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## Review of Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders: New Directions for Organizations Serving God's Mission, by Douglas McConnell

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ing his business as a church growth consultant with the Unstuck Group, it is tasteful and appropriately connected to stories of the various churches and leadership teams he has helped. I didn't get the feeling that Morgan was self-promoting, but rather that he uses his experience and skill to help you develop self-evaluative mechanisms for moving forward or back to health and growth. The book is written from the context of the Congregationalist Church and requires that the reader apply the principles to whatever system of governance their church employs.

I wholeheartedly recommend *The Unstuck Church* to any pastor or church leadership team who wants to understand their current stage in the life cycle of a church and wants to move their church towards growth.

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## **CULTURAL INSIGHTS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS SERVING GOD'S MISSION**

By Douglas McConnell  
*Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic  
(2018)*  
Paperback, 200 pages

Reviewed by DAVID K. PENNO

“What are we learning about culture that will help shape, catalyze, and propel our organizations missionally” (p. xiv)? This is the focus of Douglas McConnell in his book *Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders*. Taking ideas from leadership and organizational studies, psychology,

anthropology, and the Bible, the author states that Christian leaders in the globalized church must learn about and be able to address the “effects of culture on organizations and leadership, particularly on the organizational mission in relation to God’s mission” (p. xiv).

Douglas McConnell is a professor of Leadership and Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, where he has also served in the past as the Dean of the School of Intercultural Studies and the Provost.

The first seven chapters each describe a primary concept that “relate[s] to the role of leaders of organizations serving God’s mission” (p. xviii), while the last chapters provide a useful summary. These seven chapters each provide a case study that effectively illustrates the concept being discussed.

A brief description of each of these primary concepts is given below. Organizations must think missionally, relating their mission to the *Missio Dei* “To think missiologically about organizations is to consider their significant contribution, in all that they are and do, in relation to the mission of God” (p. 22). But our understanding of the mission, and the best ways to pursue that mission, are affected by culture. Leaders must understand the cultures that are impacting the organization. Therefore, “a careful review of the cultural context should be an integral part of every decision” (p. 186).

Leaders must also understand the interdependence of human nature and culture, and that culture is constantly evolving. McConnell describes how culture is learned, how it interacts with human nature, and how organizations can use this knowledge to bring people of various backgrounds into a common organization-

al culture that facilitates its mission.

Leaders must see everyone, members of the organization and others from various cultures, as people all created in God's image. This can happen as we listen to their stories and develop genuine relationships of love with them. This enables us to have sincere empathy for them, which enhances the fulfillment of the mission.

To do this, leaders must learn about other cultures, not superficially, but through imitation, by experiencing the culture through its rituals, language, and customs. Also, observing how respected leaders in the culture behave, how they treat others, and even how they dress for various occasions will help one learn how to lead in the culture in a fundamental way.

As a leader, authority must be exercised appropriately, always keeping in tension the use of silence and decisive action. Authority should never be exercised without reference to accountability and responsibility. And trust must always be carefully stewarded and cultivated in the organization.

Leaders in the church today must recognize four major "worlds" that members of the organization live in: religious, societal, organizational, and subcultural. This requires "maintaining a learner posture" (p. 192) studying these four areas of human life as they relate to those we serve.

Finally, leaders in the church must understand humans as an intersection of systems, "a 'system within systems.'" "We must take this interdependence of systems into account when exegeting humans and their contexts" (p. 156). Leaders must comprehend the spiritual, cultural, technological, physical, personal, and social systems that make up the experience of people.

Taken together, the seven primary concepts that McConnell discusses in

this work can equip Christian leaders to serve in the diverse church of today. His insights from culture that can guide leaders as they move the organization missionally speak against the great man theory of leadership, requiring participative and shared leadership approaches. For example, in the discussion of authority in chapter 5, it is clear that the leader must share authority with others.

In chapter 7 the author discusses the GLOBE project. The nine dimensions of culture that the study identified (p. 165) are valuable for understanding cultural diversity in the church. Additionally, the six global leadership dimensions (p. 168) from the GLOBE findings are useful for assessing one's own leadership style and that of others in the organization.

The case study presented in chapter 6 describes "The Five Faces of Islam" (p. 135), which include missionary, militant, ideological, mystical, and progressive. This discussion is extremely helpful in preventing the stereotyping of all Muslims as radical or terrorists. Much of the book is helpful for seeing people from various cultures in the complexity of the worlds that we live in. This can help prevent a leader from categorizing groups of people while learning to see the individual in the context of the group.

Another powerful idea from McConnell concerns genuine diversity in the leadership team of the organization. "Efforts to promote diversity in organizations are. . . impacted by the degree to which members are capable of and show empathy toward minorities or marginalized individuals" (p. 69). This speaks strongly to the ideas of relational and transformational leadership in the church.

The author also asserts that we must be life-long learners of culture in order to lead effectively in a glob-

alized context. Indeed, mission and cultural intelligence are inseparable.

*Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders* is a valuable resource for any leader who is working in a multicultural or cross-cultural context. It is written in a style that is easy to read, well organized, and very focused. The author's line of thought and reason are clear. I strongly recommend this book for Christian leaders in the globalized church.

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## LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

### A REVIEW OF THE JOHN MAXWELL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

By Nishanth Thomas

**Abstract:** There are numerous leadership and coaching certifications currently available on the market. This review focuses on the John Maxwell Certification Program and describes the advantages and disadvantages of the program, concluding with recommendations for those considering the program.

#### Introduction

We live in a world where leadership, speaking, training, and coaching are becoming critical parts of the life skills required for almost every personal and professional role. This is especially true for ministry-related roles. Consequently, professionals, professors, pastors, ministry leaders, students, and future leaders greatly benefit from receiving leadership, speaking, and coaching training.

Several leadership programs are available today, but for the purposes of this review, only the John Maxwell Certification Program (JMCP) is discussed, as it is one of the few prominent leadership and coaching programs that integrates Christian leadership principles for the development of self, team, and the organization (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018). Individuals who complete the program become part of The John Maxwell Team (JMT).

John C. Maxwell is a professing Christian who served as a pastor during his early ministry years. He is the leader and founder of the JMCP and is an internationally recognized leadership expert, speaker, coach, and author who has sold more than 19 million books and trained over 6 million leaders worldwide (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018). He has also spoken multiple times at the Global Leadership Summit and is a *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Business Week* best-selling author (Potempa, 2015). Maxwell is the leadership coach for several Fortune 500 companies, including Microsoft Corporation and Chick-fil-A (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018). Additionally, certified John Maxwell Team Members have trained leaders at several prominent companies (Businesses or Organizations, 2018). In 2014, Maxwell was voted the world's number one most-influential leadership expert by *Inc.* magazine and was voted the "#1 Leader in Business" by the American Management Association (American Management Association, 2015; Haden, 2014).

#### Program Highlights

The benefits of enrolling in the JMCP include becoming a better leader, increasing influence, and adding value to whichever setting an individ-