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INSTRUCTOR:

Dr. Jimmy White

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STUDENT DATA:

Name: Daniel De los Reyes

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The Importance of Leadership

Leaders set examples, must embody integrity, and inevitably instill trust in their team (Leman & Pentak, 2004, p. 65). The calling of leadership demands that leaders must not only act appropriately only when people watch. The leader's day-to-day activities behind closed doors reveal his integrity. The world needs better leaders that enlarge others and influence those around them for the common good of society.

Experts call physiological responses to leadership "mirroring." Mirroring happens when two or more individuals share an emotional connection. Often these connections happen in conversation, causing the emotional responses of two people to align. Thus, followers will most likely replicate their leader's positive or negative attitude (Goleman et al., 2013, p.7). Therefore, how leaders influence and interact with others is of utmost importance. Leaders set the standard of a group in conversation, behavior, and mindset.

Leaders have the power to shift environments with their words, actions, and temperament. The difference between a thermometer and a thermostat is that the first reads the temperature, but the latter sets it, and emotionally intelligent leaders do both. Great leaders intuitively teach their followers to trust them by keeping their word and doing what they say they would. On the contrary, poor leaders let people down and do not live up to their word. Christ exemplifies a model of servant leadership. Patterson affirms that "(Christ) followers are called to a leadership model marked by humility and powered by love" (2016, p. 78). Jesus calls Christian leaders to become stewards. It is not their people or resources, for everything belongs to God. Therefore, Christian leaders must mirror Jesus' model to serve others; they must empty themselves just as He emptied Himself of the desire to keep honor and glory (Patterson, 2016, p. 78).

Are Secular Methods Allowed in Christian Leadership?

Christian leaders can draw from two kinds of wisdom: special revelation and general revelation. The Bible and the values derived from it are considered special revelation. Principles from other sources, such as "secular" writers, and more, are categorized as general revelation. In the Christian worldview, special revelation holds more weight than general revelation. However, Christian leaders can develop a deeper view of Christian leadership by processing insights from special and general revelation (Langer, 2014, p.67). Thus Christian leaders need to experience growth using both biblical and secular principles.

Christian leadership is not at odds with a corporate vision and strategy. Spiritual leaders should not fear using secular elements to achieve godly goals. On the one hand, leaders in vocational ministry often hear from their people that "it must be nice to work at the church because you must only pray and read your Bible at work all the time." In reality, most churches nowadays use strategies that resemble much of the methods of corporate America. However, one of the dangers for Christian leaders when using secular methods to achieve biblical mandates is upholding such methods above special revelation, not utilizing prayer enough, and only sprinkling a short prayer to bookend their work (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 229).

Nevertheless, although learning from general revelation adds richness to the leader's knowledge and enhances their capacity, for Christian leaders, the ultimate authority in matters of reality, morality, faith, and practice is the Bible (Anacker & Shoup, 2014, p. 52). However, although our mission and vision to go to all the world and make disciples remains, methods change with time. An appropriate method in one era may not be the most effective today. The key to using secular methods to accomplish spiritual missions is understanding that "biblical principles and values never change…" (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 346). It all ties back to

the leader's motivation for using these methods. Is their motivation to give glory to the Father or seek their glory? As previously stated, Jesus emptied Himself of the desire to keep honor and glory (Patterson, 2016, p. 78). Then Christian leaders must examine their hearts when they use such methods, especially in the church setting.

Biblical Philosophy of Leadership

Although the Bible is not just a leadership book, its pages have many leadership principles from which to build a foundation (Burns et al., 2014, p. 8). So, for example, Christian leaders can find leadership inspiration from the life of Abraham; they can draw principles of how to delegate from the story of Moses and Jethro. Likewise, King David's life is the basis for many books on what to do and what not to do in leadership. Furthermore, what of the many books that quote Jesus's sayings and examples to extract leadership insights. Therefore, the Bible is an excellent source of inspiration for leadership; of course, it is much more than just that.

This research paper uses Blackaby and Blackaby's spiritual leadership definition as a framework to expand on Biblical leadership philosophy. Spiritual leaders "seek God's will, whether it is for their church, family or corporation, and then they mobilize their people to pursue God's plan" (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 41). My leadership theology and philosophy have grown to encompass five different aspects: (1) a personal encounter with God, (2) seeking feedback from others, (3) working to embody integrity, (4) valuing people and caring about their well-being, and (5) mobilizing people to pursue God's plan.

A Personal Encounter with God (Ephesians 2:10)

A personal encounter involves surrendering one's dark side to God and letting him redeem it. Surrendering one's dark side starts with owning one's shortcomings and mistakes. When leaders own their faults, they express to God that they are willing to grow more in God's

image. Owning mistakes also give hope to others, especially their followers, who will mirror these kinds of behaviors in their own lives. While God calls leaders to guide others, he first calls the Christian leader to a relationship with Him. Out of the abundance of their relationship with God, leaders can establish healthier connections with the people surrounding them. Therefore, before the title of leader, Christians need to look for the title of a disciple of Christ (Dolan, 2014, p. 17). Furthermore, scriptures emphasize the call of God above any characteristics of the leader (Langer, 2014, p. 78).

So transformation in the leader's life must precede any exterior work to help initiate transformation in others (Acker & Shoup, 2014, p. 60). Blackaby and Blackaby state, "The key to Jesus' leadership was his relationship with his Father" (2011, p. 43); the leader's relationship with God is the key to spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership must emanate from the desire to please God in everything the leader accomplishes. Leaders must demonstrate this discipline in guiding God's people and organizations. While a spiritual leader may use secular plans or methods, he must keep his motives pure and aligned with God's plan.

Ephesians 2:10 speaks to the proximity to God Christians must have to let them form and mold them according to his image. God will form the leader to his image as long as the leader remains in proximity to God. Christian leaders in the twenty-first century must remain close to God and keep him as their source.

Failing to keep God at the center results in lives riddled with unhealthy ambition, ladder climbing, and position-seeking; instead of finding fulfillment in God. Christian leaders need to balance their "doing for God" with their "being with God" (Scazzero, 2015, p. 25). When leaders center their inner life on God, they have more bandwidth to become outwardly focused and seek to love and fulfill the needs of others.

Seeking Feedback from Others (Proverbs 12:15)

Spiritual leaders are humble. However, bad leaders think they cannot fail. Proverbs 12:15 states, "The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice" (NIV, 2011). To grow, leaders need community because God often sharpens people through others. Feedback is a gift because it allows leaders to see their blind spots. Therefore, it is essential to receive feedback because leaders cannot correct what they do not know. Furthermore, leaders looking to grow do not just tolerate feedback but actively seek it (Dolan, 2014, p. 29); it is one of the key factors to remaining teachable. When people do not get feedback regularly, they have no opportunities to change their mindset; they become stagnant and lose their vision.

Nevertheless, more important than receiving feedback is acting on the received feedback. The exercise of receiving feedback is not effective if no change comes about because of it. Therefore, the leader must remain in community to develop a network of trusted advisors. However, there is such a thing as bad feedback. Leaders need to be aware of harsh rebukes (Scazzero, 2015, p. 77) and the use of derogatory words from people outside their trusted network. It is wrong when someone gives other people the blame and does not own their part of the problem. However, Christian leaders who foster feedback refuse to be offended and stay approachable. People comfortable with feedback understand that they can learn from the criticism they receive; they know that even ill-fitted criticisms will benefit them.

Working to Embody Integrity (Proverbs 20:7)

Integrity does not mean a person is perfect. Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines integrity as "adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty" (Maxwell & Dornan, 2006, p. 21). When the leader walks in honesty, he might make mistakes, but integrity leads leaders to correct their wrongs. Being honest about

one's shortcomings is more valuable than a leader pretending to be someone they are not. Leaders must live out the principles they preach. Modeling integrity communicates that their values are not for sale.

Modeling integrity gives the leader buy-in from his followers and creates influence. A leader must not only do what is proper when people are watching; he must do the right thing even when no one sees him. Integrity is in the details because "Character is made in the small moments of our lives" (Brooks, as quoted in Maxwell & Dornan, 2006, p. 21). Crises will test a leader's integrity, but his day-to-day mindset reveals his character.

Lastly, modeling integrity brings blessings in the long run. The results of a parent who walks in integrity are shown in Proverbs 20:7, "The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children who follow them" (NLT, 2004). This statement is a testament to those who will come after the leader, they will likely replicate what they saw in him, and if it is a worthy example, that will pave the road for them.

Valuing People and Caring About Their Well-Being (John 3:16)

Leaders need to learn to appreciate people first for their inherent value and secondly for what they bring to the table, not the other way around. Furthermore, Christian leaders know people are the mission and not interruptions. John Maxwell uses the phrase, "Leaders walk slowly through the crowd." He alludes to the fact that leaders must stop and talk to individuals even amid a multitude because people are not interruptions; they are the mission.

The fact that people have inherent value is challenging to grasp for some. Often leaders looking to "arrive" treat people as objects instead of humans. However, the point of spiritual leadership is not a position but instead serving people. Furthermore, Christian leaders must learn to see people as God sees them. Leaders need to love other people because it is in God's nature:

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NLT, 2004). How would the world perceive Christians if they embodied loving others the way God has loved them?

Christian leadership is stewardship. God has entrusted leaders with resources, and they are accountable to God for everything they manage, including people. However, even though leaders work with people and accomplish things through them, people should never leave feeling used, for this is the opposite of authentic spiritual leadership (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 123). The purpose of leading people is not to use them as another tool but to leave them better than the leader found them. Good leaders use their influence to lift others, whereas bad leaders only leverage others for their benefit.

Mobilizing People to Pursue God's Plan (Philippians 2:2)

The Christian leader's job is to help people see the desired destiny and guide their steps toward it. Christian leadership should focus on rallying people together to accomplish what God has asked them to achieve. The Apostle Paul states, "Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and <u>working together with one mind and purpose</u>" (Philippians 2:2, NLT, 2004). Leaders can lead people to pursue God's plan by using motivation. However, using their influence to motivate people and manipulating people are two different things (Maxwell & Dornan, 2006, p. 29). Motivation serves God's purpose; manipulation serves man's schemes. The role of motivation as a leadership tool is to get people "working together with one mind and purpose" (Philippians 2:2, NLT, 2004). Therefore, the desired goal ought to be a worthy one.

Leaders can motivate their followers by expressing gratitude for the importance of their time and energy sacrifices (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 138), building trust through acts of

service (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 197), and by maintaining an environment where other interpersonal relationships can flourish (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 296). On the other hand, a motivator inhibitor happens when leaders set different rules for their followers than for themselves. Therefore, leaders need to exemplify the values they expect their followers to keep.

Lastly, in motivation, leaders need to look beyond their present necessity to motivate their followers. Shortages do not inspire people: Christian organizations, specifically churches, experience many shortages. There are people shortages, financial shortages, and time restraints. The issue with shortages is that they communicate a sense of desperation instead of motivation. Motivation looks ahead to a preferred future; however, shortages are a breeding ground for complaints and explanations of why something is unachievable. These shortages make people feel like they are in a sinking ship. Shortage creates the appearance of desperation, and it is hard to inspire making a plea out of desperation.

Conclusion

Christian leaders must focus on creating a transformation in their followers rather than just achieving success for success' sake. Christian leaders must guide their followers on a path to the desired future; such a journey is transformational (Burns, 2014, p.119). Transformation needs to first start with the leader. Leaders must initially decide to embody integrity, letting others observe the transformation that God has brought them through. Next, such transformation must be evident to the follower that it causes a desire to experience that change. Godly leaders are not exempt from making mistakes. However, Christian leaders must recognize their mistakes and repent to walk in integrity. To walk in integrity, leaders must watch their personal lives, content intake, and how it affects them. If they sit idle, leaders will not grow, and evil will win. Seeking God's will for every area of life will determine if spiritual leadership is developing in a person.

When Christian leaders devote their efforts to God, he will take their lives and mold them in his image; this will be evident in how they interact with others, their view of God, and themselves.

I plan to apply this research in my current leadership situation by working on my soft skills to continually improve my leadership first, treating others with respect, and trying to inspire them to change because of the change happening in me. Furthermore, lastly, I will apply this philosophy to cast a vision about our work, keep a positive view of the future of our ministry and lead and recruit others out of motivation instead of frustration or desperation.

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