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# A Comparative Analysis of the Coalescing of Non-Biblical and Biblical Principles to Maximize Workplace Productivity

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A Comparative Analysis of the Coalescing of Non-Biblical and Biblical Principles to Maximize  
Workplace Productivity

By

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Murray State University

Fall 2017

Project submitted in partial fulfillment  
for the requirements for the  
Bachelor of Integrated Studies Degree

Regional Academic Outreach

Murray State University

November 28, 2017

### Project Approval

I hereby recommend that the project prepared under my supervision that was created by Ryan Stanger, entitled *A Comparative Analysis of the Coalescing of Biblical and Non-Biblical Principles to Maximize Workplace Productivity*, be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Integrated Studies.

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### Abstract

The relationship between leadership, management and communication theories and practices that result in productive work environments are explored. The analysis includes various business cultures, leadership strategies, management tactics, training methods, and philosophies that reflect the workplace culture most employees prefer. Research suggests that Christian business leaders can thrive in a secular marketplace and they can have just as much success leading teams as non-Christian leaders. Research validates the premise that a workplace environment built on Christian principles will not only succeed in the basic sense, but it can thrive. This paper is a comparative analysis of Biblical and non-Biblical perspectives for leading teams. These perspectives will be analyzed. The coalescing of three leadership/management principles and three Christian principles can be applied to work environments lead by Christian employers. In addition, despite the political rationale for the separation of church and state, an argument will be made that together, they represent strength for customer relations and employer/employee satisfaction. Finally, this paper will emphasize that employees who work in a supportive environment are more productive, happier, and lead to a better overall working environment for everyone. Research shows that the days of ruling with an “Iron Fist” and management tactics that use the “fear” as the core motivator is not just outdated, but ineffective.

### Introduction

Countless books, articles, journals, talk-shows, and podcasts have offered topics about how to run a business, manage employees, and handle crisis communications. Theories and practical strategies are offered to maximize the effectiveness of workplace satisfaction. Elmes and Smith (2001) believe this a basis for organizing a “factory system.” This paper explores the possibility that all “work” is God’s work as one understands God. Workplace discourse and

Christian principles can be combined in exploring the coalescing of those variables. Three principles within Christian documents are explored in order to show their validity in a work environment. These principles can be compared to well-respected leadership theories that have similar instructions and strategies for leading successful companies. Regardless of religious affiliation, Christian principles align with the secular view of success. This paper aims to provide some background on Christianity and several business strategies before examining how together, they encourage respect, kindness and fairness within the workplace. Christianity will be the only religious faith discussed. This analysis will not read like a problem-solution or policy analysis. Rather, the paper will provide background information and links between God-made and man-made suggestions about what greatness requires. The analysis will compare strategies used to motivate teams. These God-made and man-made strategies both rely on grace, love and respect. The goal of this research is to analyze management and leadership techniques that transcend religion, race, gender, and outdated mindsets. The problem with the current, standard, and often accepted leadership techniques is that they advocate archaic methods that create a mental picture of an old boss, standing behind the workers with a whip as they pull on the rope thus moving the business men and women forward. This research analyzes principles often seen as different when they are quite similar. This research also purports that a true leader stands in front of his or her workers, as the first person holding the rope, and pulling harder than anyone else. An environment where people enjoy their work, fosters inner satisfaction where they want to come to work. Employees who are satisfied are also more passionate; they work harder; and they are more productive. Productivity includes more revenue that allows for more bonuses which starts the cycle over and the employee becomes even more passionate and hard-working. This research examines whether a leader in the secular business world can successfully manage a

company and lead employee morale without compromising the Christian principles that the leader insists are at the forefront of one's managerial style. The purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges associated with trying to lead with biblical principles in a secular workforce and to show how these principles align with secular leadership and management theories.

### An Overview of the Basic Principles of Leadership

Webster would define leadership as “the office or position of a leader, capacity to lead, or the act of an instance of leading.” There is little to learn from the definition of leadership other than leadership is what happens when leaders do their thing. In order to better understand what leadership is, let us first evaluate what it means to be a leader. According to Ramsey (2011, p. 8), The qualities of a leader include:

- Integrity
- Servant
- Humble
- Visionary
- Decisive
- Disciplined
- Passionate
- Loyal
- Listener
- Influential
- Driven
- Charismatic

These are great qualities that a leader would possess and strengths you would want someone leading you to have. The most important quality in the list, perhaps, is servant. Ramsey (2011, p. 16) goes on to say “Often, when I am teaching people to be Leaders, I introduce the idea – that a teach needs to have a servant mentality.” He continues “Once I understood that I am serving my team by leading them, just like I am serving my children by parenting them, I relaxed. I might serve a team member by reprimanding hi or even allowing

him to work somewhere else. I might be serving the rest of the team by instantly firing someone who was sexually inappropriate with someone on the team. I am serving them by teaching and mentoring them. I am serving them to their good and the good of the organization.” Leadership in each organization looks very different and comes in different shapes, sizes, and techniques. Ramsey (2011, p. 19) continues “You cannot lead without passion. Passion causes things to move, and passion creates a force multiplier. Passion actually covers a multitude of sins.” The job and duty of a leader in today’s business has adapted; people don’t want a boss, they want to be lead. Bosses make commands, bosses are demanding, bosses have unrealistic expectations; they are merely there to meet certain expectations and quotas. People do not want to be told what to do, they don’t want to be looked down upon at work; people want to be lead. They want a leader who is passionate about what they do and inspires that same passion into their employees.

#### Leadership and Management Theories

According to Chemers (1997) The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness includes: (1) model leadership behavior, (2) motivate members, (3) manage group process, (4) make decisions, (5) mentor members. This model incorporates the features of several theories that incorporate the characteristics of effective leadership.

Leaders are either designated or they emerge by virtue of their personality traits. Promotions are often given to those who are not only experts in their fields but who also understand how to manage and motivate individuals and teams. Leaders within any organization are usually those who speak quickly when an issue is raised. They are knowledgeable about the issues and they encourage diverse opinions. Of course, there are a few who are unreasonably autocratic and uncooperative; however, they are probably the exceptions.



Understanding the different leadership theories allows a person to understand how to handle the people he or she may manage. There is not a right or wrong theory. Rather, there are effective and ineffective ways to lead individuals or teams based on various factors. The following theories remind us that certain situations and our own strengths and weaknesses must be considered as we combine forces to bust loose from that status quo (Engleberg and Wynn 2014).

According to Engleberg and Wynn (2014), The *Styles Leadership Theory* claims there are three styles of leadership and depending on the people you have to lead, one or more can be adopted. The *autocratic leader* wants to be in control. This leader asserts authority over people and takes credit for the decisions made. A leader with an autocratic style may be great for accomplishing tasks; but at times, he or she may be ineffective for morale. The *democratic leader* wants to share the responsibilities of a task. The democratic style seeks to guide people while also allowing them some input in making decisions. This style is preferred but I have seen a democratic leader fail because the team needed more input and direction. Therefore, an autocratic leader would have been more effective. The *laissez-faire leader* wants little control over the people he or she supervises. This style of leadership is great only if all members involved are mature, self-motivated and able to function well without constant direction.

Different people require different styles of leadership for different situations. Some employers are ineffective due to their laissez-faire style when core tasks need to be completed. Some forget to change the tone, vocabulary or nonverbal communication when employees are responsible and self-motivated and harsh directives do more to harm than to inspire. You have to know the styles and when to use them!

When we look at historical figures or even current leaders who run successful businesses, Engleberg and Wynn (2014) touch on those who are so charismatic and powerful, people are willing to put selfish agendas aside and work for the leader and the team. The *Transformational Leadership Theory* was developed in the 1970's and it examines what leaders have accomplished rather than just examining personal characteristics or their relationships with others.

Transformational leaders get things done! They turn goals into action! They inspire people to be committed to the mission and to perform beyond their duties. There is trust and openness. These leaders are charismatic, visionary, supportive, empowering, innovative, and they are models of member effectiveness because they create a climate of mutual trust. These leaders help to bring about positive changes by moving people from self-interests to team interests and goal completion.

This research will show how these theories align with Christian values and how implementing certain strategies are similar to the teachings of Christ Jesus. The research also shows there is dissatisfaction when employers and employees do not share mutual goals, motivating factors or respect. This next sections examines what determines healthy workplace climates because they are essential for success.

#### American Workforce Dissatisfaction

According to a study in Forbes (Adams, 2017), 52.3% of Americans in the workforce today are unhappy in their work. This information was obtained from a nonprofit research group, Conference Board. Since 1987, the company has performed a job satisfaction survey with employers across the nation; for three decades, Americans have been unhappy at their work. The survey polled works in numerous areas of their experiences, including job security, wages, promotion policy, vacation policy, sick leave, health plan and retirement plan; in literally every

area workers were happier thirty years ago than they are today. It is interesting, analyzing the areas that these people were polled, they are all indicators of how an employer is treating their employee. Two areas, physical environment and quality of equipment have improved over the course of this time period; which comes as no surprise considering the advancements in technology and safety in the past three decades. An interesting note from the data is that the satisfaction rate for men, compared to women, is a mere 1.5% higher; it appears that both groups have similar dissatisfaction in their work lives. (Adams, 2017) What does this mean? The bottom line is people care how they are treated at work; people that are not treated well at work are not happy; and happy employees are not productive employees.

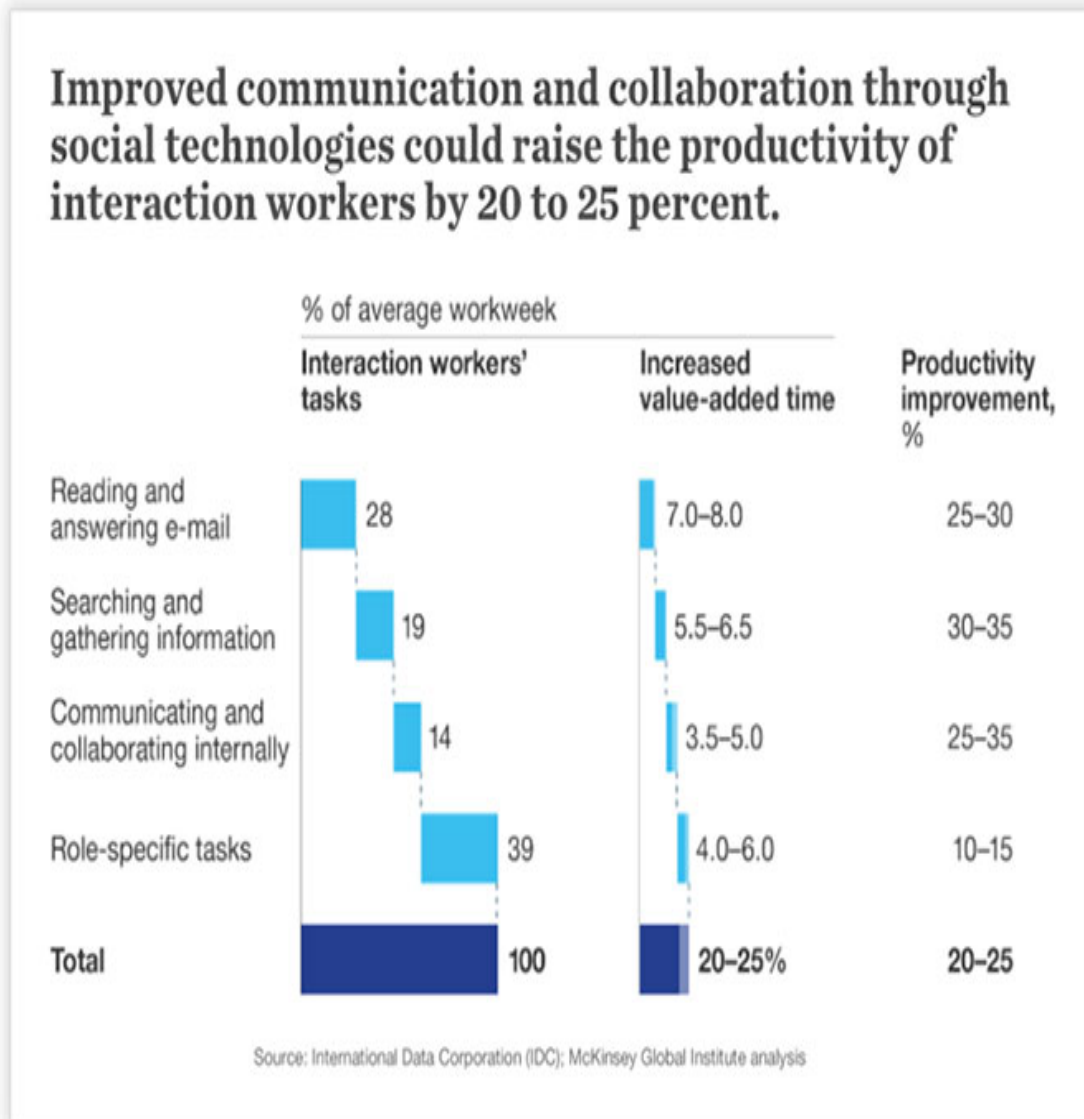
According to Sanders (2017), there are three scientific cases for employee's productivity in the workplace: connectivity, happiness, and compassionate bosses.

According to a study used by Sanders (2017) by McKinsey Global Institute (sourced in the article), productivity of employees improves by 20-25% in organizations with employees that are connected. Connected employees are those that are able to find the right information exactly when they need it; whether it be through other employees, an internal company information source or guide, or any other channel. For example, employees spend approximately 28% of time writing emails and 20% of their time searching for information; companies with well-connected employees spend almost half as much time in these areas. Sanders (2017) continued "being happy marriage, as happy employees get more done. Researchers at the University of Warwick found that employee happiness lead to a 12% spike in productivity. I'm happy workers for 10% less productive than they're happy camper parts." I'm happy workers for 10% less productive than they're happy counterparts." There is a direct correlation between the level of a person's happiness any amount of work that they get done; happy people get more work done.

Sanders also tells us that the third scientific case for employee productivity is compassionate bosses. Sanders (2017) tells us that “having a compassionate, empathetic, and understanding boss contributes to employee happiness and, in turn, employee productivity. One brain-imaging study showed that when employees remembered a time when a manager had been unkind, they showed increased activation in areas of the brain associated with negative emotion.” It comes as no surprise that people want to work with people that treat them with respect. Imagine a group of your peers and friends; do these people treat you with kindness, respect, and admiration? In the same manner that we strive to interact and spend time with people that have similar interests and overall character similar to ours, we desire to be lead by the same time of people. People that are made to feel like they matter and are treated in a way that makes them desire to come to work; people that are asked to participate are much more likely to give a better effort than someone that is forever to.

According to Hallowell et al (2002) companies like Walt Disney, Walmart and Southwest Airlines are successful because of their corporate climates. The companies have worked hard to ensure the highest quality of customer service and employees are dedicated to helping the businesses to succeed. The climate influences how employees behave which influences the value of what clients receive. “Corporate culture has been linked to competitive advantage in companies, for better or worse, and in service companies, in particular. Culture is so important in service industries because of its effect on so many factors affecting customer value. Culture becomes one of management’s most effective tools to influence employee thoughts, feelings, and most importantly, behavior.” (Hallowell, p. 73)

The following table (figure 1) shows the correlation between the amount of time an employee spends in certain areas and functions and the level of increased productivity from value-added time techniques (Sanders 2017)



*Figure 1.* Percentages showing increased productivity when employees are exposed to more valuable communication strategies and techniques

According to Sanders (2017), there are four ways to increase employer productivity:

1. Educate your leaders, and choose new ones wisely – while having a compassionate boss makes a huge difference, having the right managers, leaders, and executive leadership who understand that happy and healthy employees work harder; further, they develop a culture where people want to come to work. Leaders that understand this are much more likely to develop the right company culture.
2. Recognize employee accomplishments – employees want to be recognized for hard work and for accomplishing goals; when they do, they feel a sense of purpose. Company cultures that instill various systems of recognition are rewarded with more motivated and productive employees. When you fail to acknowledge the hard work and efforts of your staff, they are less likely to give you the same effort continually. Finding ways to truly recognize hard work and accomplishments is paramount in maintaining a motivated staff.
3. Leverage technology – Connectivity can increase not only employee happiness, but also productivity; technology can bring a team together and unify a group. A company that values technology and utilizes it properly can increase productivity and minimize wasted time by employees and increase morale.
4. Focus on your employee's holistic experience – Employees are not just worker bees or drones; they are people that have hopes, dreams, and desires. They have families, loved ones; they dream about individual growth and plan for their futures. A key to improving employee motivation is to understand the holistically of the employee experience with a company.

One may ask the following questions about employees:

Are employees working too many hours?

Are they spending enough time with their families?

Are they being properly supported while on the job?

Are they being recognized for their accomplishments?

Is the company supporting the growth of the employee?

Does the company invest in the growth and progress of the employee?

Do employees feel valued, are they eager to come to work?

Do employees feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves?

These are all questions that companies may need to address. From exit interviews to paper surveys and cafeteria suggestion boxes, companies that are putting their employees in positions to succeed and grow will be rewarded with employees who are motivated to work harder, stay longer and produce above and beyond the status quo. The research reflects that the way employees are treated results in a more productive work environment which results in a more successful organization.

### Maximizing Workforce Effectiveness

A recent study by Gallup, Harter (2015) concluded that “companies are maximizing only 5% of their workforces.” In a world where efficiency is key; businesses are struggling to become efficient. The study by Gallup revealed many shocking statistics that you wouldn’t expect. “Employees with the longest tenures in your company are also the least likely to be engaged.” The longer an employee works for a company, the more likely that employee is to be minimizing their time rather than maximizing it. After spending years with the same company, the majority of its workers are logging their motivation to be engaged and make real differences.

Employees are growing apathetic the longer they spend time with a company; they are doing the least amount of work necessary to get by. Many are nursing grudges and hard feelings and even undermining the company when they have the opportunity.

In a book by Buckingham (2014) he states that many believe that “engaged employees stay longer.” However, the data challenges this as put the burden on the manager. “The link between employee opinion and employee subtler and more specific. The employees immediate manager directly influences the items most consistently linked to turnover. This tells us that people leave managers and not companies. Businesses have thrown so much money into keeping people in the form of better pay, better perks and better training, when in the the end, turnover is primarily a manager issue.” (Buckingham, p. 38)

If the primary fault lies with the leader then perhaps more needs to be done to train the trainer. There are many programs; but often, once the program is over, additional training is not given. This is based on some informal interviews conducted with random family, friends and strangers over a 72 hour period. This is a weak random sample but it does indicate that research needs to be done. Why are programs often a one time mechanism? Why are ongoing programs not the norm? Other than posted “rules” within a manual or on an office wall, is accountability just a vocabulary word? Performance metrics are in place but are employees fearful of retaliation if they articulate their concerns? Is this fear rational? If it is rational then how do we break through the fear and the retaliation so real progress can be made? How can an employee who has been active for years, feel less threatened when new hires work beside seasoned employees.



The following table was utilized in the Gallup study by Harter (2015); the data in this table reflects trends from hundreds of businesses regarding tenure with a company and engagement with the company.

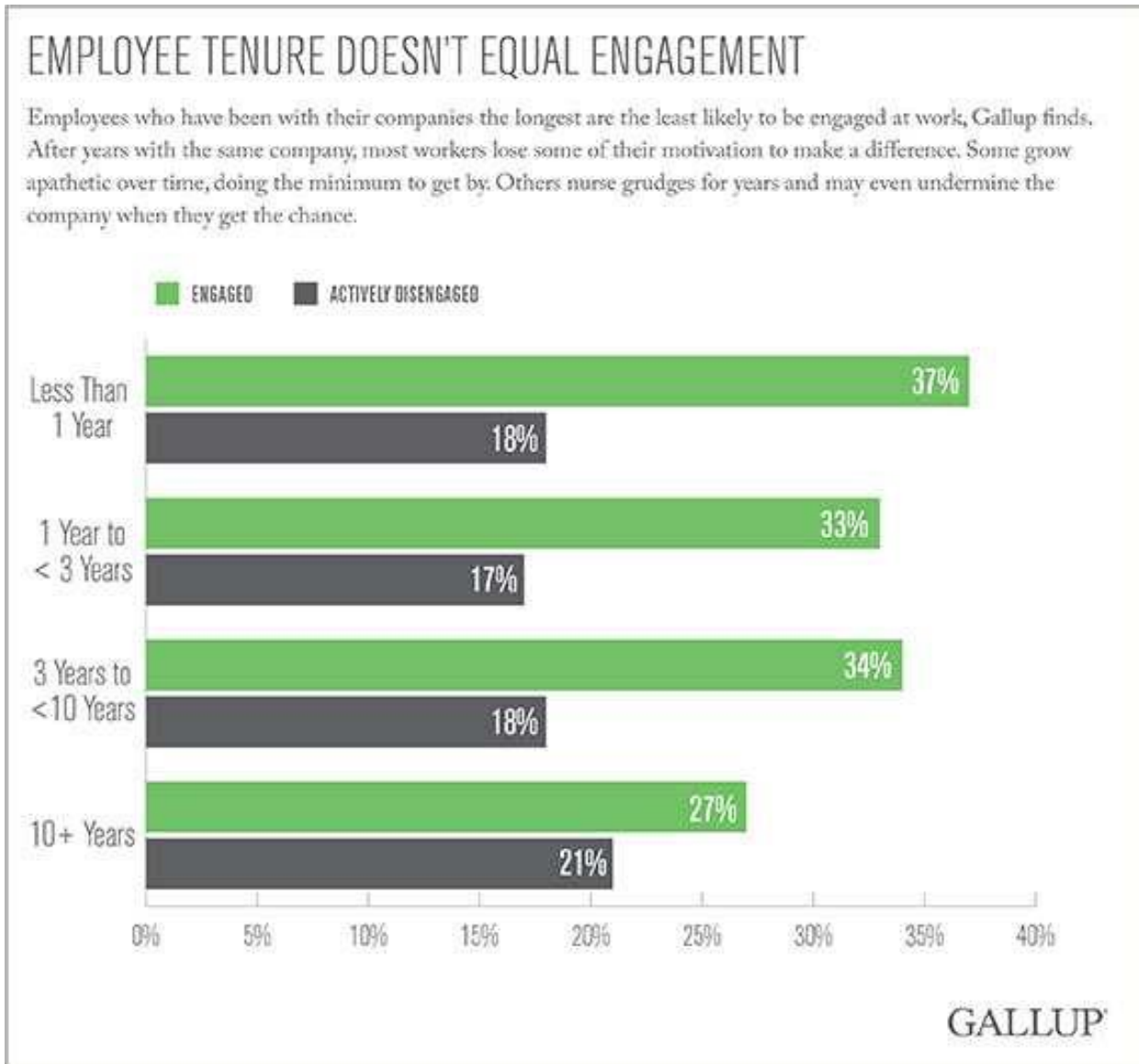


Figure 2. A graph showing that employee satisfaction does not increase with length of employment

It would be easy to say that employees lack of engagement levels is their own responsibility; the truth is, it's really the company's problem. Harter (2015) continued, "Retaining long-tenured, highly capable employees is a challenge." It is paramount that companies continue to invest and train the existing workforce; decreasing turnover is far more efficient than churning through new hires, spending money on costly training, and hiring employees who don't even fit the role. Experience is one of the greatest tools that an employee can possess. Today, companies have become increasingly specialized, by changing the ordinary inverse relationship between tenure and engagement, companies stand to make dramatic performance gains.

Harter (2015) explains that:

"Gallup's data suggest that companies highest performing individuals have three things going for them: (1) they have tenures of a decade or more in their organizations; (2) they are engaged in their work; and (3) they are in roles where the expectations of the job align with their innate talents. Each variable affects outcomes on its own, but the highest performance comes from the combination."

In the study, Gallup studied hundreds of companies; data was collected and the results are detailed in the upcoming table (see figure 3). Tenure does not matter when having 7 years with one company can yields a deep understanding of how the company operates and a deep level of expertise/ Many years of expertise cultivate an understanding of how to accomplish tasks.

(Harter p. 80).

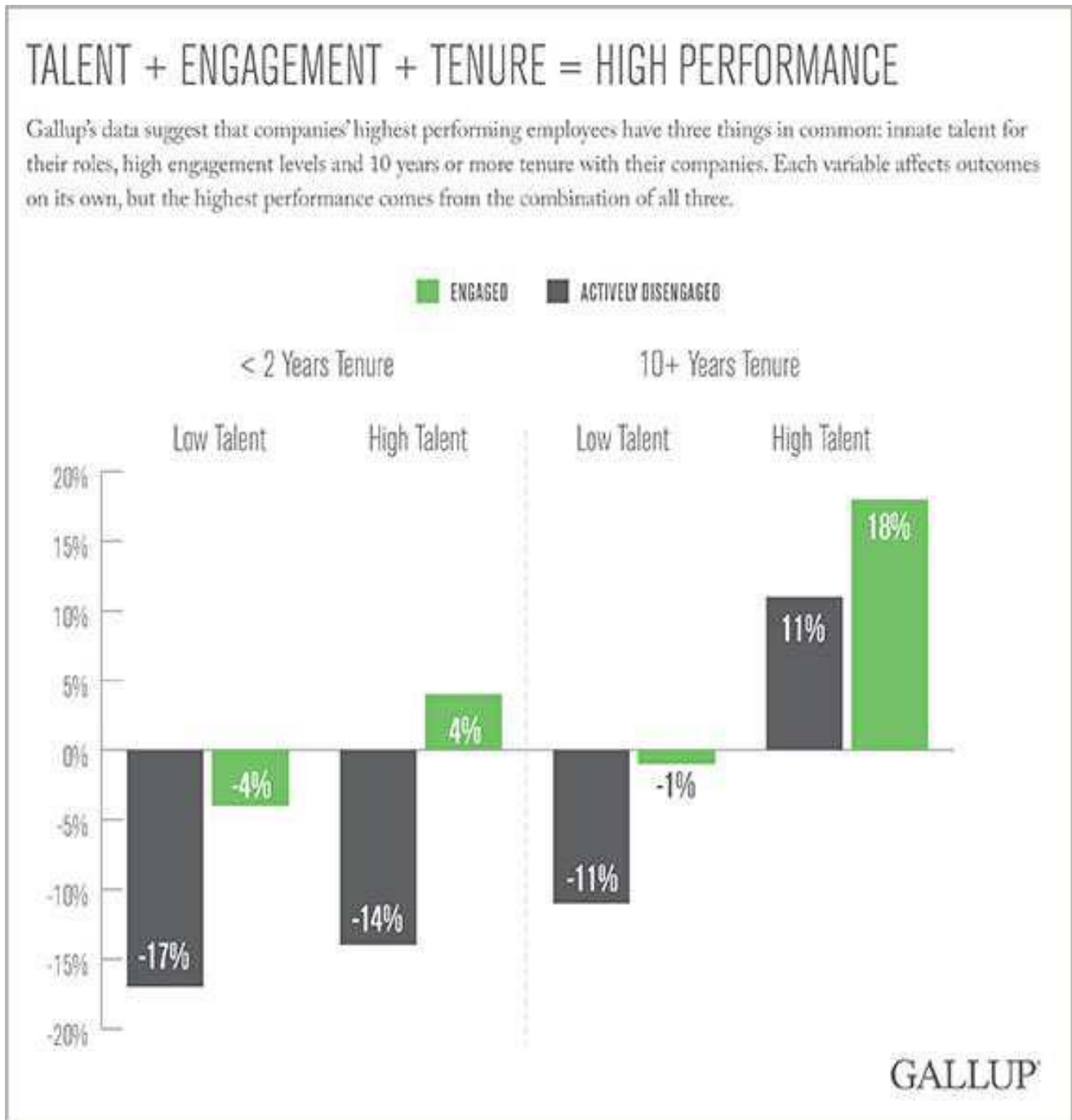


Figure 3. A graph showing that a combination of talent, engagement and tenure all show why employees are satisfied

After countless hours of collaborating on assignments and projects with the same people employees learn how to complete them with minimal friction through organizational channels. When you work with the same team over and over, you began to gain knowledge of how people interact and you begin to predict how colleagues will behave and you are able to anticipate how they will respond in certain situations. Numerous academic studies have shown that employees that have been at an organization longer tend to achieve higher performance levels.

Their improvement is likely a trajectory, a combination of their ability to grow and the increasing importance of the position that they hold; while the increase becomes less overtime, the arrow is pointing up. Experience strongly effects performance and allows a tenured employee to strive against an average employee despite the possibility of being less engaged. Depending on tenure alone to engage an employee and trust this will lead to performance would be foolish.

Engagement is paramount in any organization; people operate at the highest level of efficiency when they are doing what they do best. According to Harter (2015), "Gallup found that this is true after working with hundreds of organizations to increase their employees' engagement." Further, he stated that, "Gallup's research shows that employees are most likely to be engaged – and stay with their companies – when they report that their managers understand them and give them the chance to do what they best every day." Managers can fully utilize their employees by finding out what they are good at and putting them in positions to better utilize those talents. The key to succeeding in this area is finding peoples innate talent and matching people well with roles that fit those talents. Successful business are starting off on the right foot by hiring people with certain skill sets for certain functions or quickly finding them jobs that fit their skill set. Of the three areas researched in this article, tenure, engagement, and talent; talent

was the strongest predictor of performance. The research further suggested that talented employees that were put in work environments what were not engaging were still able to achieve above-average results the longer they were tenured. In the same sense, for employees that were tenured less than two years, they were still able to achieve above-average results so long as they were engaged in their work. The only scenarios where talent was minimized to below-average performance in the study was when the employee had fewer than 10 years of tenure and was not actively engaged in their work.

The study by Harter (2015) continued by trying to understand the combined effect that tenure, engagement and talent had on performance by analyzing data from more than 20 studies across seven different organizations with more than 7,000 employees contributing from various roles and positions including customer service, call centers, financing consultants, sales representatives, nurses, support staff and clinical staff. According the Harter (2015), “Our finding that just 5% of employees are in the proverbial ‘sweet spot’ –engaged at work, in roles that are the right fit for them and at their company for 10 years or more – likely indicates that few organizations are examining their workforce to understand where their people fit in this configuration.”

The positive results from the study suggest that employers who are taking the time to engage employees, keep them around, and utilize them in the best role possible are seeing 18% higher productivity levels than the average employee and 35% higher productivity from a non-tenured employee not being engaged in their role. These productivity levels equate to huge financial gains for companies; from \$6 million to \$12 million, respectively, per 1,000 employees! And for highly educated employees the economic outcome essentially doubles from \$12 million to \$23 million per 1,000 workers.

Companies must focus on finding the right employees for the right job; evaluating the employees that they have and putting them in roles where their natural talents can be enhanced, so they are being utilized for their appropriate strengths. According to Harter (2015) Companies that are willing to invest time and effort in trying to better utilize their current employees are seeing higher and greater rewards than those not willing to make the leap. Some company leaders still feel profits will turn without using the profits. Some organizational leaders are more interested examining product development and even customer satisfaction than worrying about morale; thus ignoring how the two are connected to each other. Companies that are better at engaging their employees are reaping a much higher benefit; they are accomplishing more work with a smaller work force. In nearly every service-based business, the largest expense for the employer is labor; this equates to huge savings when you are willing to use the employees you have and maximize their efforts!

Companies that are figuring out how to keep employees longer are seeing tremendous results if we examine the research. Whether companies implement new policies or hire new people, it is essential, based on the data, to create an environment where employees want to stay. The recruit and retain aspect of business is paramount. As a realtor, it crucial to have employees who are outstanding with clients so they make referrals that lead to more business. If the best employees keep leaving that affects credibility which in turn affects profits. Profitability and customer service are top priorities. One can't effectively exist without the other and the organization that understands this is likely a successful organization.

### A Brief Look at the Christian Faith

When it comes to a comparative analysis, it is beneficial to first examine the basic teachings of Christianity. The literature shows that Biblical jargon aligns with common vocabulary and definitions. One of the most interesting and illuminating points about this analysis is how each leadership theory can be justified within a Biblical teaching. Without starting a theological debate, it is necessary to lay the framework for this discussion. Being able to describe what a business does, in a brief conversation, is of utmost importance. According to Collamer (2017):

“If you’re looking for a job, one of the first tasks on your to-do list should be crafting an ideal "elevator pitch." It’s the 30-second speech that summarizes who you are, what you do and why you’d be a perfect candidate. You should be able to reel off your elevator pitch at any time, from a job interview to a cocktail party conversation with someone who might be able to help you land a position.”

In the same mindset, let us look at a quick “elevator pitch” of what Christianity teaches. This explanation could be as loaded as any political discussion; for this reason, it is important to stay brief yet have an understanding of the viewpoint from which this study comes. According to Crain (2017), “Christianity is about the life of Jesus as the Son of God within the Holy Trinity. The Bible teaches that Jesus was God Himself, come to live in His world as a human.” He goes on to tell us that “It is a spiritual belief that is open to all, regardless of age, religion, sex, or economic status” and it is a faith relationship with God that solves the problem of sin. Therefore, the belief is that the deliverance from sin is not achieved by one’s adherence to a system of works. One is not saved by saying good things or doing good works. Although Godly actions and reactions are encouraged, one is saved by “grace.” One is delivered from sin by receiving God’s

grace in Christ. A sinner is declared to be right with God as the merits of Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension. These are applied to him/her through faith...Unlike Buddha, Mohammad, and other religious leaders, Christianity accepts that its Messiah, Jesus Christ, is still alive today." Christianity is a religion of peace. It is a faith that teaches to put others first. It is servant hood, grace and love.

The Bible exists in two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament; the Old Testament consists of thirty-nine books referred to as "The Law". DeRouchie (n.d.) wrote the following:

"The Bible describes how God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ. The Old Testament provides foundation for this kingdom message, and the New Testament details the fulfillment. Jesus' Bible was the Old Testament, which highlights through narrative and commentary how the Mosaic old covenant was established in the Law, enforced in the Prophets, and enjoyed in the Writings. The Old Testament closes without all the promises having reached fulfillment; therefore, the end demands a sequel—a sequel that ultimately comes in the New Testament. God's reign over God's people in God's land. God will see his kingdom purposes accomplished. The old covenant is established in the Law, enforced in the Prophets, and enjoyed in the Writings. While the old covenant bore a ministry of condemnation, the Old Testament itself ends in hope and provides a foundation for the fulfillment found in Christ and the New Testament. In the whole, God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ."

The New Testament is built on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as foretold and prophesied in the Old Testament. The teachings in the New Testament go above the law; they



take the law to the next step. In the New Testament Jesus, the Son of God, teaches a doctrine of grace, love and forgiveness. Perhaps His most compelling teaching happened in Matthew when His disciples (twelve in total), asked him “Teach, which is the great commandment in the Law?” (ESV, Matthew 22:36). Jesus’ response would reveal a teaching much higher and more difficult than the law; it is a teaching that will be the foundation of the entire concept from which we will examine the culture in a business. “And he said to him, “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment...And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (ESV, Matthew 26: 37-39). He presented the concept of love your neighbor as yourself? One can wonder if this has a literal meaning. Perhaps the expression was only meant to be taken in a figurative sense and not in the literal sense. Faith and interpretation drive one’s belief. Jesus also taught “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, DO not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.” (ESV, Matthew 5:38-40).

To fully understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ, one must have the mindset of a servant. Servants in the time of Christ were at the bottom of the social class; they represented the poor, uneducated and lacking in discernment. A servant during the life of Christ, did anything and everything that his or her master required; Jesus’ teachings were to be like a servant, with a joyful heart. Jesus taught that others around you are more important than yourself, and to become first, you must be last and put others before you. It may be difficult to imagine a work culture where the people who lead put those subordinates above themselves. It is hard to imagine a work environment where the top executives, rather than pointing down from above,

are in the trenches, leading teams from those trenches. An environment that fosters an attitude where the success of others is paramount and treating everyone as equals is embedded in the Christian faith. Jesus' teachings are applicable, for Christians and non-Christians. They cause people to reflect on how our actions will effect others and how they will be beneficial for the team as whole.

### Selflessness and Serving Others

Perhaps the most interesting thing that Jesus shared us in his teachings, occurred on the night of Passover. Jesus, while enjoying a meal with his disciples, does something rather odd.

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I, as your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant<sup>1</sup> is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

*(English Standard Version, Mark 13.1-20).*

Jesus, on the night he was to be arrested, during his final meal with his friends and followers, got on his hands and knees and took the form of a servant. If you'll recall, being a servant was the lowest position in the culture during Jesus' time; this was the low of the low; the least of these. Jesus showed his leadership as a servant by taking a bowl, a cloth, and a towel, and washing the feet of his disciples.

The clothing that the men wore during the life of Jesus was standard for the culture and period of time. Men wore sandals all day long. Second, these men walked on dirt roads filled with animals; animals that did their business wherever they went and wherever the disciples walked. To be frank, the disciples had stinky feet. This could not be truer of the individuals in organizations and business, and the customers as well. Jesus, to show himself as a great servant, washed the stinky feet of his disciples. The people that businesses serve daily, especially in a

service-based business have stinky feet. Wash their feet. Employees in all areas of a business have stinky feet. Wash their feet. They have problems, they have families, they have drama and needs and desires. Wash their feet. People have different personalities. They are needy. They complain.

Employees call in sick, they make mistakes; they don't show up; and they cost the company money. Wash their feet. By taking the form of a servant in an organization's, leaders, by washing the feet of their people, show them that they care and build their loyalty. Loyal people are inspired people and inspired people care about the organization, work harder, and want it to do well because they feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves.

Being a leader is more than being in charge; it's more than being the boss or merely telling people what to do. People have a need to be inspired and led, not just forced to do what someone says. A group of people that is properly motivated is much more effective and powerful than a multitude that is forced to do something. Leaders that realize the value of people following their actions rather than forcing them to will find themselves many steps ahead of the competition. The greatest way to instill a sense of pride and ownership in a group of people is to serve them; to put that group first. When you put someone else's needs before your own there is a sense of gratefulness that cannot be matched any other way. Jesus taught a parable about a rich young man:

"And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the Commandments." He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. You

shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (*English Standard Version, Matthew 19:16-30*)

This is a mindset that is contrary to anything taught in business today; the goal is always to get ahead, no matter what means necessary. In order to become first, you have to become last; what does that even mean? By putting others ahead of yourself; you empower them to succeed; when people are empowered they are given a sense of pride and accomplishment that can be obtained in no other way.

## The Principles of Divine Reciprocity, Grace and Love

### **The Golden Rule**

There are three key principles from the Christian point of view that are needed in any workplace. The first is called “The Golden Rule” or the rule of reciprocity. It was given by Jesus. It involves advocating for empathy and treating others as one would want to be treated. In any workplace, a level of dismissive behavior, discrimination, anger, bullying or harassment will create a hostile work environment. Hostile environments cause delays, high turnover and employee dissatisfaction. Entering the work environment with a positive attitude can create healthy communication among all staff members that allows for maximum effectiveness. According to Engleberg &Wynn (2014), having a cohesive team where members are excited to be together includes using “we” language and respecting one another. Respect and treating everyone the way all people should be treated is basic courtesy. The fact it connects to a Christian principle only validates the premise that religion can survive in a secular environment.

According to Hallowell (2002) the Four Seasons hospitality brand operates with the Golden Rule as a core value. The “Golden Rule” is the foundation of the firm’s culture. It is appreciated all around the world. Basic human needs are the same everywhere. Kathleen Turner, president of worldwide operations explains how the chain gives employees several uniforms so they can feel refreshed and clean. In the hospitality industry, that is rare. She says it is basic and people want to be treated with dignity and respect. At the time the article was written, the company was among Fortune’s top 100 companies to work for in North America. (p.81)

Interestingly, not all organizations subscribe to the Golden Rule. According to Bruce Jones (2015) in an article by the Disney Institute, when it comes to fostering and sustaining true

employee engagement, has to do with how much a company is genuine in caring for the employees.

We have seen at Disney that one of the strongest signals of genuine care is providing recognition for our Cast *in ways that are meaningful to the individual* rather than simply defaulting to past practice or the leader's preference.

So, as a leader, knowing which of your employees are extroverted or introverted could help to tailor your recognition efforts and personalize the experience to the individual.

For example, extroverts probably like to be rewarded publicly, while introverts might prefer to be recognized in a small group or private setting. This is just one quick example of how tailoring your approach to individual personality styles could be more impactful, versus a "one-size-fits-all" approach. When employees feel personally cared for, they're more likely to pay personal attention to the people they interact with while on the job (customers and colleagues), as well as the work they do.

Although there are some organizations that implement different strategies and policies for employee care, there is a large amount of research that concludes how important it is to treat others with kindness and in a way humankind would appreciate being treated.

## **Grace**

Grace within the Christian Faith is the unmerited favor of God. Applying Grace may seem more complex. However, in its most simplistic form, it is giving someone a break just because we are all human. It means offering help when one is already too busy, too tired, too poor or too disgusted. It means doing for another and expecting nothing in return. Research is not needed for human kindness and the respect noted through the aforementioned Golden Rule.

Charles Ryrie (1975) in his work *The Grace of God*

...the concept of grace is the watershed that divides Roman Catholicism from Protestantism, Calvinism...The Roman Catholic Church holds that grace is mediated through its priests and sacraments, while Protestantism generally does not. The Calvinists feels that he glorifies the grace of God by emphasizing the utter helplessness of man apart from grace, while the Arminian sees the grace of God cooperating with man's abilities and will. Modern Liberalism gives an exaggerated place to the abilities of man to decide his own fate and to effect his own salvation entirely apart from God's grace, while conservatism holds that God's grace is necessary for salvation. Man is evolving, according to Liberalism, into a kind of superman who is coming to the place where he needs no outside help, certainly not the grace of God.

Robert Deffinbaugh (2017) outlines the variations of grace in his Biblical teaching. He says that while grace has to do with the character of God and was shown as Christ died for our sins on the cross, it is expressed in different forms. Here are the different forms of grace:

*Common grace* is the benevolence which is poured out upon all men and women, regardless of their spiritual condition: "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5-44-45)"

*Saving grace* is that generous provision of salvation on the cross of Calvary and the securing of it by divine intervention, as we have already outlined (Acts 15:11)

*Securing grace* is that manifestation of God's benevolence by which Christians are kept secure in spite of sin. Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by



faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:1-2)

*Sanctifying grace* is that grace which works within the true believer in such a way as to bring growth, maturity and progress in the process of becoming Christ-like: now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God (Acts 13:43)

*Serving grace* is the enablement to minister in such a way of to manifest the life of our Lord through the saints as members of His body. It refers to acts of generosity and giving. It specifically refers to spiritual gifts. The term 'gift' is a derivative of grace. (Acts 4:33).

*Sustaining grace* is grace given at special times of needs, especially during adversity or suffering.

In examining pull leadership and theories within this paper, grace is within the meaning of secular strategies Employees want generous bosses who understand circumstances that cause one to act with grace. Sanctifying grace is seen in an employer wanting to be the best company and in an employee wanting to mature and grow as a worker. Both want understanding from the other. Both need grace as means of communicating that you can get love and respect by doing nothing to earn them. Grace is given just because of humanity and not because of deeds.

## **Love**

The third Christian principle is "love." So many books, blogs, articles on love have been written. Love has so many meanings within so many contexts. The Biblical view of love is linked to Jesus Christ. The secular view of love is linked to everything from love of a devoted

parent towards a child and the sacrificial love of a healthy relationship between two consenting adults. The multiple meanings linked to physical acts and vocabulary words that fill a void but not necessarily a soul are all linked to the word “love.” All of the varied interpretations can be analyzed and argued through theories and experiences.

The late Reverend Billy Graham outlines the love of God in the following passage (1993):

The Bible is a revelation of the fact that God is love. Many people misunderstand the attribute of God’s nature which is love. “God is love” does not mean that everything is sweet, beautiful, and happy, and that God’s love could not possibly allow punishment for sin. When we preach justice, it is justice tempered with love. When we preach righteousness, it is righteousness founded on love. When we preach atonement, it is atonement planned by love, provided by love, given by love, finished by love, necessitated because of love. When we preach the resurrection of Christ, we are preaching the miracle of love. When we preach the return of Christ, we are preaching the fulfillment of love. No matter what sin you have committed, or how terrible, dirty, or shameful it may be, God loves you. This love of God is immeasurable, unmistakable, and unending!

Love is supposed to be unconditional. Although company rules are often listed like the Ten Commandments, companies that temper those rules with forgiveness “clauses “ within those rules, are more likely to have employee satisfaction. Employees are more excited to go to work when they do not dread messing up. Fear motivates. However, pervasive and ongoing fear does little to inspire one to succeed or to work for the good of the company. Most employees who fear

suffer from mental illness or extreme dissatisfaction with one's employment. Hays, R.B. (2011) offers insight in his book. Love in the Biblical sense works in the workplace because it is patient and kind. It seeks to strengthen and not destroy one's ability to thrive. Corinthians 13:4-5 in the King James Version states, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up...Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

### Pull Leadership

Leading any organization requires policies for employer and employee behavior. There are so many principles for creating a positive workplace culture. Pull Leadership is a type of leadership that has strategies that align with Christian doctrine. The Golden Rule, Grace and Love may not be obvious, but they are embedded in "Pull Leadership" principles.

Robbins (2004) stated "We all know "push" leaders-they lead by giving directions" and goes on to say that "pull" leaders create better organizations." So what is a pull leader? Well the idea of push leadership pictures a boss or a manager that is giving commands, barking orders left and right, and having no accountability. Push leadership creates a culture of low loyalty, high mobility, and constant turnover (pushing people out the door). The idea of a "pull" leader is someone that inspires people to join in on what they're doing. "They do it using principles that many people in official leadership position wouldn't follow if their lives depended on it." (Robbins, 2004).

Responsibility in an organization isn't given; it has to be taken. There is a trend beginning with businesses that do not want to take responsibility for the consequences of poor leadership, management and decisions. "Pull" leaders take responsibility for their failures voluntarily, even when it's an option. Robbins (2004) goes on to tell us

“Pull leaders believe that success of the organization is their responsibility, no matter what their job titles are. They don’t have to do all work themselves, but they have to make it possible for everyone else to succeed. They lose sleep worrying if they’ve done enough for their people to great in their jobs. They hope they’ve provided the right tools and training. They ask constantly how they can create a culture that helps others achieve.”

The success of an organization isn’t enough for them, “pull” leaders make it their responsibility to help their people succeed as individuals. They want to see their people reach their goals, even goals outside of work and in their personal lives.

Robbins (2004) tells us that “Values are the second most powerful force for bringing people together to achieve great things.” “Pull” leaders not only know their own values and make them known, they demonstrate them on a daily basis in the way they act and interact with their team members. “Pull” leaders want to see their values in action in their organization; they want people in their organization to share the same values and be passionate about what they do. “Pull” leaders examine their actions with an honest and open mind, without judgment, trying to discover and analyze what values they embody; they change their behavior so that it matches what they are teaching. The most powerful message a “pull” leader can send is when they take a risk to stay true to his or her values; these leaders are willing to make things uncomfortable and work harder to keep an inferior product off the shelves, make sure a customer doesn’t have a bad experience, and make things right so that their values are pure and intact.

Robbins (2004) explains that “Stewardship is a key element of pull leaders. A steward is a caretaker of another’s property. A pull leader takes care of the organization and employees, without stepping over the line into behaving like the owner—even if they own 100 percent of the

stock.” “Pull” leaders understand that maintaining stewardship includes being humble, having appreciation for the entire team. Robbins (2004) shares a remarkable story on stewardship:

“Robert Cavett, founder of the several-thousand-person National Speakers Association, arrived at his annual conference banquet without his ticket. The new NSA member at the door refused him entrance. Rather than make a fuss with a melodramatic "Do you know who I am?" he returned to his room to get his ticket. His graceful handling of the situation turned the door guard into a lifelong devotee when she later found out (much to her horror) that she had turned away the organization's founder.”

Stewards of an organization don't own the business or its results; they give credit where credit is due; especially to the people in the organization that made the success possible. “Pull” leaders don't trumpet their own horn, instead they build up those around them and highlight the hard work of others and dedication of the entire team. Giving recognition both privately and publicly is one of the most critical elements of stewardship in an organization. “Pull” leaders care for their people; they discuss the emotions of their people, they want their people to succeed and succeed easily; why make it difficult? They demonstrate their care in different ways; from birthday cards, to presents, to benefits, get well flowers; these employees are loyal because their organization cares for them.

“Pull” leaders don't allow just certain social spaces and culture to happen; they have architect and planned the culture out beforehand. The most obvious space they architect is the physical space; they lay out an office (cubicles, offices, etc.) to represent the culture they are trying to establish. They want the space they create to promote positive and productive interaction among their team members. Certain organizations and businesses require different

spaces, for privacy for their customers and for productivity of their employees; other organizations can allow for more open and broader spaces. Robbin's (2004) states:

“Pull leaders shape the cultural space as well as the physical space. A critical part of culture is how decisions get made. If a pull leader truly believes in people, there's no better way to show it than to let those people take the lead in shaping the organization. Let them design the environment, set space requirements, and create the work world that will best lead them to success.

This is where we find the fundamental paradox of pull leadership: People most want to follow leaders who don't order them around, but rather give them the freedom and opportunity to be an active part in shaping their own lives.”

The reason most leaders don't practice “pull” leadership is, at its core, it's about realizing that the leader isn't perfect, has flaws, and that the real strength of the organization comes from the people that comprise it. This is the opposite of the American culture image; this takes a humble leader that puts others around them first and above themselves. “Pull” leadership is not easy; however, it is a necessary leadership style in an organization if you want to be people focused, instill an environment of togetherness, and put others first.

In summary, Robbins (2004) gives us eight key traits of “pull” leaders:

- Pull leaders don't give orders; they create social systems that inspire people to join
- Pull leaders don't give orders; they create social systems that inspire people to join
- Pull leaders take responsibility for the success of the organization and their people
- Pull leaders work to become attractive to others
- Pull leaders align and inspire with values
- Pull leaders are stewards of their organizations and employees

- Pull leaders architect their social and organizational space
- Pull leadership isn't easy

### Conclusion

This analysis confirms that a separation from church and state is not an absolute when leading in the workplace. The coalescing of Non-Biblical and Biblical principles and strategies for effective leadership is a positive combination for maximizing results for superior-subordinate relationships. Author Brenda Allen (2010, p. 37) states in her book *Difference Matters*, that power dynamics are within organizations. Therefore, how people communicate will produce positive or negative relationships and work environments. Employers must recognize that how they treat people can build people up or actions and words can marginalize people. Allen (2010) says, "Organizational power dynamics do not occur in a vacuum. Enacting power in organizations resembles and relies on power dynamics in society at large. Major forces like our families, the government. Religion, education and the media impact how people enact power in organizations.

We have shown that basic secular principles align with Christian principles. Allen (2010) confirms that religion is a factor in behavioral aspects in business. We are products of our own homes. How we motivate ourselves and how we motivate others involves our family history whether we embrace it or run from it. Regardless, we consciously or subconsciously confront it in how we act and react to stimuli all around us. Those who are placed in positions of power, are often not given extensive training about best practices for leading teams. However, it is hard to believe that basic principles of leadership have not been advanced through a brief lecture or a company training manual. If only a basic level of training is given, one will find as purported through this study, the core values outlined in the "Golden Rule," "grace," and "love." Pull

leaders operate with these core values whether it is intentional or not. Pull leadership is not a cure-all but it is an effective choice for leading individuals and teams. It embraces Christian principles without needing to rely on Biblical jargon. At the most basic level, humanity is celebrated when leaders recognize people for their unique talents and contributions. At the most basic level, employees are celebrated when their supervisors are humble and willing to subscribe to the principles they try to get others to implement.

Being a servant leader who is willing to “wash the feet” of those who serve him or her shows that the leader is one who serves others. Just like children follow what parents do rather than what parents say can be applied with an employer-employee relationship. Research has shown that employees follow those who are willing to do everything they want done for them. They want to listen to those who have believe in shared decision-making. Employees want leaders who pull and not just push. Employees want companies to care that they have children who need daycare and significant others who need time. Research shows that employees want employers that understand basic human needs and put into place ways to honor those needs.

Workplaces that embody the mindset of not only serving their customers but serving their employees in the same manner can create a culture where employees “get on the bus” and are happier and more productive. The research reviewed indicates that employees that have a culture that they enjoy living in are more likely to stay, be more efficient with their time, and be more productive while they work. People have a natural desire to be part of a team, a group of people, almost like a family; when people are placed in a culture that they feel welcome, needed, and are taken care of, they are willing to give more of themselves to that organization. The days of ruling with the iron fist and showing dominance are passed, people want to be lead, not



pushed. Employees want to get on board with what a company is doing, and those that do live happier and healthier lives.

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