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## Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't. By Simon Sinek

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the Lord's leading. To be called by God to leadership does not mean that your path will be a bed of roses. On the contrary—expect pain. Learn to see the pain as a blessing. “At some point we need to radically reframe our concept of happiness, realistic expectations, and the purposes of God. You've got to learn to appreciate the lessons you learn from pain” (loc 169).

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## **LEADERS EAT LAST: WHY SOME TEAMS PULL TOGETHER AND OTHERS DON'T**

*Simon Sinek*  
*New York, NY: Portfolio/Penguin*  
*(2014)*  
*Hardcover, 244 pages*

*Reviewed by WILLIAM K. KOOMSON*

There exists an unambiguous difference between an “authority” figure and a “leader.” For example, throughout most of his life, Mahatma Gandhi did not hold any official position (authority), but he led his people through a nonviolent struggle to achieve independence. In India, he remains revered as the father of the nation. Nelson Mandela spent most of his adult life in prison, yet he achieved freedom for his people while behind granite prison walls. These leaders, among many, understood that uniting the people to bridge diverse interests also meant creating opportunities for others, not for themselves alone or a chosen few. Based on this backdrop of “others,” Simon Sinek's book, *Leaders Eat Last*, offers both a stimulating and an inspiring assessment that strong leaders ought

to provide a wider circle of safety to all. “Weak leaders are the ones who only extend the benefits of the Circle of Safety to their fellow senior executives and a chosen few others” (p. 23). That is, “only when the Circle of Safety surrounds everyone in the organization, and not just a few people or a department or two, are the benefits fully realized” (p. 23).

Leadership practices have gone through a perpetual cycle of change from kings, rulers, and lords as the anointed leaders (Great Man Theory) to behavioral theories that taught that people could learn the art of leadership through teaching and observation. Management theories assume the transactional style of leadership. There are two competing models, “Theory X” and “Theory Y.” The first model employs strict supervision, with external stimuli through rewards and punishments. The second model emphasizes motivation and job satisfaction. Simon Sinek's book extends the motivation and job satisfaction of this second model into considering every worker “more like a family” member. Thus, by simply “changing the environment in which people worked, the same people started acting differently toward each other. They felt like they belonged and that enabled them to relax and feel valued” (p. 11).

In the church organization, some leaders see themselves as “the anointed to lead” type, relegating all others to the classification of “the employees.” When pastors and other church workers are classified as “employees,” they truly exhibit employee-type behaviors. Employees come to work, clock in and clock out, and do their tasks according to their job specifications. Trust is marginal. “Unfortunately, too many of the environments in which we work today do more to frustrate than to foster our

natural inclinations to trust and cooperate” (p. 94). The over-emphasis of individual achievements means that collective performance and team accomplishments are lacking due to “a system of dopamine-driven performance that rewards us for individual achievement at the expense of balancing effects of serotonin and oxytocin that reward us for working together and building bonds of trust and loyalty” (p. 94).

The author discusses multiple points of views, from political leaders, business leaders, and military leaders to society in general, employees, and managers. According to Sinek, many organizations are failing because their work has become a numbers game, rather than shifting their focus toward developing and understanding the needs of people who work in the organization. “If the leaders of organizations give their people something to believe in, if they offer their people a challenge that outsizes their resources but not their intellect, the people will give everything they’ve got to solve the problem” (p. 212). Good organizational culture inspires the spirit of sacrifice and a healthy work environment. On the other hand, workers feel threatened when they perceive that the organization and the environment they work in is not stable. This situation triggers some employees to “start filing complaints in an attempt to protect their bonuses and, at the same time, their jobs. It’s not a culture that inspires people to give their blood, sweat, and tears to the company, its leaders or each other” (p. 170).

This book is a good read for business executives, politicians, students, and anyone aspiring to become a leader. It summarizes the results of many research trials, case studies, and qualitative studies on leadership attributes that are dominant in corpo-

rate settings. Though Sinek’s focus was not on churches and church related organizations, leaders in religious settings may benefit from reading this book. In churches and church organizations, like schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, voluntary organizations, and industries, similar forms of felt needs are demonstrated through the ranks, from top, middle, and lower-level leadership teams. The core concentration of the author was on organizational well-being, and how to motivate, inspire, and promote loyalty and leadership excellence. However, he did not articulate any new theoretical framework of leadership or management principles.

In my opinion, Simon Sinek has done a good job of using real-life organizational situations to describe how leadership should work for people at all levels. I recommend *Leaders Eat Last* without reservation to any person aspiring to leadership in both corporate and non-corporate settings.

PASTOR WILLIAM KOOMSON served as the Atlantic Union Regional Publishing Director for the Review and Herald Publishing Association from 2008 to 2015. He is currently the Executive Director for Home Health Education Ministry, USA.