

ABSTRACT

Biblical Models of Church Leadership and Their Application for the 21st Century Church

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Leadership is one of our society's most popular and most discussed topics. Church leadership is often pushed to the wayside and is not often explored from an academic standpoint. This thesis will analyze and study biblical models of leadership to propose a model which biblically addresses the leadership issues facing the twenty-first century church today. Moses, Joshua, Jesus, and Paul illustrate universally applicable characteristics and traits which contributed to their success in leadership. This thesis will survey one hundred church leaders in fifty churches in the Baptist General Convention of Texas to explore leadership issues present in the modern church. Using the leadership model obtained through the analysis of biblical figures, this thesis will propose an application to the twenty-first century church which will aid church leaders in the issues they face today.

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BIBLICAL MODELS OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND THEIR APPLICATION FOR THE
21st CENTURY CHURCH

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“Leadership is not about who you are; it’s about what you do.”¹ In *The Leadership Challenge*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner point out that leadership exists everywhere in society. More and more people are encouraged to cultivate leadership skills and capabilities as leadership is progressively viewed as a learned skill more than an inherent ability. For the twenty-first century church, leadership development and responsibilities have emerged as some of the most difficult challenges the church faces internally.² Although countless resources exist in aiding leaders in business organizations, little has addressed those serving in church leadership specifically.³

Kouzes and Posner assert that although the context continuously changes, “the content of leadership has not changed much at all.”⁴ Because of this, church leaders must turn to biblical models of leadership to find relevant principles, traits, and truths.

¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* ed. 5 (San Francisco: 2012), 15.

² Bird, Warren. “Teacher First: Leadership Network’s 2009 Large-Church Senior Pastor Survey,” *Leadership Network* (July 2009): A-17. In surveying 232 megachurch pastors concerning “the top work-related issue you lie awake in bed thinking about,” staff issues, communicating vision, and leadership vision collectively composed 31% of the responses, proving leadership-related issues to be the most lingering challenge that leaders face.

³ For the purposes of this thesis, I am defining a church leader as a church staff member who is a leader in a specific church ministry.

⁴ Kouzes and Posner, 15.

Moses, Joshua, Jesus, and Paul provide the ultimate examples of successful leadership models, though they differed in leadership styles, personalities, and circumstances. Though the modern day church looks different than the community of Israelites or the body of disciples of the Old and New Testament, the overarching leadership traits present in these biblical figures provide a model for church leaders today.

This thesis, using biblical exegesis and analysis, will explore Moses, Joshua, Jesus, and Paul as successful leaders. The Bible not only discusses their personal narrative journeys a great deal, but it also illustrates each man as a great leader in unique situations with different leadership styles. They encountered different struggles, but each adhered to the same underlying model of leadership that church leaders ought to emulate today. This thesis will propose a blueprint of biblical leadership based on these unique models of the Bible.

Though the issues that church leaders face today are different than those of the biblical models, modern leaders will find a guide to their leadership issues in these men. From *Leadership Today* issues from the past five years and from Leadership Network's available online surveys, I composed a list of leadership issues that were present often throughout both publication. Then church leaders were surveyed concerning which of these issues were the most pressing and relevant. The survey was sent to one hundred church leaders from a random sample of fifty churches in the top five percent of the largest churches in the Baptist General Convention of Texas.⁵ This survey will provide a general idea of the most difficult challenges the modern church faces. Using this

⁵ This sample was derived from a population of 271 BGCT affiliated churches of five hundred or more in worship attendance per week.

information, this thesis will suggest how the biblical model of leadership addresses these issues practically in a modern context.

Literature Review

The Leadership Challenge is one of the foremost books on leadership practices—it culminates twenty-five years of research of leaders across the globe.⁶ Through their extensive studies, Kouzes and Posner have proposed five practices of exemplary leaders, “they model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, [and] encourage the heart.”⁷ These practices which Kouzes and Posner have identified are practices church leaders ought to follow. However, this thesis is proposing that church leaders must look at these practices more specifically. As Christians and leaders in the Church, the basis for these practices is specifically demonstrated in the Bible. Thus, while these practices are very helpful for church leaders, these leaders must go deeper.

Much of the existing literature concerning biblical leadership fails to use biblical exegesis to explore analytically how the leaders of the Bible were successful.⁸ While some articles do implement this technique, they view figures in isolation rather than comparing them to compose a more universal model. Furthermore, such articles tend

⁶ Research includes surveying two million people globally using the Leadership Practices Inventory as well as ten demographic questions and ten open response questions concerning leadership (Kouzes and Posner, 25).

⁷ Ibid, 15.

⁸ David Hymes underscores this point as well in his article “Heroic Leadership in the Wilderness: Part 1”, saying “My issues is that a lack of in-depth biblical and theological ground tilling has occurred in this field [of leadership in the church and parachurch]” (296).

to fall just short of the practical application, and leave it up to the reader to apply these principles to their own leadership challenges, if they can. Those books that tend to aim towards the practical tend to lack biblical evidence and analysis as well as support that their statements concerning leadership traits are in fact relevant today.

Leadership Network has issued many surveys, which attempt to identify strengths, challenges, and emotional strains of pastors. However, these surveys do not go past surveying senior and executive pastors.⁹ While the information is useful as a starting point in the discussion of general church leadership, it is the tip of the iceberg. Church staffs are composed of more leaders than senior and executive pastors, and staff members other than senior and executive pastors lead much of the church's ministry. Because of this, leaders such as youth pastors, children's pastors, women's ministers, and others must be surveyed and addressed as well.¹⁰

Seventy-seven percent of large-church senior pastors identify leadership as one of their top three spiritual gifts, yet little academic literature addresses the challenges these leaders will face in ministry.¹¹ Many books that exist concerning Pauline or Mosaic models of leadership, for example, merely point out different motifs and models of imagery that characterizes the leaders, rather than practically identifying leadership

⁹ Leadership Network has not to my knowledge surveyed a more general population of church leaders, based on my knowledge of the articles available on their website.

¹⁰ I will use Leadership Network's surveys as a foundation for understanding issues and concerns relevant among church leaders in collaboration with my own survey of church leaders to compose a more cohesive view of leadership struggles.

¹¹ Bird, A-13.

principles based on the biblical text. Often, these works can become more confusing and discouraging in the leadership conversation. In *Moses on Leadership* by Gene Mims¹² and “Pauline Images of a Christian Leader” by D. Edmond Hiebert¹³, for example, Moses and Paul are each shown to be leaders who model teaching well. However, only thirty-six percent of large-church senior pastors considered teaching one of the top three pastoral tasks they felt best at.¹⁴ If leadership is very tied up with teaching, how does one develop one’s teaching skills? Can one lead well without teaching well? These types of works which stop one step short of practical application leave room for further exploration in the topic of leadership and in the composition of a biblical model of leadership.

The Good Book on Leadership: Case Studies from the Bible is a unique compilation of leadership traits and qualities. In it, biblical figures are explored in succession as administrative leaders, charismatic leaders, people managers, training leaders, and visionary leaders. The authors state, “The greatest need of the church is leadership...biblical leadership...effective leadership...spiritual leadership. The right type of leadership can solve the church’s problems.”¹⁵ The authors attempt not to propose a universal model of leadership, but rather to analyze “case studies” of biblical figures as different types of leaders which a reader may emulate if one subscribes to

¹² Mims, Gene, *Moses on Leadership*, (Leesburg: 2011).

¹³ Hiebert, D. Edmond. “Pauline Images of a Christian Leader.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 133.531 (1976).

¹⁴ Ibid., A-12.

¹⁵ Boreck, John and Danny Lovett and Elmer Towns, *The Good Book on Leadership: Case Studies from the Bible* (Nashville: 2005), 1.

that style of leadership. While incredibly useful as a tool to view leadership traits in the Bible as a whole rather than in isolation, one can not help but wonder what the universal traits possessed by these leaders might be, and how these “case studies” can be compiled to form a universal model rather than viewing each leader only as a representation of one leadership style. *The Good Book on Leadership: Case Studies from the Bible* provides the specificity for church leaders that *The Leadership Challenge* lacks, yet the latter provides the universality that the former fails to provide.

This thesis will fill both the gaps of specificity and universality that some works lack, as well as will use biblical exegesis as evidence for a specific model applicable to the church and its challenges today not only for senior pastors and executive pastors, but for church leaders of any kind.

CHAPTER TWO

Scriptural Models of Leadership: Moses

“Leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less.”¹ Moses is one of Scripture’s most influential and impactful figures. His legacy extends far beyond the stories of the Torah, inundating even New Testament works such as Hebrews. Moses’ life provides an example of a successful leader through his practices of strict obedience to God, active pursuit of the Father, adherence to his calling, delegation and relationships, and innate empathy. Although he was not a man who thought himself to be a leader, God used his sphere of influence to mold him into the role of a transformational leader. Moses is a testament that leadership is not an innate quality but a learned practice of harnessing one’s influence in a godly manner.

Moses’ first appearance in the Bible “after [he] had grown up” involves an altercation between an Egyptian and a Hebrew.² In Exodus 2:11, Moses seeks out his people and watches them in their oppression.³ Moses’ “protector” instinct overcomes

¹ Maxwell, John C. *The Twenty-One Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*. (Nashville: 1998),17.

² Exodus 2:11. All English biblical citations are from the New International Version 1984 unless otherwise noted. All Hebrew biblical citations are from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

³ Douglas K. Stuart points out *Exodus*, Vol. 2 of *The New American Commentary* that the phrase, אֶחָיו, “his brothers”, “serves to orient the reader to the fact that Moses saw himself at this point as an Israelite, not an Egyptian” (121). This is significant because it shows that despite his Egyptian upbringing (Acts 7:22), God enkindled the passions of Moses’ heart towards His purposes. Verse 13 suggests that this may have been a daily activity, not an isolated event.

him, and he defends his Hebrew brother from the Egyptian oppressor, killing the Egyptian and hiding him in the sand. This first introduction to Moses as a man is key in our understanding of him and how we will understand him as a leader. As Ari Zivotofsky points out, “Moses is constantly portrayed as not only caring and concerned for others, but also as willing and ready to act upon those feelings. He was the true Empath.”⁴ This account serves to show from the readers’ first introduction that Moses is a man of deep emotion and sympathy who has an instinct to protect those in need. While this trait is undoubtedly admirable, this episode also illustrates Moses using his strength outside of God’s desires, and thus his strength becomes one of his worst downfalls.⁵

In verse 14, Moses again acts altruistically, attempting to help mediate. His heart is in the right place—he is using his God-given qualities to serve a people with whom he has a strong identification. However, because he misused his gift earlier, he is met with disdain and flees to Midian to avoid the punishment of Pharaoh. Moses has the best intentions in both scenarios, but his one act outside God’s prescriptions affects his next encounter.⁶ As a leader, Moses is learning that he cannot act outside God’s will, even if

⁴ Zivotofsky, Ari Z. “The Leadership Qualities of Moses.” *Judaism* 43.4 (1994): 259.

⁵ This homicide can be said to be outside God’s will even though the commandment not to murder has not been explicitly issued yet based on the account of Cain and Able in Genesis 4 and based on the fact that Moses relied on his own strength and not on the strength of the Lord, as Stuart points out in his commentary (121).

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa reads this encounter as a caution to not be presumptuous in giving advice, as he points out that here Moses is “still young and had not yet matured to so lofty a degree of virtue” as when he addressed tens of thousands. I disagree—I believe he is not as influential here as later because God had not called him to this act as He did later. (46)

he is relying on a strong character trait. No doubt Moses had the authority, ability, and empathy required to settle these disputes—however, as a leader, God needed to teach him before his ministry that these qualities only have meaning in Him. Outside of Him, our abilities mean nothing.

Moses spends a period of forty years in Midian and adopts a new lifestyle as a shepherd for his father-in-law Jethro. He encounters the angel of the Lord on Mt. Horeb, or Mt. Sinai, as he is carrying out his everyday tasks. The circumstances of this account are of particular importance. Moses does not attempt to seek out God to provide him a great and lofty path for his life, nor does Moses wait for God to appear in Midian. Moses stays faithful to the work he is currently doing—the humble and mundane work that is “below” his former status as an Egyptian—tending the flock of another man.⁷ Moses is not in a prominent role, but he embraces the place that God has kept him in.⁸ God’s call to greatness often arrives when we are faithful in the “ordinariness” of life and seek to please his character, not position ourselves to a place we desire before His timing.

God’s call to Moses is certainly unique, but the truths behind this encounter are universally applicable. Yahweh makes himself known to Moses in a way that catches Moses’ attention and stirs his heart, pursuing Moses out of love.⁹ Moses accepts God’s call, and sanctifies himself per Yahweh’s instructions by removing both sandals.

⁷ See Stuarts’ discourse on the significance of Moses as Jethro’s shepherd on page 163.

⁸ Caine, Christine. “Get Back, Part 2: Embrace Your Place.” Sermon, Elevation Church. Charlotte, NC. January 15, 2011.

⁹ Stuart points out that the repetition of the call “Moses! Moses!” in verse 4 is an expression of “endearment, that is affection and friendship.” (169).

Yahweh's instruction for Moses to go to Pharaoh to free the Israelites prompts several objections on Moses' part. Although he properly expresses humility in verse 11, he begins to protest inappropriately in verse 13. Moses believes he does not have the proper authority, credibility, talents, or desire to carry out the task to which he has now been assigned.¹⁰ Despite these arguably legitimate concerns, "the Lord deflect[s] Moses' focus from his own inadequacies to [His own] absolute sufficiencies."¹¹

Moses is correct in recognizing that his call is not based on his qualifications—it is based on God's purpose. Moses legitimately points out that God did not gift him in the ways of speech and eloquence, but God responds "I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."¹² Something becomes useful and qualified when God speaks purpose to it. God is calling Moses to a leadership role, and although Moses does not feel inherently qualified or gifted in this area, simply by merit of God's call of purpose, Moses *is* qualified in a unique way that no one else is.

In light of Exodus 2 and Moses' attempts to use his strengths outside God's prescriptions, Moses can be confident that this situation is different simply due to the fact that he is acting within God's bounds. In chapter 4 verse 2, God tells Moses to follow a simple instruction. In doing so, Moses is shown that he holds no strength or qualifications, but God does. Yahweh accepts what Moses comes with and transforms it

¹⁰ Block, Daniel I. "The Burden of Leadership: The Mosaic Paradigm of Kingship." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162.647 (2005): 260.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 260.

¹² Ex. 4:12. Stuart argues that Moses is using "exaggerated humility" here and may in fact be gifted in speech due to his Egyptian education (192). However, I believe that the supplementation of Aaron in Moses' ministry as an "interpreter" between Moses and the Israelites supports the argument that he is not a gifted speaker necessarily.

for His purposes—the staff foreshadows Moses’ ministry in a beautiful act of trust and faith.

God has mercy on Moses and does not leave him to act in an area he does not feel comfortable in. Yahweh supplements Moses’ ministry and call with someone who is strong in an area Moses is weak, and sends Aaron as Moses’ partner. Even so, God calls him to keep his staff at hand “so [he could] perform miraculous signs with it.”¹³ The addition of Aaron to the mission does not lessen the task to which Yahweh called Moses—he must continue to be willing to be used and continue to realize he already has the tools for the task; God will make whatever he *does have* the proper tool for the job.¹⁴ Leaders are fully equipped for the place God called them simply because God called them there, and in order to be a successful leader, one must continually be available for God’s use and be aware that their faithfulness provides the foundation for God’s work in them and through them.

Verse 21b provides insight into God’s specific purpose in sending Moses to plead with Pharaoh to release the Israelites. Yahweh tells Moses that although Moses ought to implore Pharaoh to release his people, Pharaoh will not agree.¹⁵ God undoubtedly could have made Pharaoh’s heart favorably disposed towards letting the Israelites go,

¹³ Ex. 4:17.

¹⁴ Exodus 4:21 describes that the Lord has “given [Moses] the power to do” wonders already (NIV), or בִּידָּךְ שִׁמְתִּי he has (perfect tense) already placed this power “in your [Moses’] hand.” Verse 20 describes that the staff was in Moses’ hand at this moment; this supports my argument that Yahweh’s purpose is to use whatever ordinary tools Moses already has for a greater purpose, and that Yahweh has already equipped him properly despite Moses’ doubts.

¹⁵ לִבּוֹ-אֶת אֲחִיזָק וְאֲנִי “And I will harden his heart” can also be translated “And I will strengthen his heart.” For my purposes, I will adhere to the NIV translation “harden.”

or he could have stricken the Egyptians immediately without warning. However, his method reveals a great deal about Himself and the way leaders ought to seek Him. By commanding Moses to continually appeal to Pharaoh without bringing about the freedom of the Israelites, Yahweh is teaching Moses that being a leader who follows God closely means being more concerned with obedience than bringing about a result.

Moses has already exhibited at this point that he is very concerned with the way people perceive him, and Yahweh must change his concerns and desires to be solely focused on Him.¹⁶ In Exodus 5:21 Moses' people turn against him, calling upon the Lord to judge him harshly.¹⁷ God had to allow Moses to come face to face with his biggest concern so that he had no choice but to fully rely on Christ. This period of frustration serves to strengthen Moses' trust in Him and teach him to be pleased in obeying the Father, and to seek Yahweh in all situations. Leaders will not be able to please all people fully. Leaders will encounter difficult times in ministry. However, these periods must be embraced and used to direct one's heart back to the Father, seeking Him and Him alone.

Moses' active pursuit of the Lord throughout his ministry as a leader is one of the most valuable things gleaned from this narrative account. The narrative from Exodus to Deuteronomy shows tremendous growth in this area for Moses, but Exodus 5:22 shows

¹⁶ Ex. 4:13 shows that Moses' first protest against his calling was based on how the Israelites would receive him and his message.

¹⁷ Stuart suggests, "[The Israelites] had not actually overthrown their newfound faith. They apparently thought, however, that Moses and Aaron could not have properly represented the case or handled it well and thus had disobeyed Yahweh" (230). This suggests that the grumblings were directed specifically at Moses and Aaron, questioning their integrity, abilities, or both.

a beautiful beginning of this close and active pursuing-relationship Moses has with Yahweh. Immediately following his “failed” meeting with Pharaoh, Moses pours out his complaint to the Father. Stuart points out, “the wording ‘Moses returned to the LORD’ [in verse 22] is...[Moses] taking his own discouragement privately to God in prayer.”¹⁸ The beginning of this intimate relationship does not start from a place of unfaltering faith or doubtless trust—instead, Moses again brings what he has, in this case, complaints, to Yahweh and pours out his heart to his audience of one.¹⁹ It is this pursuit that Yahweh desires, and it is this practice that must develop in Moses before Moses is ready to lead others to this kind of relationship. Leaders must have the established practice of honest and raw communication with God. One must be comfortable in the stillness with God, to hear from Him, express their concerns, and model this relationship for others.

Moses’ relationship with Yahweh quickly evolves and strengthens. During the plague of frogs, Pharaoh implores Moses and Aaron to pray for the plague to be lifted. At this point, Moses is comfortable responding that the purpose of this trial of suffering is so that it may be recognized that “there is no one like the Lord our God.”²⁰ Not only has Moses become more confident in and knowledgeable about who Yahweh is, but Moses has become more comfortable in their relationship. Moses approaches Yahweh,

¹⁸ Stuart, *Exodus*, 232.

¹⁹ I would argue that he also continually brings his doubts about Yahweh’s provisions to Him, even going so far as to blame God for what he perceives as “failures” (see Ex. 6:30, blaming God for his insufficiency).

²⁰ Ex. 8:10.

crying out on his enemy's behalf, and Yahweh hears.²¹ This relationship has become one wherein Moses prays boldly and sincerely, and because he is faithful and in God's will, Yahweh hears and provides.

Yahweh continues to build trust and faithfulness in Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites as he delivers them from the hands of Pharaoh in the Exodus. Following the defeat of the Egyptians, Moses finds himself the inexperienced leader of tens of thousands of Israelites.²² However, a crucial part of this piece of the narrative is that while Moses leads the people, God is leading Moses. Because of Moses' intimate and active pursuit of the Lord, he is able to be a good leader by being a good follower of Yahweh. Stuart argues, "by reason of being guided by the pillar, the Israelites knew all day every day that God was present with them. Here was a supernatural, huge, and visible reminder that Yahweh was at the head of his people."²³ Because Moses kept the Israelites' hearts directed towards God, they were able to observe his palpable presence.²⁴ As a leader, Moses needed to continually check his own heart and his own walk and make sure that it was pursuing God as well.

²¹ An early example of the exhortations in Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:28.

²² Ex. 12:37. Stuart points out that the term, רַגְלִי, rendered "men," in fact means "foot soldier" (461). He also points out that אֶלֶף, rendered "thousand," is not necessarily a number at all but most likely denotes a military unit. He predicts that somewhere between twenty-eight and thirty-six thousand Israelites left Egypt.

²³ Stuart, *Exodus*, 513.

²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa points out that "help will not come unless the heart of the leader speaks with God" and that Moses was concerned with "those hidden things which are observed only by God" (64). In his pursuit of the character of God over God's actions, Moses kept himself and his people centered on Yahweh.

Moses' spiritual development, obedience, inherent strengths, and adherence to God's call all contributed to his excellence on a personal level in his leadership role. Exodus 18, however, shows his development as a delegator and logistical leader. At this point in the narrative, Moses himself had taken on the role of "judge," a mediator in disputes. A visit from Jethro pointed out to him just how thin he had been stretched at this point, as Jethro stated to Moses, "the work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone."²⁵ Based on his own experience, Jethro suggested to Moses that he implement a judicial system in which Moses could delegate authority to others so that he could focus on the larger task at hand—the land Yahweh promised.²⁶ Moses at this point has been very involved in the details and minute tasks of their journey—he has personally spoken to Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the Israelites.²⁷ But, Moses was called to lead the way—to walk before the Israelites, to show them how to pursue God first, and to set a standard of obedience. While it is admirable that he wants to stay this involved, the ministry has become too large for it to be beneficial for him to take care of these tasks when he has a different job and someone could easily be equipped to do this position. One of Moses' most admirable leadership qualities is his ability to recognize what he

²⁵ Ex. 18:18.

²⁶ Stuart, *Exodus*, 617.

²⁷ The text seems to suggest several times he was a very detail-oriented leader anyway (see Numbers 13:20), which implies this delegation may have been difficult for him.

should delegate and what he should not.²⁸ One person cannot and should not try to “wear every hat” in a ministry. We humans simply do not have the capacity for it.

In choosing a “support staff” to which he would delegate, Moses sought those who were capable, trustworthy, and who had been taught the decrees and laws.²⁹ He also was aware of the spiritual gifts that surrounded him which were best suited for the tasks to which God assigned him.³⁰ As the “core group” of leaders grew, they set a standard of worshipping the Lord together, intentionally and at a distance from the group, that they might partake of God and “eat and drink” him in.³¹

Moses did not just equip individuals to carry out his designated tasks; he held them to a high standard of godly excellence. Exodus 32 demonstrates the lack of accountability within the other leaders of the ministry, as when Moses left, the people quickly lowered their eyes from the Father and made for themselves another god. Despite the fallibility and errors of the other leaders, it was not Moses’ job to judge or condemn. Rather, it was his job to appeal to the Lord for mercy and to righteously rebuke them for their sin.³² Because these people were called just as Moses was called to leadership, Moses intercedes in prayer for them, confronts them in righteousness, and they move on. Moses is a merciful leader—keeping his support group accountable

²⁸ This decision was largely driven by the advice of Jethro—a priest who was familiar both with God and with leadership. One of the greatest things a leader can do to be successful in their ministry is to seek out and discern the advice of others.

²⁹ Ex. 18:20-21.

³⁰ Ex. 31:3-6.

³¹ Ex. 24:1-2, 11.

³² Stuart describes Moses as doing “everything he could to destroy the bull idol permanently” for the benefit of the entire ministry (1063).

to their vision and to their One Leader, but extending the same grace he was extended at the beginning of his call to ministry.³³

Shortly following this incident, Moses is depicted as seeking the Lord in the tent of meeting in an illustration of pursuit of God that is much more mature and developed than earlier in the narrative.³⁴ Not only is Moses able to spend time with the Lord as an intimate friend, but his example of continual seeking also inspires his followers. The Israelites take notice of his coming and going from the presence of Yahweh, and his young aide strives to attain the same relationship as him, “not leav[ing] the tent.”³⁵ His very person shows the evidence of his time spent with the Lord, even being described as “radiant.”³⁶ As a leader, the plain evidence of his walk with the Lord gave him the authority and influence to speak on God’s behalf and confidently relate the plan of the Lord.

Fast forwarding several decades in Moses’ ministry to the latter half of his work, we find Moses at Meribah for a second time, after God has declared the Israelites will

³³ Stuart points out that immediately following this incident, the people’s full respect for Moses has returned, as they stand out of respect for him when he passes (1086). In continuing to strive for obedience and God’s approval, Moses has won back the respect of his followers because he refuses to compromise his belief in Yahweh.

³⁴ יהוֹשִׁעַ וּמִשְׁרָתוֹ, הַמִּתְנַהֵּא־אֵל, וְשָׁב; רָעִהוּ-אֵל אִישׁ יִדְבֹּר פֶּאֶשֶׁר, פָּנִים-אֵל פָּנִים מִשֶּׁה-אֵל יְהוָה וְדִבֶּר. “And the LORD spoke to Moses, faces to faces, as when a man speaks to his friend.” Ex. 33:11.

³⁵ Ex. 33:11. Donald Capps points out in “Forty Years with Moses” that “only Moses had a direct pipeline to the Lord” (456). Thus, he was the ultimate example of what an intimate relationship with the Lord looked like, and the ultimate authority on God’s will among the Israelites.

³⁶ Ex. 34:29. “That Moses should after the fact, when he was no longer in God’s presence directly, still retain a very impressive effect of God’s presence proves the presence of Yahweh among the people.” (1130).

wander for forty years before entering the promised land. Arguably this second account at Meribah is the most controversial event in the whole of Moses' ministry. In a single act at Meribah, the Lord tells Moses and Aaron they will not bring the Israelites into the promise land. While it is unclear what exactly caused Moses to anger Yahweh or why, the text says "[Moses] did not trust in [Yahweh] enough to honor [Him] as holy in the sight of the Israelites."³⁷ Joel Litke points out in an article about Meribah that although the passage "does not explicitly state however, where Moses exactly failed in sanctifying God...justice surely demands that the punishment must match the offence."³⁸ Litke points out that some argue the "offense" was a missed opportunity for obedience, while some say it was an act of arrogance on Moses' part. Litke himself believes that the fault was being out of touch with the needs and nature of his followers, and Moses misjudged the sensitivities of the people.³⁹

Psalm 106 alludes to this account, providing another possible cause of this "punishment" by Yahweh. The psalm says "by the waters of Meribah [the Israelites] angered the Lord, and trouble came to Moses because of them; for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses' lips."⁴⁰ While this does have an essential truth behind it due to its place in the inerrant Word, it seems unlikely that the disobedience of the Israelites literally led to the downfall of Moses. Perhaps he tired out

³⁷ Numbers 20:12.

³⁸ Litke, Joel. "Moses at the Waters of Meribah." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 39.1 (2011): 31.

³⁹ Ibid, 32-33. I think this argument is not necessarily supported by the text, and is not a great enough transgression for Moses to be banished from the promise land.

⁴⁰ Psalm 106:32-33.

and lost his endurance, or maybe their influence and doubt of Yahweh caused him to stray.

Katharine Dobb Sakenfeld posits that this account is one of disbelief and “a failure to sanctify God before the people. For God’s chosen leadership, no sin could be more serious than that which by lack of trust impedes God’s mercy to the community.”⁴¹ David Hymes argues for a more simple interpretation—“Numbers teaches ‘All Leaders are Fallible!’”⁴² I agree with the argument that this account demonstrates the fallibility of Moses—however, that argument does not seem to fit completely.

I think that Moses has fallen into the same mistake at the end of his ministry that he did in the beginning—he acted outside God’s will. His actions were not inherently wrong, ill-intended, or uninformed. He took his mind off the pursuit of God for a moment, for an instant stopped being more concerned about obeying the details of God’s command than seeking to bring about a result, and in an instant he lost what he had worked for. Essentially, all the qualities that had made him a great leader for decades were undone in a moment. I think that these contributing factors are enough to “satisfy” the justice argument brought up by Litke. Numerous churches and ministries have been brought to the forefront of Christian media in the recent years for scandals and sins that took a moment to commit and had far-reaching and long-lasting

⁴¹ Sakenfeld, Katharine Dobb. “Theological and Redactional Problems in Numbers 20.2-13” *Understanding the Word*, 151.

⁴² Hymes, David C. “Heroic Leadership in the Wilderness Part 2.” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10.1 (2007): 20. M. Margaliot agrees with this line of thinking in “The Transgression of Moses and Aaron: Num. 20:1-13” (199-200). Frymer-Kensky seems to follow a similar line of thought as well in “Moses and the Cults” in that she emphasizes that because the Israelites saw *Moses* performing miracles, it would have been easy to deify him (447). Meribah interpreted as a display of fallibility would agree with Frymer-Kensky’s theory and hinder Moses from being deified fully.

effects on their ministry. This act of disobedience shows a disregard for the lessons Moses has learned over the years as a leader in the body of believers. He did not trust in God's call and command fully, he did not seek to obey despite what happened, he did not pursue God in this instance. Instead, he disregarded instructions and his fallibility was shown, and he sacrificed the goal of his ministry.

The episode at Meribah should not discourage leaders, however. Despite this disobedience and lack of sanctification, whatever the offense was exactly, God extended mercy to Moses. In Deuteronomy 34, although he can not cross in to the promised land, Yahweh lets Moses "see it with [his] own eyes."⁴³ God gives him the mercy of at least catching a glimpse of the fulfillment of God's promises, and Moses has to trust that the Lord is still sovereign and will finish the work He started with Moses and will not forsake Moses at his death. Moses was still commended for his faith and for his works as a leader.⁴⁴ For these years of faithfulness, God allowed him a glimpse into hope—and that was enough.

Despite his disobedience at Meribah, Moses still remains one of the most admired biblical figures both in Scripture and in our society today. His incredible patience, compassion, and faithfulness are surely qualities to be emulated. Moses was also an incredible leader with unique traits that take years to develop. His ability to delegate and manage his support group, to obey God for the sake of obedience not results, to pursue God in the midst of suffering, to obey God's call despite his lack of

⁴³ Deuteronomy 34:4.

⁴⁴ Hebrews 11:39.

confidence and qualifications, and to empathize with his followers intentionally provide a blueprint for leaders to model today.

CHAPTER THREE

Scriptural Models of Leadership: Joshua

“The study of leadership is the study of how men and women guide others through adversity, hardship, disruption, transformation, transition, recovery, new beginnings, and other significant changes.”¹ Joshua is certainly a prime example of a leader who guided others through adversity and transition, and he did it supremely well. A great contrast to his predecessor Moses, Joshua was greatly supported by the Israelites and was able to lead them into the Promised Land. His success as a leader came from his genuine humility, his ability to relate to those whom he led, his deep expectance of God’s works, his pursuit of spiritual growth, and his habit of thinking of himself last. Joshua’s journey of patience and growth illustrate leadership as a continual process wherein one must continually seek God not only in one’s ministerial leadership role, but also in one’s personal walk.

The reader is introduced to Joshua in Exodus 17 during the battle with the Amalekites. In verse 9, Moses commissions Joshua to “choose some of [the Israelite] men and go out to fight the Amalekites.”² His first appearance in the biblical narrative suggests Joshua not only is familiar with combat technique, but also he may have some influence among his peers even at his first appearance. Douglas K. Stuart infers from

¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* ed. 5 (San Francisco: 2012), 164.

² Exodus 17:9. All English biblical citations are from the New International Version 1984 unless otherwise noted. All Hebrew biblical citations are from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

this text that Joshua “had spent time during the days on the march from Egypt helping instruct the Israelites in martial arts and strategy, which would now see their first testing in actual combat.”³ Stuart may be too generously interpreting this verse, but the first mention of Joshua does seem to infer he is in some position of authority, if only in influence and knowledge.

Verse 14 of the same chapter alludes to Joshua’s future leadership role, as God tells Moses to record the events and preserve them specifically for Joshua.⁴ Although the text shows God has big plans in store for Joshua as a leader, Joshua does not receive this promise immediately. He needed to undergo a process of humility for him to be the effective leader the Israelites needed.

Joshua is next mentioned as Moses’ aide, accompanying him to the base of Mount Sinai for Moses to receive God’s law for his people.⁵ Hayyim Angel points out that we read the first recorded words of Joshua when Moses finally returns to the base of the mountain. Concerning the great uproar of the Golden Calf, Joshua declares it to be “the sound of war in the camp.”⁶ As Angel states, “the first time Joshua is quoted in the

³ Stuart, Douglas K, *Exodus*, Vol. 2 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2006), 593.

⁴ יהוה אלהים, literally YHWH is telling Moses “to place this in the ears of Joshua”. This wording further emphasizes the specificity and intentionality God has placed on the situation.

⁵ In *Moonlit Leadership: Midrashic Reading of Joshua’s Success*, Hayyim Angel says that Joshua “separated himself from the people and faithfully waited for his master at the base of the mountain (24:13)” (145). I would argue that this specific instance is representative of his future ministry—Joshua remains faithful to his Master, YHWH, and separated from his people. He lives in perfect balance between the two, whereas Moses was not as deeply involved with the Israelites.

⁶ Ex. 32:17.

Torah, he spoke in error; Moses had to correct him.”⁷ Not only does he misjudge in this instance, but also in his next speaking in the narrative, Numbers 11:27-29, “he again errs in his judgment” by asking Moses to intervene in a situation out of an emotional reaction.⁸ The warrior turned young disciple is shown still to be a student and has not yet arrived at the spiritual maturity and discernment of Moses.⁹ Leaders will most certainly not get everything right. Sometimes their errors will be public, and sometimes they will be in private company. However, this trial-and-error leadership is key in transforming a leader’s heart. The faults and missteps that leaders take are necessary goads to push them towards humility and towards total reliance on Christ lest they fall into pride. Joshua’s humility pushed him to pursue Yahweh as Moses pursued him and initiated one of his greatest leadership habits—fervent prayer.¹⁰

After his first speaking error and the incident of the golden calf, both Moses and Joshua turn to the Lord. Moses is able to converse and pray with him easily and

⁷ Angel, Hayyim, “Moonlit Leadership: A Midrashic Reading of Joshua’s Success,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 37.3 (2009): 145.

⁸ Angel, 146.

⁹ In *An Investigation Into Successful Leadership Transitions in the Old Testament*, A. Kay Fountain points out that “although [Joshua] had already proven himself a capable warrior in leading the Israelite army against the Amalekites (Exod 17:8-14), he spent most of the wilderness years simply being Moses’ personal attendant” (192). Simply the fact that Joshua is willing to be an aide for Moses after his military victory illustrates that Joshua already possesses a good deal of humility.

¹⁰ Angel suggests Joshua isolates himself here because of his errors, “creat[ing] a barrier between himself and those he was being groomed to lead” (146). I agree that Joshua’s turning to Yahweh here is in reaction to his errors, but I disagree with the effect Angel suggests it creates. Joshua is not isolating himself from the Israelites negatively, but he is seeking the One who can bring him the wisdom and pouring out his imperfections to God.

naturally as a friend, but Joshua's experience at the tent of meeting seems to be different. After Moses spoke with the Lord, he returned to camp, but Joshua "did not leave the tent."¹¹ While Stuart believes that Joshua simply was guarding the tent for Moses since he was not granted entry, I believe there is more going on in this instance.¹² Joshua is unceasingly and earnestly seeking his Maker. He does not yet know God in the intimate way that Moses does and cannot approach him as a friend. Nevertheless, Joshua does not give up in his pursuit of the Lord. He refuses to compromise his quest to know God. Joshua's humility allows him to recognize his need for One greater than himself and drives him into a sincere pursuit of Yahweh. Not all leaders are "Moseses"—sometimes God will not answer our cries right away. Leaders must not leave the tent of meeting, however. In times of struggle or error, leaders must press on and not leave the tent—they must pursue God in their personal lives and in their leadership roles. Only through this undying dedication to pursue God and hear from him can leaders show others this fervent prayer and faith.

¹¹ Ex. 33:11.

¹² Stuart, 1087. Stuart interprets this strictly as an illustration of Moses' trust placed in Joshua, but I believe that is a superficial reading of the text. Based off the implications the text supplies concerning Joshua's future role as a leader, I believe he is beginning to emulate his mentor and seeking God in a genuine way, regardless of whether or not he was granted entry to the tent. Exodus 33:10 says that when God's presence passed by in the pillar of cloud, "they all stood in worshipped, each at the entrance of their tent." I believe in the same way, Joshua is at the entrance of the tent of meeting, worshipping and seeking Yahweh. In Joshua 7:6, Joshua has what I argue to be a similar reaction to this instance—he runs to God desperately after Israel is driven away from the city walls of Ai. He seeks God passionately, not leaving the Ark of the Covenant, representative of God's presence in that particular story.

In Numbers 27, Yahweh commands Moses “to give [Joshua] some of [his] authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him.”¹³ Joshua does not actually become the Israelite leader until Joshua 1—however, this transition period serves to establish his credibility as a leader. Moses imparts wisdom and authority unto his humble aide, illustrating to the Israelites that Joshua had both God’s and Moses’ approval.¹⁴ When Joshua finally rises to his position of leadership in Joshua 1, he is well accepted, an uncharacteristic and surprising move on the Israelites’ part. Moses recognized that a good leader gives responsibility to others, and Joshua showed himself to be capable and trustworthy to carry out the task at hand.

As a leader, Joshua was significantly more relatable than Moses was—perhaps one of the most key reasons that he was successful. In Joshua 5, Joshua has an encounter that is very similar to Moses’ interaction with God in the burning bush. Near Jericho, Joshua meets a man who identifies himself as the “commander of the army of the Lord.”¹⁵ Joshua immediately falls in reverence without evident fear or doubt. The Lord tells Joshua to remove his sandal from his foot, for he is on holy ground.¹⁶ The

¹³ Num. 27:20.

¹⁴ Fountain puts particular emphasis on the importance of one’s being perceived as a capable leader before one can actually be accepted as a leader. She credits a great deal of Joshua’s success to this transitional period.

¹⁵ The man identified himself in Josh. 5:14 as “יהוה-צבא-שׂר,” or the “ruler of the army of YHWH.” However, as the conversation continues into chapter six, suddenly it is Yahweh himself speaking to Joshua. יהוה-שׂע-אֵל יהוה וַיֹּאמֶר (“And YHWH said to Joshua”). For the purposes of this thesis, I will argue that the commander of the army of the Lord is in fact a member of the Trinity and holds the same authority as Yahweh in this instance.

¹⁶ Compare the syntax in Josh. 5:15 to Moses’ encounter in Ex. 3:5. In *Joshua*, vol 5 of *The New American Commentary*, David M. Howard Jr. suggests that Joshua would have recognized this episode as extremely similar to Moses’ encounter at the bush and this

Hebrew indicates that Joshua is told to remove only one sandal, whereas Moses was told to remove both sandals when Yahweh met him in the burning bush. In *Moonlit Leadership*, Angel writes, “shoes symbolize human involvement in the world.”¹⁷ He goes on to say that this is of particular significance with regard to Joshua’s leadership style. He argues that Moses had obtained “the most exalted level of revelation” and at that time in Israel’s history, they needed a “two sandals off” leader.¹⁸ They needed someone who was very different than they were, who could meet God in a unique way unlike any other to bring them a supremely divine word and law from God.¹⁹ Angel states that Joshua did not reach the level of prophecy of Moses and had shortcomings that hindered him from the spiritual heights of Moses.²⁰

Joshua’s “one sandal off” approach to leadership represented his simultaneous involvement in the world and his deep and intimate relationship with Yahweh. His involvement and transparency allowed him to relate to the Israelites as well as gain their trust in a way Moses could not.²¹ Joshua kept a constant connection and

would have taught him how to recognize the presence of the Lord, something he previously did not have knowledge of in this way (215).

¹⁷ Angel, 151.

¹⁸ Ibid, 151.

¹⁹ Deut. 34:10-12 explicitly states that no one has known God in such a way as Moses did—face-to-face and friend-to-friend.

²⁰ Angel, 152.

²¹ Joshua’s insecurities would have been evident at least on some level to the Israelites not only because of his errors in speaking but also because of the repetitive encouragement to “not be afraid” and to “not be discouraged.” Specifically in Deuteronomy 31, he is given the command three times (verses 6, 8, 23). In Joshua 1, the Israelites repeat these encouragements back to him (verse 18). Joshua did not show

maintained continual communication with his people. This “one sandal off” approach ensured that he would stay attune to the needs of his followers and know how to directly bring God’s word to their needs. His approach was so successful that the Israelites did not even grumble under his leadership—a blessing Moses surely would have envied.²² Leaders must stay in constant connection with the culture and the community around them. A leader can not serve people whom they do not know—they must engage and stay with the people so that the word of God may be brought to meet the people where they are.²³

After Joshua and the Israelites are blessed with military success in Jericho, they are deceived by a group of Gibeonites who have heard of their fame. They enter into a covenant with them without consulting Yahweh. The kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon united together in the hope of destroying the Gibeonites because they had made peace with Joshua. Due to their peace covenant, the Israelites were bound to the Gibeonites and had to march through Gilgal to protect them from the five kings of the Amorites.²⁴

himself as weak, as the people fully supported him and believed in his capabilities. However, he was open about the areas he struggled in and was humble enough to accept the encouragement of those who could uplift him.

²² Angel goes so far as to call Joshua’s success the “ideal scenario” (144).

²³ Josh. 8:9 serves as further evidence for Joshua’s “one sandal on” approach to leadership. Although his office certainly would have justified him having his own lodgings, he chose to lodge “in the midst of the people” (הָעָם בְּתוֹךְ). The attention he paid and the care he put into the people of his community yielded his ability to stay relatable and genuine.

²⁴ Josh. 10:1-6. Howard points out that this is a test of the faithfulness of the Israelites—not to Yahweh, as per usual. However, this is a test of their word (357).

As Joshua heads to battle, the Lord reminds him that he has already defeated the enemies, and Joshua has no need to fear.²⁵ This repetition seems to imply a regression—Joshua again needs to be reminded of the things he needed to be reminded of in the beginning of his leadership role. However, he accepts the words humbly and continues on.

One of Joshua's strongest traits as a leader was his ability to expect much from God on behalf of the Israelites. He saw God send his enemies into confusion and throw hail upon them, but most of all Joshua believed Yahweh that He had already delivered the enemy into their hands.²⁶ Because Joshua knew that the Lord was fully capable, he boldly prayed for the Lord to stop the sun and the moon. His prayer was so big that he could only accredit God with the miracle—all would know that it was not anything the Israelites had done. God answered his prayer and glorified himself in a situation that stemmed from a mistake the Israelites had made.²⁷ He turned their mistake into a miracle.²⁸ Howard points out in his commentary that while Israel has seen miracles of Yahweh under Joshua's leadership, this is the first time that it was "in response to one

²⁵ Josh. 10:8.

²⁶ Howard writes that all the Hebrew verbs in verses 10-11 are in the singular, illustrating that there is a focus on "Yahweh's direct involvement as Israel's warrior" (358).

²⁷ Howard says that many commentators question this passage due to the reference to the "book of Jashar" in verse 13. However, as Howard points out, the book is merely referenced and not quoted and should not provide a stumbling block for this passage's interpretation.

²⁸ Inspiration for this interpretation comes from Steven Furtick's sermon series at Elevation Church entitled "Sun Stand Still" (2007).

man's petition."²⁹ The Lord honored Joshua's request because Joshua knew that Yahweh is a God of the unexpected, not because of any merit of his own. Joshua had bold faith in the Lord, and thus his appeal was heard with delight.

Joshua led the Israelites to defeat thirty-one other kings throughout his reign.³⁰ Because of his faithfulness in leadership, he was able to lead the people into God's blessing and allot them land from the Promised Land. Joshua received the last portion of land for himself—not allotting it to himself, but given it by the Israelites from a command of God.³¹ Howard reminds his reader that while we do not see "the specific command of God mentioned here that granted Joshua this inheritance...God's words to the rebellious Israelites in Num 14:30 were a general promise to Caleb and Joshua."³² For his past faithfulness, Joshua received a special portion of land from Yahweh himself. Joshua had spent years selflessly sacrificing for the Israelites, leading them first and thinking of himself last. However, as he nears the end of his time as their leader, Yahweh blesses him and he is able to "settle" and rest.³³ He never neglected his own

²⁹ Howard, 360. Howard continues on to say that he believes this "highlights Joshua's importance," but I believe it to have the opposite effect. It highlights Joshua's ability to expect much of God and to accredit himself with nothing. It does not elevate Joshua to a place of importance, but Yahweh. Howard chooses to read verse 14 as "And there has not been a day like that day before it or after it, when the LORD *obeyed* the voice of a man," emphasis mine (371). The Hebrew term *שָׁמַע* which Howard renders "obeyed" I have translated as "heard," which is more consistent with the character of Yahweh found throughout the Torah and prophetic works and more reasonable within this context.

³⁰ See Josh. 12 for a list of defeated kings.

³¹ Josh. 19:49-50.

³² Howard, 588.

³³ Josh. 12:50.

self-care, but Joshua always prioritized the good of the whole group—praying on their behalf, seeking the Lord, trusting in Yahweh’s promises, and leading them into blessings. “He who refresh[ed] others [was] himself refresh[ed]” in the end—Joshua’s years of sacrifice resulted in him being willing to settle and take a time of rest.³⁴ He recognized that his time of work was done, and he allowed himself to transition out of his leadership role, passing on his knowledge to the new leadership that would take over in chapters 22 and 23.

Joshua’s story of leadership in the Bible is certainly unique—the Scripture allows us to see his journey from a warrior to an aide to the single leader of a nation. It also gives us insight into his leadership development and how he came to acquire the qualities that made him one of Israel’s greatest leaders and a leader worth studying today. His continued humility, pursuit of God, audacious faith, commitment to staying relatable, and his selflessness made him a supremely successful leader and spurred on his followers to holiness and greatness in Yahweh.

³⁴ Prov. 11:25

CHAPTER FOUR

Scriptural Models of Leadership: Jesus

In the study of biblical models of leadership, Jesus obviously serves as the ultimate paragon of excellence. Christ's mode of leadership "provides the foundation for an understanding of leadership grounded in love and humble service," a distinct perfect example of right living to which other leaders ought to strive.¹ Jesus' style of leadership centered around equipping others, credibility, servant leadership, casting vision, and intentional solitude. While Jesus' leadership style cannot be fully apprehended in its innate depth by this study, the qualities leaders can emulate are invaluable to successful leadership.

Although Jesus' upbringing is not discussed much in the gospels, Jesus' call to ministry is discussed in each book and serves as the beginning point in the study of Christ's leadership. In Mark's text, Christ's baptism is in the beginning chapter of the whole book, stressing its role as a starting point for the discussion of Christ. The gospels detail the work of John the Baptist, the preparer, the one who set the scene for Christ. John baptized countless individuals at this time, teaching repentance and righteousness. Even Jesus himself "came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John."² This act in and of itself sets the stage for Christ's focus on equipping leaders.

¹ Aitken, Ellen Bradshaw. "To Remember the Lord Jesus: Leadership and Memory in the New Testament." *Angelica Theological Review* 91.1 (2009), 39.

² Matthew 3:13. Matthew will serve as my primary text in this study because of its focus on Jesus within the Jewish tradition that is highly important as context to the story. Also, Matthew includes several passages that are not included in the others gospels on

John is uncomfortable with this because he knows he is unworthy, but Christ says it must be done “to fulfill all righteousness.”³ In his commentary, Craig L. Blomberg comments that Christ’s statement “means to complete everything that forms part of a relationship of obedience to God.”⁴

One of the interesting aspects of Christ’s baptism is the issue of legitimacy. Throughout modern centuries, denominations have debated baptismal legitimacy—that is, asking the question, “by whom must I be baptized for my baptism to be valid?”⁵ Some believe it must be an ordained minister, for some it must hold to the tradition of successionism, and for some there is no “right baptizer.”⁶ It is interesting to look at the account of Jesus’ baptism—all the gospels imply that while it may have made more sense for Christ, the ultimate worthy baptizer, to have baptized John, John baptized him instead. It was not because John was more authoritative or valid, or that Christ could not have had authority if he had carried out his obedience any other way. The impact of this account is in that Christ allowed John the Baptist to have a ministry when Christ could have done it another way. Jesus was not a one-man show—although he could have been. However, he was a leader in the business of making other leaders. From

which I will focus, such as the Sermon on the Mount. However, all four gospels are consulted and used. Matthew will simply serve as the primary text.

³ Matt. 3:15.

⁴ Blomberg, Craig L. *Matthew*, Vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 1992), 103.

⁵ I am particularly thinking of early Baptist, Anabaptist, and Mennonite groups, although this discussion is certainly not limited to these denominational sects.

⁶ For the sake of this discussion, “successionism” will be defined as a successive line of baptizers from the time of Christ who have validity in their baptisms by merit of the one before them who baptized them.

this early, and even first in some gospels, account of Christ's ministry, he makes it a priority to give others the privilege of taking part in ministry and developing themselves as leaders of the faith. John continued to have students after this episode, teaching others about the one whose sandals he was unworthy to tie but who enabled and equipped him for a great witness and ministry.

Jesus, throughout his lifetime, prioritized intentional solitude for the purpose of recharging and focusing on his relationship with the Father. Immediately following his baptism, the gospels tell us the Spirit leads him into a long fast and into temptation.⁷ As James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner say in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, “challenge is the crucible for greatness.”⁸ The challenge with the tempter certainly was the perfect stage for Christ's greatness. Christ spent forty days deep in prayer, meditation, and fasting. His intentional solitude was laced with the purpose of spiritual development. He was met with resistance and temptation, but because he kept himself focused on God and his Word, Christ easily overcame his temptations. Satan tried to tempt Christ to action through perverse motivation, temptation to praise unworthy things, and through questioning his ultimate purpose.⁹ But the Spirit led Christ into the desert, into the place of temptation, that he might be an example for leaders to know how to overcome in the midst of times of trouble. Christ did so through solely relying

⁷ Matt. 4:2.

⁸ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, ed. 5 (San Francisco: 2012), 19.

⁹ Blomberg points out insightfully that the devil does not try to doubt who Christ is as God's Son—he cannot change that. However, he does bring into doubt “what type of Son Jesus will be” (106). In the same way, Christian leaders may be tempted as Satan brings into questions what kind of Christian we will be.

on God, not one's own strength, and through intentionally seeking God and developing that relationship in good and difficult seasons. Leaders struggling with burn out, pride, questions of their call, and all kinds of spiritual warfare must meet those questions head-on with the Spirit, the Word, and the Father.

Christ's temptations are worth analysis not just because of the way he intentionally recharges and seeks God in preparation for a time of trial, but also because of the credibility and relatability they bring Jesus as a person. Kouzes and Posner point out, "If you don't believe in the messenger, you won't believe the message."¹⁰ Colloquially, if you do not walk the walk, they will not believe the talk. Blomberg writes, "Jesus experienced temptation more strongly than anyone else because he never gave in and sinned."¹¹ He became a credible, tested-and-proven paragon of resisting temptation. This account shows from early in his ministry that his faith and his Father were not words he spouted. His faith was an integrated lifestyle practice that permeated his every decision, action, and word. His credibility created the foundation for which he built his leadership, and made his words trustworthy and believable. Leaders must realize the imperative nature of credibility, and seek to begin aligning their words and deeds with the enabling of the Spirit.¹²

The calling of Jesus' disciples is an interesting study. The gospels differ in how they portray this call of the first disciples, but one thing remains the same—Jesus called.

¹⁰ Kouzes and Posner, 38.

¹¹ Blomberg, 109.

¹² Each of the leaders I will examine in this thesis exhibit leadership both in word and deed—each gives discourses on how leadership ought to be and provides living breathing examples of biblical leadership. However, their words would not be credible if not for their deeds.

Jesus called to the ordinary men who would be made extraordinary through God, bringing them in to a ministry and an experience of intimacy he did not have to do. Christ could have easily carried out his ministry without his twelve “tagalongs” who often seemed to miss the point of his parables and homilies.¹³ However, Jesus was a leader who valued developing leadership skills in others. He sought to mold these distinguished men into “fishers of men” to continue the Spirit’s work and the Father’s ministry at the proper time.¹⁴ His entire sermon on the mount, found in Matthew 5-7, not only details how one ought to live righteously in Christ, but also provides a blueprint for how leaders ought to conduct themselves.¹⁵ He does not leave his student-followers to figure out how to act on their own—he mentors them, shares his knowledge, and details how they are to act in numerous scenarios. Kouzes and Posner argue that, “exemplary leaders elicit high performance because they strongly believe in the abilities of their constituents to achieve even the most challenging goals.”¹⁶ Not only did Christ fully embody that, but he made “up-front investments in initiatives that develop[ed] people’s competencies and foster[ed] their confidence.”¹⁷ Leaders must

¹³ See Matthew 6, Matthew 10, Mark 3, Luke 5, and John 1 for varying accounts of the calling of the disciples.

¹⁴ Matt. 4:19.

¹⁵ In Matthew 6:6 Jesus explicitly articulates that which is mentioned earlier in this chapter—Christians and Christian leaders are called to private and intimate relationships with the Father. This necessitates an element of isolation from distraction and an intentional “going out” to a place where one can encounter the Spirit. Christ continually “leaves the crowd” to be by himself or with his core group of students. See Mark 1:35 and Matthew 14:13 for more accounts of Jesus’ practicing intentional solitude for the sake of his personal relationship with God.

¹⁶ Kouzes and Posner, 276.

take the first step to invest in the development of others—to pour out wisdom, teach biblical leadership practices, and direct others to the favor of the Father. Leadership is not performed in isolation, and an essential practice is the development and teaching of leadership skills to others so that ministry might multiply.

Matthew 10 provides a great example to the vision that Jesus casted for those for whom he was the leader. Jesus sends out his twelve students with a specific vision—to go “to the lost sheep of Israel,” to preach, to heal, to raise the dead, to heal.¹⁸ He gives them specific instructions on how they are to act, with whom they are to stay, and how they will conduct themselves. He cautions them against pride, against a lust of wealth, and against worrying. Jesus did not merely equip and ready his disciples for the work to which he had called them—he laid out a specific vision for them. Andy Stanley writes, “people will reprioritize their lives and lifestyles in order to be a part of a vision they feel called to.”¹⁹ And that they did. Through relating his confidence in them, a specific purpose, and a detailed plan of action and conduct, Jesus was able to effectively cast vision and enable his disciples to carry out the Lord’s ministry. Leaders must remember that those under their influence must know the direction to which they are going. Followers must be able to point to the place God is leading them and articulate how they are to go there, as best as the leader understands at a given point. We cannot sacrifice vision on the altar of tradition or mediocrity—we as leaders should always be

¹⁷ Ibid, 259.

¹⁸ Matt. 10:6-8. Blomberg believes that the naming of the disciples in “twos” in the list of disciples’ names implies that they were sent off in pairs for their task (234). He also points out that the commission of verse 6 is only found in this gospel.

¹⁹ Stanley, Andy. *Visioneering* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2005): 21.

seeking the specific place to which God is calling us and whole-heartedly pursue that God-given vision with passion and clarity.

The last of Christ's innumerable leadership qualities that we will examine is his servant leadership. Near the end of his ministry, at the last supper, the gospel writer John relates the account of Jesus' washing the feet of his students so that he could show "the full extent of his love."²⁰ Jesus lovingly got on his hands and knees, scrubbing the dirt and mud off of the feet of his disciples in an act of humility and servanthood.²¹ For Jesus, service was not about convenience or comfort—he was willing to get his hands dirty to serve and fully love those whom he led. This "servant's heart" that permeated his every word and action was manifested in this ultimate act of service. Steve Walton argues that "the heart of Christian leadership [is] the imitation of Jesus, following in the path of servanthood which he walked."²² Christ explicitly urges his disciples to imitate him in this way in verse 15 of this chapter.

Service and humility are at the core of Christian leadership and are essential for a ministry of value. The precise combination of Christ's "authentic life of love and

²⁰ John 13:1.

²¹ In "Servant Leadership: Its Origin, Development, and Application in Organizations," Sen Sendjaya and James C. Sarros point out that "given the use of animals for transportation at the time, it was easy for feet to get smelly and dirty. Consequently, washing someone's feet was regarded as one of the most demeaning tasks anyone could perform." (59)

²² Walton, Steve. "Leadership and Lifestyle: Luke's Paul, Luke's Jesus, and the Paul of 1 Thessalonians." *Tyndale Bulletin* 48.2 (1997): 379.

service” serves as a concise model for Christian leaders in the modern context.²³ His leadership was “committed to meeting the needs of others” and of purposefully bringing the humble love of the Father to meet others where they were.²⁴ Jesus’ attitude of servant leadership was deep-seeded, intertwined with his very nature and how he viewed himself.²⁵ In the same way, leaders must be able to find their identity in their role as a servant and strive to be recreated by the Spirit as a servant first, and leader second.

Jesus did not just act out this servant leadership, but he taught the lesson to his disciples as well. In Mark 10, the students argue over who will have the privilege of sitting at Christ’s right hand. Their eagerness and arguably pride drive them into deep debate, until Christ tells them “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.”²⁶ Servant leadership must be servant-minded first, leadership-minded second. A leader who is concerned with his position, authority, and self-righteousness will remain drowned in deep waters of turmoil and debate, but the one who becomes a servant first will find favor with the Lord. In “Servant Leadership: Its Origin, Development, and Application in Organizations,” Sendjaya and Sarros point out, “contrary to the popular opinion of the day, Jesus taught that a leader’s greatness is

²³ Fryar, Jane L. “Jesus as Leader in Mark’s Gospel: Reflecting on the Place of Transformational Leadership in Developing Leaders of Leaders in the Church Today.” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 41.3 (2007): 158.

²⁴ Hutchison, John C. “Servanthood: Jesus’ Countercultural Call to Christian Leaders.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166.661 (2009): 69.

²⁵ See Philippians 2:3-8.

²⁶ Mark 10:43.

measured by a total commitment to serve fellow human beings.”²⁷ Within the twenty-first century context, as with Jesus’ culture, leaders have a tendency to take pride in their position and feel a sense of authority or entitlement over humility and service. Though against human nature, leaders must pursue a servant’s attitude wholeheartedly and reflect on both words and deeds, lest one prove oneself to be more concerned with one’s position as a leader than one’s position as a servant.

Jesus’ example of leadership represents the absolute pinnacle of biblical leadership qualities. His ability to enable others, cast vision, lead as a servant, maintain credibility, and seek intentional solitude are certainly practices essential for leadership in the modern church. Christ embodies all that leaders ought to strive to be.

²⁷ Sendjaya and Sarros, 59.

CHAPTER FIVE

Scriptural Models of Leadership: Paul

“Great leadership outlives the leaders.”¹ Paul’s leadership skills certainly outlived him and are very much evident in the leadership practices Christians strive to practice today. The study of his leadership style within this larger study is particularly necessary because Paul’s story is not only told by a third party in Acts, but we have numerous works in which Paul specifically mandates and speaks to those in church leadership around the ancient world. Paul sought to be a living example and a teacher of Christian leadership, creating disciples of Christ and of leadership as evidence throughout his epistles. Paul’s focus on personal conduct, initiative, encouragement, willing transformation, and on a balance of the task at hand and of the people involved made him an incredible and impactful leader.

Paul is the premiere example of willing transformation in the Scriptures. In Acts, we find Paul, the murderous hunter of Christians, had arrested, imprisoned, and executed the followers of Christ in Judea, Damascus, and other cities.² He first appears in Acts 8:1-3 as the approver of the disciple Stephen’s murder. James Kelhoffer points out that Paul is not only a “key leader of the persecution,” but he also leads the movement from the exclusive persecution of church leaders to the specific and

¹ Boreck, John and Danny Lovett and Elmer Towns. *The Good Book on Leadership: Case Studies from the Bible*. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2005: 250.

² Kelhoffer, James A. “The Gradual Disclosure of Paul’s Violence Against Christians in the Acts of the Apostles as an Apology for the Standing of the Lukan Paul.” *Biblical Research* 54 (2009): 25. For the purposes of this paper and for the sake of consistency, I will refer to him as Paul.

comprehensive attack on individual Christian homes.³ The next chapter of Acts tells that Paul “was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.”⁴ Paul himself says that he “tried to force [the Lord’s people] to blaspheme” and “was so obsessed with persecuting them that [he] even hunted them down in foreign cities.”⁵ Luke takes the time to alert his reader twice to the severity and cruelty of this homicidal leader of the Pharisees to emphasize the gravity of the great change about to take place in Paul’s life.⁶ Luke does so not only emphasize the great depravity of Paul, but also to underline the “one hundred eighty degree turn” of Paul’s life through recounting Paul’s conversion in three different instances.⁷

Paul’s conversion is incredible and worth recounting—he is met with the Son of God in a blinding light and is literally blinded until he finds spiritual sight and clarity with God’s chosen people. Paul was such a staunch source of opposition to the Christians that his conversion seemed unlikely, even to the members of the early church with whom he met. However, the text suggests he believed almost instantly and was

³ Kelhoffer, 27.

⁴ Acts 9:1.

⁵ Acts 26:11.

⁶ In Acts 26:5, Luke recounts that Paul was a Pharisee. In Philippians 3:5-6, Paul himself alludes to this. In the discussion of Acts 9, Fernando writes in the *NIV Application Commentary: Acts* that Saul’s teacher is Gamaliel.

⁷ The three stories can be found in Acts 9:3-19, Acts 22:6-16, and Acts 26:12-18. The first story is a third party narrative while the latter two are from Paul’s own mouth. For a detailed comparison, see Rordorf, Willy. “Paul’s Conversion in the Canonical Acts and in the *Acts of Paul*.” *Smeia* 80 (1997): 137-144.

baptized upon his healing at Ananias' house when he is filled with the Holy Spirit.⁸ Paul was a willing subject to the transformation that God had in store for him. Paul did not complain, whine, or try to deny the experience that God had put into place. Instead, Paul accepted what he had seen and heard and followed what the Lord told him to do.

In order to use Paul the way God intended to use him, the Son of God had to make a radical change in Paul's path, perspective, and priorities. The whole way that Paul would relate to people as a leader changed in this moment of conversion. Paul was changed from a hateful and vengeful man to a kind-hearted, bold, and passionate disciple of Christ who would have a love of the very people he persecuted at the center of the rest of his life.⁹ Even before his conversion, Paul had influence among the Pharisees. Despite his position of power, he was willing to submit humbly to the changes God had in store. God will most certainly put experiences in the lives of his people that will alter their perspective forever. It is the responsibility and challenge of leaders to accept the transformation under which God places them as a willing servant with a "yes, Lord."¹⁰

From the early moments of his walk with Jesus, Paul endured personal attacks by those whom he called brothers in Christ. Despite the very personal and harsh

⁸ Fernando suggests that this instantaneous conversion may have been because Paul was already in turmoil. Stephen's stoning, he suggests, caused a great and overwhelming confusion in Paul. The same name upon which Stephen called now appears to Paul, and Paul is spiritually enlightened.

⁹ In his later letters, Paul continues to emphasize the stark contrast between his old ways and his newly created self. See Galatians 1 and Philippians 3.

¹⁰ In *NIV Application Commentary: Acts*, Fernando points out at the end of the section on Acts 9 that there are typical elements of biblical conversion, or turning points. Conversion is divinely initiated, includes an encounter with Christ, and must include surrender. For a leader to be transformed, surrender is a necessary component.

conflicts he found himself in, he chose to keep his eyes on the purpose to which God called him and fight the personal attacks with integrity in personal conduct. After Paul left Damascus after threats against his life by the Jews, the disciples in Jerusalem did not accept him, as they were afraid of him.¹¹ Instead of working to convince the Christians or following around those in Jerusalem seeking acceptance, Paul “moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.”¹² He did not seek to clear his name or concern himself with receiving approval—he focused on Christ and knew that his conduct would speak for itself.¹³

Not only was Paul met with skepticism among the Christians for a period of time, but he also had many opponents throughout the ancient world as he travelled to proclaim the gospel and edify communities of faith.¹⁴ Joseph Tyson wrote in “Paul’s Opponents in Galatia” that in the letter to the Galatians, “Paul is on the defensive, asserting his apostleship, clarifying his position, condemning his opponents.”¹⁵ Again, however, Paul merely asserts the gospel of Christ, condemning heresy, rather than

¹¹ Acts 9:23-26. Fernando, in the *NIV Application Commentary: Acts*, argues that this visit to Jerusalem occurs three years after Paul’s actual conversion, and thus the behavior of the disciples in Jerusalem would be even more hurtful to Paul, as he had spent 3 years proving himself already (9:25-30).

¹² Acts 9:28.

¹³ In 1 Corinthians 4:4-6, Paul writes that he receives his approval from God and from God his actions and motives will receive judgment.

¹⁴ Churches that Paul founded include ones in Thessalonica, Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi. See Clarke, Andrew D. “Be Imitators of Me: Paul’s Mode of Leadership.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 49.2 (1998): 331.

¹⁵ Tyson, Joseph B. “Paul’s Opponents in Galatia.” *Novum Testamentum* 10.4 (1968): 244.

writing a discourse detailing the good works he has done and why he should be respected as a man of integrity. Paul was even stoned for his preaching, but got up and went on a mission to Derbe the next day. Paul refused to sacrifice the favor and the mission of God on the altar of personal inconvenience and attack.¹⁶

One of the most frustrating things that leaders face is the “microscope syndrome”—leaders’ lives are put under careful scrutiny and are the subject of conversation often even when those speaking may not have all the facts in a given situation. Even so, it is the responsibility of leaders to trust in God’s ultimate plan and to trust in the righteousness of their actions through Christ. For a leader, walking the walk is enough evidence of one’s relationship with Christ. Christ is the judge of actions, and Paul lived out using personal conduct as a response to personal attack.

Throughout his various missions and travels, one thing Paul never neglected was the importance of intentional encouragement.¹⁷ Throughout his journeys, Paul took the time to strengthen the churches and to encourage them. Even when his encouragement is not explicitly stated, it is alluded to in that fact that the stories he told of God’s faithfulness edified the churches and led them to grow in numbers.¹⁸ One of the five practices of exemplary leadership outlined by Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* is to “encourage the heart.”¹⁹ They write, “leaders make sure that people

¹⁶ Acts 14:19.

¹⁷ See παρακαλέω in Acts 14:22, Acts 16:40, Acts 20:1, Romans 1:12, and Romans 15:30.

¹⁸ See, for example, Acts 16:5.

¹⁹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* ed. 5 (San Francisco: 2012), 15.

know that they are being paid attention to and not being taken for granted.”²⁰ Paul most certainly embodied this principle.

Paul continually made intentional connections with those whom he encountered and ministered to for the purpose of creating a connection to make them feel valued and unified with the universal church. He invested in them to “develop people’s competencies and foster their confidence.”²¹ Leaders often struggle to find the time to encourage those whom they influence. It can seem like a menial task. But Paul never allowed himself to forsake the intentional connection of strengthening the hearts of others in a shop of genuine advocacy for them and their ministries.

People were central to Paul’s ministry, but he also knew how to balance the work at hand with the people whom he encountered. He did not spend so much time encouraging and fellowshiping with those in the churches and synagogues that he neglected the preaching of the gospel or the healing of sick souls. The preaching of the gospel was always his first priority, but he never forgot that the gospel is a message to people. Leadership is not a list of task items. It is a process of trust, investment, and collaboration with people. Leadership does not occur in isolation. Paul followed the tasks that God laid before him, and remembered to treat the people of his ministries as genuine human beings who needed the love and investment of Christ.

Lastly, Paul knew when to take initiative and be bold as a leader. Acts is filled with descriptions of his boldness—boldness in sharing the gospel and in the confrontation of others. Though never unkind or unbiblical, Paul never backed down

²⁰ Kouzes, 14.

²¹ Ibid, 267.

from something he felt God had ordained or laid on his heart specifically. Paul considered the gospel and his testimony something he could not even help but speak about. He never apologized for his boldness in words—whether it was in a synagogue, in a trial, or in prison. Paul took initiative in conversations even with close colleagues, like Barnabas in Acts 15. Barnabas and Paul disagree sharply on who should accompany them on their journey to re-visit their missions and Paul believed strongly that a specific follower of Christ, John Mark, should not come.²² Though they disagree sharply and part ways, the Bible shows us that Paul shows a level of kindness and forgiveness. His boldness does not hinder his treatment of either Barnabas or the other Christians involved.²³

Acts 27 depicts Paul's unique humility-centered initiative. In this chapter, Paul is in Caesarea and, after a stay of two years, is on his way to Rome to be tried by emperor Nero.²⁴ The ship made a risky move to continue sailing in windy conditions, and Paul spoke up from the sidelines, recommending that they follow a different course of action.²⁵ John MacArthur points out in *Called to Lead* that Paul "recognized the danger and pointed it out clearly...He had no title. He had no authority. But he realized there

²² Acts 15:36-41.

²³ See Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11, Phil. 1:24, 1 Pet 5:13. The references to John Mark's presence throughout these epistles suggests that the rift of Acts 15 was able to be reconciled at least to some point. Paul certainly would not want John Mark around this much had there not been a level of loving kindness in the way they treated each other.

²⁴ MacArthur, John. *Called to Lead: 26 Leadership Lessons from the Life of the Apostle Paul*. Nashville: Nelson Books, 2004: 7.

²⁵ See Acts 27:9-10.

was a problem, so he took initiative.”²⁶ Paul was not intimidated by his lack of worldly authority—his authority came from God. Paul viewed his experiences and past as a source of witness and testimony to God that did not need to be validated with titles. Because of this, Paul did not have a problem speaking up among men who did not consider him knowledgeable or authoritative.

While this text does not suggest that leaders need to speak outside their realm of knowledge, Acts 27 does suggest that leadership, influence, and correct thinking are not limited to specific roles or titles. Leaders should not be afraid to take initiative to speak up with boldness and with authority when speaking for the honor of Him who sends. Acts 15 further emphasizes that boldness should be a tool in a leader’s toolbox as one strives to please God and trusts in the influence with which God has provided.

Paul’s unique experiences are filled with universal principles for leadership and influence. He was not one of Jesus’ twelve disciples and he left his role of authority and titles because he considered it vain and corrupt. Instead, Paul embraced an identity of boldness, encouragement, balance, integrity, and transformation.

²⁶ MacArthur, 20.

CHAPTER SIX

Issues Facing the Modern Church

Paul, Jesus, Joshua, and Moses provide wonderful, biblical examples of godly leadership worthy of imitation. However, they also provide evidence that leaders in the church will face tremendous struggles and obstacles. Whether it be struggling with external persecution or dissent, or internal issues with letting go of control or loving people who are not loving to you, each of these figures represents a set of struggles that are not absent from the modern church.

Leadership Network surveyed 100 “high-impact” pastors in 2011 and found that the majority of them would say that they are “stuck” on implementing vision.¹ Chris Freeland of McKinney Church, in this survey, said more specifically that he was stuck on, “clarifying vision with [the] staff so they embrace a more focused model.”² This issue that seems prevalent in “high impact” pastors is interesting—in order for leaders to be “high impact,” they must have a direction in which they hope to go and on which they hope to have an influence. Yet, it is an area leaders are “stuck” in.

Interestingly, in a study of 555 executive pastors in 2009, Leadership Network found that 66% of these pastors ranked leadership in their top three spiritual gifts,

¹ Bird, Warren and Meagan M. Taylor. “Pastors Who Are Shaping the Future: An Inside Look at Today’s Influencers.” (December 2011): 10.

² Bird, “Pastors Who are Shaping,” 10.

surpassing even service, faith, and exhortation by more than 50%.³ Not just executive pastors view themselves as gifted leaders; another study showed that senior pastors also believe they are strong leaders. Of the senior pastors surveyed, 77% said the pastoral task they felt best at was “thinking about and promoting vision for the future”.⁴ The same percentage viewed themselves as spiritually gifted with leadership. However, leadership and vision are the third and fourth most troublesome issues that face senior pastors, only behind finances and staff issues.⁵ It seems that church leaders are eager to self-identify as gifted leaders, yet attribute a great deal of their struggles to the very area in which they call themselves spiritually gifted.⁶

A surprisingly large amount of senior and executive pastors self-identify as strong leaders; however, they also struggle greatly with leadership-related issues. This paradox causes one to wonder if the leaders of the church simply self-identify as spiritually gifted leaders out of a cultural pressure. It seems hard to believe that 77% of those whom God has called to the pastorate have naturally and spiritually been gifted in this area, when even Moses himself had to develop this skill over time, as he was not inherently a leader. Regardless, vision and leadership development are two of the highest-ranking issues of executive and senior pastors.

³ Pepper, Colleen. “Inside the World of Executive Pastors.” (February 2009): 29. This study examined executive pastors (also known as directors, chief of staff, or church administrators) in congregations of 100 to 23,000 in weekly attendance.

⁴ Bird, Warren. “Teacher First: Leadership Network’s 2009 Large-Church Senior Pastor Survey.” (July 2009): 31. This survey interviewed 232 megachurch pastors, which Bird says are only .3% of churches but are 10% of Protestant worship attendance. The sizes of the churches ranged from 500 to over 2,000 in attendance.

⁵ Bird, “Teacher First,” 36.

⁶ Ibid, 32.

Many various forms of Christian leadership literature focus on illuminating key problem areas for Christian leaders. Among these topics are burn out, prioritizing ministry, feeling successful, questioning one's call, leadership development, casting vision, and combating conflict in relationships.⁷ However, no discussion points to specific and documented issues in the modern church and directly points those struggling leaders to the Bible for practical advice and help. In the rare cases where these articles and discussions delve hermeneutically into the discussion, authors simply glean leadership principles and stop without putting it in a modern context.

This thesis set out to survey a more diverse group of church leaders—not simply executive and senior pastors, but several different roles on church leadership staff. Previous surveys have examined how leaders self-identify, and ask them what “keeps them lying awake” most, generally (including issues such as finances). This thesis focused a survey more specifically on a variety of leadership issues that leadership throughout the church struggles with in an attempt to get a more focused and clear picture of what leadership in the church is like today. In examining specific issues, biblical principles of leadership become relevant, applicable, and relatable.

A survey for this thesis was sent to churches in a random sample of fifty churches from a universe of 271 Baptist General Convention of Texas churches with five hundred or more in attendance.⁸ From each church, the senior pastor and one other

⁷ All these issues were addressed in the last five years of Leadership Today journals numerous times, as well as throughout the leadership literature I have read from Leadership Network, Christian Leadership Alliance, and Claybury International's Christian Leadership.

⁸ 79.2% of the sample had been in ministry for over ten years.

key church leader on staff was sent the survey.⁹ Of that sample, forty-eight responses were recorded.¹⁰ Leaders rated a list of ten different leadership issues on a scale of one to four, from not pressing to very pressing in their ministries. The most intense struggles were leadership development, casting vision, and prioritizing aspects of ministry.¹¹

The survey supports studies done by earlier researchers that show that leadership is a struggle for self-identified leaders. If leadership was not such a challenge, the issues on which leaders were surveyed would have on average been closer to 1, “not an issue,” than to 3, “pressing issue.”¹² Following this question, surveyors were asked to provide a strategy to combat the aforementioned issues. Among answers were “study Jesus as a leader,” “continuing education,” “identify what type of leader you are,” and “take healthy corporate business practices and infuse them into the church staff culture.” One respondent even commented that “from what I have seen in ministry, there seems to be a leadership deficiency.”¹³ Several responders

⁹ Among “other church leaders on staff” were children’s ministers, youth ministers, college ministers, music ministers, ministers of recreation, counselors, ministers of mission, ministers to women, ministers to senior adults, ministers to singles, and leaders in visual media and technology.

¹⁰ Response rate was 48%. My purpose was not to give any sort of statistical significance to the survey, but to provide a general idea of the issues that leaders struggled with.

¹¹ The average rating on the four-point scale for these issues respectively was 3.15, 2.96, and 2.89.

¹² The average rating of all issues was 2.73, falling close to the “pressing issue” category, valued at 3.

¹³ Responses were anonymous and there is no record of the identities of these responders.

expressed that they thought that leadership was not emphasized enough in ministry to churches as a whole or in individual churches—that leadership is glorified through titles but is not examined as a sacrificial and costly endeavor. One responder wrote, “I attended undergraduate school and received a BA in Religion. I received an MDiv from seminary. In all that time, I received little or no training in leadership, vision-casting or equipping staff and/or leaders in the church. I was never trained to be a leader, spot a leader, train a leader, delegate, equip, empower or even the importance of leadership. It's the most important thing I do. Something's wrong here.”

Leadership for Christian leaders is the topic of many books in local Christian bookstores. Countless websites, blogs, and magazines exist for the sole purpose of illuminating issues in this area of leadership. However, as the survey and the responders show, the study of leadership in an in-depth and analytical way is something equally neglected and needed. Perhaps the reason that so many of self-identified spiritually gifted leaders struggle with leadership is because there is not a source of biblical leadership study to address the issues they find themselves facing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

The biblical models of leadership in Scripture in conjunction with research on the current issues facing the church today provide the perfect framework for understanding strategies to overcome leadership issues. The issues and struggles facing the leaders of the Bible, particularly Moses, Joshua, Jesus, and Paul, are the same ones facing leaders today. These figures provide key insight into universal principles and practical strategies that move from beyond their own setting to the 21st century.

Moses knew how to respond to his call to leadership and how to equip his team. He knew he was not a spiritually gifted leader—he was too assertive and rash, he could not speak eloquently, and he had no titles or experience with the Hebrews. Knowing how to respond to his call was difficult for Moses. But he avoided it hindering his ministry through asking God difficult questions, asking God for His help, and trusting that God would turn him into the man he needed to be or provide what lacked. When Moses embraced the difficult call to confront Pharaoh, God initiated a transformation process in him that caused Moses not to question his response to his call again. When Moses was called, he asked boldly and relied on those who were gifted in the areas in which he knew he was not inherently gifted. He knew that his call was a call to *missio dei*; God's calling is not a calling for any leader to perfectly and solely carry out a task to godly perfection. John Bishop, campus pastor for Elevation Church Toronto, says, "we're

not qualified, we're called."¹ Moses responded through relying on the resources God gave him and trusting that what God provided was enough—he moved his focus from his lack of experience to God's ability to succeed with or without him. In the same way, leaders who struggle with responding to specific calls or mandates from God should turn their concerns over to God. But more importantly, they should remember to look at the resources God has given already in other parts of the body.² After all, members of the body cannot all be an eye or an ear—the church must and does have a full spectrum of gifts and talents.

Moses also equipped those with whom he worked. Although he liked being hands-on and was a talented judge, at the advice of his father-in-law, Moses instead equipped others to do his job for their people.³ Moses delegated, trained others, and allowed others to spend time with him and learn from him. Joshua was his aide for many years—learning Moses' spiritual practices and practical leadership skills before he even took a prominent leadership role. Moses put trust in the leaders of tribes, in Aaron, and in Miriam too. Even when some of those whom he trusted failed him, he gently admonished and guided them back to godliness. Equipping one's team is difficult—it takes intentional thought and time. But Moses shows us how. Through being vulnerable and transparent in one's spiritual walk and leadership practices,

¹ Bishop, John. Interview by Kaitlin Pleshko. Email. March 25, 2013.

² God had provided Aaron in Moses' life long before the call to leadership. God never lets us go without—we just need to ask for the clarity to see what might be right in front of us.

³ One survey respondent suggested that ministering leaders need to “work themselves out of a job”—that is, church leaders must pour into others, developing leadership and ministerial skills, so that the church is a functioning entity of numerous parts contributing rather than a single person driving the whole body.

others can learn the skills of church leaders. Also, Moses was willing to take on an aide, perhaps what we would view as a modern day intern, not to lighten his workload but to pass on practices that would be valuable in the leadership of Joshua. Equipping others takes intentional time to articulate what we do and why, and to allow one the opportunity to walk alongside us and express one's thoughts and opinions.⁴

Pete Briscoe, of Bent Tree Baptist Church, suggests that church leaders burn out “because they start walking with Jesus and end up working for Jesus.”⁵ Joshua did not make that mistake. He saw the passionate and unyielding spiritual walk of Moses and he refused to leave from the place of God's presence. He refused to sacrifice his personal walk on the altar of leadership tasks. He knew that “nothing is as important as staying right spiritually.”⁶ Briscoe also says that “the best leaders are the best followers—they follow Christ.”⁷ Joshua made it his goal to be an excellent follower of Yahweh. He had a role model in the faith, Moses, and he learned from Moses' practices.⁸ That kept him from burning out or becoming discouraged in his ministry. Staying centered on Christ, prioritizing one's Christian walk over all else, and becoming an excellent follower of Christ is the best strategy for modern leaders to prevent burn out. Leaders who are

⁴ The first several times that Joshua spoke as Moses' aide, he was in error. However, he had the luxury of making those errors—of expressing his opinion and being corrected. He became more equipped for ministry through being allowed to think out loud and through being shown what was true.

⁵ Briscoe, Pete. Interview by Kaitlin Pleshko. Phone Call. April 2, 2013.

⁶ Chambers, Oswald. *My Utmost For His Highest*. August 19.

⁷ Interview with Pete Briscoe. April 2, 2013.

⁸ By learning from Moses' spiritual practices, Joshua was able to develop his own (see the tent episode in chapter three). His spiritual role model gave him an example of how to balance a passionate spiritual walk with a fiercely intense leadership role.

filled up by the Spirit are able to pour out in abundance and will not find themselves feeling empty, dry, and burnt out.

Joshua also was a product of exceptional leadership transition. The transition from Moses to Joshua was successful because Joshua did not try to be the same minister-leader that Moses was. Joshua was called to a unique leadership role for a unique purpose; there would not have been any sense in him trying to be like Moses because his ministry was not Moses' ministry. Joshua respected the leader before him, waited until God's anointed time to enter into his role, and humbly learned from his predecessor as much as possible until God called him into the chief leadership role. Joshua knew that his ministry was not about him, but about the people and about the glory of God. Leadership transition has to include a process of getting to know the followers as much as getting to know where the leaders before have taken the group and why. Joshua was familiar with Moses' techniques and style, yet he was not afraid to be vulnerable and relatable in his own way. He knew where God had taken them before, respected it, and led where God told him to when God told him to. Leadership transition involves the congregation *and* the two leaders.⁹ Moses and Joshua model for us a clear process of prayer and humble learning until God's appointed time.

Jesus cast vision brilliantly. He knew the purpose of his mission, he communicated it clearly and succinctly to his followers, and he never deviated from his task. Jesus did not create an arbitrary mission for himself. His mission to bring God's love and to die for the salvation of man stemmed from God himself. His purpose was all

⁹ God gave the Israelites a time of seeing both Joshua and Moses as leaders before leadership fully transitioned to Joshua. While this is not always possible, there should be a period of grace and of learning while one leader transitions and gets to know previous leadership identity (even if only through study).

to God's glory. Casting vision must first come from obtaining vision from God. It is not something forced or for our honor; vision is work for the glory of the One who sends us on his glorious mission. Jesus took his specific purpose with humility and joy and constantly reminded his followers of their ultimate end—of future fellowship with him in heaven, of his leaving them, and of his impending suffering. Vision must be communicated often and in understandable phrases. However, Jesus is evidence that the whole picture does not have to be shared by the whole group at one time. Church leaders should discuss vision together, seeking God as its source, and reveal the vision to followers as God impresses it upon them in bite-sized pieces that congregations can pray about and get on board with. Jesus revealed his vision through stories and through his sermons—he made sure his plan was portrayed many times in a variety of ways so that it would be best understood.¹⁰

Jesus is also the premiere example of leadership development. Leadership development provides one of the biggest struggles for modern leaders, but Christ's whole narrative is full of it. Jesus knew that leadership development, like team equipping, has to include a great amount of hands-on learning. Jesus brought his disciples with him as a core group of students who learned his practices and his theology. They fellowshiped with him, saw him interact with his family, learned how to take time to pray with God, and learned how to communicate with those who had not heard the Truth. But more than just providing hands-on experience, Jesus brought his students into intimidating scenarios—putting them on the spot to feed thousands with

¹⁰ Just as with Jesus' vision, vision casting for leaders is a gradual process. It must be presented in several ways that congregations and followers can latch onto and become a part of.

little resources. He did not do so to make them appear foolish, to take the heat for a situation he could not handle, or to haze them and scare them into submission. Christ knew God's purpose for the situation, and he allowed them to be a part of a seemingly scary scenario that he was in control of to teach them about trusting God and believing boldly in God's provision and miracles. Leaders develop other leaders through allowing them to see aspects of their lives that the crowds don't see—through showing them the process of trusting God in scary scenarios. Especially in church leadership it is easy to want to preserve a façade and maintain an illusion that leaders do not get intimidated or worried—with resources, with provision, with time. But leaders need to expose other developing leaders to some of that so that they also have the opportunity to see God move greatly, as he always does.

Paul knew how to prioritize his ministry. He did not get so caught up in his fifty-hour workweek of administrative tasks that he forgot the people to which he ministered. He did not forsake ministries he had long since visited for new and exciting places. Paul knew that people are the heart and composition of ministry. For Paul, it was God first, people second, all else third. He took the time to write letters of encouragement and admonishment, to edify and strengthen those he visited, and to discuss and debate important matters with those closest to him. Prioritizing church ministry as a leader is most certainly hard. Making time for families and fellowship outside of “the job” as a church leader is difficult. But for Paul, his work as a leader and his life as a follower of Christ were not separate. Church leaders should look to Paul—is God first? Are people second? And are all else third? Leaders certainly must accomplish their essential tasks for ministries to function, but they must also remember to focus on

the people and the hearts in their ministries and in their lives. God honors our attention to his people, and favor is found in glorifying Him and sharing His gospel. The best guide for prioritizing ministry is looking to the three priorities of Paul and finding where tasks align and fall within those categories.

Lastly, Paul was an excellent relater and manager of people. While staff and volunteer relationships are difficult for modern church leaders to manage, they were even harder for Paul. In Paul's day, leaders of churches were just trying to figure out their non-Gospel-essential theology and were struggling in the midst of tempting heresies. His own contemporaries butted heads with him at times. Yet he always focused on allowing his own actions and conduct to speak for him. He never tried to please others or justify his mission or call to them. Paul treated others with love and respect, and even when it was not immediately poured back upon him, he received the favor of God for it. He never backed down from his convictions, never held back his core convictions, and never forsaked the Gospel. Modern church leaders would do well to take a page from Paul's book in their relationships with others in ministry—to encourage, to admonish, to hold true to godly convictions.¹¹

The biblical leaders of the Old and New Testaments directly address the same struggles that modern church leaders face today. Each figure represents a practical approach to combat the issues facing modern leaders. In the 21st century church,

¹¹ Often times leaders do not want to be perceived badly, and that people pleasing tendency can dictate words or actions. Paul never attempted to please people; instead, he always attempted to treat them as Christ would. Such a simple principle is a hard one to live out, but Paul did so in the small decisions and choices that set him apart (like not leaving jail when he had the opportunity so the jailer would not kill himself).

leaders need to study these figures as a source of strategies to become more godly leaders in practical ways.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Survey Results

Below are the results of the survey of the church leaders from the sample of Texas churches provided by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

	Not a Pressing Issue	Somewhat Pressing Issue	Pressing Issue	Very Pressing Issue	Rating Average	Rating Count
Losing focus	2.1% (1)	42.6% (20)	38.3% (18)	17.0% (8)	2.70	47
Burning out	12.5% (6)	25.0% (12)	31.3% (15)	31.3% (15)	2.81	48
Equipping your team	6.3% (3)	31.3% (15)	35.4% (17)	27.1% (13)	2.83	48
Responding to your call	35.4% (17)	41.7% (20)	20.8% (10)	2.1% (1)	1.90	48
Casting vision	10.4% (5)	20.8% (10)	31.3% (15)	37.5% (18)	2.96	48
Coping with leadership transition	8.3% (4)	47.9% (23)	31.3% (15)	12.5% (6)	2.48	48
Prioritizing aspects of your ministry	6.4% (3)	27.7% (13)	36.2% (17)	29.8% (14)	2.89	47
Managing relationships with staff	10.4% (5)	20.8% (10)	41.7% (20)	27.1% (13)	2.85	48
Managing relationships with volunteers	12.5% (6)	29.2% (14)	31.3% (15)	27.1% (13)	2.73	48
Leadership development	2.1% (1)	21.3% (10)	36.2% (17)	40.4% (19)	3.15	47
Other (please specify) Hide Responses						7

Figure 1: Results of question concerning issues facing the modern church today

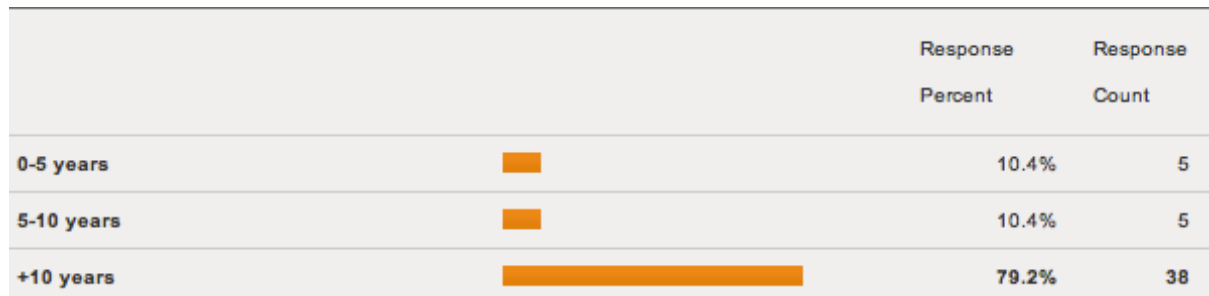


Figure 2: Years respondents spent in ministry prior to the survey

Average Weekly Attendance:	1,390
Minimum Weekly Attendance:	350
Maximum Weekly Attendance:	10,000
Median Weekly Attendance:	950

Figure 3: Respondents included the weekly worship attendance of their churches. Above are results of submitted weekly worship attendances.¹

¹ Although the sample was from churches with five hundred or more in attendance, one respondent self-identified as a minister of a church with 350 in attendance.

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