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Review of The Starfish and the Spirit: Unleashing the Leadership Potential of Churches and Organizations, by Lance Ford, Rob Wegner, and Alan Hirsch

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a focus on personal growth through confronting one's past, the principles of this book can help a leader make better decisions while maintaining a healthy relationship with failure. For any leader who struggles with looking backward, this book will provide a pathway of necessary education for a brighter future through the teacher of regret.

Reference

Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). SAGE Publishing.

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THE STARFISH AND THE SPIRIT: UNLEASHING THE LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL OF CHURCHES AND ORGANIZATIONS

By Lance Ford, Rob Wegner, & Alan Hirsch

Zondervan (2021)

Hardcover, 299 pages

Reviewed by JOY KAUFFMAN

Movements are the historically documented force that has transformed the world. While we might associate a movement with a

leader—such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement in the United States, Gandhi and India's shedding of colonial rule, and Wilberforce's role in the end of slavery—these leaders would not have been effective instruments of change without inspiring a massive and somewhat chaotic movement. *The Starfish and the Spirit* is a book that reimagines the church as a missional movement and that uses the multiplication of leaders/disciples to transform the world for Jesus.

The authors build on a previous book, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (2006). They present a new model of leadership that goes beyond empowerment, which keeps power as a centralized experience, to a distributed leadership model that mimics a starfish, in which each cell has the capacity to self-replicate, creating the opportunity for limitless influence and impact.

Collectively, the authors, Lance Ford, Rob Wegner, and Alan Hirsch, have decades of church leadership experience. In a variety of contexts, they have been catalysts for exponential church growth. They elaborate on the role of Jesus as the starfish-style leader whose command to “go and make disciples” created a self-replicating force unrivaled throughout history. Sadly, this contrasts to modern church

organizations who are not multiplying, as the early church did, but are constrained by scarcity thinking that depletes their energy and numbers. They point to the flawed leadership theory as the reason for this failure.

While at times the book's narrative feels disjointed, due to the fact that all three authors chime in without harmonizing their style, the authors rally around the basic premise of the book. It can be summarized as the questioning of pervasive power dynamics and comparing four types of alternative church or organizational entities:

- 1.Spider (with a fully centralized leadership model),
- 2.Spiderfish (with leadership slightly more distributed but nevertheless still controlled by one leader),
- 3.Starder (moving toward a more distributed leadership model), and
- 4.Starfish (with a totally decentralized power dynamic).

What I appreciate about the call toward movement in the starfish direction is that it mimics the current literature on followership theory, which I believe takes Robert Greenleaf's servant leadership theory to an entirely new and better level. Let me explain. Greenleaf's basic premise is that "the great leader is seen as servant first." While this is a great improvement over

leadership theories that place the primary focus on the leader, it still assumes that a great leader is seen—therefore still in the spotlight—even if s/he is seen scrubbing a toilet.

In the starfish concept of leadership, which closely approximates the followership theory, the leader can even be eliminated, yet still live on in the DNA of the followers in such a way that their catalytic influence lives on long after they do. This sounds more like Jesus to me! The potential influence of leaders with a starfish mentality is far greater than any alternative.

The authors' theory of change includes examining and mimicking the structure of the apostolic church and its role in movement building that contributes to multiplication or, even better, exponential growth. The centralized concept of "going to church" is challenged by the idea that the ecclesia of the Bible is a called-out people that *are* the church. The ecclesia meets in a variety of venues and is organized in a variety of ways inclusive of (a) disciples, (b) leaders, (c) houses, (d) hubs, and (e) networks. Together these components contribute to order and function while promoting freedom, like in various biological systems within the body of Christ.

From my perspective, the most helpful concept in the book for leaders who want to be part of a

multiplying movement is the light-load leader starfish. Key points are elaborated upon for leaders to distribute the weight or share the yoke of responsibility. The overall goal is to unleash freedom yet facilitate order, resulting in a movement that is led on every front by people who are confident, creative, and innovative.

From my persecutive as a leader of an organization that is now operating in six countries, even though it is only six years old, this book comforted, challenged, and convicted me! It harkens back to ancient scriptural truths that are often neglected and could be a refreshing, albeit at times overwhelming, source of inspiration for your creative and inspired leadership too. God only knows the movement you might serve as a catalyst for and its world-changing potential.

Reference

Brafman, O., & Beckstrom, R. A. (2006). *The starfish and the spider: The unstoppable power of leaderless organizations*. Penguin.

Joy Kauffman, MPH, is the founder and executive director of FARM STEW International and lives in Paonia, Colorado, USA.

RUTHLESS CONSISTENCY: HOW COMMITTED LEADERS EXECUTE STRATEGY, IMPLEMENT CHANGE, AND BUILD ORGANIZATIONS THAT WIN

By Michael Canic

McGraw-Hill (2021)

Hardback, 363 pages

Reviewed by EMMANUEL ASIEDU

Ruthless Consistency is a comprehensive and thought-provoking book with the sole aim of helping leaders identify and execute winning strategies in these turbulent times of geopolitical, environmental, economic turmoil. The author, Michael Canic, identifies the fundamental principles behind an organization's failure. Canic states that the organizations that fail to thrive and win create a "track record of failure; create expectation of failure; create acceptance of failure and create culture of failure" (p. 31). The leaders who fail to innovate and strategize often rationalize and embolden the failure culture and cast improper vision. The author blames leadership for organization's failure because leaders are responsible to "execute strategy, implement change, and build organizations that win" (p. 32).