires the study of the behavior, skills, and traits of leaders and/or followers. This path of study has left the field with a plethora of leadership options but no agreed upon definition of the very topic that is being studied (Northouse, 2013; Yukl, 2006).

Peter instead points us to a different source of leadership knowledge—specifically, a presuppositional knowledge of God. As Peter journeyed from his early disciple experiences to the places commemorated in his first epistle, he directly encountered the enormity and magnificence of the Trinitarian God. The Almighty Father that Peter was already familiar with through Judaism (Isa. 63:16) revealed Himself through the resurrected Jesus Christ (Mark 16:7), and indwelt him through the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:4). These dramatic confrontations with the Triune God, which reverberate throughout the theology of his first epistle, transformed Peter’s presuppositions regarding God’s fundamental character and nature.

In the midst of Peter’s passionate epistolary message addressing various ecclesial concerns, he established a quintessential model for defining Christian leadership. Specifically, the final chapter of Peter’s first epistle offers the capstone to his message (Jobes, 2005; Thompson, 1994), in which he delivered instructions regarding leadership to the various constituents within the Christian community of Asia Minor. Close scrutiny of this passage through the
lens of socio-rhetorical interpretation (Robbins, 1996) reveals that Peter’s basic presuppositions about God informed and shaped his understanding of what leadership is and how to lead. Because of its unique hermeneutical approach, Robbins’ interpretive framework allows the reader to analyze an author’s ideology by focusing on the layers of latent literary “texture” (p. 2), which expose the underlying fabric of thought implicit in the writing. This fabric includes Peter’s worldview, affiliations and seminal experiences which shaped his commitments in such a way that they became markers of a Trinitarian theology.

In a similar vein, Ayers (2006) proposed an initial triadic approach to the theology of leadership. Applying this structure to Peter’s ideology, what follows seeks to extend Ayers’ model by establishing an incarnational theology of leadership based on Trinitarian assumptions. Leadership, from a biblical perspective, involves a realization that the very essence of God’s being creates the rationale for all human behavior and enterprises (Beeley & Britton, 2009; Frame, 2000; Van Til, 1955). For this reason, examining God’s eternal nature represents the starting point for all endeavors attempting to explain human behavior or institutions.

Peter’s approach to leadership was shaped by his understanding of God. By uniting these interpretive and theological frameworks together, 1 Peter 5 revealed a Trinitarian presupposition as the central concern that formed Peter’s theological construct of leadership. His Trinitarian ideology seems to have established the foundation upon which he built his entire leadership ethos and formulated his instructions to the Christians of Asia Minor. Consequently, as we will show in this work, Peter points the study of leadership to the character and nature of God as the very essence and definition of leadership itself. With this realization, Christians occupy the unique position to more fully apprehend the fundamental nature of leadership and its application.

Listening to the Text

One important part of listening well to someone is asking good questions. In this study we used three questions from Robbins’ (1996) model of socio-rhetorical analysis which are especially pertinent to understanding Peter’s worldview, affiliations, and seminal experiences. First, the question of worldview seeks to understand the essential nature of existence from the author’s point of view. For instance, how authors answer the question of whether the universe was designed, the result of happenstance, or somehow the combination of both significantly affects their view of how the world operates. Second, the question of affiliation seeks to understand the community the author resides within. Inclusion within a particular community affects one’s perspective of his own role and the roles of others. If I am Ghanaian, I will likely adopt the values of
Ghana and view others outside the Ghanaian community from that perspec-
tive. Finally, the question of **seminal experience** shapes the vision of what an
ideal future holds in store. In this way, the tight interweaving of a particular
outlook and sense of belonging combined with the lessons of experience coa-
lesce to form a message that transcends the bounds of time. Approaching the
text of 1 Peter 5 with these questions assists in understanding the presupposi-
tions which Peter held.

While we are separated by the centuries, contemporary Christians face many
of the same struggles that Peter was addressing: Christians are different from
those around them because they seek to emulate and worship alone the
Trinitarian God revealed in Jesus. Those differences lead to behavior and
responses that bring upon believers cultural shame, trials and suffering; those
community pressures require believers to respond to a “hostile, suspicious
society” while strengthening relations within the body of believers (DeSilva,
2004, pp. 847-858). Of course, while these grand themes of Christian living can
be identified in Peter’s writing, more difficult are their application in day to
day living. Being a Christian family, a Christian neighbor, a Christian politi-
cian, a Christian worker, a Christian entertainer, a Christian religious leader—
essentially a Christian in culture—requires that these themes address the
unique expressions of Christianity in culture. This article seeks to apply these
themes from Peter to the field of leadership, recommending a uniquely
Christian approach to being a leader.

**A Matter of Worldview**

As might be expected from his Jewish background, Peter exhibited a world-
view that expected divine participation in human affairs, providential relief
from present suffering, and a hope of future salvation (vv. 6–7, 10). While the
recipients of Peter’s letter might have temporarily experienced exile-like suffer-
ing, Peter was confident that “the God of all grace . . . will himself restore, con-
firm, strengthen, and establish you” (v. 10, ESV; Blum, 1981; Davids, 1990;
Jobes, 2005; Kistemaker, 1996). Despite his own dire circumstances while
awaiting what would be his own execution in Rome, Peter remained assured of
God’s ability and desire to protect His people; not, however, before a commen-
surate amount of suffering had concluded. For Peter, the normal Christian life
included suffering, which made it essential to learn to depend on God (vv. 6,
in God and resolute action based upon it” (p. 167). It is within this paradox that
Peter’s understanding of God was forged.

At the same time, Peter’s argument reflected a revolutionary character as
well. As much as Peter expected God to intervene on behalf of His people, he
fully expected a radical change that would utterly displace the current evil world (Ladd, 1993). Peter’s anticipation of “the glory that is going to be revealed . . . when the chief Shepherd appears” (vv. 1, 4, ESV) revealed the understanding that God had yet to fully consummate the work He began at Creation (Davids, 1990; Grudem, 2009; Jobes, 2005; Kistemaker, 1996). In the present, the Christian’s primary enemy, the Devil, sought to prevent followers from achieving this outcome (v. 8). Only at some future time would Christians “receive the unfading crown of glory” (v. 4, ESV). In the meantime, there existed urgency for Christians to remain vigilant and persevere in the face of tremendous persecution.

In the end, Peter’s message reflected a hopeful yet pragmatic worldview that allowed him to courageously approach the situation and genuinely engage with the Christian community. Peter understood the risks surrounding him and other believers. It was the roaring lion (v. 8) that sought to dislodge Peter’s gaze from a singular focus on Christ, much like the waves had done earlier in his life. Although he fully expected God to intervene on Christians’ behalf, he also understood that suffering, to varying degrees, remains a certainty in this life. Even if God did not intervene in the immediate moment, eventually He would act decisively and conclusively to redeem the Creation as His holy character demands. For Peter, such steadfast belief in the faithful character of God (v. 12) allowed him to lead with an understated and enduring confidence that galvanized the Christian community.

**A Sense of Belonging**

Peter’s affiliation with several different groups presents another critical consideration of his understanding of the Trinitarian God. Peter was a Christian writing to other Christians—this is obvious. However, his frequent allusions in chapter 5 to the Old Testament (vv. 3, 5, 7–8) indicate that he clearly affiliated himself with historical Judaism (Guthrie, 1990; Laniak, 2006). Yet, his understanding that Christ represented the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures (vv. 1, 4, 10, 14) set him apart from the larger Jewish community. Indeed, the insistence that Christ was the Messiah created much controversy between followers of Christ and the Jewish religious establishment (cf. Acts 2, 4). Therefore, while Peter shared a common religious ancestry with the Jewish people, his worship of Christ put him at odds with that very same community.

At the same time, the basic Hebrew theological conviction regarding the oneness of God put the Christian community of Asia Minor at odds with the resident population. Given the pagan influence that dominated the ancient Near East, much of the hostility endured by the Christians in Asia Minor occurred as a result of religious bigotry (DeSilva, 2004). The belief in one God
as opposed to a pantheon of gods, which included the emperor, placed Christians in conflict to the majority populace and imperial power (DeSilva, 2004; Wright, 2013).

For this reason, Peter’s writings displayed a factional quality that recognized the acute differences between Christians and everyone else. Concerns regarding loyalty to the state as well as the perceived ignorance of monotheistic belief saturated the antagonistic reaction of local residents against Christians. Peter’s rhetoric countered this mentality and, remaining consistent with his understanding of God, he insisted that Christians confront matters of honor with humility and grace (vv. 5–6), echoing Christ’s comments to John and James many years earlier (cf. Matt. 20:25–28). Uncharacteristic of Greco-Roman society, which was preoccupied with the acquisition of honor, Christian demeanor offered a humble response to criticism (DeSilva, 2004).

In this way, Peter stood paradoxically between two home worlds, belonging to neither Rome nor Jerusalem. As DeSilva (2004) notes correctly, much of the persecution the Christian community faced was due to an inherent animosity of religious practices in conflict with those of Greco-Roman society. Peter’s command in the first chapter to “be holy” (v. 16, NIV) represented a severe separation from conventional ideology of the time. Even within Judaism, the obsession with power and honor captivated the members of society (cf. Matt. 20:21–24), affording little distinction from the practices of Hellenistic society (DeSilva, 2004; Robbins, 1996). Christians, on the other hand, were to behave differently, pursuing noticeably different objectives. Indeed, Peter’s journey had taken him far from rather adolescent notions on the extent of God’s sovereignty that had viewed Jesus’ death as antithetical to the role of a King.

Learning From Experience

Conspicuously, Peter’s initial remark in chapter 5 immediately confronted a particularly critical past event—Peter counted himself “a witness of the sufferings of Christ” (v. 1). Although it is not clear as to whether Peter meant to restrict this to the crucifixion event or rather intended this comment more generally (Davids, 1990; Jobes, 2005), Christ’s sufferings, and His behavior modeled after that suffering, represented a pivotal series of events which were etched in Peter’s memory (Hiebert, 1982; Kistemaker, 1996). Thus, Christ’s sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection crystallized Peter’s understanding of Christian behavior and his faith that God ultimately restores His people.

With Christ’s example at the forefront of this thought, Peter juxtaposed a clear distinction between two specific groups within the community. Peter addressed the elders first, extolling them to watch over the members of the church (vv. 1–3). Notably, he referred to himself as a fellow elder (v. 1) rather
than imposing his apostolic authority, placing himself as an equal to others (Blum, 1981; Elliott, 2001; Hiebert, 1982). Peter addressed a group of chief representatives who, due to their cultural function and Christian maturity, served as role models and de facto leaders of the community (Davids, 1990; Elliott, 2001; Hiebert, 1982; Marshall, 1991; Sher, 2014). Unlike Greco-Roman society, which was bent on achievement and the acquisition of honor, Christian leaders were to serve as a result of reflecting Christ’s character with genuine willingness (v. 2), moderation (v. 2), and proper application of power (v. 3).

Peter continued by addressing the younger men (v. 5), establishing a non-authoritarian leadership structure. A natural reading favors the interpretation of all those who would, in due time, become elders themselves; however, the comment could also be extended to all other members of the church as well (Grudem, 2009). Once more, against the Greco-Roman cultural milieu of honor and power, Peter exhorted the young men to show deference to their cultural and, more importantly, spiritual elders. Consequently, within the Kingdom of God, humility, as opposed to hubris, aligns relationships both vertically and horizontally (vv. 5–6).

Ultimately, whether speaking to the elders or younger men, the shadow of the cross and Christ’s sacrificial actions from the past undergirded and reinforced Peter’s understanding of how leadership would operate in the future reality of the church. Thus, whether being forced to go where he did not want to go (John 21:18) or remaining until Christ’s return (21:22), Peter had learned that the secret to Kingdom leadership lies primarily in developing the divine character within rather than obsessing over outward prestige and honor.

**Hearing Peter**

Peter’s instructions to the beleaguered community in Asia Minor left little doubt as to where he stood. Again and again, his personal trust in God’s faithfulness, in light of Christian suffering, surfaced as he articulated his vision of Christian leadership. Peter’s commitment to and understanding of leadership grounded itself in the very character of God—a character that is Trinitarian in nature. While Peter did not explicitly mention all the members of the Trinity within chapter 5, the residual effects remained evident in his rhetoric (Kistemaker, 1996; Ladd, 1974). Undoubtedly, the definitive concept of the Trinity as it is known in contemporary theology had not been developed at the time that Peter wrote. Still, chapter 5 recapitulates Peter’s opening statements in the first chapter, forming rhetorical bookends for the entire letter. Within his initial exhortation, Peter clearly mentions all three members of the Trinity by name (1:2; Thompson, 1994), and Trinitarian references permeate the text in the verses and chapters that follow (Blum, 1981; Kistemaker, 1996). By the final
chapter, the Trinitarian concept had been well established and seems presupposed in all that Peter presented.

Thus, Peter’s foundational commitment rested in his knowledge of God’s essential nature as three persons in one being. His understanding of God as Father resulted in reminding believers throughout chapter 5 of God’s sovereign will, holiness, grace, power, and the ushering in, as well as the final consummation, of the end of days. His recognition that God had come in the person of Jesus Christ points to the reality of the Trinity. Christ’s sacrificial atonement (1:2) places Him in a position of authority previously reserved for God alone. This incarnational element of the Trinity reappears once again in 1:21 where trust in God and Christ are considered equivalent expressions of faith. Likewise, Peter’s recognition that the Spirit confirmed the promises of the Old Testament prophets and vindicated Christ’s suffering (1:11–12) formed the basis of his call to holy living (vv. 13–16). These themes of Father, Son, and Spirit—explicitly and implicitly—continue throughout 1 Peter.

In summary, an analysis of 1 Peter 5 reveals a fundamental commitment to the most basic truth of Christianity—the Trinity. It is this foundational commitment that Peter applies throughout the entire epistle to the practice of Christian living in various contexts (e.g., respect for human authorities [2:13–17]; slaves/masters [2:18–25]; wives/husbands [3:1–7]), focusing in the final chapter specifically on leadership within the church itself. In the final analysis, Peter’s message represented a Trinitarian theology of leadership which provides a framework from which to apply the practice of leadership even in the contemporary context.

A Theology of Leadership

Nevertheless, uniting theology and leadership demands more than mere literary analysis. For his part, Ayers (2006) proposes an initial triadic construct to the theology of leadership in which he seeks to marry philosophical and theological language as a bridge between Christian and secular perspectives. This construct includes the nature of God’s eternal and infinite being (ontological), the divine methods that God uses (methodological), and the purposes of God (teleological). Ayers concludes that these dimensions can be used to describe who leaders are at their very core, how they approach leadership, and fundamentally why they lead. Ayers concerned himself with the need for such common language as a result of a “moral and spiritual void” (p. 7) that exists in the study and practice of leadership. He theorizes that theology could, perhaps, provide the necessary moral and spiritual substance required to fill this void.

Recent research focusing on ethical leadership has suggested that a moral vacuum exists within the practice of leadership and that the development of
ethical practices and behaviors is urgently required (Levin & Boaks, 2013; Thornton, 2009). However, as Ayers (2006) notes, a plethora of potential antidotes for such an ailment have been suggested—but there has been a struggle to determine ethical standards or behaviors that often lead to ethical relativism (Minkes, Small & Chaterjee, 1999; Tartell, 2011; Thornton, 2009). Could the “a priori nature of the leader” (Ayers, p. 11) be helpful in establishing the foundation for ethical leadership?

Interestingly, Peter goes a step further in his letter. Understanding who a leader is begins with reflection on the a priori nature of God. Only after God’s nature has been ascertained can application to human leadership be made. Thus, it is not enough to appropriate theological language to describe leadership; rather, theological language must establish that the study of leadership has the very same presuppositional foundation, namely God (Beeley & Britton, 2009). God’s nature becomes, then, the foundation of leadership to which all definitions can be anchored. One deficiency of modern leadership theory and language is that it can leave leaders bereft, not just of theological language but of a basic realization that God, not man, is the foundation and central focus of leadership.

Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Leadership

Having established the philosophical connection between theology and leadership, our focus now may shift to presenting a reformulated theology of leadership from a Christian perspective. Using Ayers’ (2006) triadic construct as a starting point, a Trinitarian theology of leadership offers a more robust account of biblical leadership. Ontologically speaking, a Trinitarian approach acknowledges that God exists as a plurality of one (Bavinck, 2003; Berkhof, 1996). The members of the Trinity co-exist in such a fashion that none forfeit their individuality, yet each is so intimately involved in the others that no separation exists (Bavinck; Zscheile, 2007). This is the quintessential relationship where the members are indivisibly united without diminishing one another’s individuality (coherence). The action of one affects the others and vice versa. Insight into this relationship reveals the epitome of organizational dynamics. Each member of the Trinity contributes His unique blend of skills and experience so that the whole can function effectively (Horsthius, 2011), yet none are considered more vital than or subservient to the others. The same is true of leaders and followers. Each fulfills a required function within the organization, yet neither assumes superiority over the other (Covrig, 2010; Tucker, 2006).

Peter understood this well. His admonition that the elders serve, not out of obligation, greed or ambition, but rather willingly, simply for the sake of the sheep (5:2–3), reflected the ontological principle of Trinitarian leadership.
Likewise, the younger members were to recognize the elder’s valuable contribution without attempting to usurp or undermine their authority (vv. 5–6). Each served in humble recognition of what the other had to offer. Trinitarian leadership assumes humility in deference to the other members of the community.

The implications from a methodological perspective flow logically from the ontological perspective. The relationship enjoyed within the Trinity reflects mutual cooperation and reciprocation. Each member relishes the opportunity to serve the others and, likewise, finds fulfillment and enjoyment in the others’ activities (Bavinck, 2003; Zscheile, 2007). More than just assisting or supporting other members, the methodological principle of Trinitarian leadership extolls a participative cooperation (Horstius, 2011) that removes all personal pride from the equation. This realization allowed Peter to disregard Greco-Roman notions of honor and shame and call for mutual submission between the elders and younger members of the Christian community in Asia Minor as well as with the outside population.

The Trinitarian character of leadership can also be seen in teleology, the study of divine goals or purposes and, theologically speaking, the reason for existence. Creation evidences design and therefore implies a designer (Frame, 1994; Sproul, Gerstner, & Lindsley, 1984). Simply stated, God creates. The relationship enjoyed within the Trinity is so intimately filled with love that it overflows into creative activity (Bavinck, 2003). Consequently, the crowning masterpiece of this creation—humanity—mirrors the divine image (cf. Psalm 8). A Trinitarian perspective focuses leadership on developing the personhood of individuals and fulfilling the image of God within each individual and culture. Zscheile (2007) refers to what he calls “irreducible otherness” (p. 53), meaning that which makes each person unique. In other words, a primary goal of leadership is to maximize what the individual or culture has to offer both to God and the human community. Peter’s acknowledgment of this principle permitted him to address his fellow elders without arrogance or pride that might easily beset a man in his position (5:1). Rather, his focus concerned developing those in his care to their ultimate potential (vv. 4, 10).

At the same time, the teleology of leadership is wrapped in another characteristic of God—sovereignty. Leadership theory and practice has been preoccupied with how to account for as well as ensure effectiveness (Northouse, 2013). Still, human beings are creatures subject to God’s sovereign will and purpose. Trinitarian leadership mitigates against this tension. It understands that while leadership (or, more generally, human responsibility) values and honors attempts to maximize human potential, ultimately, the results are left to God. This perspective also guards against humiliation and despair when desired results are not achieved. Peter’s recognition of this very basic truth allowed
him to hold and offer hope in the midst of suffering, even his own. Human action or the lack thereof is not necessarily the catalyst for suffering (cf. John 9:3). Rather, God allows suffering both as a means for humanity to recognize the need for rescue from a broken world and as a means of instigating the transformation into the image of Christ. In all of this, God’s grace abounds. Peter’s basic presuppositional commitments provided the assurance that this was indeed a reality.

Making Theory Visible

A final element of a Trinitarian theology of leadership, going beyond Ayers’ (2006) triadic taxonomy, is that of incarnationality. Theological reflection on leadership must include acknowledgement of the Incarnation (Cafferky, 2011; Lingenfelter, 2008; McKenna, 2013; Patterson, 2014; Zscheile, 2007). There exists no other more concrete, definitive or authoritative statement demonstrating divine leadership. That God would forsake His heavenly abode and divine status in order to take the flesh of humanity (cf. Phil. 2:6–11) served as the ultimate paradigm of leadership. Paradoxical to modern leadership theory, which purports to understand what makes leaders effective, biblical leadership emerges from weakness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:10) and is demonstrated in serving those we often call followers.

Chaleff (2003) proposes that followership and leadership are mutually balanced as they orbit in unison around a common purpose. Rarely are the common purposes exactly identical. However, to the extent that they are similar, the common goal keeps both leader and follower in orbit and accomplishes the goals of the positions they have mutually agreed to fulfill (Kellerman, 2008). When that goal is the incarnated revelation of the person and nature of the Trinity, then a strong orbit can be established to accomplish the common goal.

In other words, a Trinitarian leadership theory cannot simply be a theory—it must be practical. Did Peter—after he experienced God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—exhibit this style of leadership in practical experience? Indeed, the events of Acts 6 clearly demonstrate that he did. Ecclesial and faith-based organizational leaders will resonate with the all-too familiar story. Complaints arise regarding certain constituents who feel slighted, causing divisions that could easily derail the mission and purpose of the fledgling group by distracting leaders and/or sowing the seeds of devastating conflict. Anyone in a leadership role for any length of time has dealt with similar situations.

Leaders who are guided by a Trinitarian understanding of the being of God (ontology) recognize both the unique individuality and the necessary involvement of all members within the relationship without assuming superiority over the others. This is, in fact, exactly what the events of Acts 6 reflect. The apos-
titles—obviously, inclusive of Peter—recognized their unique role in prayer, preaching, and the ministry of the Word. Yet, there is no sense within the passage that they intended to create a role inferior to their own. Instead, it constituted a vital role necessary within the context of fulfilling the Great Commission (6:7).

In this context we see leaders pursuing participative cooperation, which reflects what would be expected in a Trinitarian leadership paradigm. This was evident in the selection of the seven. Rather than the apostles making an autocratic selection of individuals, they relied upon “the full number of disciples” to select those who would care for both Hebrews and Hellenists (v. 2). “What they said pleased the whole gathering” (v. 4). Those selected by the gathering were then brought before the apostles—Peter was one of them—“and they prayed and laid their hands on them” (v. 6).

Finally, leadership teleology, reflecting a Trinitarian teleology, develops personhood by fulfilling the image of God within each individual. The Jewish apostles did not consider the Hebrew widows more important than the Hellenists. Nor did the Hellenist seven (note their Greek names), given the results of their work, appear to place more emphasis on the Hellenist widows. On the contrary, the very fact that the apostles established a means to care for both groups equitably echoes the very heart of Trinitarian teleology. Additionally, all of the groups within this narrative—apostles, the seven, and the gathering of disciples—all in their own unique manner fulfilled their calling. In the ministry of the apostles, the service of the deacons, and the unity of the gathering, the image of God radiated forth as a testament of Trinitarian leadership.

Conclusion

Does this then necessarily mean a limited audience of applicability for this model of leadership? The answer to that is both yes and no. On the one hand, the ability to live out the Christian life is not simply a matter of living in a moral manner. Rather, the Christian life is lived as one submits through faith to the reign of Christ as God for transformation into His image, displaying His character. This is a work that only God can accomplish by the grace of the Father, through the person of the Son, and with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, Trinitarian leadership is narrowed in applicability to those who are in Christ.

However, the model is not limited simply to ecclesial or intra-Christian cultural contexts. Believers following a Trinitarian model of leadership will seek to highlight the manner in which the image of God is displayed in people and the organizations that they represent. Thus, whenever a godly exhibition of
authority, humility, servanthood, justice, mercy, transformation, unity, love, and/or grace occurs (and the list extends to all of God’s attributes), God’s image is also displayed. Within this environment, Trinitarian leaders enact the characteristics offered in this model and invite others to fulfill their God-ordained purpose, ultimately revealing the divine character.

Whenever and wherever God’s image shines less brilliantly, Trinitarian leaders stand as a testimony of what could and should be. This allows much future study into the manner in which Trinitarian leadership supports, critiques, and refines contemporary leadership theories. Thus, while followers of Jesus are uniquely equipped by God to fulfill this manner of leadership and followership, its effects extend far beyond the edges of the community of God’s people, spreading the goodness of God out into the world, reminiscent of the original cultural mandate.

Ultimately, though, the model is dependent on a more basic presupposition: leadership can only be explained to the extent that the character of God is understood. While the image of God is not utterly effaced from mankind and thus human beings can contribute positively to an understanding of true leadership, presuming that a study of humanity alone will lead to the ultimate definition of leadership is a fool’s journey. Humanity is not *a priori*—God is *a priori* and as such His character is the presupposition that underlies all true leadership understanding. While the infinite nature of God tends to suggest an endless depth of study, the value of the study will not lie simply in effective leadership, but rather in a deeper knowledge of God.

**References**


A TRINITARIAN MODEL


BRIAN RUFFNER
FROM DIABOLICAL TO DIALOGICAL: TRANSFORMING ETHICS THROUGH DIALOGICAL LEADERSHIP

Abstract: Much like the example of David and Nathan in 2 Samuel 11–12 demonstrated, moral lapses victimize the entire organization, and members often persist in ethical misconduct without full comprehension of the gravity of their actions. As an antidote, organizational members must be vigilant and resolute in watching for the signs of ethical degradation, forming a noticing organization. However, as opposed to confronting ethical misconduct head-on, dialogical leadership, encompassing a Trinitarian perspective, attempts to preserve the fabric of community through strategic narrative and transparent dialogue aimed at raising ethical awareness and inhibiting unethical behavior.

Keywords: Dialogic storytelling, ethical blindness, isolation of leader, ethical transformation, dialogical leadership

Introduction
“You are the man” (2 Sam. 12:7, NIV)! In exclaiming this brief yet irrefutable indictment, Nathan convicted the then king of Israel and turned the tide of what, until that point, had been diabolical behavior of epic proportions. While the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11–12) remains a paragon of God’s grace and, ultimately, David’s humility (Baldwin, 1988; Goldingay, 2011; Youngblood, 2009), Nathan’s challenge in the face of the king’s heinous crimes stands as a witness to his courage and a model for establishing ethical climates within the organizational environment. What follows attempts to show how Nathan, using dialogical leadership, strategically employed storytelling and dialogue in order to lift the scales from David’s eyes and restore ethical character to the royal household.

At the heart of dialogical leadership, however, lies a commitment to Trinitarian principles that heighten ethical awareness. The art of storytelling and dialogue, then, reverberates from the biblical account into the modern organizational arena, bridging theology and social science into a robust mixture of leadership methodology which transforms ethical climates from diabolical to dialogical.

Brian Ruffner is currently a doctoral student in the Strategic Leadership program at Regent University’s School of Business and Leadership. He holds a master’s degree from Reformed Theological Seminary and has served in various leadership roles within the fields of operations and project management for nearly 20 years. Brian is currently a senior advisor for strategic services development in the telecom industry.
The Causes of Ethical Blindness

Unfortunately, David’s adulterous betrayal and murderous conspiracy reflect an all-too-common tale within the domain of leadership and organizational life (Gini, 2004; Sims & Brinkmann, 2003). In this light, it is necessary to first understand the reasons why leaders cross ethical boundaries and, therefore, why dialogical leadership offers such a powerful tool for combating ethical lapses.

**Ambiguity**

Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2011) cited ethical blindness as a common cause of moral degradation. Ethical blindness refers to either an intentional or unintentional desensitization or ignorance toward ethical boundaries, resulting in a gradual loss of moral compass (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel; Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2013; Pittarello, Leib, Gorden-Hecker, & Shalvi, 2015). Losing sight of ethical boundaries might occur due to mistaken assumptions regarding the reality of the situation, false assumptions made about other people, or an over-exaggerated sense of self-importance and ability (Messick & Bazerman, 1996). In any event, blurring of ethical boundaries produces enough situational ambiguity that ethical sensibilities weaken and distort, allowing moral compromise to occur (cf. Gen. 3:1–7; Camp, 2011).

**Bypass**

Although any one of these misperceptions might result in ethical failure, Argyris (1998) contended that an even more perverse phenomenon occurs within the organizational environment. In what he called “bypass” (p. 263), Argyris identified the process whereby organizational actors, in order to maintain a sense of psychological safety, deceive themselves into believing that the organization functions appropriately. The loss of negative feedback induces single-loop learning which, in turn, dampens ethical responses (Argyris, 1976) and, again, leads to desensitization, incrementally weakening and/or distorting ethical bearings.

**Isolation**

At the same time, leaders, due to their position, become particularly susceptible to ethical ambiguity and bypass behaviors. Perhaps the prestige of position and authority results in an over-inflated sense of privilege, convincing leaders that the rules no longer apply to them (Price, 2004), or encourages an overwhelming sense of entitlement, leading to unadulterated self-indulgence (Fedler, 2006; Ludwig & Longenecker, 1993). Kets de Vries (1989), on the other hand, proposed that leadership by nature isolates leaders further and further...
from sources of moral support and correction. As a result, their perspective gradually becomes strangely introverted and skewed, allowing significant errors in judgment to occur. At any rate, in all the aforementioned cases, the inability or refusal to properly integrate and/or acknowledge feedback mechanisms produces ethical blindness and opens the door for moral temptation and failure (Argyris, 1976).

David’s Ethical Blindness

While there were undoubtedly facets of each of these ethical factors which contributed to David’s descent into moral calamity, the biblical text, curiously, underscored his self-imposed and highly unusual sequester from combat (2 Sam. 11:1; Baldwin, 1988; Youngblood, 2009) that eventually led to his encounter with Bathsheba (11:2–4). As Kets de Vries (1989) warned, isolation leads to moral distancing, and certainly that effect is observed in David’s circumstance. Consequently, the king took what did not belong to him (11:4; Janzen, 2012), clearly violating the scriptural admonition that Israel’s leaders should never depart from the law nor consider themselves better than their fellow countrymen (Deut. 17:20; Ludwig & Longenecker, 1993; Price, 2004).

Yet, in the final analysis, David’s ethical failure resulted from an inability to properly consider and integrate individual and corporate interests. Indeed, the universal nature of sin ensures that such ethical compromise will occur, disrupting the created order and God’s intended harmony within relationships (Wallace, 1997). Consequently, Cafferky (2011) insisted that herein resides the quintessential conundrum facing organizations—the delicate and paradoxical tension between individual freedom and organizational solidarity. Ultimately, ethical lapses occur as a result of disregarding corporate interests in favor of indulging individual desire. In that respect, David’s behavior remains an unfortunate yet instructive depiction of the destructive consequences of individual desire run amuck.

Of course, the issue of integrating the one and the many has plagued mankind since the Fall (Frame, 1994; Van Til, 1955). That is, equitably addressing the concerns of the universal and particular at the same time has, historically, challenged ethical sensibilities (Cafferky, 2011). The impetus behind the Ten Commandments, in fact, resides in ensuring that individual interests do not supersede that of other community members. Although insight into solving this enigma has remained somewhat elusive, the Trinity offers an exemplary model of dialogical leadership which seamlessly harmonizes the one and the many and, as a result, reorients ethical perspectives to genuinely consider the interests of others (Jensen, 2001).
The Trinity and Dialogue

In this respect, the Trinity appropriately informs the study of ethics and concretely establishes a theological basis for dialogical leadership. Because the members of the Trinity exist in a perpetual plurality of one, communication occurs transparently and effortlessly. At the same time, such unequivocal unanimity does not diminish individual identity or distinctiveness (Bavinck, 2003). In this manner, then, the Trinity interweaves the one and the many into a vibrant yet indivisible community of persons equally concerned with individual as well as corporate interests (Tumblin, 2007).

Undeniably, the biblical matter resonates with Trinitarian language demonstrating the veracity of this principle. For example, within the prolific hymn of Colossians 1, Paul spoke vividly of Christ’s involvement in the creation event, stating that “through him God created everything” (v. 16, NLT). In saying this, Paul described the process by which both the Father and Son have existed in everlasting union and cooperated together seamlessly and harmoniously, quite literally, in the creation of reality (cf. John 1:1–3). Christ himself spoke at length regarding the intimate relationship between Himself and the Father, reinforcing the concept that neither acts without the complete knowledge and agreement of the other (John 10:25–39) and exemplifying the notion of dialogical communion. Christ also testified to the reciprocal relationship between Himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, indicating that the third member of the Trinity participates equally and co-creatively in the activity of the Father and Son (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–15). Likewise, in his eminent treatise on Christian unity (Eph. 4:1–16), Paul, following a conspicuously trinitarian formulation (vv. 4–6), emphasized the necessity of fostering harmony between the one and the many.

Although human relationships, as intricate as they are, pale in comparison, the Trinity represents the ideal model for dialogical leadership whereby transparent and unrestricted communication between the various members sustains and maintains communal cohesion and, in turn, promotes ethical behavior (Chase, 2013; Ellens, 1974; Reid, 1974). For only within the dynamic yet inseparable community of the Trinity does the space exist for diversity to flourish without threatening the inherent union that binds members together (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12–31; Tumblin, 2007). As with all forms of authentic dialogue, awareness of alternate perspectives stimulates pause for genuine ethical consideration. In other words, illuminating the existential unity of the whole challenges egotistical assumptions and dampens the desire to harm others knowingly.

Accordingly, authentic dialogue transpires within the safety of dialogic containers (communicative spaces) that promote the suspension of judgment and defensive routines (Isaacs, 1999; Schein, 2010). As Argyris (1994) concluded,
sincere transformational communication rarely occurs in the organizational environment due to the hesitance to confront, for the sake of saving embarrassment, the most critical matters concerning the maintenance of healthy and, therefore, effective relationships. Instead, organizational members pander to one another in an intricate dance of denial and deception intended to sustain a rather dysfunctional status quo. On the other hand, dialogic containers create a sanctuary where organizational members can explore alternate perspectives without fear of reprisal, leading to a broader range of ethical considerations. Unquestionably, within the interior of Trinitarian communion, such dialogic conditions exist, providing the pattern from which to establish dialogical leadership.

**Dialogical Leadership**

In this light, authentic dialogue, it would seem, offers the appropriate vehicle to engage with organizational constituents in order to encourage the formation of an ethical community. If, indeed, leadership entails the ability to influence others toward objectives, then the ability to alter how people perceive reality involves the application of ethical considerations and forms the basis for dialogical leadership (Wines & Hamilton, 2009). Inherently, dialogue entertains storytelling as a means to invite participants to collaborate in the co-creation of reality, dampening competitive behaviors (Mitra, 2013; Nielsen, 1990; Olsen & Morgan, 2012). This is, potentially, the most salient aspect of organizational dialogue, in that it promotes and enhances the learning behaviors which are essential for enabling an ethical organizational environment (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008).

**Fostering Dialogue Through Storytelling**

Human beings, by their very nature, communicate through story—it is simply part of mankind’s DNA (Barker & Gower, 2010; Denning, 2007; Randall, 1999). Narrative leadership harnesses the power of storytelling as a means to connect with and relate to that intrinsic human nature (Denning, 2007). Consequently, storytelling involves the creation of meaning and reality in a dramatic and episodic format, inviting the listener to not merely observe but rather become part of the story (Barker & Gower; Boal & Schultz, 2007; Fønnebø, 2011; Mitra, 2013). From an ethical perspective, it is therefore imperative that storytelling not only invite listeners to participate but to co-create reality as well (Denning, 2007; Mitra, 2013; Olsen & Morgan, 2012). As a Trinitarian perspective aptly demonstrates, only through collaborative co-creation of reality does the necessary ethical balance between the interests of the one and the many take place.

In this respect, Nathan provided an exceptional example of dialogic story-
telling to confront unethical, and in his case diabolical, behavior. Of particular theological importance to this contention, the biblical text recorded that the Lord “sent Nathan . . . to tell David this story” (2 Sam. 12:1, NLT), emphasizing divine intent to employ storytelling as a leadership technique. Rather than challenge David directly, which could prove mortally dangerous for a prophet (Goldingay, 2011), Nathan obediently and cleverly leveraged the power of story to create a dialogic container from which to gain agreement on principle (12:1–6) and, only then, convict David of his crime (v. 7). Surprisingly, David reacted not with contempt but with painful realization that he had committed heinous acts not just against his fellow man but, in the larger perspective, against God (v. 13a), validating the notion that dialogue entreats participants to lower defenses and suspend judgment in favor of conscientious reflection. Likewise, Psalm 51 has been recognized traditionally as David’s lament in light of his grievous actions, underscoring the sincere remorse he felt upon Nathan’s pronouncement that he was the very man depicted in the story (Youngblood, 2009).

The Otherness of Others

Indeed, as David’s response proved, dialogue heightens the awareness of and intensifies consideration for others (Deetz, Simpson, & Cissna, 2004; Olsen & Morgan, 2012). Buber (1958) contended that typical human interactions involve the I/It distinction, treating others as mere instruments through which the personal agenda is achieved. Unquestionably, such a mindset befell David when he observed the beautiful Bathsheba from his rooftop vantage (11:2). From that moment on, everyone else became only means through which to further his diabolical plans (Janzen, 2012). Conversely, dialogical interaction, according to Buber, promotes the I/Thou distinction whereby others are viewed as ends in themselves. Dialogue, then, initiates a process of interchange that emphasizes and, as a result, stimulates genuine concern for otherness (Deetz, Simpson, & Cissna; Olsen & Morgan). Cavanaugh (2008) argued much the same, stating that through the act of communion, participants become so absorbed in the otherness of Christ that they cannot help but become acutely aware of the pain and suffering of those around them.

In this way, storytelling presents common language and imagery from which to invite others into a participative narrative (dialogue), entreatng them to experience others’ perspectives (Denning, 2007; Mitra, 2013; Olsen & Morgan, 2012; Wines & Hamilton, 2009). Narrative is so powerful because stories reflect a basic facet of human existence and provide the ability to communicate on an innate level (Barker & Gower, 2010; Denning, 2007; Randall, 1999). By engaging in an emotional and dramatic manner, leaders captivate listeners and draw them into their narrative (White, 2008). Yet, from a dialogical
perspective, the narrative remains open-ended so that listeners have the opportunity to contribute to the story as well. Although a difficult paradox to articulate, dialogical communication allows both parties to maintain their position while genuinely appreciating the position of others (Pearce, Pearce, & Cissna, 2004).

**Dialogical Communion and Learning**

Most importantly, dialogical narrative fosters extraordinary collaboration, inducing organizational communion in which a heightened sense of otherness transcends the rather limited perspective of any single participant. In other words, dialogical narrative, rather than suppressing or manipulating the creative powers of others, reveals a vibrant range of alternatives that might otherwise remain obscured behind self-interest and competitive behaviors (Barker & Gower, 2010; Boal & Schultz, 2007; Mitra, 2013). Without question, organizations' survival and efficacy not only depend on the degree to which members mutually cooperate toward common objectives but to the degree they develop resilience and improvisational skills as well. A Trinitarian perspective only strengthens such a conclusion and suggests that as unity and diversity proliferate in tandem, organizational efficacy increases substantially (Tumblin, 2007).

Thus, dialogical leadership instigates organizational learning as well. As such, narrative assists leaders in mediating organizational reality, either upholding organizational values or subverting them so that needed change can occur (Pettigrew, 1979; Schein, 1993, 2010; Wines & Hamilton, 2009). Notice that Nathan’s narrative involved a recognizable case of Jewish hospitality and legal principles (Hyman, 2002; Janzen, 2012). That is, the obligation for the rich man to serve his guests set over against taking the ewe lamb from the poor man (2 Sam. 12:4) served to reinforce both social and legal customs prevalent within the Jewish culture of that time. David, acting as judge, immediately recognized and reacted to the legal ramifications, convicting only himself of violating both cultural standards in the process (Derby, 1996). In this way, the dialogic container Nathan constructed opened David’s mind to other possibilities, serving to expose the severity of his crimes.

Because the propensity to share knowledge relates directly to organizational learning capacity (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Caza, Barker, & Cameron, 2004), narrative more effectively disseminates information into digestible units (Conger, 1991; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997; Sillince, 2006), allowing participants to learn faster. In addition, dialogical narrative, by virtue of recognizing and respecting the otherness of others, facilitates psychological safety and builds trust more rapidly than what otherwise might occur under normal circumstances (Isaacs, 1998; Schein, 1993), contributing to learning behaviors as well. Once again, only within the context of Nathan’s story did David realize
the awesome gravity of his regrettable actions (v. 13), reinforcing the concept of accelerated learning through narrative (Reich, 2003). As a result, the use of narrative dialogue engenders acute awareness of others (Buber, 1958; Deetz, Simpson, & Cisna, 2004) and heightened ethical awareness (Nielsen, 1990; Olsen & Morgan, 2012), making dialogical leadership the preferred method to address ethical blindness within organizational structures.

Embedding Dialogical Leadership

As Nathan’s example testified, dialogical leadership presents a model for creating what Bazerman (2014) referred to as the “noticing organization” (p. 119) as an antidote to the moral distancing to which leaders and organizational members alike so frequently fall prey. The intent of the noticing organization, of course, resides in transforming ethical character and outcomes as opposed to simply suppressing unethical behavior. The key, as Argyris (1976) asserted, involves introducing feedback and stimulating double-loop learning—both of which noticing organizations accomplish. Consequently, applying the principles of dialogical leadership presents several practical guidelines for enabling an ethical organization.

Stay Visible

Because of their position, leaders often lack an appropriate peer group or find difficulty in relating to the rest of the organization (Kets de Vries, 1989). As a result, like David, they might withdraw into self-imposed seclusion, whether purposefully or unconsciously. In either event, the loss of external feedback dampens, if not entirely extinguishes, otherwise ethical perspectives. For this reason, leaders must resist the temptation to become islands unto themselves. On the contrary, by surrounding themselves with those who will hold them accountable, leaders maintain precious contact with the organization and ensure that a necessary check-and-balance mechanism exists. Entering into a covenant relationship with a few unfailing yet brutally honest allies anchors leaders and prevents them from plummeting over the edge of ethical impropriety. Reciprocally, upholding ethical values and behaviors sets the tone for organizational conduct (Morrison, 2001), providing members with an exemplary model to emulate (Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012). In this way, leaders remain faithful to Trinitarian ideals and therefore invite organizational communion to occur.

Slow the Tempo Down

At the same time, in the frantic pace of the modern environment, ethical failures often occur simply due to lack of appropriate consideration (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). The key to recognizing and/or resisting unethical urges rests
in decelerating the decision-making process. Just as Nathan demonstrated, storytelling interrupts and slows the flow of time (Boal & Schultz, 2007; Boje, 2012), allowing ethical sensibilities to percolate and eventually overtake more insidious intentions. Leaders in turn benefit from entering a dialogic container as impulses to overreact and potentially attack accusers or offenders are tempered significantly as well (Isaacs, 1998; Schein, 1993). In the end, rather than jumping headlong into a questionable decision or confrontation over unethical behavior, dialogic leaders press the pause button, so to speak, in order to induce a dialogic environment which stimulates further contemplation of an ethical course of action (Nielsen, 1990).

**Encourage Reflection**

In concert with decelerating the decision-making process, dialogic leaders harness storytelling to impress listeners with the gravity of unethical actions. It is here where the otherness of others comes to the forefront of consideration. Somewhat akin to Socratic Method, storytelling causes listeners to engage in deep thinking and reflection (Daudelin, 1996; Swidler, 2012), amplifying openness to alternative ethical perspectives (Trammel, 2015). Christ, in fact, intended His parables to produce the same effect (Fønnebø, 2011). As thoughts stir, listeners begin to imagine themselves in the place of story characters, producing a conscientious and sympathetic response. Clearly David experienced the powerfully ethical pull of Nathan’s story and, as a result of his sympathy for the poor man’s plight, began the journey back to ethical awareness. Indeed, as Tumblin (2007) suggested, implementing a Trinitarian approach to leadership necessitates extending the grace necessary to create existential space within which change might occur. This is exactly what dialogic leadership accomplishes.

**Rehearse Ethical Situations**

As a proactive measure, Ncube and Wasburn (2006) recommended that small-group mentoring provides an exceptional platform from which to engage organizational members in dialogue and rehearse ethical decision-making. The mentoring environment, if executed effectively, can be used to simulate the stress of potential ethical dilemmas, affording both leaders and constituents the opportunity to enter into dialogic containers wherein alternate decisions and their consequences might be explored. Although enacted in a virtual environment, such practices nonetheless create “crucible experiences” (Mendenhall et al., 2013, p. 19) that trigger the development of mental-muscle memory (Reichard et al., 2015) should similar circumstances occur in the future. In this way, dialogic rehearsal induces organizational learning, generates organizational cohesion, and ultimately stimulates ethical behaviors. Like
any other discipline, practicing ethical conduct leads to virtuous performance when the pressure mounts.

Realizing Authentic Ethical Transformation

In the end, dialogical leadership involves an authentic quality which includes a mixture of self-awareness, reflection and humility (Collins, 2001; Morris, Brotheridge, & Urbanski, 2005; Olsen & Morgan, 2012; Trammel, 2015), allowing organizational members to transform in the process (Berkovich, 2014; Mitra, 2013). The picture of David’s remarkable change from diabolical murderer to humble penitent speaks volumes about the power of dialogical leadership to drastically alter the ethical nature of individuals and organizations. Similarly, Strom (2006) and Currie (2003) elaborated the concept of dialogical grace which fosters openness and cooperation yet constrains jealousy and strife. No matter what the designation, dialogical leadership integrates a paradoxical combination of corporate and individual interests, producing unexpected and extraordinary outcomes. Within such an environment, in Tumblin’s (2007) estimation, “transformation becomes inevitable” and moral isolation “fades into” galvanized organizational “unity” (p. 72) of unsurpassed ethical character.

Conclusion

Rooted in the vibrant unity of the Trinity, dialogical leadership, by its very nature, occurs in the midst of community. As members cooperate together to co-create reality, they establish values which correspond to that reality. Incorporating the concept of the noticing organization, through dialogical leadership, community members guard against ethical blindness and use dialogic storytelling to challenge behaviors which contradict core values. At the same time, dialogical leadership allows for the otherness of others to permeate the conversation, precipitating an understated yet crucial tenderness which encourages trust and sharing without negating individual contributions.

Although leaders may isolate themselves and subsequently engage in unethical conduct, ethical failure never occurs in isolation. Much like the example of David and Nathan demonstrated, moral lapses victimize the entire organization, and members often persist in unethical behavior without full comprehension of the gravity of their actions. As an antidote, organizational members must be vigilant and resolute in watching for the signs of ethical blindness, forming a noticing organization. However, as opposed to confronting ethical misconduct combatively, dialogical leadership attempts to preserve and strengthen the fabric of community through narrative dialogue aimed at raising ethical awareness and therefore inhibiting unethical behavior.
References


LEADERSHIP LIVED
RODNEY MILLS
HEALTHY CHURCHES GROW

He walked into the church not knowing what to expect. It had been hard making the decision, but he was determined to attempt to worship God in church that weekend. Jim didn’t look like the other congregants. His piercings glistened in the morning sun, contrasting with his dark tattoos and spiked hair. On both sides he was dragging two rag-a-muffin children. It was clear that Jim was out of place.

He settled into the rear of the sanctuary just as the praise music was beginning. He hoped that his small children wouldn’t make a fuss, but that was unlikely as this was the first time in their lives that they had crossed the threshold of a church. As the praise music began to fade, his youngest began to squirm, chatter, and cause an unwelcome distraction to all around them.

Just as Jim was deciding on whether this “church thing” was worth the trouble, an elderly woman in the row in front of him turned around and stared in his direction. The stern expression on her face made him want to wither away, never to try this again. However, his thoughts of fleeing were soon quenched as she asked, “May I help you with your children, so that you can enjoy the service?” Relief flooded his mind as at that moment Jim knew that he had found a warm, accepting home.

Such is the experience that God wishes for all who come to Him. People young and old, from all walks of life, are searching for meaning, belonging and acceptance. Alone and isolated, they search for a place where they can be themselves and find what is missing from their unfulfilled lives. Apprehensions abound if they happen to venture across the threshold of a church door. What will they discover waiting for them on the other side? Will they find an environment of safety, love and acceptance, or just another place where they are judged by their outward appearance instead of the content of their character? Will they encounter a presence of the Divine throughout the worship service that inspires and transforms their lives, or will they be met by congregants merely fulfilling their weekly duty to ease guilty consciences? Will

Rodney Mills is a 2009 Doctor of Ministry graduate from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. His doctoral project explored the implementation of Natural Church Development. After pastoring in several states for the past 35 years, he currently serves as the Ministerial Director for the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He and his wife of 36 years, Pamela, have one grown daughter.
they be encouraged to utilize their unique gifts and talents in service for others, or simply observe a finely tuned performance with no encouragement to personally get involved? These and other questions are being asked each week as people search for something more to life and seek meaning in a world that offers little hope for today or tomorrow.

God has given His body—the organic, living Church—the task of being a beacon of hope to a struggling and dying world. He desires the church to exhibit the grace and acceptance that led Jesus Christ to give everything for humanity. Yet, too often, the church is not living up to the ideal to which it is called. Too often there exists little vitality in God’s body as members have become accustomed to the dysfunction and unhealthy habits that have formed over decades of organizational existence.

Volumes of literature have been written over the past years extolling the virtues of various health principles and their relationship to church growth. Some authors have synthesized church health down to no more than five major principles (Gladden, 2003; Rainer, 1994; Warren, 1995). Others have created detailed lists containing 19 or more essentials to measure a healthy church (Getz, 2007; Scheidler, 2005). Each has sought to illuminate the essential ingredients for maintaining church health. Some differences in the stated principles are simply semantic; others are additional principles that complement the eight essential characteristics presented by Christian Schwarz in his Natural Church Development (NCD) concepts (Schalk, 1999; Schwarz, 1999, 2000, 2005).

This focus on health is important for congregations of all sizes. While larger congregations may appear to have an advantage in health, it is imperative that all congregations look closely at their health before attempting to grow. The reality for congregations both large and small is that the fundamental issue is health, not growth (Martin, 2005). Only after dealing with the systemic issues related to health should the pastor/leader of the congregation make growth a goal for the congregation. It is true that a church will never be totally healthy, just as in life there is a constant threat of disease-causing germs. However, the pastor/leader and congregation must seek to make health a priority.

In his book Seven Practices of Effective Ministry, Andy Stanley shares that in order to have an effective ministry one must think in steps, not programs. Addressing church leaders, he says that you must first “determine where you want the people to be. Then figure out how you are going to get them there. That’s doing ministry with the end in mind” (Stanley, 2004). As leaders, we are called to be systematic in our approach to problems, including the health of the church. We must have a clear end in sight and have specific steps that we can take to achieve that goal. If we are going to make health a priority, then we...
must have clear steps to achieve better health instead of just focusing on the newest and fanciest program or latest gimmick to attract more congregants.

Still the question remains whether focusing on health is a biblical concept. Christian Schwarz uses Mark 4:26–29 as an integral biblical basis for his theory of NCD (Schwarz, 2005). The “all-by-itself” principle forms the basic rationale for considering church health as a priority for church growth. Christ says in Mark 4:28 that the “earth by itself” brings forth the crop. This seems to support the philosophy of growth occurring apart from human activity. The Greek word αὐτοματη is frequently used in the Septuagint to refer to that which is worked by God alone. It is the same term that is used for the vegetation which grows up during the Sabbatical year in Leviticus 25:5 and 11, again emphasizing the growth occurring apart from human involvement. The farmer sows the seed, goes about his daily rounds and neither fusses nor loses sleep over the growth process. He recognizes that God is at work. Despite the farmer’s absence and ignorance of the growth process happening underground, the soil brings forth “all by itself” the harvest.

As church leaders, it is our responsibility not to grow the harvest, but to create an environment whereby God can bring about His harvest and grow His kingdom.

**Personal Experience**

Some years ago I was called to pastor a church in the upper Midwest region of the United States that had experienced a significant decline in membership over the past couple of decades. I had read about the concept of Natural Church Development, but was unsure if it would work for my particular church. There were many things that seemed stacked against this congregation regaining its vitality. We didn’t have the resources of the big churches in town. We didn’t have the multiple services, multiple pastors or multiple ministries. Parking was only on the street, in an old residential neighborhood. If congregants were to fill the church, most of them would have to park their cars a couple of blocks away, an especially unpleasant task in the winter months. What could something like Natural Church Development do for this dying urban church? How could this congregation, worshipping in the same location for 60 years, change to meet the needs of and become a beacon of hope to an ever-changing city.

My first task was to help the congregation realize the dire straits they were experiencing. As John Kotter states in his book *Leading Change*, there must first be an established sense of urgency for lasting change to occur (Kotter, 2012). The members needed to develop the realization that unless something drastic were to happen, their days as a church would be numbered and their pews
even emptier than they were at the time. Sitting with the church board and
going over the statistics of decline in the past 15 years helped to bring that
sense of urgency to the leaders. They began to realize that the church had not
deteriorated to its current condition overnight. If the congregation was to be
vibrant again, it would take something more than a quick-fix, microwave solu-
tion to their decades-long problem. They voted to make a long-term attempt at
using Natural Church Development as a tool in reversing their current trend.

Over the next seven years, the congregation would take the NCD survey mul-
tiple times to assess its health (Mills, 2009). A basic profile showed scores on
eight church qualities (empowering leadership, gift-based ministry, passionate
spirituality, effective structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small
groups, need-oriented evangelism, loving relationships). There were times
when committees were formed and goals were set and approved by the church
in an attempt to work on the lowest quality. Other times, the goals and object-
tives were less defined and more haphazard methods of dealing with the per-
ceived issue took center stage. All of this was done before the introduction of a
more detailed report (Profile Plus) where each question was evaluated for its
contribution to the score. Therefore, there were times when little was done to
meaningfully change the health of the congregation. Only when the majority of
the members were intentionally aware of the concepts and the need of provid-
ing a healthy environment in which God could grow His church did things real-
ly begin to improve.

One year, the church board brainstormed various ideas that were passed on
to a select committee to come up with four S.M.A.R.T. initiatives for the church
to implement. Another time, as pastor, I bypassed the committees and came up
with my own goals, which turned out not to be too smart. There were times
that we polled the congregation for ideas, and other times we had congrega-
tional meetings detailing the initiatives for the coming year. In each case, the
common theme was that the church was conscientiously striving to improve
the lowest quality and create a healthy, nurturing environment in which the
church could prosper.

Yet, to determine the effectiveness of any program, system or initiative,
there needs to be an objective measurement. There are numerous authors who
clearly recognize that growing a healthy church is not just about numbers but
also about growing the members themselves. There is an intangible growth
that comes from the maturity that God brings in areas of faith, love and service.
The expansion of the ministry of the church into the community, making a dif-
fERENCE in the community served, is something that is difficult to quantify, yet
it is a critical part of a healthy congregation.

It is clear that much of the growth of a healthy church cannot be measured
with numbers and statistics. However, there is value in recognizing that numerical growth does represent people. The number of people involved in the ministry of the church is an indication of the effectiveness of the church in following God’s will. Therefore, we chose to measure our growth through the size of the membership, the attendance at services, the giving of personal resources, and the number of people accepting Christ as their personal Savior and joining the ministry of the local church.

The first year of addressing the lowest quality of the church saw the most dramatic change in the life and health of the church. Over the course of the year, the church saw its NCD scores rise from an average of 45 to 59. The lowest quality rose 19 points and every other factor also rose, many more than 10 points. The church’s membership increased 9%, from 235 to 255, while the attendance at services grew almost 30%, from 120 to 155. There were new ministries started in the community. People were excited about coming to church. The congregation was alive again.

As mentioned earlier, there were times when I tried, as pastor, to do things my way instead of inviting input from the congregation as to the direction that we should take as a church. There were times that personal issues and family demands sidetracked the implementation process and the church plateaued on its quest for health. Still there remained one focus, one objective: to create a healthy environment where God could grow His church and expand His kingdom.

After leading the congregation through five cycles of the church development process over a course of seven years, this Midwest congregation saw dramatic, lasting change. Not only were they healthy and vibrant—their average score was 69 (score 65 and above indicating health)—the congregation had planted a small congregation on the other side of town. In addition to the new church plant, the membership of the congregation had grown 19%, from 235 to 270. The weekly attendance had increased 64%, from 125 to 205. The members’ personal giving had increased 23%, and dozens of people were coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Natural Church Development (NCD) is a process through which the health of churches can be evaluated and improved. NCD is broken down into the following eight categories: empowering leadership, gift-based ministry, passionate spirituality, effective structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships.

Each of these categories represent biblically based characteristics of a healthy church. Results of a survey (one-time or repeated) identify which of these areas provide opportunity for improvement, helping the church plan to move toward greater health. Figure 1 graphically demonstrates measurement of the NCD Quality Characteristics. Note that 35 points represents one standard deviation below average, 50 points represents average, and 65 points represents one standard deviation above average, based on national norm. (Figure 1 also shows the current NCD profile of the church described in this study.)

In the last 25 years, this tool has generated 70,000 church profiles in 70 countries across various denominations. NCD is based on biblical, natural, and social science research of churches around the world.
Practical Lessons: Implementing the Natural Church Development Process

After leading this and other congregations through a similar process of restoration and health, several principles have surfaced as key to my understanding and implementation of a process of health within a congregation. Natural Church Development is not a magic pill that a congregation can take to cure its decades-long illness. However, with careful, diligent effort, God can bring any congregation back to the fullness of health that He designs for His body.

Prayer is an integral part of health. It is easy to become immersed in the programs of the church. We can take surveys, analyze the results, and determine the steps of action we need to take to make the biggest impact on the health of the congregation. However, if we fail to realize that lives are changed through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will miss the target. All our strategies, plans, and surveys can help focus our attention on the goal, but it is God who changes the hearts and characters of our congregants.

Any lasting restoration to health can only take place in answer to deep, heartfelt prayer. Sermons, programs, lectures, socials and a multitude of other things will have little effect if we fail to acknowledge and plead for God’s Spirit to change the hearts and minds of our congregants. The most hardened member can become a valuable tool in the hand of God. If we forget or minimize the effect of prayer to restore and build the health of our church, we are in essence
relying upon our own ingenuity and prowess rather than realizing we are mere shepherds tending the flock that God has entrusted to us.

Change will not occur until there is a sense of urgency. Church leaders and their members have long tolerated the atmosphere of ill health. Their current state of dysfunction has been going on for so long that the members often believe it is normal and therefore to be expected. Excuses are made to maintain the status quo and as a result nothing improves in the life of the church.

For lasting change to occur, church leaders and members must sense the urgency of the situation and determine that doing nothing is worse than the anticipated pain of changing long-standing practices or traditions. It will not be easy for any congregation in ill health to grapple with the fact that they must undergo some radical changes in order to reverse the troubling trends. Yet it is imperative that such a realization permeate the fabric of the church. Only then will they become willing to make the necessary adjustments in order to provide an environment conducive for God to grow His church.

Restoring health takes time. We live in a world that desires instant solutions to long-term problems. People expect answers to be as speedy as a Google search and as painless as a pin prick. Churches forget that it often takes years for a congregation to begin noticing the decline and even longer to admit there is a problem. Still, once they have reached the point of accepting that there must be change, they want the process to be swift, thorough, and easy.

Restoring health to the church is a lot like restoring health to our physical bodies. The extra pounds we put on over the holidays do not come off as easily as they went on. It takes long hours of exercise and months of dietary changes to see a lasting difference. With the church, it takes years of focusing on health to bring a congregation back from the cliff of extinction to the mountain of hope that God intends them to be.

Great care should be taken by the leaders of the church not to promise too much, or to expect the results too quickly in regards to regaining church health. Improved health will come, but it will not happen overnight. I have often seen churches become discouraged and quit emphasizing the importance of health because they did not achieve their utopian goals as soon as they desired.

Intentional effort will produce results. It doesn’t matter whether the church leadership follow perfectly an implementation plan such as the one set forth by NCD America (www.ncdamerica.org). Having a coach and following a detailed implementation plan will enhance the results and hasten the church along the path to health, because the people will be more intentional about their every move. Still, what matters the most is that they actually do something to improve their health. Procrastinating on improving the health of your congre-
gation because you don’t have a certified coach or do not completely understand all the underlying principles of biotic growth should never be an option for the church leader who is truly concerned about creating a healthy environment.

Doing something is better than doing nothing. Though sometimes pastors and leaders may do the wrong thing or have the incorrect focus toward improving the climate of the church, the greatest mistake would be to do nothing.

In establishing the test groups for my dissertation project, the only criterion was whether the church pastor or leader could verbally delineate what the church had attempted to accomplish in order to improve the health of the congregation. No distinction was made as to whether the objective actually helped the church’s health to improve. No distinction was made as to whether there was a coach or all the implementation guidelines were followed. The only criterion was whether the church was intentional in their effort to improve the health of their church. Could they specify what they tried to accomplish?

As a result of churches’ intentional effort to improve their health, there emerged a significant statistical difference in four of the six qualities used to measure healthy church growth. In addition, depending on which group the churches fell into, there was a group predictor for a significant statistical difference in the result in three of the five categories analyzed (Mills, 2009).

A church can grow “by itself” in numbers, but it takes intentional work on the qualitative church development.

You may be questioning the validity of tools such as NCD as a way to improve the health of your congregation. You may believe that it might work in the upper Midwest but doubt that it can help your specific situation. You may wonder if the benefit will outweigh the cost or if you are throwing money away on another program that will not make a significant difference in the life of your church.

Take heart. God desires that His entire body, including your church, become a healthy representation for Him. He longs for His Church to be an oasis in the desert of despair that permeates society. It is His desire that the Church be a beacon of hope to those like Jim who are searching for meaning and fulfillment. It is God’s plan for the Church to be a vibrant, living, growing, and thriving organism that will impact lives for eternity.

Pastor, church leader, and concerned member, take courage. Healthy churches do grow, and God wants to partner with you in making your church a healthy church.
References


STANLEY E. PATTERSON  
BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN 
LEADERSHIP, PART I  

Introduction  
The biblical foundations of leadership begin to be laid in the first chapter of Genesis and conclude with the declaration of a kingly leadership position (Rev. 1:5, 6) for God’s people in Revelation. These books and those in between reveal the deeds and misdeeds of leaders throughout. We see the massive deterioration of leadership behavior in the rebellion of Lucifer against God, but we also observe the incredible demonstration of leadership in the descent of the Messiah into the greatness of transformational service.

The model demonstrated by Christ is a model of service. The followers of Jesus are called to serve as God’s stewards from a platform that is free of positional tension or self-ascendant attitude. As He emptied Himself of all desire for honor and glory (Phil. 2:7), so His followers are called to a leadership model marked by humility and powered by love. The competencies necessary for the ministries to which each one is called are provided by the Holy Spirit. The competencies are practiced in an interdependent manner with all other believers within the context of relational health that is also made possible by the Spirit of God. The reward of grace is revealed in the promise of Revelation 3:21, wherein we are promised a seat with Jesus on the throne of God—the very seat that was coveted by Lucifer.

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:25–28, NIV)
A Mother’s Love—Misdirected

What mother doesn’t want the best for her children? What wouldn’t a mother do to assure the success and reputation of those she labored in love to bear? Salome1 (Matt. 20:20–21; Mark 10:35–37) respectfully approaches Jesus during His last journey to Jerusalem with a request on behalf of her sons, James and John. Kneeling before Him, she humbly makes a less than humble request, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.”

Jesus’ response is interesting in that He does not respond directly to Salome at all! He turns His attention to her two sons. Given that Mark’s account of this incident does not mention Salome, it is reasonable to assume that these two “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17) conspired to have their mother make the request for them. Jesus ignored the proxy voice and immediately directed the conversation to the two instigators by asking whether they were up to the challenge that He was facing—could they drink of the cup from which He was about to drink (v. 22)? They responded confidently and without hesitation—“Yes!” (v. 23).

It might be helpful to take a moment apart from this story and briefly assess the characteristics that might recommend James and John to positional leadership roles in most organizational contexts. They demonstrated courage and enterprise in crafting their approach to request advancement; their timing was well-considered in that Jesus was being quite clear that something was about to happen that would challenge the current structure of their disciple community; they were leveraging existing relationships to accomplish a desired end; and they were decisive and confident in their ability to accomplish what was necessary to be effective in the positions to which they aspired. Not a bad recommendation, based upon the common profile expected of an emerging leader of promise. The biblical narrative does not, however, support that assumption.

The conversation continues with Jesus granting their request of sharing the cup from which He will drink (v. 23), but He informs them that He does not have the authority to determine who sits beside Him in those honored positions. It is in this statement that Jesus reveals a critical element in His leadership model—He maintains a team position with the Father and the Holy Spirit that has clearly defined roles for each. He is clear on the scope of His personal authority and that of the Father.

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1“Comparison of Matt. 27:55–56 with Mark 15:40 leads to the plausible suggestion that Salome is to be identified with the woman who is also called ‘the mother of the sons of Zebedee,’ i.e., the mother of James and John, two of Jesus’s most prominent disciples. This would also make her the wife of Zebedee, who appears to have been a moderately wealthy man, since he employed ‘hired men’ and owned a boat (Mark 1:20)” (Powell, 2011, p. 1124).
What is also clear is the immediate impact of the introduction of the possibility of positional ranking in the discipleship community—indignation and strife among the other disciples toward these two brothers. This should be read in the broader narrative of the New Testament issues related to Jesus, the disciples, and the leadership/organization model revealed in the Gospels. The incarnation was not wholly revealed in the physical change of Jesus becoming human flesh. It must be understood in the broader perspective of Jesus emptying Himself of all desire for position and honor (Phil. 2:7) in His effort to serve as our spiritual leader. He further flattens the structure of the discipleship community with the subsequent incredible announcement that He would henceforth relinquish the title of “Master” and assume the preferred relational designation of “friend” (John 15:15). He creates a flat leadership community.

The natural social tendency is to gradually sort out the characteristics and behaviors within a community until rank issues are determined and all members find their unique place in the group. Leadership roles, if not assigned, will emerge through this sorting process. The persistent question of “who is the greatest” was never answered by the imposition of a hierarchical structure in the discipleship community. It remained flat and unranked with Jesus at the center. The introduction of positional ranking immediately introduced issues of jealousy and strife, because it violated what had for three and a half years functioned as a community of equals led by One who chose to become like those He led.

The reaction to James’ and John’s proposition prompted Jesus to gather the whole group together for a teaching moment:

> You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

(Matt. 20:25–28)

Jesus leverages the moment of angry reaction to the suggested ascendance of James and John to connect them with the larger issue of dominance and ascendant behavior. Though many respected translations of this verse use the word Gentile as the appropriate translation of ethnon (ἐθνῶν), it may legitimately be translated “peoples.” If ethnon (ἐθνῶν) is understood as peoples, then Jesus’ listeners have a problem—they are people! Translating ethnon (ἐθνῶν) as “Gentiles” lets the Jewish people off the hook, and consequently the disciples themselves since they are Jewish. “Not so with you” (v. 26) requires a search for an alternative that does not exist in the behavior of people—even the Jews. If the Greek source word (ἐθνῶν) is translated “people,” then the solution lies in a dimension outside of sinful humanity.

Jesus abandoned the throne on the heights of the heavenly Mount Zion in a
bid to serve the salvation needs of the human race. He did so by making self-
less generative service His mantra. He came down to serve (Mark 10:45; John
1:14). In this story of Salome, her two sons and a group of offended disciples
are asked to consider the mantle of service even to the point of suffering to
and for others as the purpose of being leaders in the kingdom of God.
Accepting this mantle requires embracing a model of leadership that is rad-
cially different from what is commonly held to be leadership. Some reject it as
being totally upside down from what is deemed appropriate and necessary to
qualify as leadership.
It is from this story that we launch a journey into the biblical passages that
make up the footings of spiritual steel and hardened concrete—a foundation
for building a Christian model of leadership.

**Historical Background**

The influence of Judeo-Christian teachings on social models of order,
governance, management, and leadership is pervasive. Social norms of male
headship, privilege of the firstborn, stewardship, shared and distributed leader-
ship models, and leadership ethics are embedded in the leadership ethos
and behavior of many cultures around the globe. Though most of these ele-
ments have been radically interpreted at times, in certain cultures the root
concepts are embedded in the biblical narrative.

The elemental characteristics of the God/man relationship are defined in
the covenants (Gen. 12:1–3; 17:4–6; Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:7–13). God promises
to be our leader. His leadership promises permanent relationship with Him
(Heb. 8:10), transformed hearts (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10), forgiveness (Jer. 31:34),
ultimate prosperity (Gen. 12:3; 32:12; Ps. 72:7), ultimate security (Ps. 4:8), and
descendants—either physical or faith community (Gen. 22:17; Heb. 11:12).
Gideon acknowledged this leader/follower relationship for what it was—God
is ruler (Judg. 8:23) and His people follow in obedience. But God requires of
the people more than blind obedience. He expects leadership of those He has
called—service as a faithful steward through whom “all peoples on earth will
be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3).

The making of leaders is a primary objective in God’s plan, as opposed to
designating a few leaders and a mass of compliant followers. “Leading” the
people of this planet to the person of Jesus Christ is a call to all who believe.
To do so requires first that His people are passionately committed to following
Him. Christians are by definition followers of Jesus—always. Concurrently,
they are processed through discipleship to become effective leaders as a part
of the mission strategy to declare Him to the world.
Biblical Perspectives

Since we are building a biblical foundation for leadership models, we need to return to “In the beginning.” Genesis provides no clear dedicated statement of what leadership behavior looked like prior to mankind’s fall into sin (Gen. 3). We can, however, catch glimpses that give us significant insights into how God accomplished tasks prior to that time. The first verse of Genesis introduces us to the Creator by using the name Elohim, which is a plural form of the name for God. This is often missed in the English reading of this verse, since the plural element is not translated. The intent of the term is that the earth was created by what we commonly refer to as the Trinity—the divine community.

Christian teachings did not emerge in a vacuum, but in a rich and varied historical context. History prior to the record of the rebellion of Lucifer (Isa. 14:12–15; Rev. 12:7–9) is sketchy, but enough exists to provide critical background to Jesus’ teaching related to leading and leadership behavior. Doukhan (2014) expresses the inclusion of the leadership dimension in the creation narrative of Genesis 1:

The first word of the Hebrew Bible bereshit, generally translated “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1), encapsulates the essence of leadership: it is derived from the word rosh, which literally means “head” and is the technical term normally used to designate one who is leading in a given situation. The event of creation is thus from the start described as an act of leadership. Creation is leadership par excellence. (p. 31)

The creation story grants us a glimpse that reveals nothing that would indicate the presence of dominance-oriented behavior or the aspirations of ambition that would spawn it. “In the beginning God created . . .” (Gen. 1:1) gives no hint of the distinct positions or roles held by the members of the Godhead—no ranking or hierarchy that would betray a prior process of establishing dominance or role. There was a consistent sense of oneness wherein no one member of the Trinity was elevated or abased relative to another. The expression “Let us make man in our image” (Gen. 1:26) reveals the planning aspect of creation as a conversation rather than a command. Doukhan (2014) goes on to discuss the question of who is in conversation:

Generally Jewish tradition held the plural to refer to God addressing His heavenly court, the angels, as supported by Job: “when I [God] laid the foundations of the earth . . . all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:4, 7). An important Jewish tradition reported by the great medieval commentator Rashi explains this text as a lesson of humility on the part of God: “The superior must take counsel and ask authorization from his inferior.” The text of the Midrash Rabbah which is the source of Rashi’s remark is even more explicit and reports the story that when Moses received this phrase by revelation he was disturbed and asked God to
explain. And God answered: “Since man will be the lord of creation, it is appropriate that I ask their agreement to the higher and lower spheres, before I create him. Humans will then learn from Me that the greatest should ask the agreement from the smallest before imposing on him a leader.

From the time of the Church Fathers, Christian theologians in general saw the plural as a reference to Christ or/and the Trinity. Certainly the traditional Christian interpretation would not exclude the traditional Jewish interpretation, insofar as the divine council (the heavenly host) is understood in a broad and larger sense, though with some nuances. In the former interpretation, the sharing operation involves other beings than God Himself. In the latter interpretation, it takes place within the Godhead and is here understood as an inherent quality of God Himself. 

The majority Christian view reveals a discussion between equals where a suggestion regarding the nature and/or appearance of man as being somehow similar or like God is adopted and carried out by the collective Godhead without addressing the issue of dominant voice or position. No one person is given credit for the suggestion nor does the context seem to expect that the recommendation needed to be credited to an individual member of the Godhead.

Though the New Testament attributes creation responsibility to Jesus (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10), the creation account mentions the activity of God in a plural sense. The plural nature of the Godhead is revealed in the creation narrative in that the Spirit is mentioned specifically as an active agent in the creation process (Gen. 1:2). It seems that the credit given to Jesus as Creator is assumed to extend to all three members of the Trinity.

Jesus described the nature of the relationship of the Trinity (John 14) to His disciples as a radical oneness (John 14:7–18) to the degree that it allowed Him to use the first person singular pronoun “I” when clearly referencing the presence and activity of the Spirit (John 14:18). He reminds Thomas and Philip that He and the Father share this oneness to the extent that seeing one allows for the recognition of the other (John 14:7, 9). Further, His followers are included in this radical oneness which defies physical reality—“I am in the Father, you are in me and I am in you” (John 14:20).

This spiritual oneness leaves no room for competitive behavior. Dominance and the dance to attain prominence over others is simply not an issue that is revealed as being present in the cosmos prior to Lucifer’s rebellion. The poetry of Isaiah 14:13–14 reveals the origins of the ascendant-dominant element in leading people. The prophetic biblical narrative that foretells the rise and fall of the King of Babylon (Isa. 14:3–11) also includes a metaphorical comparison with the rise and fall of Lucifer (Isa. 14:12–21). The origin of leadership as self-ascen-
dancy that aims at attaining dominance for self is revealed in this depiction of his coveting the throne of God, or at least a place of parity at the throne with God.

This story and the consequences arising therefrom impact leadership behavior and practice more than any other event in history. It is the story of an angel, Lucifer, created with great gifts of service and leadership, who inexplicably began to feel envious toward the God who created him. Though his position was that of “the guardian cherub” (Ezek. 28:14) and he was ordained by God to live and function in a position next to God Himself, he began to doubt the love and wisdom of God to a degree that he coveted the very throne of God. War followed. This war dramatically and tragically impacted life on our planet. Humans, who had been entrusted with leading planet earth, were influenced to side with Lucifer in this conflict, which altered their very nature and thereby indelibly impacted behavior—particularly leadership behavior.

Isaiah the prophet quotes the divine account of the thoughts of Lucifer as he contemplated his rebellion against God:

I will ascend to the heavens;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,
on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.
I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High. (Isa. 14:13–14)

The verbs and the pronouns within these lines of poetry reveal much about the core elements of his philosophy—“I” is the prominent pronoun and ascendancy is the overriding direction of his movements. Within this vision of his future, Lucifer reveals negative dimensions that trouble many within the context of leadership. His intense self-centeredness contrasts with the generative attitude of the creator, characterized as a giver who blesses and enhances the lives of others. We also see the seeds of competition for primacy that germinate in his heart and bear the fruit of dominance and control throughout the history of the human race—war, murder, conflict and slavery, to name but a few.

The desires of Lucifer’s heart, as recorded in this Isaiah 14 poetry, have been passed on to all who make this earth their home. Their influence on what passes as leadership is ubiquitous and provides the foundation for leader behavior throughout most of human history. Power and force replaced the cooperative conversations that led to task accomplishment in the previous era, where the influence of Lucifer’s rebellion was unknown. Great Man Theory as a model for leadership went unchallenged for most of earth’s history until challenged by Jesus. He condemned the wickedness of

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2Great Man Theory is the idea, popularized by Thomas Carlyle in the 1840s, that history hangs (largely) on the “impact of ‘great men,’ or heroes; highly influential individuals who, due to either their personal charisma, intelligence, wisdom, or political skill utilized their power in a way that had a decisive historical impact” (“Great man theory,” Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/).
Capernaum (Luke 10:15) by referencing the language of Isaiah 14—self-ascendent behavior that mocked the God of creation. He inverted the common wisdom of leadership by characterizing the great men as slaves (Matt. 20:26–27) and recalibrating our sense of what it means to be a leader by inverting first with last (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 9:35).

In the eschatological passage of 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, Paul clearly references competition born of a covetous heart that hopes to occupy the throne of universal leadership as the sin that will mark the time just before Jesus returns at the end of earth’s history. These passages bracket the history of leadership on this earth after the rebellion of Lucifer and the moral fall of mankind.

Hierarchies of power emerged as the structures that formalized Lucifer’s self-ascendant move toward dominance and control. Ambition that motivates coveting of positional dominance finds its origins in the cosmic rebellion initiated by Lucifer and presages the murderous treachery of the likes of Abimelech toward Gideon’s 70 sons (Judg. 9:1–5), the attempt at dominance initiated by Salome for her sons (Matt. 20:24), the arguments among Jesus’ disciples as to who among them was the greatest (Luke 22:24), and countless other cases that stain the history of the human race.

The Hebrew nation alone functioned without a centralized human ruler up until the final years of Samuel’s role as judge and prophet. The absence of a physical ruler was a problem for the Israelites before and during the period of the Judges. Idol worship emerged as a persistent problem as they endeavored to fill the physical vacancy that accompanied their covenantal leader who led from a spiritual but physically intangible dimension. The persistent press for a king was likewise associated with a preference for the physical over the spiritual. Centuries later, this dissatisfaction raised its head again as the early church struggled with the absence of Jesus and the need to depend upon a spiritual leader in the person of the Holy Spirit. This tension of absence eventually led to the consolidation of authority in human clergy, which reached its zenith in the supreme ascendancy of the Bishop of Rome and the papacy.

Jankiewicz (2013) makes this observation:

Faced with the reality of the physical absence of Christ on earth, the post-Apostolic Church felt it needed someone who could take His place, represent Him to believers and the world, and represent believers to God. Viewing themselves as separated for special ministry via the rite of ordination, early Christian ministers assumed the position of headship in the church in place of Christ. This is the actual meaning of the widely used Latin phrase *in persona Christi Capitis* (in place of Christ the Head). Another phrase, *Vicarius Filii Dei* (in place of the Son of God), expresses the same belief. (p. 29)

After years of resisting, God, the invisible spiritual ruler that Gideon
affirmed when he was asked to be king of Israel (Judg. 8:22, 23), allowed the installment of a human king. Positional governance thus replaced the Divine-human relational structures of Israel’s covenant with God. It is critically important to the formation of an understanding of God’s leadership ideal that we recognize that kingly administration was not originally included in that model. God predicted that it would become a part of their future (Deut. 17:14f) because He knows the tendency of the human heart. The covenant relationship of God with His people established Him as ruler and the people as followers and stewards of His authority on earth, but the kingly model was an accommodation to the desires of His people to have a tangibly visible human leader presence.

The demise of the theocracy was initiated by a request of the elders of Israel for a king “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:20). The subsequent act of choosing a king for Israel was accompanied by a warning from God through Samuel: He predicted that the king would rule (1 Kings 8:9, LXX; Rahlfs, 1971) with complete control (βασιλεύσει) (Louw & Nida, 1989) and that his subjects would eventually bemoan their request for a king (1 Sam. 8:11–18). In summary, the ubiquitous nature of dominance as the primary underlying leadership behavior of the fallen human race has its origins in the rebellion of Lucifer and has been present to a greater or lesser degree in all leader-follower relations since.

Leadership in the Disciples’ Community (Matt. 20:20–28)

The social dynamics at play in Matthew’s narrative of Salome’s request reveal a predictable response to the interjection of a process of positional dominance into a relational social context. To this point in time the disciples had related as peers while Jesus served as the central alpha figure apart from formal position and in whom they freely acknowledged authority. The mother of James and John interjected the possibility of a new social order among the disciples based upon positional rank as would be dictated by Jesus. The request that her sons occupy the preeminent positions to the right and left of Him (Matt. 20:20–21) contain three assumptions: (1) that Jesus possessed the authority to speak (εἴπε) and it would happen (Great Man theory), (2) that the organizational structure of the community built around Jesus would be ordered according to the familiar hierarchical structures that marked the world around her (power-based and top down), and (3) that the relational structures that held the community together and by which it functioned were inadequate without hierarchy.

Jesus challenged the first assumption in His response by claiming that granting positional rank to the disciples was not His to give (v. 23), but the Father reserved the right to determine the role of each. Though He did not
defend the relational nature of His community, He gave no hint that it needed the imposition of hierarchical power structures. The third assumption is undone during Jesus’ earthly ministry by the clear absence of formal positional ranking among the disciples.

The injection of rank and position into the disciple community by this mother caused an immediate negative emotional reaction toward James and John by the other disciples (v. 24)—dominance through social competition for position. Mark’s account, “they began to be” (Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, 1921, Mark 10:41), indicates that the tension created had its beginning here but continued on in their relationships. This incident illustrates the role dominance plays as a primary source of conflict in the church and elsewhere—perennial relational stress resulting from competition for positional honor and influence. This reality mirrors the initial cosmic rebellion and conflict between God and Lucifer memorialized in the words of Isaiah—“I will ascend” (Isa. 14:13).

It is in this context that Jesus contrasts the leadership behavior of the rulers of the people or nations (ἄρχοντες τῶν ἔθνων) (v. 25) who anticipate becoming great. Again, this language reinforces the ubiquitous nature of dominance behavior as a negative element of leadership. It is ironic that His followers who are receiving this counsel are embroiled in such behavior at the moment His words reference it. This ubiquity is not confined to the Gentiles only but is the modus operandi of Jewish leaders as well—both political and religious. Jesus expands His counsel to include the great or important ones (μεγάλοι), those who exercise authority (κατεξουσιάζουσιν) that comes from the top down to subjects or authoritarian leadership rather than the generative authority in the more positive demonstration of authority (προίστημι) (Vincent, 1887; 1 Pet. 5:3; 1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17). In contrast, Jesus counsels His followers that those who anticipate becoming great (θέλῃ εἶναι) must first descend into servitude to accomplish that end.

The contrast comes forward implicitly in Jesus’ directive to His disciples that such behavior will not be demonstrated by those who follow Him. This statement of the ideal confronts both the positional maneuvering of James, John and their mother, and the anger that welled up among the other 10 disciples in reaction to James’ and John’s bid for prominent position on either side of Jesus. What it does not do is describe the positive alternative. Here we have authoritarian leader behavior that Jesus identifies as universal among the people and which He condemns as unacceptable among His followers, but contrasted with what? If authoritarian leadership behavior is universal, then we must move to a different dimension to discover the model that contrasts with the autocrat or authoritarianism. The non-competitive, collaborative,
interdependent leadership model that is captured and revealed in the context of creation and in Eden prior to the Fall is the only viable alternative. This ideal was not yet a reality among the followers of Christ but was, by faith, within reach of this fledgling community.

Oneness with Christ now goes beyond the relationship dimension and embraces an identity and behavior consistent with that of the Trinity. Even as the greatness of Jesus the Christ was experienced by means of emptying Himself of desire for honor and glory (κενόω, Phil. 2:7), so also, the believer who would become great is encouraged to find greatness as a servant (διάκονος, Matt. 20:26). Those who desire primacy (James and John) have the greater challenge of passage in that they must become slave (δοῦλος) to the other believers—a mighty challenge when contrasted with the mental models upon which their social understanding of position and leadership were based.

The narrative concludes with Jesus referencing Himself as their example (cf. 1 Pet. 5:3) in that He left His place in glory and descended to serve to the degree that His life would be forfeited in order to serve the transformational process of granting salvation and eternal life to those captured in the grip of sin and death. The contrasting model that faces off against the ascendant-dominant model of leadership may be found only in the descendant-service model demonstrated in the persons and relationships of the Godhead.

To be continued in the next issue.

Reflection Exercise

1. The contrasting models represented by Lucifer’s ascendant-dominant model revealed in Isaiah 12 and Ezekiel 28 and that revealed in the New Testament depiction of Jesus’ incarnation and life of dedication create a paradox for people regarding authority and accountability. Jesus indicated that leaders must be last, and the great will be as slaves. Where does my accountability come from, if I lead as a servant (from above, or below, or both)? I was born looking up for authority and up for accountability (Mom and Dad). To what extent can I trust my natural intuition relative to authority and accountability if I am committed to being a disciple of Jesus as a leader?

2. Assume that you are a part of the body of Christ and belong to a congregation where each one has received different spiritual gifts for ministry. Do you need to ask permission in order to exercise your spiritual gift? In what ways does the pastor of the church serve as a manager of the collective spiritual gifts of the church? How extensive is the pastor’s personal authority? How can he or she ever legitimately proclaim, “Do it because I said so!”?
References


THE DECISION MAKER

By Dennis Bakke
Seattle, WA: Pear Press (2013)
Hardcover, 218 pages

Reviewed by TOM STONE & CHARITY STONE

Dennis Bakke, co-founder of AES Corporation, which employs 27,000 employees (p. 10), presents a decentralized model of leadership in his book The Decision Maker. The author does not teach his leadership model to the reader through lists of strategies and concepts, but rather weaves a story that asserts his beliefs and ideas. This format gives the reader a practical business model of decentralized decision-making concepts conveyed in such a way that the reader can assimilate these concepts and transfer them to various business/leadership settings. Bakke’s main thesis is that bosses, managers, and department heads should delegate decision-making to those people who are closest to the action; this can only happen if the leaders believe in their workers.

Bakke argues that the long-standing view of leadership has been that of a dictator—the boss makes the decisions and tells the underlings what to do and how to do it. The underlings grudgingly do exactly what the boss wants (eliminating creativity but supposedly increasing productivity and quality). In the traditional model, the boss micromanages the employees (which in actuality can lead to hurried, half-hearted, busy work). This model is not always (if ever) ideal. If decisions are made at the top by people who do not completely understand the ins and outs of the working material, work environment, or other aspects that would inform and alter their decision, they are prone to make the wrong decision. However, if decisions are made by people who better understand what they are doing, what they are working with, and how their decisions will affect the overall situation, a better decision is more likely to be made. In theory and reportedly in practice, the idea is that better decisions will be made when employees have a greater stake in making decisions, and employees will have a greater pride in their performance when they get to make the decisions.

Bakke’s concepts are easy to follow and easy to remember because of the narrative format. He keeps the reader interested in what he has to say through the twists and turns of the story line (although rather predictable). His book will never make the New York Times bestseller list for being a novel, but his ideas about leadership are solid and he demonstrates this within his fictional story. However, we want to challenge the author’s approach on three points: (1) he argues his ideas through a fictional story which he can manipulate any way he wants (it would have been more beneficial to include testimonials about actual events), (2) he gives very little background and few exam-
amples to demonstrate the validity of his ideas, and (3) it is difficult to predict how Bakke’s decision-making ideas would transfer to other non-manufacturing businesses. If anything, this book is a starting point for someone who is looking for a new way to lead others.

His concept of decentralized leadership through delegating decision-making seems valid for four reasons: First, the best qualified person to make any given decision is the person with the most information and greatest investment. Second, employees are likely to be just as invested in a company they work for as the bosses, because employees’ livelihood is on the line (when the company flourishes, the employees’ financial situation flourishes as well). Third, when employees are given authority to make decisions that affect the company, they become more invested in the company because they take part in the success or failure of the company. Finally, when bosses show trust towards their employees, employees are more likely to rise to the occasion and succeed.

Bakke calls for his readers to believe that employees are unique, with different strengths and needs, that they are creative thinking individuals, that they are capable of learning, that they are capable of making decisions and enjoy a challenge, that they are capable of improving their work environment and want to make a valuable contribution, and that even though they are fallible they can be trusted.

We recommend this book to people who are interested in learning through a format in which they have to pluck out the important factors themselves. It would not be as beneficial for others with a more analytical mind who desire step-by-step guides or bullet-pointed lists. In either case, because this book is designed for instructing the business world on leadership, church leaders would need to prayerfully consider how to apply it to their situation. Ultimately, God gives free will to His followers, but there may be times when execution of the decision-maker concept could constitute spiritual neglect on the part of church leaders, who are called to a higher standard of behavior and shepherding.

TOM STONE and his wife, CHARITY STONE, are both graduate students in the ministry program at Andrews University while they pastor for the Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Reading and Pottstown, PA.

LEADERSHIP AS PRACTICE: THEORY AND APPLICATION

By Joseph A. Raelin (Ed.)
Paperback, 310 pages

Reviewed by HERMAN DAVIS

Joseph A. Raelin, editor of this book, holds the Asa S. Knowles Chair of Practice-Oriented Education at Northeastern University, where he is also the director of the Center for Work and Learning. An author of numerous books, he is interested in creating communities of practice in which members are deeply committed to democratic and inclusive practices, dedicated to each others’ development and devoid of impressionistic or inauthentic behavior and intentions.

Most recently he has sought to establish a new form of leadership, called “leaderful practice,” in which everyone can participate in leadership, not just sequentially but at the same time and all together—in other words, concurrently and collectively. Leadership as Practice presents an
emerging theory of leadership that challenges traditional thought about how leadership is defined and exercised. It is an attempt to create momentum in the direction of the emerging practice view of leadership.

Practice leadership as described in this book is very much akin to earlier traditions, such as distributed, collective, relational and shared leadership. Thus it is set apart from the traits and behaviors of individual leadership. The book posits the theory that leadership as practice allows for organism versus static, agency versus structure, and leadership development based upon shared collaboration, dialogics and contested interactions.

This book emphasizes the need for greater research that will go beyond the tradition of trait or influence theories to include agency, dialogue, and other social processes. The book brings together a collection of 18 theorists and experts who provide scholarly and empirical background, study of the nature of practice, social interactions and application, all of which address methodologies and development. The book suggests that much of what leadership is does not reside outside of leadership but is in fact embedded within it.

Historically, trait and influence leadership is individualistic and structured. It tends to reflect management style and thus is often static. This book proposes a process of leadership that emerges from the idea that anyone within the community of the project or process can contribute and influence direction and outcomes. This theory proposes a “we-ness” or subjective inclusiveness that stands opposite the individualistic and hierarchal traditions of behavior leadership theory. This proposes through practice leadership a socialized process that can be discursive but also agency driven. Trait and behavior leadership can be considered prescriptive, because they assume certain presets. Practice theory allows for forays into the unknown. The text describes it as ontological, epistemological and philosophical. It takes into account the being, beliefs and interpretations of participants. The idea of agency is the vehicle to this end. Plainly put, people and their interactive processes go a long way toward driving practice leadership.

Therefore, practice leadership, as described in this text, relies heavily upon integrated communication, such as is reflected in shared, distributed, and relational leadership. Such interaction, dialogue, collaboration and shared learning reflect what the text refers to as holarchy, which is an ethically grounded relationship between unity and diversity. In such a context, the whole and the parts are equally valued.

Traditional leadership models or theories focus on pursuit of the most direct route possible to the desired outcomes using whatever methods are necessary to incentivize the team. Practice leadership, however, desires what the text calls “intersubjectivism.” This is a “shared, unique and contested understanding of social realities created between people in and across moments of time and space.”

Traditional leadership has often practiced an imposition style that is externally applied, compared with practice leadership, which relies upon embedded relationships. The intersubjectivism proposed in this book presupposes connected responsiveness based upon ongoing engagement. Practice leadership is processual and transitory. In this context, practice leadership is also democratic, allowing for gender
inclusion and diversity. The examination of interpersonal dynamics gives strength to community and thus leadership practice.

Because leadership as practice is emergent, it does not stand as strong among various leadership theories. Even so, the book presents practice leadership as an option worthy of careful consideration, especially since so much about social context is emergent and the need to expand local involvement in leadership is rising.

The book concludes with a call to intentional leadership as practice development. Traditional models of leadership theory are worthy of specific and deliberate challenge. Leaders, learners and developers must recognize and facilitate the necessary tensions among themselves that will allow cross-boundary collaboration and better practice outcomes.

I strongly recommend Leadership as Practice. If you are interested in reassessing how you have considered and used various leadership theories, this text will provoke your thinking on how to do better what you have already done well.

HERMAN DAVIS is a current Doctor of Ministry student and active church pastor in south Florida.

BOUNDARIES FOR LEADERS

By Henry Cloud
Kindle Version, 272 pages

Reviewed by OSEI DANIELS

“You are ridiculously in charge!” This is one of the key phrases stated by Dr. Henry Cloud in his book Boundaries for Leaders. This book breaks down clearly how leaders are to set up appropriate boundaries with themselves and those they lead. Being “in charge” gives you the authority to accomplish exactly what you determine is important and the direction you want to take the team or organization.

This book, Boundaries for Leaders, has helped me embrace the fact that I’m in charge, and that it is completely OK to lead! Speaking the truth in love, clarifying responsibilities and literally asking people what I need them to do has been a big challenge for me in my life. I have always been more of the “worker bee” and not the leader. God has given me the opportunity to mature and grow into my leadership role as youth pastor.

As a pastor, my role is to develop relationships with young people, to encourage them not only to give their lives to Jesus but to motivate them to want to serve Jesus by using their gifts and talents. From what I’ve learned in this book, they also need to make sure they learn crystal clear boundaries for themselves, what they are and are not responsible for as future leaders in their schools and communities. “No one else can set these boundaries for you” (loc 2661) is a powerful principle that will help them tremendously in their maturing into young adults and successful people, serving others out of love rather than fear.

In my marriage of nine years, I’ve been reminded of the amazing gift my wife is to me as it relates to receiving feedback. Before, in my immaturity, I bristled at my wife’s suggestions, corrections and input. But I’ve learned that I needed someone who knew me, believed in my abilities, and didn’t want to harm me in any way. I’ve learned that I needed to open up. Dr. Cloud states that “good character . . . HUNGERs for feedback” (loc 2776). Being a trustworthy leader mandates
influencing, and having such a wise and insightful wife has already proven to me that I need to be open to feedback so that I can reflect the Christ-like character needed to lead my youth in the right way.

Because I am introverted, I’ve found it very difficult to open up and interact with others. I’ve been a worker-bee type for as long as I can remember, but once I was tasked with being a leader in various church positions, I learned fast that my success depended strongly upon how well I was able to inspire and motivate my team. That meant being around them and interacting with them more than sending e-mails and text messages—which is of course where I was more comfortable. But even more so, I learned that one-time events wouldn’t cut it, either! Dr. Cloud states that “you can’t grow a plant by dipping it into the dirt once a year. It takes an ongoing connection to build a root system” (loc 1156). Consistency in our interactions would make the difference in how well we gelled as a team and accomplished our established goals. I am still growing in this area, but I understand that I need it much more.

This book has solidified for me the almost terrifying but freeing truths of leadership, that I am “Ridiculously in Charge,” and it’s up to me to get the team going where it needs to go. I’m still learning how to shift my mind from the worker-bee to that of the leader, putting first things first in establishing the goal of what we’re trying to accomplish, and developing a road map for each step of how we’ll be getting to our destination. I’ve learned that my personal boundary is that of not going into worker-bee mode, of staying in my lane and giving everyone the confidence that not only do I know where we’re going but have come up with a way to get there, of seeking input from my team on how to get there more effectively, of giving them direct impact on our success and not trying to do it all myself.

As I continue to strive to be a leader with boundaries, another one of Dr. Cloud’s profound truths is that “leaders get what they create, or what they allow” (loc 2163). By God’s grace, with input from the church staff as a whole, I have to literally create ahead of time what I believe God wants us to accomplish as a department.

**BOOK REVIEW**

**Gabriel Gutierrez, Jr.**

Osei Daniels serves as Lay Youth Pastor for the Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, DC.

**Influencer: The Science of Leading Change**

By Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, & Al Switzler


Paperback, 299 pages

Reviewed by Gabriel Gutierrez, Jr.

The foundation and heart of this volume is found in the first few pages: “However, the short explanation for why they’re successful is that they see themselves not simply as owners, managers, or leaders but as full-time influencers” (p. 6). “The lion’s share of the problems that really bother us don’t call for additional technology, theory, philosophy or data (we’re up to our necks in that), instead, the problems call for the ability to change what people do” (p. 7). The data and scientific research of all these findings have been tried, tested, and analyzed and the positive results have been measured and reproduced. Every case using these theories has found flesh and bones that have become much
healthier as a result of their implementation.

The book is divided up into three general sections: focus and measure, find vital behaviors, and engage in all six sources of influence. Basically, the first idea elaborates on the fact that, “Influencers are crystal clear about the result they are trying to achieve and are zealous about measuring it” (p. 13). Then we have the second concept that focuses on “high-leverage behaviors that drive results. More specifically, they focus on the two or three vital actions that produce the greatest amount of change” (p. 13). The third aspect of bringing about change is found as we engage all six sources of influence. Instead of only using one or two tools, “influencers identify all of the varied forces that are shaping the behavior they want to change and then get them working for rather than against them” (p. 14).

True to a foundational tenet of the book, five authors write it, illustrating that the most successful influencers always work in teams. The approach here is very much in line with Relationship Theories. Most of their methods in helping people change are interdependent. For example, out of their six sources of influence, four are directly related to working in groups. Under social ability you find this kind of commitment: “The KIPP administration want the family to know there is nothing they won’t do to help the student succeed” (p. 32). KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) is a program that was founded in 1994 by Levin and Feinberg, which helps underprivileged youth. “A child attending a KIPP school is four times more likely to graduate from college than a child attending the public schools in his or her surrounding neighborhoods” (p. 29).

The balance between the application of these methods, the heavy emphasis on teamwork, and the thorough research and or understanding that goes into helping someone with change is crucial to bringing about the abundant positive results. Many times there is a focus on the relational aspect at the expense of the collection of facts, or vice versa. You will not find that imbalance in this edition. This following portion is almost like hearing a “voice in the wilderness.” “Diagnose before you prescribe. Anything else is malpractice” (p. 295). On the other hand, you will read things like “No source of influence is more powerful and accessible than the persuasive power of the people who make up our social networks. None” (p. 146).

There are two suggestions that I would make that could have strengthened the Influencers’ influence. In the area of leadership there is a vast audience that has some type of belief in God. I wouldn’t have hesitated to add biblical nuggets, especially since many of the principles presented can be found in the Scriptures. For example, Henry and Richard Blackaby, who have written comprehensively on the subject of leadership, reach both spiritual and secular audiences—and they unabashedly use the Scriptures. Here is a sample: “Therefore, the first truth in leadership development is this: God’s assignments are based on character—the greater the character, the larger the assignment (Luke 16:10)” (Spiritual Leadership, p. 82).

The five authors demonstrated that true leadership has primarily to do with change. Being able to change personally and helping others to change are at the heart of true leadership. It was clear that anyone with the desire to influence others toward positive change is able to accomplish this. The key is in following the three main ideas undauntedly and
consistently—focus and measure, find vital behaviors, and engage all six sources of influence—as closely as possible; in this you are almost always guaranteed success in influencing others to change.

One aspect that was repeated several times, which also helps in avoiding discouragement as one tries to implement change, was the importance of focusing on one or two vital behaviors at a time. Let’s look for a moment at Dr. Mimi Silbert, founder of Delancy Street in San Francisco, California. In this semi corporate-residential therapy business, Dr. Silbert has helped more than 16,000 men and women come off the streets and drugs, with over 90% of them going on to become professionals. All this is done without professionals or therapists—they just simply use a great influence strategy. Dr. Silbert’s “goal, remember, is to foster two vital behaviors” (p. 268). It’s crucial to know what those behaviors are that are keeping one from advancing. It’s not enough for a basketball player or a piano player to practice; it is even more important for one to know what the specific areas of growth are. The old adage, then, “perfect practice makes perfect,” becomes a reality. “Influencers are universally firm on this point. They don’t create methods for changing behavior until they’ve carefully identified the exact behaviors they want to change” (p. 35).

I strongly recommend Influencer to everyone—because everyone has influence. We are constantly influencing someone, either for good or ill. The wide variety of examples included in the book are not only from corporate America and American culture. They are principles that apply to everyone and everywhere. When ideas positively impact different parts of the globe—eradicating the Guinea worm disease, helping troubled youth in the USA excel in academics, curbing the AIDS/HIV epidemic in Tanzania, and helping young people get off the streets and drugs—the value is significant.

Gabriel Gutierrez, Jr., is the senior pastor of New Jerusalem and Beit Shalom Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Brooklyn, New York, USA.

Learning Leadership: The Five Fundamentals of Becoming an Exemplary Leader

By James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner
Hardcover, 272 pages

Reviewed by STEFAN DINU

Learning Leadership is a compelling, practical and excellent guidebook for anyone who is in leadership, who is considering leadership, or who is afraid to get involved in leadership, regardless of their age or experience. The authors have summarized, in an engaging and comprehensible way, the fundamentals of what it takes to become an exemplary leader, putting at the reader’s disposal the results of more than 30 years of research in the field.

The central theme of this great book orbits around the message that leadership is everyone’s business, pulverizing the five myths that keep people from boarding the vessel of leadership: talent, position, strengths, self-reliance and it-comes-naturally. “Leadership potential isn’t something that some people have and other people don’t” (p. 1).

Through this book, Kouzes and Posner create a strong bridge between the ideological concept of leadership and leadership practice by
providing at the end of each chapter self-coaching actions to guide readers in reflection and practice. Leadership makes a difference. Everyone has a leadership story to tell; because of this, *Learning Leadership* describes five practices that tell it well—model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable and encourage others (p. 26).

*Learning Leadership* reminds professionals that education does not stop with graduation:

The very first step to become a better leader is to acknowledge that I can improve my leadership skills and remind myself that I can make a difference. All I need is a positive mindset to look for opportunities and a willingness to take initiative. (p. 39)

One of the benefits of the book is described in the preface:

[It provides] great value to leadership developers, internal and external trainers, and coaches who are focused on building the next generation of leaders in their client organization—as well as those who have a responsibility to help people be the best they can be. This includes supervisors and managers at all levels. The next generations of leaders need your wisdom and experience if they are going to excel and take your organization to the next level. (p. xxi)

Learning is a cyclic process with a formula: TRY—FAIL—LEARN—REPEAT. “As weather shapes mountains, problems shape leaders” (p. 107). There is no such a thing as learning without failing. The truth is, the best leaders are the best learners.

This book will not just provide insights regarding leadership; it will also shape/enhance readers’ leadership view and along with it, change their lives. Kouzes and Posner adopt a perfect combination of facts and analysis, resulting in a conversational and optimistic tone. For example, “You have to believe in yourself” (p. 35).

Mastery of the art of leadership comes from the mastery of self. Leadership development is self-development. “Authentic leadership flows from inside out” (p. 55). It does not come from the outside in. Inside out leadership is about discovering who you are, what values compel you to do what you do, and what gives you credibility to lead others. Readers are urged to take initiative in their own development and start connecting to a network of resources to further their progress with support and helpful feedback.

*Learning Leadership* is a jewel, a fabulous book that responds to the needs of those who are committed to becoming better leaders, to staying positive and influential during difficult times, and to leading people in a way that brings out the best in them. I give this book my highest recommendation.

STEVEN DINU serves a preaching and teaching ministry for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pottsville, Pennsylvania.

**LEADERSHIP PAIN: THE CLASSROOM FOR GROWTH**

By Samuel R. Chand
Kindle edition, 250 pages

Reviewed by MELISSA SILVA

Samuel R. Chand communicates a beautiful, and sometimes difficult, spiritual leadership truth: a leader can only grow to the threshold of his or her pain. Since God uses painful situations to help us grow (Rom. 5:3; Jas. 1:3), if we shrink from the pain we—and consequently the organiza-
tions we lead—will stagnate in growth. If we are able to endure the pain, there is no limit to what God can do through us (by His grace).

Since Chand’s theory originates in the Bible, this book caters primarily to spiritual leaders, though its principles can be applied by any Bible-believing leader, whether working in the church or secular circles.

The concept is not new. As already mentioned, it originates in the Word of God. Chand, however, applies its principles in a very practical way to modern leadership. First, he looks at the main causes of pain in leadership—namely, external sources, personal unrelieved stress, and a growing organization. But he does not stop there. He spends a good deal of time looking at how to analyze and recognize the painful experiences that we have and how they help us grow. This is important because, without it, a lot of pain we suffer can be in vain.

Finally, the author encourages leaders by reminding them that there are privileges that come with leadership in spite of the pain. Most spiritual leaders will acknowledge that God uses trial to refine us, but few will stop to really analyze their hardships in a way that allows God to maximize them for personal growth and the growth of their organizations. Even fewer will see this pain as a blessing and privilege.

For example, a church that has been thriving for years with a wonderful team makes plans for expansion. As the church grows and prospers, the leader realizes that the team that had done so well in a small setting cannot handle the task of a larger congregation. New people need to take their place, but it’s very painful to remove people, especially in a volunteer organization. “The price is the figurative blood of leadership . . . the pain of hard conversations and replacing people (many of whom are friends) who no longer fit the larger scope of responsibilities . . .” (loc 93).

If you are not willing to endure the pain caused by replacing people, your organization will never grow. It’s a blessing to need to make changes because of growth. Chand helps us identify in practical ways why certain things hurt and how the Lord can use the pain for our growth. This brings great encouragement to leaders, aiding their ability to cope with more pain once they understand its benefits.

As Chand points out, we don’t have to endure it alone, or even just with the Lord. God often permits that we have “pain partners” (loc 203)—friends who go through pain with us or simply help us deal with the hardships.

This volume is very educational in its approach, having included thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter. The reader must know that the author uses stories extensively throughout the book. Each chapter begins with a story, and additional stories are included in addition to that, possibly to a fault. The principles found in the book could have been presented in a more concise way if less storytelling was done. The stories, however, do illustrate the points made and inspire the reader. The content could have been broadened to include more Christian leaders who work in secular circles, both in the stories chosen and the applications made.

I highly recommend Leadership Pain for Christian leaders who, feeling called by God, want to grow to their full potential. This growth takes place not in spite of pain but through pain. “You will only grow to the threshold of your pain. To grow more, raise your threshold” (loc 21). This book can also greatly encourage any leader who has felt ready to give up because of pain, or who has begun to question
the Lord’s leading. To be called by God to leadership does not mean that your path will be a bed of roses. On the contrary—expect pain. Learn to see the pain as a blessing. “At some point we need to radically reframe our concept of happiness, realistic expectations, and the purposes of God. You’ve got to learn to appreciate the lessons you learn from pain” (loc 169).

MELISSA SILVA is a full time mother of two, housewife and ministry partner with her husband Diego Silva in Miles City, Montana, USA.

LEADERS EAT LAST: WHY SOME TEAMS PULL TOGETHER AND OTHERS DON’T

Simon Sinek
Hardcover, 244 pages

Reviewed by WILLIAM K. KOOMSON

There exists an unambiguous difference between an “authority” figure and a “leader.” For example, throughout most of his life, Mahatma Gandhi did not hold any official position (authority), but he led his people through a nonviolent struggle to achieve independence. In India, he remains revered as the father of the nation. Nelson Mandela spent most of his adult life in prison, yet he achieved freedom for his people while behind granite prison walls. These leaders, among many, understood that uniting the people to bridge diverse interests also meant creating opportunities for others, not for themselves alone or a chosen few. Based on this backdrop of “others,” Simon Sinek’s book, Leaders Eat Last, offers both a stimulating and an inspiring assessment that strong leaders ought to provide a wider circle of safety to all. “Weak leaders are the ones who only extend the benefits of the Circle of Safety to their fellow senior executives and a chosen few others” (p. 23). That is, “only when the Circle of Safety surrounds everyone in the organization, and not just a few people or a department or two, are the benefits fully realized” (p. 23).

Leadership practices have gone through a perpetual cycle of change from kings, rulers, and lords as the anointed leaders (Great Man Theory) to behavioral theories that taught that people could learn the art of leadership through teaching and observation. Management theories assume the transactional style of leadership. There are two competing models, “Theory X” and “Theory Y.” The first model employs strict supervision, with external stimuli through rewards and punishments. The second model emphasizes motivation and job satisfaction. Simon Sinek’s book extends the motivation and job satisfaction of this second model into considering every worker “more like a family” member. Thus, by simply “changing the environment in which people worked, the same people started acting differently toward each other. They felt like they belonged and that enabled them to relax and feel valued” (p. 11).

In the church organization, some leaders see themselves as “the anointed to lead” type, relegating all others to the classification of “the employees.” When pastors and other church workers are classified as “employees,” they truly exhibit employee-type behaviors. Employees come to work, clock in and clock out, and do their tasks according to their job specifications. Trust is marginal.

“Unfortunately, too many of the environments in which we work today do more to frustrate than to foster our
natural inclinations to trust and cooperate” (p. 94). The over-emphasis of individual achievements means that collective performance and team accomplishments are lacking due to “a system of dopamine-driven performance that rewards us for individual achievement at the expense of balancing effects of serotonin and oxytocin that reward us for working together and building bonds of trust and loyalty” (p. 94).

The author discusses multiple points of views, from political leaders, business leaders, and military leaders to society in general, employees, and managers. According to Sinek, many organizations are failing because their work has become a numbers game, rather than shifting their focus toward developing and understanding the needs of people who work in the organization. “If the leaders of organizations give their people something to believe in, if they offer their people a challenge that outsizes their resources but not their intellect, the people will give everything they’ve got to solve the problem” (p. 212).

Good organizational culture inspires the spirit of sacrifice and a healthy work environment. On the other hand, workers feel threatened when they perceive that the organization and the environment they work in is not stable. This situation triggers some employees to “start filing complaints in an attempt to protect their bonuses and, at the same time, their jobs. It’s not a culture that inspires people to give their blood, sweat, and tears to the company, its leaders or each other” (p. 170).

This book is a good read for business executives, politicians, students, and anyone aspiring to become a leader. It summarizes the results of many research trials, case studies, and qualitative studies on leadership attributes that are dominant in corporate settings. Though Sinek’s focus was not on churches and church related organizations, leaders in religious settings may benefit from reading this book. In churches and church organizations, like schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, voluntary organizations, and industries, similar forms of felt needs are demonstrated through the ranks, from top, middle, and lower-level leadership teams. The core concentration of the author was on organizational well-being, and how to motivate, inspire, and promote loyalty and leadership excellence. However, he did not articulate any new theoretical framework of leadership or management principles.

In my opinion, Simon Sinek has done a good job of using real-life organizational situations to describe how leadership should work for people at all levels. I recommend Leaders Eat Last without reservation to any person aspiring to leadership in both corporate and non-corporate settings.

PASTOR WILLIAM KOOMSON served as the Atlantic Union Regional Publishing Director for the Review and Herald Publishing Association from 2008 to 2015. He is currently the Executive Director for Home Health Education Ministry, USA.
**DISSEYATION NOTICES**

**Bang, S. (2016). Developing leaders for effective cross-cultural Christian leadership in East Asian context. D.Min., Biola University.**

This study is about developing leaders for effective cross-cultural leadership practice in the East Asian cultural context toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission. This dissertation asks the question, Will the increased understanding of effective Christian leadership practices in the East Asian context increase the confidence of leaders who intend to lead within that culture? In order to discover the answer, leaders of Los Angeles United Church were invited to participate in a training seminar which focused on strengthening theological understanding of Christian leadership and raising anthropological awareness of culture in a leadership situation. The participants completed a pre-seminar and a post-seminar questionnaire in order to measure their progress. The analysis of the instrument confirmed the hypothesis to be true. Acquiring greater understanding of biblical leadership and cross-cultural dynamics in a leadership situation increased their motivation and confidence level necessary for effective cross-cultural leadership.


This dissertation is a qualitative case study of religious leadership in the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, commonly known as the Foursquare Church, a Pentecostal Christian denomination with a network of over 1,600 churches in the United States. The study collected data on the distinctive characteristics of Foursquare leadership by examining four core documents of the church and the church’s website and through semi-structured one-on-one interviews with eight prominent national leaders of the organization. The researcher then analyzed the data through a systematic coding process to identify key themes related to Foursquare leader characteristics and then categorized those themes. The study also compared the characteristics of Foursquare leadership to the characteristics of leadership as described by Weber’s (1963) theory of religious leadership and with five contemporary leadership theories to discover similarities and differences. The results indicated that there were several similarities and differences between Foursquare leadership and leadership described by Weber’s theory and the five contemporary leadership theories, showing that Foursquare leadership has much in common with leadership described by the five contemporary theories, but that only Weber’s theory accounted for the distinctly religious characteristics of Foursquare leaders. The study concluded that religious leadership as practiced in the Foursquare Church is best described by a combination of the five contemporary theories and Weber’s theory. Implications and limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research regarding religious leadership are discussed.


Leadership styles and the attendant behavior of mission practitioners and church administrators too often demonstrate leadership attitudes and practices that reflect cultural norms.
while violating biblical norms. There is both historical and contemporary evidence of a predictable migration from leadership as service to leadership as control—such as autocracy, coercion, self-ascendancy, and dominance. These problems are found even in leadership within the faith community, thus violating biblical principles. This reality creates an urgent need for the application of biblical principles that transcend cultures and bring leadership practices into alignment with the character and behavior of the Trinity.

This study aims to establish a theology of missional leadership through motifs inherent in the cosmic conflict between God and Satan in the book of Revelation, examining the Apocalypse and comparing it with relevant leadership theories. The book of Revelation is a valid source of understanding pastoral and missional leadership because it contains leadership terminologies and concepts and reveals the Lamb’s leadership behavior and exposes the counterfeit leadership of the Dragon.


This study employs narrative research methodology to explore Trinity Community Presbyterian Church’s understanding of growing in love together as the Body of Christ in worship. The project assessed community formation in worship and used “Love Song for a Savior” by the band Jars of Clay as its organizing principle.

Consisting of two explorations, the project examined the impact dancing (Holy Motion) has on community and facilitated interaction with the cross as a symbol during the seasons of Lent and Easter. The paper evaluates the project and explores its implications for the practice of ministry. The gathered stories present the conclusion that both change and transformation occurred in three distinct ways: worship as play, worship as participation, and worship as community. It was discerned that transformation related to the following symbols: dancing, the communion table, the cross and death. Each of these symbols, often through challenge, invited a new way forward and the emergence of a new future. The stories highlight the need for further study regarding the impact that the role of dancing and interaction with symbols might have on the formation of Christian community in worship.


One of the primary images for ecclesiology is Paul’s “body of Christ” metaphor. The contemporary church, as the body of Christ, sometimes struggles with its sense of identity and mission as well as with its relationship with other social bodies in the world. This study examines the intersection of ecclesiology, disability, embodiment, and liturgy and offers possibilities for developing a general ecclesiology of disability that is grounded in human embodiment and embodied practices. The interconnections between disability theory and theology are explored, followed by an examination of the “body of Christ” metaphor, starting with Paul’s context and continuing with an analysis of how the metaphor functions linguistically. A review of the development and function of body theology in church history is presented, followed by consideration of how the
work of selected theologians is grounded in a theology of the body. A brief history of ecclesiology is followed by an assessment of the embodied ecclesiology of selected theologians. The relationship among embodiment, liturgy, and Christian formation is probed. Finally, principles are proposed that answer the question, “What would it mean for the church to be a disabled body?” The intention of these principles is to help churches disable those beliefs and practices that keep them from being the message of the kingdom of God and from embodying the new social reality of the Gospel that challenges the values of other social bodies in the world.


This qualitative, multiple case study examined the best practice of shared leadership in a ministry context. Four specific churches were considered for this study between September and November 2014. Data was gathered from the four churches through online questionnaires administered to leaders, on-site interviews with leaders and staff, published material from each church, notes documented while observing, sermons on shared leadership, training materials, bylaws, and other pamphlets or material to discover and isolate the number of occurrences of the established best practices, as well as possible unique best practices in each ministry context. The top three highest occurrences of established best practices in a ministry context were spiritual giftedness, relational support, and biblical shared leadership. Unique best practices were discovered and isolated as well. This study will assist leaders and others interested in the best practices of biblical shared leadership.


The study was undertaken to examine two issues: to determine the development track of Ministry in Secular Employment (MSE) between 1960 and 2000 with associated strategy and policy intentions in the Church of England for ordained ministers, and to use the material collected to examine the ecclesiology and socio-cultural context that had underpinned the decisions about MSE. Materials archived between 2005 and 2011, including interviews, memoirs, surveys and personal communications, were examined. Using narrative, contextual and grounded theology approaches, individual narratives of those in MSE were examined to illuminate both the nature of the role fulfilled and the institution in which it was based. Analysis identified that the experimental start to the initiative had not been embedded into the structure and strategy of the church, while being well embedded into the culture and structures of the worlds in which the Ministers in Secular Employment lived and worked. The church adopted a homeostatic approach to this development characterized by dioceses and their bishops acting independently. MSE had not been explored for its potential in the field of mission or cultural integration of church and society. The church continues to understand its mission and purpose in terms of stipendiary parish priests to the exclusion of nearly all other options. While MSE has not developed to the degree its early pioneers had hoped, it is still
practiced in church life and therefore has potential for the future.


In the last decade, the theory of shared leadership has received considerable attention. This theory shifts the primary focal point of leadership discussions from vertical to lateral forms of influence. Moreover, it has been recognized that the shared leadership environment requires a unique understanding of identity. Working in teams that allow for lateral forms of influence requires that members have both a bounded and open understanding of identity.

This research examines the association between Trinitarian thinking and the understanding of personal identity in the context of positions of lateral influence. In particular the doctrines of the image of God, union with Christ, and covenant are examined from a Trinitarian perspective. Because the doctrine of Trinity emphasizes that the one God eternally exists as three persons, Trinitarian thinking requires that both universals and particulars be held together in an equiprimal relationship. Each of these doctrines is examined in order to highlight the significance of this equiprimal relationship in understanding personal identity.

This study proposes a model of leadership that values both the bounded and open aspects of personal identity, encouraging the development of ethical lateral influence through love, dialogue, and a covenantal understanding of authority. These three aspects of ethical lateral influence are then applied to the workgroup setting through the development of a particular organizational culture, which must build observable patterns of teamwork, diversification, and coaching.
THE JOURNAL OF APPLIED CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP MISSION

“To provide a peer-reviewed published dialogue of applied research in Christian servant leadership across denominational, cultural, and disciplinary environments.”

This mission involves several elements that provide a greater sense for what the Journal seeks to accomplish. Explaining key words serves as a window into the “culture” of those operating the Journal of Applied Christian Leadership.

**Peer-reviewed:** This element describes the editorial nature of the Journal. The Journal encourages articles for publication that will be reviewed by peers in the field of leadership for evaluation both in content and style. This process will include ways of improving and/or other resources that might be considered as part of the dialogue. This will also allow for an expansion of the field to occur so that at the time of publication the article can have a wider audience.

**Published:** Our initial goal is that the Journal be a semi-annual publication with an eye of shifting toward a quarterly and then possibly monthly at some future point.

**Dialogue:** Descriptive of the nature of the inquiry, the Journal seeks to encourage a respectful dialogue between scholars, students and practitioners of leadership. Writers will present their findings in ways that while prescriptive also encourage dissent and a shared conversation.

**Applied:** The content of what is presented derives from strategies, principles, philosophies, and dynamic elements of leadership put into practice in a host of varied environments. What is presented is not an untried theory but a “theory-in-use” applicable to a place and time. Therefore, editors ask writers to use non-technical language accessible to practitioners.

**Research:** There are many leadership journals that provide an “anecdotal” approach to understanding leadership. While this approach is vital to growth in understanding, the rigor of research-based studies is vital as well to give a more rounded viewpoint toward leadership. Therefore, the vast majority of approved articles will consist of a research base to understanding. This is a core component of the Journal.

**Christian:** A second core component of the Journal is the focus of Christian principles as they intersect with leadership in action. While there will no doubt be “Christian” principles located in non-Christian environments, the tenor of the Journal will be based upon scriptural elements of leadership.

**Servant:** A third core component of the Journal is the centrality of Servant Leadership. While this nomenclature is widespread today (even outside Christian circles), we recognize that “servant” leadership arises largely out of the life and leadership of Jesus Christ and as expressed powerfully by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 2. It is our dynamic understanding of His life and this passage that serves as a platform for our understanding of this core component.

**Leadership:** Every endeavor in human history has involved a leader of one type or another. The Journal is about leadership. It is about the way people motivate, inspire, and lead others to accomplish as a group what could never be accomplished by themselves, all the while providing a dynamic transformation of all involved.

**Across:** Leadership is exemplified across religious, racial, and national boundaries. Fundamental to a dynamic understanding and application of leadership is a soul belief that no one group has sole propriety of leadership wisdom. In fact, when the discourse concerning leadership transcends all time and space our comprehension expands and our practice of leadership moves with greater effectiveness.

**Denominational:** This first of three environments demonstrates the Journal’s fundamental worldview that learning can take place regardless of creed and denominational divides. In fact, the more one studies various leadership issues throughout the denominational world, the clearer becomes the commonality of our leadership challenges. Since the Journal centers upon Christian leadership, it is imperative that our research expand beyond denominational borders.

**Cultural:** One of the greatest challenges facing any organization in the 21st century is the growing expanse of globalization. Whether that globalization is reflected in micro-globalization through immigration or macro-globalization through increased universal communication and transportation, fundamental to any leader of the 21st century is the ability to lead across national, sub-cultural, and multicultural boundaries.

**Disciplinary:** A final arena where boundaries can be removed for the benefit of leadership comprehension is this vital area of academic disciplines. More often than not, various schools have made leadership the focus of study. Each school has provided incredible insight into the theory, philosophy, and practice of leadership. However, if our leadership comprehension is to expand, it will require the synergy of cross-disciplinary dialogue to occur. Increasingly in the leadership world, contribution is coming from such schools as history, sociology, theology, and even philosophy. To deny the interdisciplinary dynamic of leadership comprehension would substantially minimize and/or prevent leadership learning.

**Environments:** Finally, the Journal recognizes that the culture of leadership is influenced by the various environments where leadership is practiced and the skills honed. From the military arena (in either a peace-time environment or war-time environment) to the entertainment arena, leadership spans the limitations of environmental factors. Leadership is played out in the symphony hall as well as the science lab as well as the sports arena. If leaders are to grow so that followers and organizations and our world can become a better place, it is imperative that our understanding of leadership cross the expanse of time and space.
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The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership seeks submissions from a multiplicity of disciplines by those researching various areas of Christian leadership throughout the world. We are looking for manuscripts engaging readers in areas like Christian ethics and leadership, diversity, organizational culture, change, mentoring, coaching, self-leadership, team building and a host of other leadership issues. We are most interested in those who are conducting research in any of these areas from a distinctly Christian perspective, including those investigating various leadership theories and how they influence or are influenced by Christian principles and practices. Abstracts should be between 400-800 words and emailed in MS Word. All submissions can be emailed to jacl@andrews.edu. Conformity with APA style is preferred. See instructions online: www.andrews.edu/services/jacl

Contact Info

The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104-0111
Tel. 269-471-3487; Fax. 269-471-6506
Email: jacl@andrews.edu
Website: www.andrews.edu/services/jacl

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The Christian Leadership Center is an interdisciplinary organization of Andrews University providing inspiration, on-going leadership development, coaching, consultation, and research for a network of church and community leaders throughout the world. It also sponsors the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*.

**VISION**
The vision is people transformed and empowered by Christian principles who provide outstanding leadership for the local church, and church and educational organizations throughout the world.

**MISSION**
Our mission is to accompany and develop people in their journey as servant leaders in the church and as Christian market-place ambassadors in a changing world.

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Our goals are:

1. Dynamic understanding: A shared and dynamic understanding of a biblical model of servant leadership that informs the global practice of church and community leaders
2. Transformed leaders: Christian leaders transformed by a biblical model of servant leadership
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**CONTACT**
Stan Patterson, Director
Christian Leadership Center
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104
269.471.8332 (leave message)
clc@andrews.edu