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Toward a Theory of Biblical Leadership

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ABSTRACT: The Faith at Work Movement started in the 1980s to address the needs of Christians who felt like their life was being segmented between their work and faith (Miller, 2003). As Christians have been searching for meaning at work, they have accepted servant leadership as the ideal form of leadership because it has been taught as the leadership of Jesus (Niewold, 2007). In this paper, an ideological exegesis of Luke 9:57-62 reveals that the true leadership of Jesus does not fit into the construct of servant leadership. As a result of the ideological exegesis, this paper proposes a new theory of leadership needs to be developed for Christian leaders in secular organizations that could serve as a guide for Christian practitioners and advance the scholarly field of Christian leadership.

KEYWORDS: leadership, biblical leadership, faith at work, spiritual leadership, servant leadership

INTRODUCTION

Americans are desperately searching for an increased spiritual dimension and true leadership at work (Fry, 2003). Organizations are currently being affected by the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression, which has created a more stressful business environment that has not traditionally cared for an employee's personal life (Kim, 2009). Additionally, many Americans no longer believe that it is possible to live the American Dream and get rich as devastating events like the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, have caused numerous Americans to reevaluate their lives and work (Bygrave & Macmillan, 2008). Christians who are evaluating their lives are finding that they are increasingly dividing their life into two distinct segments: work and church (Miller, 2003), which is a real problem because Christians are uniquely positioned by God to have a lasting, eternal impact on their co-workers as they live out their faith and exhibit biblical leadership at work (Matthew 5:16; Galatians 6:9; 1 Peter 3:15; Acts 22:15).

In response to the needs of Christians who are working in secular organizations, this paper utilizes scholarship on the Faith at Work Movement, servant leadership, spiritual leadership, and an ideological exegesis of Luke 9:57-62 to form a foundation to explain the connections that exist between leadership and Christian thought. These connections indicate the need for a leadership theory that is truly based on the leadership of Christ.

THE FAITH AT WORK MOVEMENT

The Faith at Work Movement began in the 1980s in response to the growing problem that Americans were facing as their lives became segmented between work and faith (Miller, 2003). Even though Americans have been desperately seeking an increased spiritual dimension that results in true leadership at work (Fry, 2003), the church has done very little to support the movement (Miller, 2003). The traditional, secular viewpoint is that one's faith should remain private at work (Cooling, 2010). This approach has been faltering as the secular approach does not enable organizations to solve many of their existing problems (Hula, Jackson-Elmoore, & Reese, 2007).

One of the most important developments for the Faith at Work Movement occurred in 1997 when President Clinton issued a directive that protected expression of religion in the workplace. This directive has helped the resurgence of the movement in secular organizations by offering it legal protection (Lindsay & Smith, 2010). Americans are spending more time at work than ever before and need to learn how to live a consistent life that ties their religious and work lives together (Bygrave & Macmillan, 2008).

As Americans are spending more time at their place of work, their need to incorporate their faith is growing (Bygrave & Macmillan, 2008), and the Faith at Work Movement is gaining momentum (Javanmard, 2012). Empirical evidence has shown that faith at work can have a positive impact on the employee's work performance as it gives the work meaning and helps develop a sense

of community (Javanmard, 2012) and can result in a higher level of job satisfaction (Noor & Arrif, 2011). Even though the faith at work movement is growing, many employees are still experiencing difficulties in finding opportunities to practice their faith at work, or they feel that talking about faith at work is not welcomed in their workplace (Grant, O'Neil, & Stephens, 2004). One of the reasons for these difficulties is that just as every person has a different sense of spirituality, every organization and every work group differs spiritually; therefore, employees may encounter a spiritual dynamic that is new to their understanding or even outright hostile to their beliefs (Geroy, 2005).

As employees begin work at a new organization or in new work group, it is important to learn about the spiritual aspects of the group and how they might be able to express their faith at work in a way that is productive for their own personal spiritual beliefs but also in a way that is suitable to the group. An employee who is able to live out one's faith in that manner will have a higher faith maturity, which is the extent to which a person is really living out one's religion (Harrowfield & Gardner, 2010). There is a need to develop a new theory of leadership for Christian leaders in secular organizations that help empower the leaders to live out their faith at work while also improving employee motivation, ethical behavior, job satisfaction, and other desirable organizational outcomes.

LEADERSHIP THEORY

Thousands of leadership studies have been conducted, but the varieties of leadership constructs that have been utilized have made it difficult to compare the results of the research (Bass, 2008; Yukl, 2012). Winston and Patterson (2006) reviewed 160 articles and books on leadership in an attempt to categorize all of the distinct leadership dimensions in the leadership literature, and they found 91 different dimensions and one miscellaneous dimension. Rost (1991) suggested that a common definition of leadership simply cannot be reached amongst scholars because it is an extremely complex concept that will continue to change with global and generational differences in society. Yukl (2012) provided a good context from which one may view leadership: "The essence of leadership in organizations is influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. Leaders can improve the performance of a team or organization by influencing the processes that determine performance"

(p. 67). There are important organizational outcomes that need to occur for successful leadership, but the spiritual outcomes have not had the same amount of development in the literature.

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Spiritual leadership has been constructed as a response to the large amount of workers who are looking for deeper meaning in their work (Fairholm, 1997), and its result should be an increase in the level of intrinsic motivation in the lives of the followers (Yukl, 2013). Fry (2003) presented the following definition of spiritual leadership:

Spiritual leadership is not only inclusive of other major extant motivation based theories of leadership, but that it is also more conceptually distinct, parsimonious, and less conceptually confounded. And, by incorporating calling and membership as two key follower needs for spiritual survival, spiritual leadership theory is inclusive of the religious—and ethics and values—based approaches to leadership. (p. 693)

Fry (2003) explained that there are two essential elements in spiritual leadership. First, leaders must help followers develop transcendence in their lives as they develop the belief that their work is meaningful beyond the money that they make. Second, fellowship is important because followers have a need for meaningful relationships, and the workplace is a good place for leaders to help those relationships grow (Fry, 2003).

Benefiel (2005) posited that the scholars who have developed spiritual leadership have been well-trained in the leadership realm but have lacked the necessary training and scholarly insights for the spiritual and religious part of spiritual leadership to make spiritual leadership a viable theory. Fry (2003) argued that an understanding of religion is important for spiritual leadership because religion involves spirituality, but spirituality does not need to involve religion, thereby making it possible for leaders to exhibit spiritual leadership without a religious foundation. Yukl (2013) posited that the creators of spiritual leadership wanted to avoid all debates regarding religion and one's support of a religion in the creation of spiritual leadership, and so they made it all-inclusive. This is very different from Freeman's (2011) idea that spiritual leaders should encourage followers to incorporate their faith and hope in God at work as they help to create a higher calling in their work as they serve God.

There is not a consensus among scholars as to the definition and components of spiritual leadership (Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005). Some writers claim that there is a nexus between leadership and spirituality being tied to a specific religion while others do not see the connection (Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005). Researchers have avoided studying the spiritual aspects of organizational life for many years, and it is now being discovered that leaders are integrating their spirituality and their work at much deeper levels, which is leading to positive changes in both their effectiveness and relationships at work (Benefiel, 2005). One of the problems that scholars face as they define spiritual leadership comes from the fact that the two main terms, spiritual and leadership, each independently have many different definitions (Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005).

Hicks (2002) asserts that “spirituality is often defined in opposition to religion and that this opposition is not an accurate description of a complex interrelationship” (p. 379). However, spirituality should include specific religious belief systems because it cannot and should not be considered to be context free (Lynn, Naughton, & VanderVeen, 2009). The term and construct of spiritual leadership has been so diluted and convoluted by pluralistic researchers and scholars that researchers need to find a new construct and term to capture leadership as it is expressed by Christians. Spiritual leadership is not meeting the needs of Christians in the workplace. Rogland (2006) poignantly expressed the need for Christians to lead in a biblical manner by stating that “whether a person leads in a beneficial or detrimental way depends upon whether or not the character, motive, and agenda of the leader are in accord with biblical truth” (p. 442). In response to the need for a Christian leadership theory, servant leadership has gained the most traction in Christian thought and practice (Niewold, 2007).

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Niewold (2007) stated that Christians have accepted servant leadership as the form of Christian leadership that should be followed because it is the type of leadership that Jesus displayed. Greenleaf (1977) explained that the starting point for servant leaders is that they must desire above everything else to be a servant first. Servant leadership “is a conviction of the heart that constantly manifests whenever there is a legitimate need to serve in the absence of extenuating personal benefits” (Sendjaya & Pekerti,

2010, p. 645). Patterson (2003) explained that servant leadership is an extension of transformational leadership and is characterized by (a) love, (b) humility, (c) altruism, (d) vision, (e) trust, (f) empowerment, and (g) service. Patterson’s model of servant leadership explains that servant leaders always act with the best interests of followers in mind.

One of the key results of servant leadership is the way in which it helps to build trust in organizations (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). “Trust provides the foundation for people to follow their leaders with confidence and enthusiasm” (Russell, 2001, p. 79). Servant leaders’ appreciation of others reflects their foundational personal values that value others (Russell, 2001). Servant leadership causes followers to believe that the leader really cares for their feelings and needs, creating a greater motivation to work for the leader (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). However, the organizational outcomes should always be secondary in the mind of the leader as the focus must continue to be on the followers and their interests in servant leadership (Mayer, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008).

SHORTCOMINGS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leaders empower their employees in a way that runs counter to most of the historical management practices that attempt to manipulate through power and coercion (Russell, 2001). Servant leadership places the interests of the followers before not only the leaders’ needs but also the organization’s needs in an attempt to first satisfy followers’ needs (Mayer et al., 2008; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Because of this, servant leadership has not been accepted in many professional circles because of its insistence on putting the follower first (Norbutus, 2012).

Agee (2001) explained that a servant leader “is one who seeks to embody the spirit, attitude, and disposition of the greatest leader of all, Jesus Christ” (p. 8) and that the servant leader is “marked by the impact of the Holy Spirit in his or her life” (p. 8) that is characterized by Galatians 5:22-23. Definitions of servant leadership by Agee and other Christian scholars who monopolize the leadership of Jesus as servant leadership have caused servant leadership to be devalued (Niewold, 2007). Niewold (2007) purposed, “This uncritical acceptance of servant leadership has a distorting effect on our understanding of who Jesus Christ is, what his work is, and what his continuing presence in the world is to look like” (p. 120).

Senge (1990) explained that employees need to share mental models of the organization. A servant leader who focuses on the needs of the follower will have a difficult time responding to an employee who does not come to share the vision of the organization. It is imperative that an organization's employees have the same vision as the leadership because that provides an environment in which the leaders can trust the employees and truly allow them to do their jobs without having to constantly watch over them (Peters, 1996). Peters (1996), in writing about the leadership necessary for learning organizations, stated,

Being a learning organization certainly is not about being nice to all your staff. It is about treasuring the ones who are on side and doing their best, but also weeding out and showing the door to those who are, deliberately or otherwise, sabotaging the effort. If you want to be nice to everyone, however they behave, go and get a job in a church or something. (p. 7)

This is a very strong statement about the type of leadership necessary for a learning organization and reflects one of the real concerns regarding servant leadership theory. It is important to examine servant leadership and all other leadership theories through the lens of the Bible. An ideological exegesis of Luke 9:57-62 was conducted because it is critical to understand how Jesus and researchers have interpreted the call that God has placed on each Christian and how it should impact leadership theories that are viewed as Christian.

IDEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS OF LUKE 9:57-62

An ideological exegesis, one particular facet of the larger socio-rhetorical method of examining the Bible, was performed to provide deeper insights into the Luke 9:57-62 text, especially its relevance in differentiating biblical leadership from previous leadership theories that are not meeting the needs of Christians in the workplace. Robbins (1996) explained that an ideological exegesis may be used to "explore the manner in which the discourse of a text presents comprehensive patterns of cognitive and moral beliefs about humans, society, and the universe that are intended to function in the social order" (p. 193). The insights gained from this ideological exegesis are used to examine Jesus' leadership and its application to servant leadership and leadership theory in general.

DeSilva (2004) elucidated that readers of the Gospel of Luke find "the heart of God for the lost and for the poor most clearly revealed, and the church must be force-

fully challenged to mirror that heart" (p. 298). Jesus' encounters with the three men recorded in Luke 9:57-62 took place when Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, where He would soon die on the cross (Bratcher, 1981). This was a very important time in the life of Christ, and He used this opportunity to explain His demands to His followers. Essentially, followers of Jesus must be ready to put discipleship above all else and be ready to persevere until the end. This commitment is absolute and is much deeper than the leader-follower relationship of an Elisha to Elijah or a pupil to a rabbinic teacher (Marshall, 1978). Jesus wanted His followers to be more than students as He offered His disciples a far more dangerous and compelling course of life (Bock, 1996).

This specific passage is intentionally placed before Luke 10, which gives the account of Jesus' sending 70 of His disciples out into the world (Bock, 1996). Those who accepted the radical demands of Christ have their lives explained in Hebrews 11:13, which states that many followers of God "did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth." Luke 9:57-62 clearly elucidates the cost of following Jesus so that His followers can truly count the cost before deciding to follow Him.

Three types of men in this passage are attracted to Jesus and desire to be loyal to Him. Bratcher (1982) called these three men the "would be" disciples because they expressed a desire to follow Him, but they do not follow through on their intentions. They wanted to serve Him but clearly did not realize the demands that the kingdom of God requires of them (Morris, 1979). These men explained to Jesus some of their difficulties in following Him and their desire to make some compromises, but Jesus clearly and resolutely refuted these compromises (Sohweizer, 1984). It must be noted that Jesus did not make great demands on others while He Himself enjoyed palace life. His demands were accompanied by His own life of sacrifice for His disciples and the kingdom of God (Stein, 1992). Therefore, the focus of the passage should be placed on the responses of Jesus, not on the men (Bock, 1996). Jesus is the central figure in this account as well as in the Gospel of Luke as a whole (Lindsey, 1968). Many important lessons can be gained in the following three encounters.

First Encounter

The first man was fascinated by Jesus and expressed his admiration of Him by declaring his desire to serve

Him (Morgan, 1931) as he exclaimed to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go” (Luk 9:57b). He wanted to become a disciple of Christ and was at least partially convinced of the lordship of Christ (Van Doren, 1981). This man wanted to serve Jesus, and nothing was inherently wrong with this statement as it expressed his real desires (Morris, 1979). However, Van Doren (1981) explained that it is not the motives but rather the actions that define Christians. Essentially, this man had not gone through the process of counting the cost of following Christ.

This man’s statement was open-ended, so Jesus replied in an open-ended manner (Bock, 1996): “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luk 9:58b). Jesus explained that even wild animals have a home to call their own and rest in safety from their enemies, but that He and His followers do not have a fixed place to lay their heads. Followers of Jesus actually have it worse than animals because following Jesus requires living like a stranger in a world that can offer so many comforts (Bock, 1996). His followers need to be willing to live like one who is homeless in this world (Bratcher, 1982). People like the idea of living a pious life, if they can keep their riches and honors in the process. This is why Jesus used the head in a symbolic manner as it signifies that following Christ includes a renunciation of everything that a person would like to claim as their own (Van Doren, 1981).

This is basically an incidental glimpse of the incarnation and its cost (Morris, 1979). Jesus explained that if the man was going to follow Him, it was necessary for the man to give up the comforts and desires of the world and be devoted to Him alone. The “Son of man had no anchorage in the world that for a single moment prevented His progress towards the hostile, doomed city, that it might be rebuilt, and become the city of God” (Morgan, 1931, p. 132). Jesus demanded that His followers detach themselves from everything that stands in their way of both Him and His ultimate goal of human redemption on earth (Morgan, 1931). In this way, He demanded that His followers make His kingdom and mission their first priority.

Second Encounter

Jesus began the dialogue with the second man. The book of Matthew states that the second man was already a disciple, so the call of Jesus to follow Him in verse 59 was one of joining Him in His mission (Morgan, 1931). The second man responded, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father” (Luk 9:59b). The request to go and bury his father probably did not mean that his father was dead

or about to die. If that were the case, he probably would not have even been with Jesus (Morris, 1979) because people who prepared a body for funeral were considered unclean for 1 week (Nums 19:11; Luk 7:12; Bock, 1996). Therefore, this statement was rather an expression of his desire to take care of and provide for his father, who is most likely an older man, until he dies (Bratcher, 1982).

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (Luk 9:61b). Obviously, this is not a literal statement because the dead cannot bury other dead people. Bratcher (1982) explained that the first reference to the dead refers to people who are not spiritually alive in Christ, and that the second dead refers to dead people in that person’s family. To a pious Jew, this is a very demanding statement because one of the most important duties of a Jew is to provide a respectful funeral for one’s father (Bratcher, 1982). However, Jesus’ command to follow Him clearly needs to supersede all other family obligations (Bratcher, 1982). Therefore, even good works, when used as an excuse to not follow Christ, may be considered dead works (Van Doren, 1981). It is far too easy for humans to become busy with the ceremonial, day-to-day activities of life.

The Bible does not state that Christians are to neglect their families or their duties on earth; rather, they are to obey God and put His calling on their lives before all else (Van Doren, 1981). In fact, in the scope of eternity, the proclamation of the Gospel is supremely more important than anything else (Stein, 1992). Bock (1996) explained, “One cannot follow after two things at once; following Jesus means making Him the compass of one’s life” (p. 983). The man who has seen Christ, His mission, and His work must not delay in responding to the call from God (Morris, 1979). This magnificent call is one that is so great and important because of its lofty mission, and it must be totally embraced—lest it be lost (Plummer, 1913). Jesus was calling the second man to join Him immediately; therefore, His demand was that the man abandon his nearest and highest earthly tie. Morgan (1931) explained,

Christ’s call is superior to the highest and the most beautiful of the earth’s obligations. That is the Cross. Christ had flashed upon him the light of a tremendous enterprise, the enterprise of preaching the Kingdom of God; and that demanded the abandonment of the earthly tie, when it conflicted with the call of his Lord. (p. 133)

Jesus’ command is indeed rigorous and stands in opposition to Jewish teaching, the culture of the first

century, and the lifestyle of many Christians in the 21st century (Marshall, 1978). This command embodies the real urgency of taking the Gospel to all nations and the cost that is involved in that mission.

Third Encounter

The first two encounters were included in Matthew's account (Matt 8:19-20), but the third man is unique to the Gospel of Luke (Plummer, 1913). The third man stated, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family" (Luk 9:61). This man was very attracted to Christ as well, but he wanted to take care of a few things before following Him. This seems to be a reasonable request, but from Christ's perspective it shows hesitation and a lack of the necessary decisiveness that His followers are required to possess (Bratcher, 1982). This is similar to Elisha's request in 1 Kings 19:20 to return home and say goodbye to his family before he followed Elijah, but Jesus' reply was different from Elijah's reply to Elisha (Marshall, 1978). The kingdom of God had come, and it takes priority over everything else (Stein, 1972).

Jesus responded, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luk 9:62b). At the time, a man guided the controls of a plow as the animal plowed, causing the metal point to work the soil into a straight furrow (Bratcher, 1982). If the man did not keep a close eye on the ground to avoid stones, he might break the plow. If he were to look back or around, the result of the work would not be good as it needed to be done in straight lines to be the most effective (Bratcher, 1982). Jesus used this imagery to explain to His followers the need to be completely committed to Him throughout everything, not allowing them to be hindered by anything on earth for even a moment (Morgan, 1931). Sowing is always preceded by a time of plowing, and plowing required strong hearts that could persevere through difficult work (Van Doren, 1981).

Luke captured Jesus' words here to show that family relationships are included among what is necessary to leave behind when following Him. Jesus stated that His followers can only be useful in the kingdom of God if they are single-minded in their devotion to Him and His task of redeeming the world (Bratcher, 1982). Jesus was likely concerned that if the man went back to bid farewell to his friends and family that he would be persuaded to stay rather than go with Christ because looking back often confuses one's plans and can thwart one's purpose (Van Doren, 1981).

This was the sin of Lot's wife in Genesis 19. God commanded Lot and his family to flee Sodom and not look back. Unfortunately, Lot's wife looked back, and she was turned into a pillar of salt for her sin. It is possible to begin to serve Christ and then to look back and miss the old life later on (Bock, 1996). However, this type of living is detrimental to one's spiritual health. If somebody is going to follow Christ, it is best to count the cost before beginning and not look back.

Luke 9:57-62 is concerned first and foremost with priorities, and Luke used this discourse as a forceful example of the radical change in priorities that is necessary when following Christ. This teaching is consistent with other portions in the Gospel of Luke. Luke 10:27 states, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind."

Van Doren (1981) stated, "Earthly pleasures, earthly love, and early sorrow are three great forces drawing men back from Christ" (p. 344). Human desire yearns for the comfort and security of home. However, at the time of the account of Luke 9, Jesus was on the road to Jerusalem to die, and His only security was in God (Sohweizer, 1984). Jesus explained that the only way in which somebody can follow Him is to be completely devoted to Him and to find his or her security in Him alone (Sohweizer, 1984).

Jesus was already living out all of the demands that He made of His followers, presenting them a perfect example of how they should live their lives (Morgan, 1931). "He was not looking back. He never looked back. He set His face to go to until He came to hostility, to doom to death; and through all to the travail that makes the Kingdom sure" (Morgan, 1931, p. 134). Those who are a part of the kingdom of God will not receive political power on earth but will rather share in the sufferings and rejection of Jesus (Bock, 1996). Every potential disciple of Jesus needs to understand this important truth, which is stated very clearly again in Luke 14:25-30:

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'"

The new era of the kingdom of God that Jesus ushered in brought with it a restructured set of priorities and demands on His followers, which can be summarized as total and complete commitment to His kingdom, which will result in suffering, pain, and rejection (Bock, 1996).

This passage is critical for Christian businesspeople to understand, believe, and display on a daily basis. This radical call to follow Christ that is evident in the Scripture is not only for those who are in full-time ministry but for all believers, and it should have a great impact on leadership theories. Niewold (2007) postulated that Christians have accepted servant leadership as the ideal form of leadership without examining it in detail.

Niewold (2007) explained that servant leadership has a secular influence that has hampered the Christianized version of servant leadership, reflecting a distorted Christology that has been used to distract the church from its mission. Niewold stated, “We live in a period whose primary characteristic of uncompromising secularism tends to marginalize those who espouse public faith. It is not so much that the life of faith is openly mocked and run out of the market place” (p. 130).

Christian leadership has been watered down and been made overly simplistic for a variety of reasons, but one stream of influence that has adversely impacted the Christian view of leadership is Western culture and media. Skill and Robinson (1994) examined the way in which Christian leaders were depicted on television and found that Christian leaders were often positively labeled as people who were sincere and humble. However, Skill and Robinson also found that Christian leaders portrayed through media outlets “tend not to have personal lives filled with family and friends, and they lack richness in their occupational lives as well” (p. 75) as they are “little more than a convenient mechanism for moving a story around other more interesting, attractive, and nonreligious characters” (p. 75). The stereotype of Christian leaders has become ones who are weak and intellectually inferior because of the prejudices that they have against many secular lifestyles that do not honor God (Skill & Robinson, 1994).

Bekker (1996) stated, “The serious study of Scripture (hermeneutics) remains one of the most important avenues for exploring leadership” (p. 4) for the Christian scholar. One of the key themes that arises out of the ideological exegesis of Luke 9:57-62 is that the leadership of Jesus does not have the best interests in mind for His followers, at least from a human perspective. The kingdom of God and its priorities are what followers of Christ must

be totally committed to, even to the point of being willing to sacrifice and die for it. Therefore, it is not possible to state that servant leadership is the leadership of Jesus because the needs of the followers were not, and are not, Jesus’ priority. However, when one examines the totality of Scripture, it is clear that servanthood is a major component of the Christian life (Matt 23:11; Mrk 10:43-45; 1 Pet 4:10; Phil 2:1-4), but biblical leadership needs to incorporate more than just servant leadership.

Martyrological Leadership

Martyrological leadership provides some balance for servant leadership and supports the important truth that leaders should not put the needs of the followers over the needs of an organization. Niewold (2007) suggested that Jesus’ leadership should be characterized as martyrological or witness-based because His leadership was based upon the inclusion of believers who need to be participants in the incarnational life of Christ through witnessing. Niewold believed that present-day evangelicalism and its servant leadership model have watered down the person and message of Christ. Western Christians should look to Christian brothers and sisters in persecuted countries to learn what it takes to survive and thrive in difficult contexts and then to experience the renewal that is so desperately needed (Niewold, 2007). However, the martyrological model of leadership stands in direct opposition to secular, Western society. It is at this point where the church should reflect upon the leadership and lives of both Jesus and Abraham and realize that the spiritual well-being and renewal of the world has always been counter-cultural, and that at the very center of Jesus’ leadership He called His followers to suffer and persevere as they proclaimed His Gospel to all nations.

Matteson and Irving (2006) stated that self-sacrificial leadership “occurs when a leader forfeits one or more professional or personal advantages for the sake of followers, the organization, or a mission” (p. 37). Jesus urged His followers to sacrifice everything, even their own lives, as they serve Him in establishing His kingdom. The cost of following Jesus is great, and Western Christians could learn from those in persecuted countries about how following Christ can change the world. This change happens through the lives of Christians who are being transformed by the Holy Spirit (Foster & Griffin, 2000). There is a need to build a new theory of biblical leadership drawn primarily from servant and martyrological leadership.

TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

In response to the shortcomings of current leadership theories and the Faith at Work Movement, a theory of biblical leadership needs to be developed for Christian leaders who work in secular organizations. The new model of leadership should be apositional and multi-dimensional as it incorporates the leader's spiritual life, relational and professional abilities, and desire to complete important goals. A proposed initial model could be divided into four main components that are the most important for a Christian leader in a secular organization: (a) relationship with God, (b) relationship with man, (c) a focus on completing the mission, and (d) organizational relationship skills. The following pages provide additional details that could be utilized to support the proposed components as Christian scholars work toward a new theory of leadership.

Relationship with God

It is important for Christian leaders to place their trust and dependence in God (Strawbridge, 2009; 1 Tim 3:1-10; Titus 1:5-9). While the current Western culture celebrates independence, the Christian's dependence on God strengthens the leader to help them through stressful and challenging situations (Fry et al., 2011; Parameshwar, 2005). The following items are suggested to form the relationship-with-God construct:

1. Decisions. Christians need to ask God for wisdom regarding the decisions that they are making at work (Nichols, 2010). Kardong (2011) argued that it is not professional or possible for Christians to pray at work, but the theory of biblical leadership emphasizes the importance to pray about everything (1 Thess 5:17-18).
2. Authority. God is the source of all power (Kretzschmar, 2002; Strawbridge, 2009), and the authority of a Christian leader does not come from the person or position, but from God (Dean, 2009; Matt 16:17-19). Therefore, a Christian leader in a secular organization should realize that they are relying on God to work through them in the organization, which should take the pressure off of the leader. Additionally, this authority that a leader finds in God is not exhibited through a haughty leader who is serving his or her own interests but through a humble leader who sacrifices for others and for the organization (Hutchison, 2009; Mrk 10:41-45).

3. Purpose. Christian leaders seek the goals of Jesus Christ in all areas of their lives (Lawrence, 1987) as the primary purpose of work is not to gain status but to focus on completing the work to bring glory to God (Clarke, 1992; Col 3:23). The motivation of Christians to work hard and make a difference increases as they understand their purpose from God's perspective (Fry, et al., 2011).
4. Spiritual Dimension of Life. There is "a higher power or being [that] affects the way in which one operates in the world" (Fry, 2003, p. 705). The spiritual dimension in the world is real, yet it has received scant attention by researchers. Njoroge (2005) explained that one of the greatest needs for Christians is to know how they can use their biblical knowledge and training in their work and daily activities.

Relationship with Man

It is important for Christian leaders to form good relationships with their co-workers, vendors, and customers. Christian leaders in secular organizations need to examine their motivation for leadership to ensure that they are not leading because they are hungry for authority, but that their work should focus on serving the organization and those they come into contact with at work (1 Peter 5:2-3). Hebrews 10:24 states, "And let us consider how we may spur one another toward love and good deeds." The following six items are proposed to form the relationship-with-man construct:

1. Integrity. Integrity is a foundational part of biblical leadership because it "serves as a magnet to draw others who listen and respond to the leader" (Lawrence, 1987, p. 320). Proverbs 10:9 states, "Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out." Leaders who exhibit integrity draw followers through relationships built on trust, while leaders who lack integrity will eventually become exposed.
2. Trust. Fry (2005) suggested that leaders need to cultivate a trust with followers, which increases the follower's intrinsic motivation and commitment. Trust is built through authentic leader-follower relationships that do not abuse power (Kretzschmar, 2002).
3. Diligence. Christian leaders should be like a workman or farmer who is continually being formed and working hard (Hiebert, 1976; 2 Tim 2). A leader who lacks diligence will not be able to continue as a leader (Prov 20:4).

4. Love/Shepherding. There should be evidence in the lives of Christian leaders of God's love for them and their love for others (Strawbridge, 2009; 1 John 3:10, 4:16). Sanders (1994) explained that the master principle of leadership is not persuading other people to work for the leader but actually serving and loving them. Kretzschmar (2002) referred to Jesus' example of leadership in Mark 10:35-45 and explained that Jesus "taught with authority but was never authoritarian, he was compassionate but never ineffectual, he was just but never judgmental" (p. 42).
 5. Ethics and Morality. Kretzschmar (2002) posited that Christian leaders need to have moral formation to enable them to lead others with competence and honesty. Biblical leadership has some commonalities with ethical leadership, specifically with the moral dimensions of honesty and trustworthiness (Brown & Mitchell, 2010).
 6. Humility. Leaders must be humble, shepherding and leading willingly without being selfish (Crowther, 2011; Acts 20:17-26). Cheline (2003) explained that "humility has from the early Christian centuries been defined in one word: truth. It is the truth about oneself before God" (p. 110). Selfish ambition is looked down upon in biblical leadership and will actually drain the biblical power from the leader (Lawrence, 1987).
3. Evangelism. The scholars who created the spiritual leadership theory decided to make it religion neutral because of the divisiveness of issues like evangelism (Benefiel, 2005). Fry, Vitucci, and Cedillo (2005) explained that:

Viewing workplace spirituality through the lens of religious traditions and practice can be divisive in that, to the extent that religion views itself as the only path to God and salvation, it excludes those who do not share in the denominational tradition and often conflicts with the social, legal, and ethical foundations of business and public administration. (p. 859)

Christians need to follow Scripture and put God's mission of sharing the Gospel by always being ready to witness in every situation, but it is important for Christians to always share the Gospel with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

Organizational Relationship Skills

Relational skills within the workplace are important in regards to leadership because it forms the foundation for how leaders should share life and live with one another (Grant, 2011). The following two items are countercultural and are proposed to form the organizational-relationship-skills construct:

1. Submissiveness. Leaders must submit to the authority figures that they answer to within an organization (Heb 13:17).
2. Peacemaking. Christian leaders have a responsibility to build community and holiness in the groups that they work with in organizations as God desires peace on earth (James 3:17).

Completing the Mission

A biblical leader needs to have a vision to grow the company while also making an eternal difference through their witness for Jesus Christ. The following three items are proposed to form the completing-the-mission construct:

1. Vision. Fry (2003) posited that the purpose of leadership "is to create vision and value congruence across the strategic, empowered team, and individual levels and, ultimately, to foster higher levels of organizational commitment and productivity" (p. 693). Biblical leadership must inspire followers to utilize their hope and faith in God so that they have a higher calling in their work to serve God (Freeman, 2011).
2. Stewardship. People in groups and organizations gain an advantage when they are managed well and find synergy (Barker, Wahlers, & Watson, 2001). God expects Christian leaders to be good stewards of both people and resources that are under their direction (Luk 12:42-46).

SUMMARY

In the same way that humans have manipulated and thwarted the good things that God has created, humans have abused leadership by abusing its power and seeking personal gain. The importance of the power of the Kingdom of God is evident in Luke 10 as the disciples were amazed with the power that they possessed because of God. Jesus' response in Luke 10:20 indicated that Christian leaders are to utilize the power available to them while realizing that the power, strength, abilities, and gifts of leaders all come from God (Strawbridge, 2009). David and Solomon are clearly told in the Old Testament that their riches are not from their own efforts but from God's power and blessing (Klein, 1982).

There is a need for Christian leaders to have a solid framework from which to operate in secular organizations. It is critical to highlight the point that God's power will not make a Christian's leadership perfect, but "it will guide them in a model of growing Christian maturity as well as enable them to have a spiritual impact that cannot be had in any other way or by any other kind of leader" (Lawrence, 1987, p. 321). Additionally, this authority that a leader finds in God is not exhibited through a haughty leader who is serving their own interests but through a humble leader who sacrifices for others and for the organization (Hutchison, 2009; Mark 10:41-45).

Organizations are facing a crisis as there is a real lack of confidence in leadership (Parameshwar, 2005). Followers in organizations desire a more holistic type of leadership that integrates the human and caring needs in form of spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003). The only way to restore this confidence is to have leaders in the workplace who find their strength, authority, and accountability in God (Isaiah 40:31). There is a need for scholars to develop a new theory of biblical leadership for leaders who are committed to living out their faith at work.

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