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# A KINGDOM MODEL OF LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP STANDARD ESTABLISHED ON KINGDOM PRINCIPLES AND EXEMPLIFIED BY THE PERSON AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

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A KINGDOM MODEL OF LEADERSHIP:  
DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP STANDARD ESTABLISHED ON KINGDOM  
PRINCIPLES AND EXEMPLIFIED BY THE PERSON AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

A PROJECT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
MEREDITH JAMES  
SPRING 2023

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

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## ABSTRACT

Although secular leadership principles and insights may benefit pastors and ministry leaders, business practices and cultural trends should not be the driving influences that guide and inform the church. Many pastors and ministry leaders are not practicing the biblical concept of kingdom leadership that Jesus modeled. Instead, they have increasingly relied on secular leadership strategies to produce successful results for their churches. This approach to ministry can often guide ministry leaders to depend on their natural gifts, marketing campaigns, and elevated production elements to grow attendance. The problem with this ministry methodology is that faithfulness and biblical truth are many times exchanged for achievement and notoriety based on growth and numbers. Secular leadership strategies are not inherently wrong; however, they are often used to replace biblically based teaching at the expense of spiritual growth and transformation. Leadership in the kingdom of God is not equivalent to leadership found in secular culture or derived from business principles. The church and its leadership are to be guided by the spiritual principles God has provided in scripture. Pastors and ministry leaders are citizens of God's kingdom and ambassadors of Christ; therefore, they should embody his life and mission. This research aims to construct a kingdom model of leadership that can be utilized in educating and developing pastors and ministry leaders, thereby creating a biblical leadership standard established on kingdom principles and exemplified in the person and ministry of Jesus.

### *Dedication*

The Lord is my Shepherd; glory belongs to him alone.

### *Acknowledgment*

This endeavor would not have been possible without the steadfast love and encouragement of my husband, Tim, and son, Grant. You continuously inspired and championed me in this work, providing strength and perseverance to finish well.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

### *Introduction*

The church and its leadership should be guided by the spiritual principles God has provided in scripture. Ministry leaders need to understand that leadership in the kingdom of God is not equivalent to leadership found in secular culture or derived from business principles. Secular leadership principles and insights might be beneficial for pastors and ministry leaders; however, business practices and cultural trends should not be the driving influences that guide and inform the church. Concerningly, a church viewed by its leadership as a corporation could be predominantly steered by marketing principles and programs rather than the principles of God's Word that produce genuine spiritual growth.<sup>1</sup> Although these practices can be observed in churches of all types and sizes, they are most notably recognized in megachurches, seeker-sensitive churches, and churches ascribing to the church growth movement.

Secularization has been embraced by some leaders in the noted churches to maintain relevance and to attract potential members.<sup>2</sup> This trend is addressed by J.B. Watson, Jr. and Walter H. Scalen, Jr. in the article "Dining with the Devil': The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches." Watson and Scalen provide an understanding of secularization as determined by social scientists: "Secularization, as defined by social scientists, is the process by which religion begins to lose influence in a society as interest in other-worldly or idealistic

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Damazio, *The Making of a Leader* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1988), 2.

<sup>2</sup> J.B. Watson Jr. and Walter H Scalen Jr., "Dining with the Devil': The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches," *International Social Science Review* 83, no. 3/4 (2008): 171-180.

religious ideas is replaced by greater emphasis on material success and other pragmatic concerns.”<sup>3</sup> Secularization frequently leads to a consumer-based approach to ministry to attract prospective members. Evidence of secularization in evangelical churches can often be identified through corporate business culture, self-improvement perspectives, and pop-culture trends.<sup>4</sup> Dependence on these methods can lead a church to become a secular entity over time and lose the ability to influence individual behavior and the larger culture toward the principles and practices of the kingdom of God.<sup>5</sup> Wolfe asserts, “In every aspect of the religious life, American faith has met American culture—and American culture has triumphed.”<sup>6</sup> Secularization is never a fruitful endeavor for the church, yet many evangelical churches have moved in that direction.

Dr. Tracy Munsil, Executive Director of the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, addresses concerns of secularization within the church in the article “US Christians Embrace Secularism in ‘post-Christian’ America.” She contends that the post-Christian reformation within American Christianity is causing Christian groups to abandon biblical truth and traditional theological beliefs and instead adopt secular cultural values.<sup>7</sup> This argument was substantiated in recent research conducted by Dr. George Barna. The American World Inventory 2020 revealed that evangelicals are increasingly embracing secularism. The primary results of the survey include the following: a majority (52%) of evangelicals reject

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<sup>3</sup> Watson and Scalen, “Dining with the Devil,” 174.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 1-9.

<sup>5</sup> Watson and Scalen, “Dining with the Devil.” 171-180.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Tracy Munsil, “US Christians Embrace Secularism in ‘Post-Christian’ America,” Arizona Christian University, October 6, 2020, <http://www.arizonachristian.edu/2020/10/06/us-christians-embrace-secularism-in-post-christian-america/>.

absolute moral truth; 61% do not read the Bible daily; 75% believe that people are basically good rather than subscribing to the biblical view that humans have a sinful nature. The study found that one-third to one-half of the survey's evangelicals embrace various beliefs and behaviors counter to biblical teaching and longstanding evangelical beliefs.<sup>8</sup> This research indicates that American secular culture significantly impacts the evangelical church. Secularism is progressively influencing Christians to abandon God's truth and biblical principles. Barna concludes,

It's one thing for Americans to be confused on the finer points or even hotly debated elements of theology. But for Americans to misunderstand or to flat out reject the Bible as a foundational source of truth and moral guidance, to reject salvation by grace alone, and to reject core doctrines of the Christian faith points to a major crisis in our society.<sup>9</sup>

### *Rationale for the Project*

In the article “‘Dining with the Devil’: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches,” Watson and Scalen suggest that the church growth movement has persuaded many churches to adopt cultural ministry methods. The concern with this practice is that these churches are “reaching the culture by becoming the culture.”<sup>10</sup> Reggie McNeal speaks to this practice in the book *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*. He writes,

Church growth played to the dark side of some church leaders. The abuse of CEO privilege and position in Wall Street scandals has its counterpart in the church. The money and power that gravitate to leaders of large organizations can place

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<sup>8</sup> George Barna, “American Worldview Inventory 2020 Results—FULL Release #11: Churches and Worldview,” Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, October 6, 2020, [https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CRC\\_AWVI2020\\_Release11\\_Digital\\_04\\_20201006.pdf](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CRC_AWVI2020_Release11_Digital_04_20201006.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Munsil, “US Christians Embrace Secularism.”

<sup>10</sup> Watson and Scalen, “‘Dining with the Devil,’” 171-180.

extra pressures on already-cracked character foundations. Under the all-growth-is-good mantra, some unscrupulous and spiritually suspect methodologies have been employed to “get the numbers up.”<sup>11</sup>

McNeal argues that the rise of the “celebrity-status church culture” has contributed to an unhealthy environment for many pastors and ministry leaders. It has created a culture of competition and unreachable standards within the church and in ministry at large. The focus on methodologies and success promoted throughout the church growth movement has only heightened this phenomenon.<sup>12</sup> The twenty-first century American evangelical church has experienced the results of this unhealthy setting among its leadership. An emphasis on celebrity, status, money, and numerical success has led to the demise of several prominent evangelical leaders. Michael Youssef, senior pastor of the Church of the Apostles, contributed to the conversation regarding the inability of many celebrity pastors to withstand the pressures of notoriety while maintaining their integrity. He suggests that this problem arises because pastors can become more concerned with being celebrities and CEOs of the church rather than serving and ministering as shepherds. Youssef further argues that this trend is a direct result of secularization.<sup>13</sup> This sentiment is echoed by Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary President and Missiology professor Scott Sunquist. He contends, “We have a pandemic of narcissism today. Social media feeds our small self-esteem appetite until it becomes a narcissistic monster. Most leaders fall into this trap.” Sunquist continues: “We see leaders fail because they did not name the demons, and they did not have strong people around them to guide them toward

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<sup>11</sup> Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 22-23.

<sup>12</sup> McNeal, *The Present Future*, 23-25.

<sup>13</sup> Leah MarieAnn Klett, “Crisis in Church Leadership: How Celebrity Pastors Can Avoid Failing the Fame Test,” *The Christian Post*, October 10, 2021, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/how-christian-celebrities-can-avoid-failing-the-fame-test.html>.

holiness.”<sup>14</sup> Influence and notoriety have proven to be disastrous for many prominent ministry leaders. Lack of character partnered with a preoccupation for power and success formulate to create ministerial failure. Corporate models of leadership can provide beneficial elements to the church; however, it is essential that they never overshadow the kingdom principles that are found in the Word of God.<sup>15</sup>

Ministry leaders have increasingly looked to cultural trends and business models to inform and guide their leadership. Focusing on performance and consumerism redefined how these leaders determined success within the church. The techniques and models that have proven to be immensely prosperous in the business world have also garnered the attention of many ministry leaders who are driven by success. These ministry leaders will often rely on management tools, marketing strategies, statistics, and data to produce successful results for their churches. This practice is especially prevalent in the modern church growth movement. The problem with this ministry approach is that faithfulness and biblical truth are often exchanged for achievement and notoriety based on growth and numbers. Many ministry leaders have adopted secular means of leading their churches while abandoning the principles found throughout scripture. Some ministry leaders have even neglected the kingdom principles of leadership and have increasingly adopted cultural methods of attracting and entertaining people. The world's values, however, are countercultural to those of the kingdom.<sup>16</sup> Secularization of the church has

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Gryboski, “‘Pandemic of Narcissism’: Seminaries Respond to the Evangelical Church Leadership Crisis,” *The Christian Post*, October 9, 2021, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/seminaries-respond-to-the-evangelical-church-leadership-crisis.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 16-17.

<sup>16</sup> John Ortberg, “What Does God Think of Entertainment?,” *CT Pastors*, April 18, 2011, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2011/spring/whatdoesgodthink.html>.

created a slippery slope that suggests God and his principles are irrelevant.<sup>17</sup> Ministry leaders are citizens of God’s kingdom and should not be developing their leadership around cultural relevance or corporate ideals.<sup>18</sup>

In the article “Authentic Spiritual Leadership,” Richard Mayhue addresses a critical differentiating factor for leadership in the church. He writes,

I once asked a group of pastors to define “spiritual leadership.” One man quickly responded with, “Knowing where you are going and getting people to follow.” He seemed a little irritated when I continued to probe for a better answer. His response focused exclusively on “leadership” and ignored the “spiritual” aspect. That is a common mistake when seeking leadership in the church.<sup>19</sup>

Mayhue contends that the church is in dire need of strong spiritual leaders as defined by scripture. The model for this leadership is unquestionably Jesus.<sup>20</sup> He is the most remarkable example of a leader. His success was not measured by achievement or outcomes but rather by the life that he led. Jesus is *the* kingdom leader. He taught the disciples the kingdom way of leadership in the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon established non-negotiable kingdom principles of leadership.<sup>21</sup> Joseph Stowell writes in the book *Redefining Leadership: Character-Driven Habits of Effective Leaders*, “If the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, then it seems a great contradiction for kingdom of Christ leaders to be leading by advice and values that are of

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<sup>17</sup> Os Guinness, “Church Growth—Success At What Price?” *Ligonier Ministries*, April 1, 1992, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/church-growth-success-at-what-price/>.

<sup>18</sup> Brett McCracken, *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 212.

<sup>19</sup> Richard L Mayhue, “Authentic Spiritual Leadership,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 22, no. 2 (2011): 213-224.

<sup>20</sup> Mayhue, “Authentic Spiritual Leadership,” 215; 221.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph M. Stowell, *Redefining Leadership: Character-Driven Habits of Effective Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 16-17.

this world.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, followers of Jesus must embody his leadership model if they aim to lead and influence others toward the mission of God.<sup>23</sup>

Many twenty-first century ministry leaders are not practicing the biblical concept of kingdom leadership that Jesus modeled. Instead, they have increasingly relied on secular leadership strategies to produce successful results for their churches. This approach to ministry can often guide ministry leaders to rely on their natural gifts, marketing campaigns, and elevated production elements to grow attendance. Secular leadership strategies are not inherently wrong; however, they are often used to replace biblically based teaching at the expense of spiritual growth and transformation. Many leaders claim that leadership is influence. This argument suggests that leaders are influencing those who follow them toward something. The primary objective of kingdom leaders should be to influence people in the direction of a life that follows Jesus.<sup>24</sup> The Apostle Paul points toward this life of following Jesus in 1 Cor 11:1 (NIV) when he says, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Jesus called the disciples to follow him and continues calling twenty-first century ministry leaders to follow his example in how they lead the body of Christ. Ministry leaders are called to be ambassadors for Christ. Paul affirms this calling in 2 Cor 5:20 (ESV), writing, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” An ambassador is an authorized representative or messenger.<sup>25</sup> Ministry leaders are ambassadors of Christ and should therefore exemplify his life

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<sup>22</sup> Stowell, *Redefining Leadership*, 50.

<sup>23</sup> Stowell, *Redefining Leadership*, 59.

<sup>24</sup> Stowell, *Redefining Leadership*, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Merriam-Webster, s.v. “Ambassador,” accessed December 5, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ambassador>.

and mission. Their leadership should embody his character and methodologies.<sup>26</sup> In the book

*Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church*, Paul Tripp writes,

It's time for us to confess that personal ambition often moves and shapes our leadership more than the gospel does. It's time to confess that as leaders we have given in to the temptation to be ambassadors of something other than our Lord. It's time to humbly admit that we cannot serve leadership idols and be ambassadors at the same time.<sup>27</sup>

The primary research question is this: How can ministry leaders formulate a framework for developing kingdom leadership characteristics exemplified by the person and ministry of Jesus? This research aims to construct a kingdom model of leadership that can be utilized in educating and developing pastors and ministry leaders. It will create a biblical leadership standard established on kingdom principles and exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus.<sup>28</sup>

### *Relationship of the Project to the Researcher's Ministry*

The focus of this doctoral research project is on ministry leadership. The goal of the research is to identify the characteristics that Jesus exemplified in the way that he led and ministered to others. This research will be used to educate and develop healthy and effective ministry leaders.

The emphasis of my education has been on spiritual formation and ministry leadership. Spiritual formation and leadership are equally important in developing healthy ministry leaders. My ministry was created through this understanding and a desire to educate and equip ministry leaders. The intention of the ministry is to assist leaders in their spiritual growth and deepen their

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<sup>26</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 107-109.

<sup>27</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 109; Meredith James, "Contextual Engagement I Final Paper: The Kingdom of God" (essay, Southeastern University, 2021), 1-3.

<sup>28</sup> Meredith James, "Contextual Study of the Ministry Challenge: Foundational Aspects of Kingdom Ministry Leadership" (essay, Southeastern University, 2022), 3.



knowledge of a biblically based way of carrying out ministry leadership. I have invested over twenty-five years in this endeavor, educationally and professionally. This ministry began with leading and developing leaders within worship ministries and later expanded to all contexts of ministry. An essential component of my ministry is educating and developing young ministry leaders. This facet of ministry emerged through teaching teenagers and young adults at retreats, workshops, and conferences. The development of student ministry leaders continued through the role of a spiritual formation and leadership educator in a Christian high school and included the development of a leadership and spiritual formation curriculum for students in grades nine through twelve.

### *Limitations of the Project*

The scope of this research will be limited to pastors and ministry leaders and will engage scripture, ministry- and faith-based resources, and leadership experts in the context of ministry. Secular leadership resources will be consulted to explore the principles that inform secular leadership models. The focus of the research will be explicitly on Jesus in an attempt to develop a leadership framework from his life and ministry. There will be specific attention given to the characteristics of leadership that are representative of the kingdom of God and that were exemplified by Jesus. The intended outcome is limited to the education and development of pastors and ministry leaders.

The methodology chosen for this research project is qualitative. Qualitative research, in the form of a survey, was conducted to determine whether present-day lead pastors embody the kingdom leadership taught and exemplified by Jesus. The survey focused on the practical

application of kingdom leadership characteristics for pastors and ministry leaders. Participation was limited to pastors and full-time church staff members and was specifically focused on evaluating lead pastors. The questions used in the survey were developed from research investigating the characteristics necessary for effective kingdom leadership. They were derived from relevant literature devoted to ministry leadership that is both gospel-centered and modeled after the leadership that Jesus taught and embodied.<sup>29</sup> Neither secular leadership resources nor experts were consulted or used to develop the survey questions.

#### *Research Question and Anticipated Results*

The aforementioned primary question guiding the research is this: How can ministry leaders formulate a framework for developing kingdom leadership characteristics exemplified by the person and ministry of Jesus? The anticipated results from the research include (1) a comprehensive theological-biblical foundation on the kingdom leadership that Jesus modeled, (2) a ministry leadership framework that will be used to educate and develop pastors and ministry leaders, and (3) an evaluation tool that will be used to determine the areas of strength and weakness of pastors and ministry leaders in relation to the characteristics of kingdom leadership that Jesus embodied.

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<sup>29</sup> James, "Contextual Study of the Ministry Challenge," 3, 24.

### *Goals and Objectives*

This research project aims to answer the primary research question: How can ministry leaders formulate a framework for developing kingdom leadership characteristics exemplified by the person and ministry of Jesus? The results that are yielded from the research will serve to create a kingdom model of leadership to educate and develop ministry leaders, providing a biblically based leadership standard established on kingdom principles and exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus.<sup>30</sup>

The first goal of this research is to discover the biblical definition of the kingdom of God. The first objective will be to define the kingdom of God. The second objective will be to identify the characteristics of the kingdom of God. This objective will be accomplished by thoroughly examining relevant literature devoted to the kingdom of God and the leadership of Jesus. Scripture will be critical in grounding and informing the research.<sup>31</sup>

The second goal of this research is to develop a theology of leadership. The first objective will be to engage in an in-depth study of scripture that will focus on the life and ministry of Jesus. The second objective will be to explore the role of Jesus as a shepherd-leader. The third objective will be to examine the purpose and motives of the ministry of Jesus as identified in Luke 4:16-19.

The third goal of the research is to engage relevant literature devoted to ministry leadership that is both gospel-centered and modeled after the leadership of Jesus to discover the specific attributes necessary for effective kingdom leadership. The first objective will be to create an evaluation tool for pastors and ministry leaders to evaluate their areas of strength and

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<sup>30</sup> James, "Contextual Study of the Ministry Challenge," 3.

<sup>31</sup> James, "Contextual Engagement I Final Paper," 3.

weakness based on these characteristics. The second objective will be to identify action steps to remediate areas of deficiency discovered through the evaluation tool.

This research aims to create a ministry leadership framework that encompasses a biblical concept of the kingdom of God, a theology of leadership, and the characteristics necessary for effective kingdom leadership.

### *Summary*

This research will investigate the kingdom of God and the person and ministry of Jesus to establish a framework of kingdom leadership for pastors and ministry leaders. The theological-biblical foundation and a literature review on ministry leadership will determine the role, motives, and characteristics essential for leadership in the kingdom of God. The research aims to create a kingdom model of leadership that can be used to educate and develop ministry leaders.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PROJECT IN PERSPECTIVE

#### *Introduction*

A thorough understanding of the kingdom of God and its components is necessary in developing a kingdom leadership model for pastors and ministry leaders. Significant attention must be given to defining the kingdom of God and outlining its characterizing principles in this process. Jesus is established as the example for the development of a kingdom model of leadership; therefore, considerable emphasis must be given to his life and ministry.

God provided the shepherd motif as a model of leadership throughout scripture; this pattern is demonstrated both through the examples of God as the Great Shepherd and Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The shepherd motif provides a biblical example of leadership that is patterned after the leadership attributes of God and witnessed in Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus established the purpose and motivation for a kingdom model of leadership in his synagogue sermon found in the Gospel of Luke. Examination of this sermon is necessary to determine the correct intentions and heart attitudes that guide pastors and ministry leaders in their leadership.

Chapter two contains theological and biblical dimensions to answer the following research question: How can ministry leaders formulate a framework for developing kingdom leadership characteristics exemplified by the person and ministry of Jesus? The intent of this theological and biblical research is to explore the kingdom of God, shepherd leadership, and the purpose and proper motives for ministry established by Jesus in Luke 4:18-19. A biblical leadership model is necessary to guide the church and its leaders. God has provided principles

and examples of faithful leadership in scripture to serve in the development of a model for the church.<sup>1</sup>

### *Theological and Biblical Dimensions*

Biblical concept of the kingdom of God

*Defining the kingdom of God.* The kingdom of God is situated as an important topic throughout the Bible. The Old Testament prioritizes God’s kingship by establishing God as the king of Israel and over all of the Earth; the New Testament further develops the theme of the kingdom of God, particularly in the Synoptic Gospels of Mark, Luke, and Matthew.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that Douglas and Tenney see the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven as synonymous phrases in scripture.<sup>3</sup> The biblical meaning of the word “kingdom” refers to the rank, authority, and sovereignty exercised by a king. The Old Testament uses the Hebrew word *malkuth* when identifying the kingdom of God while the New Testament uses the Greek word *basileia*.<sup>4</sup> J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney define the kingdom of God as “his sovereign activity as King in saving sinners and overcoming evil.”<sup>5</sup> God is the sovereign King of the kingdom of God, where

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<sup>1</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Tremper Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Illustrated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 1006-1007.

<sup>3</sup> J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Moisés Silva, Illustrated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 811.

<sup>4</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas and Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 809.

he has the absolute authority to rule. The area over which God rules is called his realm and includes the heavens and the earth.<sup>6</sup>

Every instance in which the kingdom of God is referenced in scripture indicates God's reign, rule, and sovereignty. George Eldon Ladd writes, "God's Kingdom is His power."<sup>7</sup> Scripture speaks of God's kingdom and power in the Psalms; the psalmist wrote, "They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power" (Ps 145:11) and continued, "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations" (Ps 145:13). These verses emphasize the everlasting nature of God's rule. Dan 4:3 reiterates Ps 145:13, further underscoring God's sovereignty throughout scripture.<sup>8</sup>

*The realms of the kingdom of God.* God's sovereign rule is experienced within his realm and can exist in the present and the future to varying degrees. At different stages throughout redemptive history, God's reign has been revealed. Heaven represents the age to come, in which humanity will fully realize the blessings of God in their complete perfection. However, his kingdom may also be experienced here and now, in part. The Second Coming of Christ, the *parousia*, will end this age of the reign of God and inaugurate the age to come.<sup>9</sup>

This age of the reign of God and the age to come have contrasting characteristics and will, therefore, yield various experiences. Earth's present age is dominated by evil, sin, unrighteousness, and rebellion against God; the Apostle Paul described these desires of the flesh

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<sup>6</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 518-19.

<sup>9</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 22-27.

in Galatians: “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:19-21). Consequently, the modern age proves a hostile environment for the gospel as Satan has been granted a measure of power and authority from God that allows him to influence and compete for the hearts of humanity.<sup>10</sup> The Apostle Paul wrote, “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:4). The gospel of the kingdom becomes invisible to unbelievers because Satan has blinded their minds; they reject the scriptures because they cannot understand them. Satan is actively working in the present age to hinder the gospel of the kingdom, leading this age into evil rebellion against God.<sup>11</sup> Believers will certainly suffer affliction during this time as they are exposed to great hostility. However, the powers of the coming age have permeated this age, allowing a means by which God’s people may endure; Christ made way for this transaction to happen through his death and resurrection.<sup>12</sup> Paul wrote in Galatians that Christ “gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Gal 1:4). Christ provides a means for believers to be empowered so that they might be delivered from the evil that dominates the present age.

God’s kingdom serves as part of the age to come, directly opposing the present age and instead representing eternal life and salvation, which pervade the promised future for believers.

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<sup>10</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 28-30.

<sup>11</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 8 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 103-104.

<sup>12</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 31-41.



One must be born again to enter the kingdom of God, a truth observed in John 3:3-5 during a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus:

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

Jesus emphasized the fact that entering the kingdom demands more than law-keeping or privileged positions; it requires a spiritual transformation through a personal relationship with him.<sup>13</sup> The kingdom of Heaven is characterized by righteousness and will be marked by the perfect fullness of God’s kingdom. Destruction of the enemy ensures there will be no more evil, wickedness, or sin in the age to come, which will arrive after the Second Coming of Christ; indeed, he is the only one who can usher in the coming age.<sup>14</sup>

*The mystery of the kingdom of God.* The kingdom of God is a mystery, a hidden truth that must be revealed to the unsaved for their understanding; only those who are born again can perceive the kingdom of God.<sup>15</sup> Jesus demonstrated this concept in Matt 13:11 when he explained why he spoke in parables to the disciples: “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.” In the book *The Kingdom of God*, Martyn Lloyd-Jones identifies Christ himself as the mystery of the kingdom because he is the one who brings

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<sup>13</sup> Bruce Milne, *The Message of John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 75-76.

<sup>14</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013), 76.

<sup>15</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 98-99.

it.<sup>16</sup> Paul described this idea in 1 Timothy when he said, “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory” (1 Tim 3:16).

The greatest mystery of the kingdom of God is the way in which God saves humanity; his sacrifice on the cross, which offers healing to all those who believe, provided a way of redemption for all. Each individual must elect on his or her own to receive Christ and be born again.<sup>17</sup> Jesus admonished, “For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matt 7:14). The narrow gate of salvation leads to the abundant life only found in the kingdom of God, but it is difficult and marked by persecution and opposition.<sup>18</sup> Absolute submission to the Father, on his terms and by his principles, is required when one decides to receive Christ. He provides only one way into the kingdom of God: through Christ crucified.<sup>19</sup> Jesus revealed this truth in the Gospel of John when he declared, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Preaching is essential in this process because the Word is planted in the hearts of the hearers, and the Holy Spirit works to apply it in their lives. In this planting process, a profound work takes place in the souls of humankind.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 98-99.

<sup>17</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 100.

<sup>18</sup> D. A. Carson, Walter W. Wessel, and Walter L. Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke, with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (London: Zondervan, 1984), 188-89.

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 166.

<sup>20</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 100.

The final mystery that awaits God’s people is future glory; Christ’s return destroys all tribulation and ushers in a new kingdom.<sup>21</sup> The Apostle Peter wrote, “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13). The new kingdom will be a life characterized by freedom from sin, and God’s people will be made righteous by their faith in Christ.<sup>22</sup> The tragedy of the mystery of the kingdom is that not everyone will receive it—God does not force the kingdom onto anyone; instead, individuals must seek salvation and all of its blessings. Acceptance of the kingdom is best represented in the parable of the sower, found in Matthew 13. Some people will receive the seed of the gospel while others will reject it; still others will not understand it because Satan will deceive them. The kingdom is a costly gift, and each person must decide to surrender their will and heart to God in order to inherit his kingdom.<sup>23</sup>

*The kingdom demands a decision.* The most critical decision any person will have to make is whether they will enter the kingdom of God. God has given his Word in the New Testament, and it requires a response; every person who has heard the Word of God has chosen either to receive or reject it—a decision regarding the kingdom cannot remain neutral.<sup>24</sup> Hebrews 12:25 states, “See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.” God speaks through scripture and provides all the resources necessary to live an abundant life through Christ. The author of Hebrews stresses

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<sup>21</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 101.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Harvey and Philip H. Towner, *2 Peter & Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 130-31.

<sup>23</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 56-57.

<sup>24</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 205-6.

the importance of listening to God's warnings, receiving Christ, and living by the truths God has spoken in his Word,<sup>25</sup> all of which are necessary in order to enter the kingdom of God; the consequences are dire. God sent his only Son into the world to save humanity from an eternity of evil and darkness. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus urged the disciples to seek the kingdom first. He understood the weight of this decision, knowing that one day, each person stands before God in judgment, whether or not he or she heeded God's words.<sup>26</sup>

Restoration, by way of new birth, is necessary to enter God's kingdom; this new birth is a fresh start that requires the old way of life to die completely. Such a rebirth does not merely consist of behavior modification; rather, the new life involves living wholly submitting to God and dedicating oneself to his glory. The reborn life is committed to loving God with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains that the kingdom of God is "entering into the spiritual realm, into fellowship with the almighty and the everlasting God. It means being a citizen of God's kingdom; it means walking with him."<sup>27</sup> He continues, "It is the realm of light and glory; and before I can enter it I must have something in me that corresponds to that."<sup>28</sup> Regeneration, therefore, is absolutely necessary; no one can enter the kingdom of God in their naturally born state. The kingdom is where God dwells, and in order to commune with him, each man and woman must be born again.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ray C. Stedman, Haddon W. Robinson, and Grant R. Osborne, *Hebrews* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 208-15.

<sup>27</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 200.

<sup>28</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 200.

<sup>29</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 193-200.

To receive the kingdom of God, one must believe that Jesus is God incarnate—God in the flesh, sent to bring personal redemption. Such salvation requires obedience to his teachings and their demands. Reception of the kingdom demands the understanding of one’s inherent nature as a lost and hopeless sinner who is in need of rebirth through Christ. Submission, both to God’s way of salvation as well as his rule and reign, is essential.<sup>30</sup> Jesus emphasized this truth in Matt 16:24-26:

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

*Jesus and the kingdom of God.* Jesus began his public ministry by entering Galilee and announcing that the gospel of the kingdom of God had arrived. Mark 1:14-15 reveals, “Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’” This message of the coming of the kingdom of God was paramount to the mission of Jesus.<sup>31</sup> Jesus announced that he had something significant to share that was important for the people to hear; it was an authoritative announcement from God. He was preaching the beginning of the gospel, and it carried with it a plan and a purpose. God’s plan for this world, from the beginning of time, was to deliver people from their sin and shame.<sup>32</sup> 1 Cor 2:7 states, “But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.” Here, Paul emphasized that God foreordained

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<sup>30</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 63-66.

<sup>31</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 13-15.

the gospel in his sovereignty, which was his purposed plan for his people before time began.<sup>33</sup>

This truth is revealed through the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, and the time had come for its fulfillment. Jesus proclaimed this reality when he said, “the time is fulfilled.”<sup>34</sup>

Jesus’ synagogue sermon in Nazareth introduced Jesus as the gospel. In effect, he announced that the kingdom of God had arrived in his person.<sup>35</sup> Jesus declared, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). This announcement from Jesus is a direct fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-2. His ministry is a realization of the Old Testament scriptures and will be characterized by preaching the good news to those in need and performing mighty works. He is the appointed Messiah whom the Spirit has anointed to bring salvation to the world.<sup>36</sup> The purpose of the gospel, therefore, is to usher in freedom and provide healing. The kingdom arrived in Jesus, and the coming of the kingdom imparts God’s reign and rule, also bringing righteousness, peace, blessings, favor, hope, and the defeat of evil for those who believe in him. God’s people are heirs to his kingdom and receive the spiritual blessings that come with it. There is only one way to enter the kingdom of God—through Christ’s death on the cross. His love for humanity is so great that he was willing to be crucified so that a way through the narrow gate would be available to all.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Leon L. Morris, *1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 59-60.

<sup>34</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 22-23.

<sup>36</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, American ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 178.

<sup>37</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 21-24.

Both the mission and ministry of Jesus were rooted in the kingdom of God; it was his primary concern and purpose. The teachings of Jesus are intended to show people how they can enter the kingdom of God. The Gospel of Matthew reveals, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20) and “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 7:21). The mighty works of Jesus affirm that the kingdom of God has arrived. Matt 12:28 demonstrates: “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Parables are a means by which Jesus can illustrate the truth of the kingdom to his disciples. He explained to them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matt 13:11). Jesus taught his followers how to pray for the kingdom: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). The night before his death, he encouraged the disciples to partake with him in the fellowship and blessings of the kingdom. Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke, “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:28-30). Finally, Jesus promises he will return in glory to bring the inheritance of the kingdom to God’s people. He exclaims in Matt 25:31-34,

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 14-15.

Table 2.1. The kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus

Teaching	Matt 5:20 Matt 7:21
Mighty Works	Matt 12:28
Parables	Matt 13:11
Prayer	Matt 6:10
Encouragement	Luke 22:22-30
Promises	Matt 25:31-34

The kingdom of God is the mission of Jesus, and he urges his followers to seek it above all else. He said in the Gospel of Matthew, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). Jesus made sure to emphasize that the kingdom of God needs to be the driving priority for God’s people. They are not to pursue temporal things as those who do not know Jesus do; their lives should be markedly distinguished from a pagan lifestyle. Carson, Wessell, and Liefeld clarify this concept: “To seek first the kingdom is to desire above all to enter into, submit to, and participate in spreading the news of the saving reign of God, the messianic kingdom already inaugurated by Jesus, and to live so as to store up treasures in heaven in the prospect of the kingdom’s consummation.”<sup>39</sup>

*Characteristics of the kingdom of God: Jesus is the model.* Jesus began his earthly ministry by choosing disciples and instructing them to follow him. He was a teacher and a mentor to the

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<sup>39</sup> Carson, Wessel, and Liefeld, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 181-82.



disciples as he modeled kingdom living.<sup>40</sup> The coming of the kingdom of God was paramount to the mission of Jesus; the prominence of the kingdom is reflected in how he lived, in the truths he taught, and in the works that he performed. Jesus embodied the way of the kingdom.<sup>41</sup> He demonstrated to the disciples the way in which they should continue to endure after he would no longer be with them. He showed them how to accomplish his mission and live as heirs of the kingdom. F. B. Meyer writes, “Our Lord for thirty years was content to live an absolutely holy life, as the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot; and His supreme work in the world was not only to give His life as a ransom, but to live His life that He might leave us an example that we should follow in His steps.”<sup>42</sup> The Apostle Peter echoed this sentiment in 1 Peter: “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Pet 2:21).

Jesus was committed to executing the work of the Father. Luke 2:49 records Jesus as a young boy emphasizing to his parents the urgency with which he must conduct his Father’s business. He said to them, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49). John 17 records Jesus declaring to the Father that he glorifies him in his earthly life and ministry: “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do” (John 17:4). The concern that matters most to Jesus is glorifying the Father, which is ultimately the goal of holy living. The Sermon on the Mount reflects Jesus’ concern for the disciples to exemplify this holy life. He said to them, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16). Jesus’ life was motivated by

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Youssef, *The Leadership Style of Jesus: How to Make a Lasting Impact* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 11-12.

<sup>41</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 12.

<sup>42</sup> F. B. Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom: Meditations on the Sermon on the Mount* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 30.

this one objective; he embodied it in his life and intentionally urged the disciples to follow his example.<sup>43</sup>

Prayer was a necessary discipline that Jesus modeled for the disciples, and the most impactful way he achieved this practice was by praying constantly. This example moved the disciples, and they asked Jesus to show them how to pray. This request is illustrated in Luke 11:1: “Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1). Jesus went on to demonstrate to the disciples how to pray, telling them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation” (Luke 11:2-4). Jesus models a life of prayer to the disciples while also providing them with a model of how to petition the Father.<sup>44</sup>

Jesus earned the trust of his followers by living in a manner that was worthy of being followed. He set their vision on the kingdom while mentoring, teaching, and challenging them; his leadership was defined by servanthood and humility. He modeled courage and boldness in standing resolutely for kingdom values and principles. His mission in life was to do the will of the Father, even unto death on a cross, thereby embodying love, sacrifice, and forgiveness. Jesus provides this model for every disciple as they endeavor to follow him.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom*, 40-41.

<sup>44</sup> Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom*, 99-100.

<sup>45</sup> Youssef, *The Leadership Style of Jesus*, 12, 25, 57, 87.

*Characteristics of the kingdom of God: Relationship to the Father.* Jesus, even as a young boy, understood that dependency on the Father was essential for his life and ministry. He quickly stressed this point to his parents when they were confused by his disappearance. He responded to them: “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49, NKJV). Jesus was disappointed that not even his parents understood that his relationship with the Father was critically important and superseded all else.<sup>46</sup>

Jesus was committed to faithfully executing the Father’s will, which is evidenced by his practice of solitude and prayer. It was only after a long night of prayer that he chose the disciples: “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles” (Luke 6:12-13, ESV). Jesus commissioned these disciples to preach and gave them the authority to cast out demons. Time with the Father in prayer was needed to take these critical actions, and Jesus was constantly praying. His disciples saw this practice modeled in the mornings when he would retreat for a time of solitary prayer and in the evenings when he climbed mountains to be alone for prayer. Jesus modeled dependence on the Father for his followers through the discipline of a prayerful life.<sup>47</sup>

Jesus, as the Son of God, was full of divine nature; he was capable of living life entirely on his own merits. However, he became poor and emptied himself so God could work through him. Jesus never spoke his own words; he only shared that which the Father desired to say through him. He followed God’s will and became a conduit for the mighty works of the Father.

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<sup>46</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 1st ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1982), 444.

<sup>47</sup> Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom*, 8-9, 99.

Jesus received his power from God, and he pointed directly to the Father in everything that he said and did. Glorifying the Father was his ultimate purpose, which he reminded the disciples of this intention during the Sermon on the Mount. Followers of Jesus are to be a light in the world, giving “glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16). Jesus relied on God for everything and made glorifying him a priority in all he did.<sup>48</sup>

Paul instructs in Eph 5:1 that followers of Jesus are called to be imitators of God; undoubtedly, an intimate relationship is necessary in order to imitate someone. Therefore, God’s people will need to develop and foster a close relationship with him so they can know his thoughts and ways. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor 3:18). Paul emphasized that the character of God’s people will become more like his as they spend time with the Lord and emulate his character, a transformation achieved through worship, prayer, the study of scripture, and participation in the body of Christ.<sup>49</sup> Jesus understood the necessity of a relationship with God. He loved the Father and only desired to please him, which required spending significant time alone with God. Through prayer and solitude, God’s people will develop a relationship with him in which they can be encouraged, empowered, and equipped for life and ministry.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom*, 21, 40-41.

<sup>49</sup> John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Kingdom Living: Growing in the Character of Christ* (London, England: Hodder & Stoughton Religious, 1988), 21-23.

<sup>50</sup> Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom*, 87.

*Characteristics of the kingdom of God: Seek the kingdom of God.* The kingdom of God was central and essential to the mission and ministry of Jesus.<sup>51</sup> The kingdom of God was so important to Jesus that he urged his followers to seek it above all else: “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). Jesus intentionally emphasized that the kingdom of God needs to be the driving priority for God’s people. They are not to pursue the temporal things of the world, which are fleeting.

The kingdom of God defined Jesus’ entire life and ministry. His teachings were meant to demonstrate how to enter the kingdom of God, and he declared in the Gospel of Matthew, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20). Jesus went on further to illustrate, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 7:21). The mighty works of Jesus are intended to demonstrate that the kingdom of God has come upon the disciples. He said to them, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). Jesus used parables to explain the truth of the kingdom to the disciples. He told them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matt 13:11). He taught the disciples to pray: “Thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). Jesus encouraged the disciples that they would fellowship with him in the kingdom (Luke 22:22-30). He assured them that he will return to the earth in glory to bring the blessedness of the kingdom to those who are to inherit the kingdom of God (Matt 25:31, 34).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 14.

<sup>52</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 14-15.

Jesus was so committed to communicating the prioritization of the kingdom of God to the disciples that he strongly warned of being doublehearted. He made this concept clear in the sixth chapter of Matthew. His message insists that one cannot have a heart invested in earthly matters while professing to belong to the kingdom. Jesus drew a firm line in the sand when he declared, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matt 6:24). The kingdom demands complete devotion, which means seeking God’s will wholeheartedly and living to please and glorify him alone.<sup>53</sup> The heart of the gospel is represented in the words of Jesus in Matt 6:33, where he said, “Seek first the kingdom of God.” He emphasized that God’s concern is with the priorities of the hearts of his followers. The gospel demands total commitment to the kingdom, and God’s people need to make it their primary motivation.<sup>54</sup> The desert fathers modeled the gospel through their simple and practical way of life, demonstrating that the kingdom of God is accessible to all who desire it.<sup>55</sup> Saint Anthony, the Father of monks, writes,

Some leave home and cross the seas in order to gain an education, but there is no need for us to go away on account of the kingdom of God nor need we cross the sea in search of virtue. For the Lord has told us, “The kingdom of God is within you.” All that is needed for goodness is that which is within, the human heart.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom*, 131-33.

<sup>54</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 29-32.

<sup>55</sup> Benedicta Ward, ed., *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*, Rev. ed. (London, England: Penguin Classics, 2003), x.

<sup>56</sup> Athanasius, *Life of St Antony*, trans. Robert T. Meyer (London, England: Longmans, Green & Co., 1950), 37.

*Characteristics of the kingdom of God: Righteousness.* Jesus talked about righteousness often because it is the characteristic that matters most to God. Righteousness, in fact, is the qualifying factor that determines whether a person can enter the kingdom of God. Furthermore, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was careful to stress that this righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and scribes. He said, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20). The scribes and Pharisees were devoted to righteous living because they were professional students of religion, committed to studying the scriptures and living according to their precepts. Exceeding the righteousness of these religious students requires a standard that is above reproach. The kingdom has values that differ from those found in the world. The righteousness of the kingdom is of greater concern than the external acts of sin. God is looking at humans’ hearts and desiring to address the root cause of the sin. God’s righteousness is grounded in love and is devoid of all selfish motivation; it is a standard of character that can only be attained by experiencing the reign of God in one’s life. Only the kingdom can give what the kingdom requires.<sup>57</sup>

Martin Luther struggled with the search for a gracious God. He was concerned with how sinners could obtain a righteousness that would be acceptable to a righteous God.<sup>58</sup> C. S. Lewis also wrestled with the idea of righteousness and the corrupt and ungodly nature of humans, writing, “In my most clear-sighted moments not only do I not think myself a nice man, but I know that I am a very nasty one. I can look at some of the things I have done with horror and loathing.”<sup>59</sup> Luther reconciled his question with the gospel, recognizing that it provides justifying

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<sup>57</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 79-94.

<sup>58</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2017), 272.

<sup>59</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), 116.

righteousness to believers. He concluded that God is not a harsh judge but rather is merciful and gracious in offering righteousness to sinners as a gift.<sup>60</sup>

According to systematic theologian Wayne Grudem, righteousness is “The doctrine that God always acts in accordance with what is right and that he is himself the final standard of what is right.”<sup>61</sup> God, himself, is righteousness, and he possesses the power to discharge righteousness. He said of himself, “I the Lord speak the truth; I declare what is right” (Isa 45:19). Moses spoke of God, saying, “All his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he” (Deut 32:4). The justice of God requires that he punish sin and deal with people according to the consequences they deserve. God is incapable of withholding punishment for sin because of his righteous nature; to do so would indicate that he is unrighteous. The only way in which God can abstain from punishing sin is through another means of justice. The Apostle Paul indicated that God sent Christ as a sacrifice to assume the penalty of sin,<sup>62</sup> writing,

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom 3:23-26)

Tenney and Silva define righteousness as “Morally right behavior or character. Justice, honesty, loyalty,” and continue, “In its general use, righteousness represents any conformity to a standard, whether that standard has to do with the inner character of a person or the objective standard of accepted law. With reference to a person, it has to do with his conformity to God’s

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<sup>60</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 272, 338.

<sup>61</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 1523.

<sup>62</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 243-244.



holiness.”<sup>63</sup> God is the final standard of righteousness; therefore, righteousness is determined by that which conforms to his moral character.<sup>64</sup> The problem is that human righteousness fails when attempted through absolute obedience. God’s mercy and righteousness are needed to justify humankind through the forgiveness of sins; his righteousness becomes a person’s righteousness through a relationship of faith in Christ. The anonymous author, Mathetes, speaks of this sacrificial exchange, saying,

He himself took on him the burden of our iniquities, he gave his own Son as a ransom for us, the holy One for transgressors, the blameless One for the wicked, the righteous One for the unrighteous, the incorruptible One for the corruptible, the immortal One for them that are mortal. For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified, than by the only Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! That the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that righteousness of One should justify many transgressors!<sup>65</sup>

Righteousness is never something to be acquired; rather, it is a dependent relationship with Jesus, in whom all righteousness dwells.<sup>66</sup> Tenney and Silva conclude, “Christian righteousness is never an attainment; it is a direction, a loyalty, a commitment, a hope—and only someday an arrival.”<sup>67</sup>

Righteous people love God wholeheartedly and live for his glory as they follow his commandments; they love others more than themselves. This kind of commitment is required for

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<sup>63</sup> Merrill C. Tenney and Moisés Silva, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, Q-Z (Zondervan, 2009), 129.

<sup>64</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 244.

<sup>65</sup> Mathetes, *Epistle to Diognetus*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1885), 15.

<sup>66</sup> Tenney and Silva, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 133, 141, 143.

<sup>67</sup> Tenney and Silva, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 144.

entrance into the kingdom of God.<sup>68</sup> The Apostle Paul wrote, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Cor 6:9). The Old Testament points to God’s requirements for righteous living in the Psalms. David proclaimed, “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully” (Ps 24:3-4), and he emphasized again in Psalm 51, “Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart” (Ps 51:6).

A righteous life is not achieved by performing religious acts or attaining moral standards; rather, righteousness entails standing face to face with God and maintaining a clean heart with pure motivation. God, in his mercy, provides righteousness for believers through Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). When men and women are born again, Christ takes away their sins and imputes his righteousness onto them, ushering in peace and joy and allowing the believer to rest in the assurance that he or she is a child of God. Such restoration delineates the power of the gospel.<sup>69</sup>

*Characteristics of the kingdom of God: Power.* In 1 Cor 4:20, the Apostle Paul stressed to Timothy that God’s power is needed for one to live in alignment with the kingdom of God. He wrote, “For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.” The kingdom is comprised of more than mere words of encouragement or sage advice; it is a divine power that

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<sup>68</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 146-48.

<sup>69</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 76-84.

casts out demons and performs miracles.<sup>70</sup> The power of the kingdom of God can affect and influence change in the lives of everyday people. In turn, individual men and women have power for the kingdom's work. The kingdom of God is a power, and the preaching of the gospel is the proclamation of that power. The power of God saves human souls from the kingdom of darkness.<sup>71</sup> Paul contended, “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

*The power and authority of Jesus.* The power and authority that Jesus exemplified were evident to everyone, particularly after he concluded the Sermon on the Mount: “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt 7:28-29). The power and authority that Jesus embodies distinguish him from other teachers. Jesus speaks from his authority, while the teachers speak from the authority of others. Jesus *is* the kingdom of God come, and power is his most notable characteristic, defining everything that he says and does. His authority is revealed in the signs and miracles that he performs<sup>72</sup>—Jesus gives sight to the blind and heals the sick as well as the deaf. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two into ministry, he said to them, “Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near you’” (Luke 10:8-9). Healings are to be regarded as the presence of the kingdom's power.<sup>73</sup> Jesus also casts out demons, but the greatest

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<sup>70</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 84.

<sup>71</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 108-12.

<sup>72</sup> Carson, Wessel, and Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 195-96.

<sup>73</sup> Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 421.

manifestation of the power of Jesus is his resurrection from the dead. His power ultimately overcame the power of death and the grave.<sup>74</sup>

The ministry of Jesus is significantly characterized by the casting out of demons. George Eldon Ladd writes in *The Gospel of the Kingdom*,

What means the announcement that the Kingdom of God has come near? It is this: that God is now acting among men to deliver them from bondage to Satan. It is the announcement that God, in the person of Christ, is doing something—if you please, is attacking the very kingdom of Satan himself. The exorcism of demons is proof that the Kingdom of God has come among men and is at work among them. The casting out of demons is itself a work of the Kingdom of God.<sup>75</sup>

The casting out of demons by Jesus demonstrates the power of the kingdom of God. Jesus said of himself, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). His supernatural power is evidence that the kingdom of God has arrived, has broken into the present realm, and is binding Satan’s power through Christ, thereby freeing humankind to experience the power and blessing of life in the kingdom.<sup>76</sup> The spiritual power facilitated through Christ’s reign within his followers defeats every evil principality and power. Origen submits that this victory is possible for every Christ follower; the reign of sin is overpowered by the reign of Christ through the indwelling kingdom of God.<sup>77</sup>

*Acts 2 power.* The day of Pentecost ushered in the power of the Holy Spirit onto the disciples.

Acts 2:1-4 records,

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<sup>74</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 114-15.

<sup>75</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 47.

<sup>76</sup> Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 48-50.

<sup>77</sup> Origen, *Origen on Prayer*, ed. William Curtis (Chicago, IL: Letcetera Publishing, 2015), 11.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

When the kingdom of God descends upon a person, the supernatural power of the kingdom falls onto them through the empowerment of the Spirit. Spirit-power produces boldness for witnessing, and after being filled with power, Peter's first sermon was marked by boldness. He preached with authority and conviction; his power-filled words pierced the hearers' hearts, and their lives were radically changed. Acts 2:41-43 states,

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

The power of the kingdom of God always produces a conviction of sin and demands a decision for Christ; this phenomenon is evidenced in the people who hear Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. Kingdom power also enables people to understand and believe the gospel message: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (1 Cor 2:12). Kingdom power creates new life when individuals are born again, taking that which was dead and bringing it to life. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). The kingdom of God provides power to the believer to accomplish all things in life and to overcome every challenge because "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:37).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 115-18.

*The kingdom of God misunderstood by the first-century church.* The early church was plagued by problems stemming from leadership crises, heresy, division, arrogance, and immoral behavior. Apostolic leaders addressed these important issues and circumstances through the writing of letters to their churches. The following accounts portray some of the difficulties that the first-century church experienced as well as the responses provided to them by the apostles.

The church in Corinth was mostly comprised of Gentiles who were former pagans, and although they were part of the Christian faith, they still embraced a Hellenistic worldview regarding ethical behavior. The attitude and conduct of the Christian church in Corinth reflected the sinful lifestyle of the culture instead of influencing the city for the kingdom of God. Additionally, some leaders in the church community were causing conflict and division by ridiculing Paul's authority and his gospel, even going so far as modifying the gospel toward Hellenism. The corrupt leaders had significant influence and used their power to lead the church astray. Paul wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians to the church in Corinth to reassert his authority and to convince them to stop promoting theology and behavior contradicting the gospel. He reminded them that as Christians, they were to follow his example as he followed Christ, the kingdom of God in person. Paul instructed the Corinthian church to discontinue imitating culture and instead pattern their beliefs and behaviors after Christ himself. The church in Corinth lacked humility, adopted attitudes and behavior from secular culture, accommodated secular culture by changing the gospel, and dishonored and challenged Paul's authority.<sup>79</sup>

Paul also used the letter to the church in Corinth to specifically address church leaders, stressing the importance of Christian service. He emphasized that apostles should be

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<sup>79</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 3-21, 183-190.

characterized by humility and regarded as servants of Christ, accountable to God and entrusted with stewarding their position faithfully.<sup>80</sup>

In the letter of Galatians, Paul addressed concerns about the false teachers in the churches of Galatia who were criticizing his authority and gospel. The troublemakers were promoting a false doctrine that caused Paul's converts to leave the church; they attacked Paul's authority, calling into question his credibility amongst the converts. Paul preached the gospel of grace to the converts; however, they deserted his gospel in favor of one that relied on human effort and merit. The Galatians were neither stable nor confident in the gospel of Christ, as evidenced by how quickly they abandoned it for a perverted gospel.<sup>81</sup>

The letters of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John were written by the Apostle John during a time of spiritual confusion wherein beliefs contrary to orthodox Christian doctrine were infiltrating the church. He was confronting significant misunderstanding and distortion of the gospel that was being propagated by false teachers. John used these letters to encourage his readers that their eternal life after death was secure because they knew God in Christ. The letters addressed the topics of right belief about Jesus, a right attitude toward sin, and interpersonal relationships that are characterized by love. John wrote the letters as a pastor expressing care for the people he shepherded.<sup>82</sup>

The letters of 2nd and 3rd John were written to warn and provide protection to churches in the area because of false teachers who left John's own church, describing them as false prophets, deceivers, and antichrists. He wrote, "For many deceivers have gone out into the

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<sup>80</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 75.

<sup>81</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1968), 11-12, 21-24.

<sup>82</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 21-25.

world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and antichrist” (2 John 7). John instructed the churches against showing hospitality to these heretics so that their false doctrine would not infect and influence the Christian communities.<sup>83</sup> The false teachers promoted extreme worldly views, were characterized by lovelessness, and proved to be unconcerned with righteousness. Therefore, it was essential for John to remind the churches of the need for holy living and obedience to God’s commands.<sup>84</sup>

The early church did not prioritize the reign, rule, and sovereignty of God; rather, they were creating their own kingdoms that were characterized by secular cultural values. Paul described these values as works of the flesh: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and other similar values. He warned the church that people who participated in these works of the flesh would not inherit the kingdom of God. Satan influenced the early Christian communities by preventing them from recognizing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. He blinded their eyes and led these communities into evil rebellion against God. They rejected the truths of scripture because they could not understand them and instead created their own false gospel. The first-century church was not following the example of Jesus, the kingdom of God incarnate, by living a life characterized by holiness, righteousness, love, and selflessness. Instead, it was mirroring the world and concerning itself with earthly matters. The church lacked saltiness because it embraced secular cultural values. Jesus warned the disciples that when salt loses its saltiness, it is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under

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<sup>83</sup> Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 248-249.

<sup>84</sup> John Stott, *The Letters of John*, reprint ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 51.



people's feet. The early church had become tasteless salt, ineffective for the work of the kingdom of God.

The first-century church struggled to understand the principles of the kingdom of God, as evidenced by their adoption of secular attitudes and behaviors. Immorality flourished and false teaching was embraced due to the powerful influence of corrupt leaders. Amma Syncletica warned against being enticed by worldly pleasures, writing,

Do not let yourself be seduced by the delights of the riches of the world, as though they contained something useful on account of vain pleasure. Worldly people esteem the culinary art, but you, through fasting and thanks to cheap food, go beyond their abundance of food. It is written: "He who is sated loathes honey" (Prov 27:7). Do not fill yourself with bread and you will not desire wine.<sup>85</sup>

Individuals within the early church craved the delights of the world, and in return, they lost their desire for the kingdom of God. Immoral attitudes and behavior were the driving agents that directed their way of life. The apostles, as kingdom ambassadors, were entrusted with confronting the leadership abuse and unethical conduct in the Christian communities as well as pointing the churches back to the truths of the gospel of Christ.

*The kingdom of God in practice today: Jesus is the kingdom.* The kingdom of God was the ultimate priority and concern for Jesus. It was what he spoke about most often, and it was the central mission of his ministry. He was relentlessly committed to the kingdom and to proclaiming its message.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ward, *The Desert Fathers*, 231.

<sup>86</sup> Brian Gleeson, "The Mission of the Kingdom of God: Ultimate Source of Meaning, Value and Energy for Jesus," *Australasian Catholic Record* 93, no. 3 (July 2016): 326-39.

The early Christian theologian Origen of Alexandria used the word “autobasileia” when speaking about Jesus. This reference to Jesus was meant to indicate that he himself is the very kingdom incarnate.<sup>87</sup> Origen wrote the following in his commentary on Matthew 18: “If it be likened to such a king, and one who had done such things, who must we say that it is but the Son of God? For He is the King of the heavens, and as He is absolute Wisdom and absolute Righteousness and absolute Truth, is He not so also absolute Kingdom?”<sup>88</sup> Jesus was the kingdom of God in person. Therefore, the kingdom of God and Jesus are inseparable; to be concerned with Jesus requires attention to the kingdom. Jurgen Moltmann contends, “If, therefore, one wants to learn what the mysterious ‘Kingdom of God’ actually is, then one must look to Jesus. And if one wants to understand who Jesus actually is, then one must experience the Kingdom of God.”<sup>89</sup>

Jesus never explicitly defined the kingdom of God to his followers. He did something much more powerful; he modeled it. Jesus lived in a manner that enabled all those who followed him to experience kingdom living in an authentic and palpable way. His embodiment of the kingdom is evidenced in 1st John by those who witnessed his life and ministry. The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:1-3,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you.

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<sup>87</sup> Origen, *The Complete Works of Origen*, trans. Philip Schaff (Omaha, NE: Patristic Publishing, 2017), 1556-1557.

<sup>88</sup> Origen, *The Complete Works of Origen*, 1556.

<sup>89</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, “Jesus And The Kingdom of God,” *The Asbury Journal* 48, no. 1 (January 1, 1993), <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/vol48/iss1/2>, 5.

These followers of Jesus were authoritative eyewitnesses. They were able to bear witness because they had personally seen and heard that which they were proclaiming. Their proclamation was intended to encourage others to adopt the kingdom way of living they witnessed in Jesus.<sup>90</sup> Their experience served as a testimony that the kingdom of God can be experienced and practiced by those who follow Jesus.

Jesus urged his followers to seek the kingdom of God before all other things. He called the community of believers to experience and exemplify kingdom principles and power. This same commission applies to his followers today; he is calling God's people to be co-workers for the kingdom of God in this age. The kingdom of God was Jesus' priority, and it should therefore be the most critical concern for his followers throughout the ages.<sup>91</sup>

*The kingdom of God in practice today: The kingdom demands urgency and change.* Mark 1:14-15 details Jesus entering Galilee and proclaiming the gospel. He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent* and believe in the gospel" (emphasis added). The word "repentance," by definition, involves the changing of one's mind. The act of repentance is an intentional decision that changes the course of one's life: "Repentance is a profound change of mind involving the changing of the direction of life from that of self-centeredness or sin-centeredness to God- or Christ-centeredness."<sup>92</sup> In this passage, Jesus calls his followers to radically change their lives from one of self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness. Such a decisive

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<sup>90</sup> Stott, *The Letters of John*, 66.

<sup>91</sup> Moltmann, "Jesus And The Kingdom of God," 13-14.

<sup>92</sup> Douglas and Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1223-24.

choice requires not only a change of mind and heart but a life wholly committed to kingdom living.

Jesus demonstrates that one cannot seek the kingdom and remain the same.<sup>93</sup> The kingdom of God demands a decision; to choose the kingdom of God, one must abandon selfish pursuits and embrace a life of righteousness in Christ. Jesus demonstrated the urgency of this decision in how he called the disciples. He said to them, “Follow me!” The disciples immediately left what they were doing and followed Jesus, who was the embodiment of the kingdom. Jesus further emphasized the importance of pursuing the kingdom of God in Luke 9:57-62. In this passage, Jesus illustrated the significance of choosing to follow him. He made several statements responding to individuals who announced their desire to be his followers, saying, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (v. 60). He continued, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (v. 62). Jesus warned these would-be followers that seeking the kingdom requires absolute allegiance and loyalty that will come with a great expense. Choosing the kingdom of God is costly, and it may include the risk of death or rejection by others. However, Christ's followers keep their eyes fixed on the reign of Christ and the coming kingdom so that they may endure present trials.<sup>94</sup> The decision to follow Jesus involves urgency and includes sacrifice.<sup>95</sup> Jesus lived and died proclaiming the message of the kingdom of God, and he urged the disciples to follow his commitment to the kingdom's mission.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Gleeson, “The Mission of the Kingdom of God,” 327-28.

<sup>94</sup> Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin Martyr: An Early Christian Writing* (Orlando, FL: GodSounds, Inc., 2017).

<sup>95</sup> Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 833-34.

<sup>96</sup> Donald Senior, *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 75-76.

*The kingdom of God in practice today: Salt and light.* Jesus said to the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet” (Matt 5:13). Jesus emphasized to the disciples that those who reject kingdom principles are like tasteless salt. Craig Keener writes, “Just as tasteless salt lacks value to the person who uses it, so does a professed disciple without genuine commitment prove valueless for the work of the kingdom.”<sup>97</sup> Saltiness refers to a person's character, which is developed by embracing God’s principles. Kingdom people need to be salty in order to affect the world for the kingdom of God. Just as salt transforms the taste of food, followers of Jesus should be transforming culture.<sup>98</sup>

Jesus continued speaking in metaphors in Matt 5:14-16, saying to the disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:14-16). Jesus conveyed to the disciples that if their lives did not reflect the kingdom principles he embodies, they were ineffective for the kingdom's work. Their character had to radiate kingdom values; otherwise, they would be rendered useless. Jesus continues to establish the standard of character expected of his followers.<sup>99</sup>

To live as salt and light in the world means living differently from the surrounding culture by seeking to emulate the characteristics and behavior of righteousness that Jesus

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<sup>97</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 173.

<sup>98</sup> Ranko Stefanovic, “The Meaning and Message of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, (2015): 181-182, [https://works.bepress.com/ranko\\_stefanovic/33/](https://works.bepress.com/ranko_stefanovic/33/).

<sup>99</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 174-175.

modeled. It involves a genuine transformation of the heart from the values of the world toward the values of the kingdom of God.<sup>100</sup> John Stott comments on the expectations that Jesus established for the disciples: “They were not to take their cue from the people around them, but from him, and so prove to be genuine children of their heavenly Father.”<sup>101</sup> Jesus is calling his followers to a higher standard of living that is distinctly different: a Christian counterculture.<sup>102</sup>

*Present-day leadership that operates from a kingdom perspective.* Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God was controversial to the New Testament community of believers. His message conflicted with that which they had long expected and anticipated. The principles of the kingdom of God are challenging and antithetical to commonly held beliefs. Robert Wayne Stacy writes, “There is always a *countercultural* character to the kingdom, its participants being at once *in* the world but not *of* it.”<sup>103</sup>

Leadership, in the kingdom of God, is not defined or understood by the values of this world; in fact, the entire concept of a leader in the kingdom of God proves countercultural. Leaders in God’s kingdom are first-followers, representatives, and ambassadors of Jesus in his absence; all of their power and authority are derived from him. The establishment of a leader in the kingdom of God is solely dependent on Jesus. Independent rights, authority, and power do

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<sup>100</sup> Stefanovic, “The Meaning and Message of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount,” 183-84.

<sup>101</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 18.

<sup>102</sup> Stefanovic, “The Meaning and Message of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount,” 185.

<sup>103</sup> Robert Wayne Stacy, “Following Jesus in the Kingdom of God: Leadership in the Synoptic Gospels,” in *Biblical Leadership*, eds. Benjamin Forrest and Chet Roden (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 319.

not exist for the kingdom leader. First-followers will operate in a manner that reflects life under God's reign, always leading and pointing people toward his kingdom.<sup>104</sup> Stacy writes, “Leaders, therefore, are living, breathing intimations of the kingdom, foreshadowing in this world the vision and values of that world. They are ‘kingdom guides,’ and as such express ‘leadership’ appropriate to the new reality in which they live.”<sup>105</sup>

Jesus chose a group of twelve disciples as leaders to embody the kingdom's work. The men in this group were set apart by Jesus as representatives of his mission who were empowered with his authority. These chosen men would be called apostles and were trained by Jesus for a particular role of leadership authority. His teaching to these men was understood to be leadership training,<sup>106</sup> and the apostles were commissioned by Jesus to preach the kingdom's good news and perform miracles.<sup>107</sup> The Gospel of Luke illustrates, “And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal” (Luke 9:1-2).

Jesus directed his teachings specifically to this group of leaders. He placed great trust in them as they were being prepared to continue his ministry and mission after he was gone. The purpose of these teachings was to illustrate the actual cost of operating according to kingdom principles. Douglas Petersen writes, “Life under the new rule of God required a dramatic change in the rules of leadership.”<sup>108</sup> The expectations for leadership in the kingdom of God were high

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<sup>104</sup> Stacy, “Following Jesus in the Kingdom,” 319-20.

<sup>105</sup> Stacy, “Following Jesus in the Kingdom,” 321.

<sup>106</sup> A. Boyd Luter and Nicholas Dodson, “Matured Discipleship: Leadership in the Synoptics and Acts,” in *Biblical Leadership*, eds. Benjamin Forrest and Chet Rodin (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 334-37.

<sup>107</sup> Stacy, “Following Jesus in the Kingdom,” 322.

<sup>108</sup> Douglas Petersen, “Kingdom Rules: Upside-down Discipleship,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 2013): 31-50.

for Jesus. He required a significant level of commitment from those who followed him. His disciples had to count the cost of leaving behind worldly affections to embrace the life of the cross fully.<sup>109</sup>

*Present-day leadership that operates from a kingdom perspective: Kingdom leaders will embrace the cross.* The disciples were not exempt from worldly temptations as leaders. They were committed to the kingdom of God, but they had difficulty understanding it apart from culture's values. Their idea of success was defined by position and authority rather than through the perspective of the cross, and they did not immediately grasp the reality that there is a cost to discipleship. As followers of Jesus, they needed to embrace the cross and its conditions. Jesus provided clarification on this issue when he addressed the disciples and the crowd in Mark 8:34-35: "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.'" The way of the cross is a life of self-denial and suffering, requiring one to relinquish control and instead surrender everything to God. Stacy writes, "For the disciple, for the leader, following Jesus means giving up any pretense that we are 'in charge.'"<sup>110</sup> Leadership in the kingdom of God is characterized by the countercultural life that Jesus exemplified. Kingdom leaders will need to surrender ego and selfish ambitions, instead embracing the suffering represented by the cross.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Luter and Dodson, "Matured Discipleship," 339.

<sup>110</sup> Stacy, "Following Jesus in the Kingdom," 325.

<sup>111</sup> Stacy, "Following Jesus in the Kingdom," 324-27.



*Present-day leadership that operates from a kingdom perspective: Kingdom leaders will be servants.* Jesus addressed the subject of leadership and service in Mark 10:45. In response to James and John’s request for favor and positions of prominence in the new kingdom, Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The brothers were seeking ambition and self-promotion, but Jesus quickly rebuked their request, illustrating that the way of the cross is paved by humility and service. Alan Cole writes, “So Jesus justly rebukes both the two and then ten at once, by showing them their common ignorance of the very nature of Christian leadership. All such leadership is only humble service, for it takes its colour from the example of Jesus, who is above all, the Servant.”<sup>112</sup> At this moment, Jesus set the expectation and example for leadership in the kingdom of God. He established a clear distinction between the way that culture exercised authority and the way his followers were to lead when he said, “But it shall not be so among you” (Mark 10:43). Kingdom leadership is radically different from leadership in the world; it is grounded in sacrifice and service to others. Service is inseparable from the kingdom of God and is the true measurement of greatness.<sup>113</sup> Gene Wilkes writes, “This example of Jesus does not fit the cultural picture of leadership. Jesus, however, did not come to show us a better way to do things. He came to show us how to live as kingdom people.”<sup>114</sup>

Secular leaders in the first century used power to force those underneath them to serve their needs. Such power became a weapon that emboldened their ego and authority, and their leadership was characterized by domination instead of service flowing out of humility. These

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<sup>112</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Mark* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 247.

<sup>113</sup> Stacy, “Following Jesus in the Kingdom,” 328-29.

<sup>114</sup> C. Gene Wilkes and Calvin Miller, *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1998), 175.

leaders lorded their power over others as a means of control. It was this behavior that Jesus specifically addressed. The disciples observed this leadership directly and were familiar with it in their culture. Jesus turned their leadership understanding upside-down when he introduced the kingdom's approach to leading. The accepted cultural norms were no longer sufficient in light of the kingdom's demands. Existing attitudes and behavior, in the context of leadership, had to be changed to reflect the kingdom values Jesus was teaching and modeling. Douglas Petersen writes, "What happens to Jesus will happen to his followers, too. The disciples must learn that for them, as for Jesus, leadership is service, defeat is victory, and death is the pathway to life."<sup>115</sup>

*Present-day leadership that operates from a kingdom perspective: Leading like Jesus.* Jesus became a picture of the kingdom of God for his followers. He proclaimed and embodied the kingdom perfectly, living a righteous life that exemplified kingdom values. The apostles were set apart so that Jesus could teach them to operate as kingdom leaders. The book of Acts observes Jesus teaching the disciples for forty days about the kingdom of God: "He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The kingdom of God was an extremely important subject for Jesus. It was the one thing that he commanded his followers to seek first. The kingdom was to be their priority. The kingdom of God was intended to be a framework for determining all other priorities in life. Leaders in the kingdom of God are commanded to seek the kingdom and the righteousness of Jesus first in their lives, which requires submitting to

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<sup>115</sup> Petersen, "Kingdom Rules," 38-39.

God's rule and authority in every area of life. This instruction is as true today as it was for the apostles.<sup>116</sup>

Leadership that operates from a kingdom perspective will live for the kingdom of God. Godly leaders will not seek notoriety or build their own kingdom; Jesus is the only reigning King in the kingdom of God. A leader cannot be the lord of his or her own life while simultaneously taking up the cross and following Jesus.<sup>117</sup> Jesus explicitly told the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matt 6:24). Leaders who do not make Jesus their Master can only serve themselves.<sup>118</sup> Jeremy Treat writes, "Here's the truth: when we don't give *everything* over to Jesus, we're still the one who is in control. We act as our own king and then try to use Jesus to accomplish our goals."<sup>119</sup> Leadership under God's reign will affect all areas of life, shaping the whole character and behavior of the leader. Devotion to Christ and the kingdom's mission will be a priority for leaders in the kingdom of God.<sup>120</sup> Kingdom leaders will be characterized by a heart that lives for the glory of God: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever" (Rom 11:36).<sup>121</sup> Treat summarizes, "To experience the life Jesus says we were made for, we need to have kingdom perspective, live with kingdom

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<sup>116</sup> Jeremy R. Treat, *Seek First: How the Kingdom of God Changes Everything* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 12-15.

<sup>117</sup> Treat, *Seek First*, 57.

<sup>118</sup> Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 54-55.

<sup>119</sup> Treat, *Seek First*, 65.

<sup>120</sup> Treat, *Seek First*, 57-81.

<sup>121</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 215-16.

purpose, and learn to be kingdom people.” He continues, “Stop building our own personal kingdoms and start living for the one thing that matters most—the kingdom of God.”<sup>122</sup>

### Biblical model of leadership

*Shepherds in the Old Testament.* The biblical metaphor of a shepherd finds its origin in the Old Testament. Three central applications of the word “shepherd” are understood when translated by the verbs “shepherding,” “tending,” or “herding,” or by the nouns “shepherd,” “shepherdess,” or “herdsman.” These usages indicate the following: herders of livestock, YHWH as Shepherd of Israel, or a person or group as leaders/rulers.<sup>123</sup> When “shepherd” is used as a metaphor in the Old Testament, it suggests royal implications associated with kingship. This relationship is described in the following manner:

The association of kingship with shepherding is a typical ancient Near Eastern manner of viewing monarchy. Royal authority belonged to God; the king exercised it on behalf of God. The sheep belonged to the divine ruler; the king was the earthly caretaker. The people as a flock were given in trust, and eventually the king was called to account for his exercise of the office of shepherd.<sup>124</sup>

Shepherding required strong leadership that was equally balanced with tender care. Sheep were utterly dependent upon the shepherd and could not survive without his guidance and protection.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Treat, *Seek First*, 23, 25; James, “Contextual Engagement I Final Paper,” 4-34.

<sup>123</sup> Quentin P. Kinnison, “Shepherd or One of the Sheep: Revisiting the Biblical Metaphor of the Pastorate,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 59-91.

<sup>124</sup> Craig S. Keener and John H. Walton, eds., *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture*, special ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 1388.

<sup>125</sup> Keener and Walton, *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, 900.

True shepherds were characterized by wholehearted commitment and sincere concern for their sheep.<sup>126</sup> They were dedicated to every aspect of the care and protection of the flock, including feeding, safety, and finding and restoring lost sheep. The shepherd and the sheep in the flock shared an intimate relationship.<sup>127</sup> Shepherding was challenging work that required toughness and resolve to lead sheep through rough terrain and beat animals that were a threat to the flock. Such a role involved bold and courageous leadership characterized by both nurturing and strength.<sup>128</sup>

*Shepherd leadership.* The word “nagiyd” means “leader” in Hebrew, and is a term characterized by servanthood, indicative of a person under authority who submits to a higher power. Essential components found in the root meaning of the word “nagiyd” include standing out boldly, announcing, and manifesting. God desires nagiyd leaders to shepherd his people; these leaders will submit themselves to God’s authority, listen to his will, and carry out God’s will faithfully empowered by divine authority. They are obedient leaders who become an example to others in their dedication to God and his commands. David was a nagiyd leader for Israel, and 1 Sam 13:14 indicates that he was a man after God’s own heart.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Nathan H. Gunter, “For the Flock: Impetus for Shepherd Leadership in John 10,” *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 10, no. 1 (2016): 8-18.

<sup>127</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vols. 1 and 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1988), 2090-91.

<sup>128</sup> Steven W. Smith, “Jesus Christ, The Good to Great Shepherd,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 56, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 53-63.

<sup>129</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 18.

The Old and New Testaments use different titles for God's leaders. These titles include the following: bishop, presbyter, priest, preacher, minister, and shepherd. Historically, "shepherd" is the most infrequently used title in the church. Frank Damazio suggests that this term is attributed to many leaders in the church who are not experiencing or practicing true shepherding. The result of neglecting the function of a shepherd within the church is an insufficiency of genuine and loving spiritual care provided for the congregation by their pastor. It is critical for God's leaders to possess a shepherd's heart for their flock.<sup>130</sup> Psalm 23 illustrates a leader who goes before the sheep to guide them safely and offer provision.<sup>131</sup> W. Phillip Keller provides a picture of this ever-present shepherd in the book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. He writes,

It is the alertness, the awareness, the diligence of a never-tiring master which alone assures the sheep of excellent care. And from the sheep's standpoint it is knowing that the shepherd is there; it is the constant awareness of his presence nearby that automatically eliminates most of the difficulties and dangers while at the same time providing a sense of security and serenity. It is the sheep owner's presence that guarantees there will be no lack of any sort; that there will be abundant green pastures; that there will be still, clean waters; that there will be new paths into fresh fields; that there will be safe summers on the high table lands; that there will be freedom from fear; that there will be antidotes for the flies and disease and parasites; that there will be quietness and contentment.<sup>132</sup>

Scripture consistently uses the metaphor of a shepherd as a means for understanding a biblical concept of leadership. Good shepherds are deeply committed to the welfare of the sheep in their flock. Similarly, a leader in God's kingdom will be genuinely concerned for the care and provision of the people that have been entrusted to him or her by God. True shepherds prioritize the flock's care and concern over their own needs. This dedication will often require tremendous

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<sup>130</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 89-90.

<sup>131</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 19.

<sup>132</sup> W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 121.

personal cost and will demand that the shepherd exercise authority while simultaneously providing tender care and compassion. Courage and resilience are necessary to endure and overcome significant challenges.<sup>133</sup>

Shepherd leadership includes oversight, protection, provision, care, and guidance of God's people; God entrusts the oversight of his flock to human agency.<sup>134</sup> Timothy Laniak writes, "Our theology of leadership is informed by this breathtaking choice of God to grant royal prerogatives to his creatures. To be made in His image is to rule with Him and for Him. Every shepherd leader is first, and always, a sheep who relates to God as 'my Shepherd.' This is a dependent relationship on God."<sup>135</sup> Leaders in the kingdom are appointed by God and empowered by his Spirit. They are responsible for the flock while remaining accountable to God, who is the supreme and Great Shepherd of his people. True shepherds serve the flock for God's sake and never their own.<sup>136</sup>

*Failure of the shepherd leaders: Ezekiel 34:1-10.* In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel delivers a message of judgment against the shepherd leaders of Israel. The Lord was speaking against these leaders because they failed in their responsibility of caring for the people of Israel. Shepherds were tasked with caring for the flock, protecting it from outside dangers, and

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<sup>133</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 37, 247-48.

<sup>134</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 15-16.

<sup>135</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 248.

<sup>136</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 248.

gathering sheep that strayed and became lost.<sup>137</sup> However, the shepherd leaders of Israel were caring for themselves instead of the sheep, prioritizing their own interests and well-being over that of the flock. Ezekiel declared,

The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.” (Ezek 34:1-3)

The prophet continued with a second indictment against the shepherd leaders. Ezekiel charged them with neglecting the physical health of the flock and failing to seek the lost sheep, therefore causing them to be vulnerable to prey. He stated,

The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search for them. (Ezek 34:4-6)

The shepherd leaders of Israel were ruling over God’s people with harshness and brutality. They were irresponsible in their leadership, which proved to be detrimental.<sup>138</sup>

St. Augustine addresses Ezekiel 34 and the issue of shepherds who neglect their flock, contending, “You are members of the flock of the Good Shepherd, who watches over Israel and nourishes his people. Yet there are shepherds who want to have the title of shepherd without wanting to fulfill a pastor’s duties; let us then recall what God says to his shepherds through the prophet. You must listen attentively; I must listen with fear and trembling.”<sup>139</sup> God spoke

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<sup>137</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ezekiel*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 1999), 394.

<sup>138</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 283-84.

<sup>139</sup> St. Augustine, *Sermo 46*, 1-2: CCL 41, 529-30.



strongly to the shepherds who failed in their duty to watch over his flock. Ezek 34:7-10 records God's response to these shepherd leaders:

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

The shepherds are held accountable by God for the reckless care of his flock; they were specifically commissioned by God to care for the sheep but instead used their position for personal enrichment. Judgment on the false shepherds was announced, and the consequences were severe. God declared he was against them and immediately removed the leaders as shepherds to his sheep.<sup>140</sup>

God is the Great Shepherd and the exclusive leader of his people. He assigns undershepherds to care for and guide his flock, understanding that they are ultimately accountable to him.<sup>141</sup> The leaders judged in Ezekiel were not true shepherds because they inflicted great harm on God's people. Ultimately, God intervened to rescue and restore the flock that he loved deeply. Ezekiel prophesied in Ezek 34:11-16,

For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their

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<sup>140</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 284-286.

<sup>141</sup> Kinnison, "Shepherd or One of the Sheep," 90-91.

grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

The leaders of Israel were wicked, and God acted immediately to restore the nation. He gathered the scattered people and placed them under the leadership of the shepherd-king, David. The Lord God exclaimed, “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them” (Ezek 34:23-24). This Davidic leadership would provide the people of God lasting security.<sup>142</sup>

*God’s undershepherds.* The people of God were mistreated and abandoned by selfish and abusive leaders such as their kings, prophets, and priests. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah to promise his people true shepherds who would lead them well. Jeremiah proclaimed, “And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer 3:15). The words of the prophet were a promise from God to his chosen people in a time of destruction and confusion. God was promising to provide true shepherd leaders who would serve sacrificially and with compassion—shepherds after God’s own heart, not their own. Such leadership is marked by a willingness to follow God and to lead as he has modeled. True shepherds lead with a heart characterized by God’s love and compassion and with a mind capable of deep discernment and wisdom.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 341.

<sup>143</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 22.

Shepherds were a biblical metaphor for the rulers of Israel, leaders of God's people. Jeremiah characterized these leaders in the following manner: "For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the Lord; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered" (Jer 10:21). The leaders of Israel were unfaithful and failed to use wisdom in caring for God's people. For this reason, God promises to care for his sheep and provide faithful leaders. The shepherd leaders promised by God will teach the people a more profound knowledge of their relationship with God and help them increase their land. The Lord said in Jer 23:3-4,

Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.

God is the "Shepherd of shepherds."<sup>144</sup> He is the Shepherd of his people, leading them through the oversight and guidance of undershepherds. Moses and David were both undershepherds; Jesus arrived as the divine-human Shepherd of Israel, commissioning the disciples as his ambassadors to become undershepherds. His Spirit empowered them to continue in their assignment of leading God's people. Undershepherds are God's fellow workers, as the Apostle Paul noted in 1 Cor 3:9. He wrote, "For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." Shepherd leaders are God's ambassadors; they are always in a supporting role and prioritizing the care of his people.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2018), 83.

<sup>145</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 249-50.

*The shepherd leader: God as the Great Shepherd.* A shepherd’s main priorities in caring for sheep are protecting, guiding, and feeding the flock. Frank Damazio describes the responsibility of a shepherd in the following way: “A shepherd is a man who takes care of the sheep, a person who cares for and protects the sheep; a spiritual guide, friend or companion.”<sup>146</sup> The work of a shepherd is both practical and spiritual.<sup>147</sup> Shepherd is an intimate metaphor that is used in scripture, describing a person who lives with the flock and is the source of their every need—a guide, physician, and protector.<sup>148</sup>

Scripture establishes God as the spiritual Shepherd of his people. He provided the ultimate example for undershepherds to follow on how to be a true shepherd. The following verses presented in Table 2.2 identify God as the Great Shepherd.

Table 2.2. Scriptures identifying God as the Great Shepherd<sup>149</sup>

Psalm 23:1	The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
Psalm 80:1	Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock.
Ezekiel 34:12	As a shepherd who seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.
Isaiah 40:11	He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.
Psalm 77:20	You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

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<sup>146</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 91.

<sup>147</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 91.

<sup>148</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72 An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 127.

<sup>149</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 91.

The Great Shepherd demonstrates the appropriate heart attitude and actions for undershepherds to follow in their leadership of his people. The following actions shared in Table 2.3 represent the care that the Great Shepherd provided for his sheep.

Table 2.3. Scriptures illustrating the heart attitude and actions of the Great Shepherd<sup>150</sup>

Ezekiel 34:11-16	Searched out the lost sheep
Ezekiel 34:12	Delivered the captive sheep
Ezekiel 34:13	Gathered the dispersed sheep
Isaiah 40:11, Ezekiel 34:13	Fed the hungry sheep
Psalms 23:1-3, Ezekiel 34:15	Rested the weary sheep
Ezekiel 34:16	Bound up the hurt sheep
Ezekiel 34:16	Strengthened the weak sheep
Psalms 23:3	Guided the directionless sheep
Isaiah 40:11	Carried the broken sheep
Psalms 23:3	Restored the soul of the tired sheep
Psalms 23:4	Comforted the agitated sheep
Psalms 23:5	Prepared a table for the frightened sheep
Psalms 23:5	Anointed the needy sheep

The image of God as a shepherd and his people as sheep is found throughout the Psalms.<sup>151</sup> For example, “Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Ps 100:3). Psalm 23, written by David, provides the most notable example of God as the Great Shepherd to his people. David was a shepherd and the son of a shepherd; eventually, he would be called the Shepherd King of Israel.<sup>152</sup> David boldly declared in the opening line of Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps 23:1). He continued to describe a relationship with God throughout the Psalm that is intensely personal,

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<sup>150</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 91.

<sup>151</sup> Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2009), 418.

<sup>152</sup> Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 15.

illustrating the intimate nature of a relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. God is a shepherd to David in that he protects and guides him. The metaphor of God as a shepherd is primarily a pastoral one, but the term was also used in the Ancient Near East to refer to kings and other leaders.<sup>153</sup>

David expressed in Psalm 23 that he had complete trust in the provision, protection, and guidance of God, the Great Shepherd. The king is dependent upon the divine Shepherd for all his needs. David is speaking as a sheep, not a shepherd; he models a relationship of dependency as an undershepherd to his Great Shepherd. Shepherd leaders are first and foremost sheep who relate to God as “my Shepherd,” appointed by God and only effective as they rely on his care and are empowered by his Spirit. Undershepherds must be shepherded by God so that they are capable of leading and providing for his people. Leaders in God’s kingdom require the guidance of the Great Shepherd so that they can walk in his ways. This deep and intimate relationship keeps them from going astray as they encounter the dangers and difficulties of life and leadership. Psalm 23 provides a model of the kind of relationship that every shepherd leader needs to maintain with God. Timothy Laniak writes, “Psalm 23 is a reminder that even the king—especially the king—was dependent on the God of Israel for personal nurture and guidance. Israel’s kings had to understand that being a member of the flock of God was more fundamental than being appointed shepherd over that flock.”<sup>154</sup>

Shepherd leaders must place a higher priority on being shepherded than on shepherding others. Undershepherds must learn to trust God as their personal, divine shepherd before they can

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<sup>153</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 134-35.

<sup>154</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 114.

lead God's people;<sup>155</sup> it is a wholly dependent and continual relationship understood through the context of being, primarily, a follower. The first line of Psalm 23 assists shepherd leaders in developing a biblically faithful understanding of shepherd leadership. The Lord provides the ultimate example for leaders in how to lead, mentor, and train God's people. David underscores this concept when he announces that the Lord is his Shepherd. Leaders in God's kingdom would be wise to observe how the Great Shepherd guided, prepared, and led those under his care; he provides a perfect model for learning to lead others and care for their needs.<sup>156</sup> Walter Kaiser writes, "God's provision, abundance, and protection will always be there for the shepherd, who is thereby taught to communicate the same to those under his or her leadership."<sup>157</sup>

*The shepherd leader: Jesus as the Good Shepherd.* The New Testament reveals Jesus as the Good Shepherd; he is "the revelation of God in the flesh."<sup>158</sup> Jesus became a shepherd to God's sheep in the New Testament just as God was a shepherd to them in the Old Testament. In the book *The Making of a Leader*, Frank Damazio writes, "Jesus was the full expression of the heart of the heavenly Father on earth. His words, His ways, and His actions all manifested the heart of the Father."<sup>159</sup> This truth is observed in John 10:30, where Jesus indicated that he and the Father

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<sup>155</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 110-14.

<sup>156</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The 'Shepherd' as a Biblical Metaphor: Leadership in Psalm 23," in *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader*, eds. Benjamin Forrest and Chet Roden (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 155-56.

<sup>157</sup> Kaiser Jr., "The 'Shepherd' as a Biblical Metaphor," 161.

<sup>158</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 92.

<sup>159</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 75.

are one; they are one in mind, one in purpose, and one in action.<sup>160</sup> Jesus also implied his oneness with the Father in John 14:9, when he said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus is the revelation of the Father; there is a mutual indwelling between the Father and the Son. The words and works of Jesus all come from the Father.<sup>161</sup> Jesus affirmed this truth in John 8:28-29 as he explained to the disciples, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” The following scriptures listed in Table 2.4 identify Jesus as the Good Shepherd of the New Testament.

Table 2.4. Scriptures identifying Jesus as the Good Shepherd<sup>162</sup>

John 10:11, 14	“I am the Good Shepherd”
Hebrews 13:20	“Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep”
1 Peter 2:25	“For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”
1 Peter 5:4	“When the Chief Shepherd appears”

Jesus provided a perfect example of a true shepherd's heart attitude and actions through his life and ministry. His purpose in shepherding was to meet the needs of the sheep while being compelled by love and compassion in his care of them. Jesus modeled that a true shepherd lays down his life for the flock. The following actions in Table 2.5 represent the care that the Good Shepherd provides for his sheep.

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<sup>160</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 233.

<sup>161</sup> Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 300.

<sup>162</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 92.



Table 2.5. Scriptures illustrating the heart attitude and actions of the Good Shepherd<sup>163</sup>

Matthew 9:35, 36; John 10:15b	Cares for the sheep.
John 10:3	Relates to the sheep.
John 10:1	Condemns all who reject the Door of the sheepfold, and enter some other way, as thieves and robbers.
John 10:8	Condemns all who came before him as thieves and robbers.
John 10:1	Provides a sheepfold for the sheep.
John 10:3, 4	Leads the sheep.
John 10:2	Enters by the Door himself.
John 10:3a	Has the doorkeeper open to him.
John 10:6	Provides spiritual insight for the sheep.
John 10:3b, 27a	Makes his voice plain to his sheep.
John 10:3c	Calls his own sheep by name.
John 10:3d	Leads his own sheep out into pasture.
John 10:4a, b	Goes before his own sheep as he leads them out.
John 10:4c, 27c	Has the sheep follow him.
John 10:4d	Has the sheep recognize his voice.
John 10:7, 9a	Is the Door of the sheep.
John 10:9	Feeds the sheep.
John 10:10b	Gives life to the sheep by protecting them.
John 10:10b, 11b, 15c, 17	Gives his life for the sheep.
John 10:11a, 14a	Is the Good Shepherd of the sheep.
John 10:12a, 13a	Is a true Shepherd of his sheep and the opposite of a hireling.
John 10:12c	Is the owner of the sheep and not a hireling.
John 10:12d	Sees when the wolf comes to destroy the flock.
John 10:12e, f	Stays near the sheep when the wolf comes in contrast to the cowardly hireling.
John 10:14b, 27b	Knows his own sheep.
John 10:14c	Is known by his own sheep.
John 10:15b	Knows the Father.
John 10:15a	Is known by the Father.
John 10:16a	Has other sheep in other folds.
John 10:16c	Brings in the other sheep also.
John 10:16d	Is heard by the other sheep as well.
John 10:16e	Is the One Shepherd and owner of all folds.
John 10:17c	Takes up his life again because he laid it down.
John 10:18abc	Lays his life down freely and by his own initiative.
John 10:18d	God himself has commissioned him to do so.

<sup>163</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 92-93.

God promised that he would send a faithful shepherd to care for his sheep, a promise revealed in the book of Ezekiel when God speaks through the prophet to admonish the shepherds of Israel for their failure to care for his people properly. God declared through the prophet, “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd” (Ezek 32:23).<sup>164</sup> This servant, David, was not the historical figure but rather the Messianic Shepherd. God established Jesus as the chosen Good Shepherd to be entrusted with the care of his people,<sup>165</sup> and Jesus declared that he is the Good Shepherd in the Gospel of John. He said in verse 11, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11) and continued in verse 14, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15). The Good Shepherd is the true King of Israel and the obedient Servant of God.<sup>166</sup> He exemplified the character and actions of a true shepherd throughout his life and ministry.<sup>167</sup>

Shepherd leadership requires great sacrifice on behalf of the sheep; God demonstrated the tremendous cost of being a true shepherd through Christ at Calvary. Jesus was the perfect Good Shepherd who gave up his life for God’s flock. Phillip Keller writes,

The blood shed for the sheep is what makes them precious to the Good Shepherd. Likewise, the cost and sacrifice that an undershepherd pays for his sheep makes them precious to him. Sheep require endless attention and meticulous care. The shepherd must continually lay down his life for them if they were to flourish and prosper.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Gunter, “For the Flock.”

<sup>165</sup> John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, reprint ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 217.

<sup>166</sup> Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 225.

<sup>167</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 92-93.

<sup>168</sup> Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 19.

Jesus illustrated that there is no sacrifice too great for the well-being of the sheep. The Good Shepherd models that he loves the sheep and his role as their Shepherd. He will endure great pain and difficulty to ensure their protection and care.<sup>169</sup> Shepherd leadership must be characterized by the self-sacrificial leadership that Jesus exhibited as the Good Shepherd. He willingly obeyed the Father and submitted his life unto death for the sake of those he led.<sup>170</sup>

The prophets in the Old Testament spoke against the bad shepherds who mistreated and abandoned God's people. There was a desperate need for authentic leaders. God promised to send a Shepherd to save Israel in Ezek 34:23, and the gospels depict Jesus to be the fulfillment of that covenant. John 10:1-21 is the most notable scripture illustrating Jesus as the Good Shepherd, in which John emphasizes two essential concepts in this Good Shepherd discourse. First, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. Second, Jesus as the Good Shepherd is the leadership model for undershepherds. John is conscientious to stress that the heart motivation of a shepherd is more important than the practical elements of leadership. Jesus embodies genuine concern for the welfare of the sheep over all else.<sup>171</sup>

The Good Shepherd discourse is a model of leadership for shepherd leaders. Jesus intended for this example to be a pattern of leadership for his undershepherds to follow in guiding and caring for God's people.<sup>172</sup> John illustrates that Jesus is training undershepherds to follow his example in the following scriptures presented in Table 2.6.

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<sup>169</sup> Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, 18-19, 29, 111.

<sup>170</sup> Benjamin K. Forrest and David Nemitz, "Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership: Shepherds and Servants on Behalf of the King," in *Biblical Leadership*, eds. Benjamin Forrest and Chet Roden (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 516.

<sup>171</sup> Gunter, "For the Flock," 9-10.

<sup>172</sup> Gunter, "For the Flock," 10.

Table 2.6. Scriptures illustrating that Jesus is training undershepherds to be like him<sup>173</sup>

John 14:12	“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”
John 20:21-23	Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”
John 21:15-19	When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Jesus sent the disciples out to feed his sheep and prepared them to emulate his life and ministry as the Good Shepherd.<sup>174</sup> Undershepherds are given the responsibility to guide and care for the sheep. However, this commitment does not include the authority to rule over them. God entrusts the care of the sheep to the shepherd leaders, so their leadership should be marked by love, not power.<sup>175</sup> 1 Pet 5:1-4 offers an instructive word to shepherd leaders. Peter exhorted,

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

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<sup>173</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 211.

<sup>174</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 179.

<sup>175</sup> Kinnison, “Shepherd or One of the Sheep,” 84-89.

The Good Shepherd is good because he loves and treasures the sheep and is willing to sacrifice his own life for their benefit. The leadership of undershepherds must be characterized by the love that Jesus embodied. The sheep belong to God, and shepherd leaders will be accountable to him in how they care for his flock.<sup>176</sup>

*The purpose and motives of the ministry leader.* Jesus provided a perfect example of the heart attitude that a true shepherd should have toward God's people. He was motivated by love and compassion in his care for them, even unto death.<sup>177</sup> True shepherd leaders will be characterized by sacrificial love for the flock, thereby modeling the standard that Jesus established.<sup>178</sup> The shepherd leader's care for and relationship with the sheep are of primary importance, marked by unconditional love and concern that is not dependent on the actions or attitudes of the flock. More importantly, the love expressed by a shepherd leader toward God's people is in response to the love they receive from the Lord. 1 John 4:7-11 conveys this concept:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

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<sup>176</sup> Gunter, "For the Flock," 226-27.

<sup>177</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 93.

<sup>178</sup> Gunter, "For the Flock," 17.

Shepherd leaders must cultivate and maintain a close and intimate relationship with the Good Shepherd. This companionship will enable them to hear his voice clearly and to imitate his Shepherd's heart in being compelled by love in the care of the people of God.<sup>179</sup>

Jesus revealed the proper motives with which to guide shepherd leaders in his synagogue sermon found in the Gospel of Luke:<sup>180</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19, NKJV). Here, Jesus was fulfilling the prophetic announcement found in Isaiah 61 when he announced the purpose of his mission in this sermon. The kingdom of God had come, and Jesus was consummating it. This mission included preaching the good news of the kingdom of God to the poor and imprisoned, healing the brokenhearted, restoring sight to the blind, and providing relief and forgiveness for the persecuted.<sup>181</sup> Jesus knew that the purpose of his ministry was to preach the good news of the kingdom of God to people who were distraught and hurting. God was acting through his teachings to break the power of sin, establish communion with the Father, and enable God's will to be accomplished.<sup>182</sup>

God anointed Jesus through the Spirit to accomplish these works;<sup>183</sup> the life and ministry of Jesus were marked by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit as he fulfilled the eternal

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<sup>179</sup> Gunter, “For the Flock,” 16-17.

<sup>180</sup> Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, 33.

<sup>181</sup> Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 532-33.

<sup>182</sup> Leon L. Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, illustrated ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 126.

<sup>183</sup> Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 183.

purposes of God. Jesus commissions shepherd leaders to continue his mission and ministry in the empowerment of the Spirit. This assignment is accomplished by the embodiment of his purpose and motives in ministry.<sup>184</sup>

### *Summary*

Paul Tripp provides meaningful insight to pastors and church leaders, writing, “Pastoral ministry is always shaped by a war between the kingdom of self and the kingdom of God, which is fought on the field of your heart.”<sup>185</sup> Jesus exemplified how to live for the glory of God rather than the glory of self. He paved the way for those who follow his example to live in a manner that no longer serves selfish ambitions. The Apostle Paul exhorted, “And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor 5:15, ESV). Church leaders will need to decide either to serve the kingdom of self or the kingdom of God; such a decision regards the rulership of their hearts. Jesus made the answer clear when he said, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10).<sup>186</sup> True shepherd leaders will follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd, as they emulate the heart of the Father in guiding, protecting, and providing for the people of God. True shepherds, therefore, will embody his way of kingdom leadership through sacrifice and selflessness—for the glory of God alone.

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<sup>184</sup> Tremper Longman III et al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, *Luke-Acts*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2007), 105-106.

<sup>185</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*, 1st ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 98.

<sup>186</sup> James, “Contextual Engagement I Final Paper,” 37.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PROJECT IN CONTEXT

#### *Introduction*

Leadership is essential to every organization, impacting its health and effectiveness. Good leadership is necessary for an organization to operate efficiently and achieve success. The pursuit to discover and better understand the primary factors that constitute effective leadership has provided extensive research and writing on the subject matter, with much of this effort focusing on wisdom from the sectors of business, psychology, management, and human behavior. Consequently, the results of this research have led to the development of leadership models geared toward managing environments and producing specific outcomes.

Ministry leaders often engage leadership resources to improve their leadership and address issues within their churches and organizations. Many of these resources developed out of practices and principles found in scripture; however, sometimes, they are what Forrest and Roden call an “attempt to yoke biblical *principles* with unbiblical *practices, postures, or perspectives*.”<sup>1</sup> A biblically centered approach to leadership development is necessary to provide ministry leaders with scriptural leadership practices and principles that are Christ-centered.<sup>2</sup> God has provided revelation in his Word and through the example of his Son, to guide ministry

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Forrest and Chet Roden, eds., *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Forrest and Roden, *Biblical Leadership*, 9.



leaders in their leadership of self, others, and their churches and organizations. Therefore, scripture should be the leading source for Christian leadership research and development.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter three contains a literature review that explores components of both secular leadership and kingdom ministry leadership. The research on secular leadership examines definitions of secular leadership, secular leadership traits, emotional intelligence, and power in secular leadership. The project's research on kingdom ministry leadership investigates the characteristics necessary for effective kingdom ministry leadership by way of analyzing relevant literature devoted to ministry leadership that is both gospel-centered and modeled after the leadership that Jesus taught and embodied. Various foundational characteristics of kingdom leadership are identified throughout the research, including Commitment to God's Agenda: The Gospel is the Standard and Jesus is the Model, The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility, Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Spiritual Warfare and Spirit-Empowerment, Dependence on God, Love: Love for Others and Love for Jesus, and Accountability.

### *Literature Review*

#### Secular leadership defined

Leadership is an essential commodity for individuals and corporations because of its many benefits; practices and principles of leadership enhance individuals' personal, social, and professional lives while providing valuable assets to corporations.<sup>4</sup> A society or organization's

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<sup>3</sup> Forrest and Roden, "Introducing 'The' Biblical Foundations of Leadership," 23.

<sup>4</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 8th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2019), 1.

ability to operate well depends upon effective leadership. Leadership's primary objective is to utilize human and organizational resources to achieve a specific goal and resolve complex issues.

Despite its easily identifiable practices, an exact definition of leadership is challenging to articulate.<sup>5</sup> One of the complexities involved in defining leadership is that the word can have different meanings for different people and within diverse contexts.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, global influences and generational differences affect the ways in which leadership is understood. Table 3.1 presents the developing definition of leadership throughout time.

Table 3.1. Evolution of leadership definitions<sup>7</sup>

1900-1929	Emphasis on control and centralization of power. A common theme of domination.
1930s	Emphasis on leadership traits. Leadership is viewed as influence rather than domination.
1940s	Leadership is defined as an individual's behavior while directing group activities. <sup>8</sup> Leadership by persuasion was distinguished from leadership by coercion. <sup>9</sup>
1950s	Themes that dominated leadership definitions: continuance of group theory, leadership as a relationship that develops shared goals, and effectiveness.
1960s	Leadership is defined as behavior that influences people toward shared goals.
1970s	Emphasis on organizational behavior.
1980s	Leadership themes: do as the leader desires, influence, traits, and transformation.

<sup>5</sup> John Antonakis and David V. Day, "Leadership: Past, Present, and Future," in *The Nature of Leadership*, eds. John Antonakis and David V. Day (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2017), 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Melvin Stogdill, *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1974), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> John K. Hemphill, "Situational Factors in Leadership," *Ohio State University Bureau of Educational Research Monograph 32* (1949): 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Norman Copeland, *Psychology and the Soldier: The Art of Leadership*, 1st ed. (The Military Service Publishing Company, 1942).

1990s—21 <sup>st</sup> Century	Emphasis on the process of leadership. Leadership approaches include authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, followership, and discursive leadership.
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The complexities of leadership make the term increasingly difficult to define; however, many scholars have offered opinions regarding how to define and understand its components. Peter Northouse emphasizes the elements of process, influence, groups, and common goals in defining leadership. He identifies leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”<sup>10</sup> Joseph Rost and Richard Barker establish leadership as an influential relationship between leaders and followers. Within such a relationship, the goal is to produce changes and outcomes that benefit the shared purposes of both parties.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, John Antonakis and David Day underscore the components of process, influence, and relationship when defining leadership: “Leadership is a formal or informal contextually rooted and goal-influencing process that occurs between a leader and a follower, groups of followers, or institutions.”<sup>12</sup> Antonakis and Day make a significant distinction in specifying that leadership is rooted in context. Context influences the kind of leadership that develops in a situation and determines whether it will be effective.<sup>13</sup> John Maxwell identifies influence as the most crucial aspect in defining leadership, asserting that influence is a mandatory requirement to be able to lead people: “Leadership is influence—

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<sup>10</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph C. Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 102; Joseph C. Rost and Richard A. Barker, “Leadership Education in Colleges: Toward a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Paradigm,” *The Journal of Leadership Studies* 7, no. 1 (2000): 3-12.

<sup>12</sup> Antonakis and Day, “Leadership: Past, Present, and Future,” 5.

<sup>13</sup> Robert C. Liden and John Antonakis, “Considering Context in Psychological Leadership Research,” *Human Relations* 62, no. 11 (November 1, 2009): 1587-1605.

nothing more, nothing less.”<sup>14</sup> Lastly, James Kouzes and Barry Posner conclude that leadership is a relationship determined by the leader's behavior. A leader's behavior will affect whether someone chooses to follow them and, ultimately, whether their leadership is effective.<sup>15</sup>

### Secular leadership traits

The study of leadership in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century focused on leadership traits that produced effective leaders. Leadership traits were identified as innate qualities and characteristics that enabled a person to become a great leader. This trait-focused approach evolved throughout the century as leadership researchers explored and challenged its merits. Currently, trait research centers around the essential concept that traits contribute to making leadership effective. A list of essential leadership characteristics emerged from many years of trait research; certain characteristics were considered indicative of success and most likely to indicate leadership status: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.<sup>16</sup>

Richard Daft designates the personal characteristics of optimism, self-confidence, honesty, integrity, and drive as key leadership traits. Optimism enables a leader to recognize opportunity and impart hope in others, while self-confidence provides the assertiveness necessary to make difficult decisions. Honesty is a critical characteristic in a leader that indicates integrity and ethical behavior; trust in the leader-follower relationship is dependent upon honesty

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<sup>14</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*, 1st ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 11-17.

<sup>15</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 6th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 13.

<sup>16</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 19-23.

and integrity.<sup>17</sup> Kouzes and Posner contend, “Honesty is absolutely essential to leadership. After all, if we are willing to follow someone, whether it be into battle or into the boardroom, we first want to assure ourselves that the person is worthy of our trust. We want to know he or she is being truthful, ethical, and principled. We want to be fully confident in the integrity of our leaders.”<sup>18</sup> The effectiveness of leadership is dependent on the credibility of the leader.<sup>19</sup> Lastly, drive is the characteristic that provides motivation and energy for a leader to meet demands and achieve goals.<sup>20</sup>

Jim Collins coined the term "level 5 leader" to describe the leaders observed at what he determined to be good-to-great companies. He defines a level 5 leader as someone who embodies the qualities of extreme personal humility and intense professional will. Humility is the foundational characteristic that enables the leader to prioritize the company over selfish ambition. Equally, these leaders exhibit intense resolve focused on making the company great. They are modest and willful leaders—humble, fearless, and resolute in their determination to produce results for the institution's benefit. The embodiment of these diverse traits makes the level 5 leader invaluable to a company.<sup>21</sup>

Stephen Covey stresses the leadership traits of trust and inspiration in developing effective leaders. The effectiveness of these characteristics is dependent on the leader’s commitment to believing them and, more importantly, living them consistently. “Trust and

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<sup>17</sup> Richard L. Daft, *The Leadership Experience*, 6th ed. (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2014), 36-40.

<sup>18</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 14.

<sup>19</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 40.

<sup>20</sup> Daft, *The Leadership Experience*, 40.

<sup>21</sup> Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2001), 21-39.

inspire” leaders view their leadership through the perspective of stewardship. According to Covey, stewardship embodies the leader's credibility and moral authority, the cultivation of a relationship of trust with followers, and the ability to connect with people and inspire them.<sup>22</sup>

John Maxwell echoes the importance of trust as foundational to leadership. He submits that trust is developed by demonstrating competence, connection, and character traits: “Character makes trust possible. And trust makes leadership possible.”<sup>23</sup> Trust is a necessary component of leadership because without it, influence is unachievable, and without influence, it is impossible to lead others.<sup>24</sup>

*Emotional intelligence.* Emotional intelligence is a vital leadership trait that enables leaders to be more perceptive of their emotions and how they affect followers. There is a direct correlation between a leader's emotional intelligence capability and leadership effectiveness.<sup>25</sup> Daniel Goleman, co-chairman of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, confirmed the advantage that emotional intelligence provides in a study of leaders in 200 companies worldwide. The study revealed that two-thirds of the difference between average and top-performing leaders was connected to emotional aptitude in leaders. Technical skills, on the other hand, accounted for only one-third of the difference between the two

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen M. R. Covey, *Trust and Inspire: How Truly Great Leaders Unleash Greatness in Others* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2022), 13-14, 76-77.

<sup>23</sup> Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, 58.

<sup>24</sup> Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, 62-65.

<sup>25</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 28-29.

categories of leaders.<sup>26</sup> Results from this study show that effective leaders embody a remarkable aptitude for emotional intelligence, identifying it as the distinguishing factor that sets great leaders apart and affords them the ability to be highly successful.<sup>27</sup> Goleman states, “My research, along with other recent studies, clearly shows that emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won't make a great leader.”<sup>28</sup>

Emotional intelligence explores the interaction of a leader's emotions and thinking.

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso explain emotional intelligence in the following manner:

Whereas *intelligence* is concerned with our ability to learn *information* and apply it to life tasks, *emotional intelligence* is concerned with our ability to understand *emotions* and apply this understanding to life's tasks. Specifically, *emotional intelligence* can be defined as the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions, and to effectively manage emotions within oneself and in relationships with others.<sup>29</sup>

The critical components of emotional intelligence include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Table 3.2 defines these components and shows their distinguishing traits.

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<sup>26</sup> Diann Daniel, “Soft Skills for CIOs and Aspiring CIOs: Four Ways to Boost Your Emotional Intelligence,” *CIO*, June 25, 2007, <https://www.cio.com/article/274930/relationship-building-networking-soft-skills-for-cios-and-aspiring-cios-four-ways-to-boost-your-emo.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Goleman, “What Makes a Leader?,” *Harvard Business Review*, January 2004, <https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader>.

<sup>28</sup> Goleman, “What Makes a Leader?”

<sup>29</sup> John D. Mayer, Peter Salovey, and David Caruso, “Models of Emotional Intelligence,” in *Handbook of Intelligence*, ed. R. J. Sternberg (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 396-420.

Table 3.2. The five components of emotional intelligence at work<sup>30</sup>

	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Distinguishing Traits</b>
<b>Self-awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-confidence</li> <li>• Realistic self-assessment</li> <li>• Self-deprecating sense of humor</li> </ul>
<b>Self-regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods</li> <li>• The propensity to suspend judgment—to think before acting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustworthiness and integrity</li> <li>• Comfort with ambiguity</li> <li>• Openness to change</li> </ul>
<b>Motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status</li> <li>• A propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong drive to achieve</li> <li>• Optimism, even in the face of failure</li> <li>• Organizational commitment</li> </ul>
<b>Empathy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people</li> <li>• Skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise in building and retaining talent</li> <li>• Cross-cultural sensitivity</li> <li>• Service to clients and customers</li> </ul>
<b>Social Skill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks</li> <li>• An ability to find common ground and build rapport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectiveness in leading change</li> <li>• Persuasiveness</li> <li>• Expertise in building and leading teams</li> </ul>

*Power.* Power is a concept associated with leadership because of its relationship to the influence process. Peter Northouse writes, “Power is the capacity or potential to influence. People have

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<sup>30</sup> Goleman, “What Makes a Leader?”



power when they have the ability to affect others' beliefs, attitudes, and courses of action.”<sup>31</sup> Power is the means by which leaders generate change within individuals to achieve goals.<sup>32</sup> The way in which power is employed determines whether a leader uses it constructively or destructively. Individuals who use power for personal gain or to control others represent the dark side of leadership.<sup>33</sup> Coercive power is a particular kind of power that is characterized by force and manipulation. Leaders can exercise coercion to influence others through threats, punishment, and negative rewards; coercive power is often used for leaders' personal gain and not for the benefit of followers or the organization.<sup>34</sup> James Burns provides a different perspective on the use of power in leadership. He stresses that power in relationships intends to achieve the common goals of leaders and followers.<sup>35</sup>

Discussions surrounding power define it this way: “the potential ability of one person to influence others to carry out orders”<sup>36</sup> or “to do something they otherwise would not have done.”<sup>37</sup> Some definitions focus on the ability of power to fulfill leaders' goals or reach their

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<sup>31</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Dina V. Krasikova, Stephen G. Green, and James M. LeBreton, “Destructive Leadership: A Theoretical Review, Integration, and Future Research Agenda,” *Journal of Management* 39, no. 5 (July 1, 2013): 1308-1338.

<sup>34</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 11-12.

<sup>35</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> Robert A. Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 201-215.

<sup>37</sup> W. Graham Astley and Paramjit S. Sachdeva, “Structural Sources of Intraorganizational Power: A Theoretical Synthesis,” *Academy of Management Review* 9, no. 1 (January 1984): 104-113; Abraham Kaplan, “Power in Perspective,” in *Power and Conflict in Organizations*, eds. Robert L. Kahn and Elise Boulding (London, England: Tavistock, 1964), 11-32.

desired outcomes.<sup>38</sup> The two types of power found within organizations are positional and personal. Northouse provides the following description for these kinds of power:

Position power is the power a person derives from a particular office or rank in a formal organizational system. It is the influence capacity a leader derives from having higher status than the followers have. Personal power is the influence capacity a leader derives from being seen by followers as likeable and knowledgeable. When leaders act in ways that are important to followers, it gives leaders power.<sup>39</sup>

Leaders exercise their position as well as their personal power to influence followers to achieve organizational goals; however, power can also be used in toxic and destructive ways. Power used for personal gain rather than the organization's benefit represents abusive leadership.<sup>40</sup> Some leaders seek leadership positions because they crave a type of power that fulfills their need to control others. These leaders pursue leadership positions that provide access to power solely to exercise their will over followers.<sup>41</sup> Followers depend on their leader; therefore, the more followers a leader has, the more power he or she holds.<sup>42</sup> Power affords leaders influence that can be used to entice followers to respond favorably through pressure, flattery, or rational persuasion.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Gerald R. Salancik and Jeffrey Pfeffer, "The Bases and Use of Power in Organizational Decision Making: The Case of a University," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1974): 453-473.

<sup>39</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> Daft, *The Leadership Experience*, 380.

<sup>41</sup> Rachel E. Sturm and Lucas Monzani, "Power and Leadership," in *The Nature of Leadership*, eds. John Antonakis and David V. Day, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2017), 276.

<sup>42</sup> Samuel Bendahan et al., "Leader Corruption Depends on Power and Testosterone," *The Leadership Quarterly* 26 (2015): 101-122.

<sup>43</sup> Robert B. Cialdini, "Harnessing the Science of Persuasion," *Harvard Business Review*, October 1, 2001; Robert B. Cialdini and Noah J. Goldstein, "Social Influence: Compliance and Conformity," *Annual Review of Psychology* 55 (2004): 591-621.

Philosophers Plato and Aristotle were interested in the subject of power and contributed to the conversation regarding the issues surrounding it.<sup>44</sup> Plato valued a person's character and deemed it essential when considering individuals for leadership positions. He argued that leaders must possess strength of character to avoid using power for self-serving motives. Thad Williamson writes, "Plato believed that rulers should be carefully selected and developed to govern and that only the virtuous—those with a highly developed sense of justice—should be allowed to exercise power."<sup>45</sup> Plato entrusted the management surrounding the leader with controlling and limiting the leader's use of power. Aristotle agreed with Plato's argument regarding the careful selection of leaders; however, his argument centered around the leader's ability to lead themselves rather than be supervised by the governing class. Self-leadership is the most essential quality for a leader to embody, according to Aristotle. Rachel Sturm and Lucas Monzani write, "Thus, for Aristotle, leadership—and by extension, being able to exercise power—was only meant for those who could master their passions through a leadership of self, because self-mastery would prevent rulers from succumbing to the corruptive nature of power."<sup>46</sup>

The primary consideration regarding leadership should not be in how to define it but rather in determining the components necessary for developing exemplary leaders. Understanding the significance of power in leadership is crucial in knowing how to develop good leaders. Plato, and many of the ancients, realized that the temptations of power in leadership are

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<sup>44</sup> Sturm and Monzani, "Power and Leadership," 273.

<sup>45</sup> Thad Williamson, "The Good Society and the Good Soul: Plato's Republic on Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (2008): 397.

<sup>46</sup> Sturm and Monzani, "Power and Leadership," 273.

the most significant issues for leaders.<sup>47</sup> Joanne Ciulla explains, “The power that leaders have to do things also entails the power to hide what they do. Power carries with it a temptation to do evil and an obligation to do good.”<sup>48</sup> The Bathsheba Syndrome, a condition that has been coined based upon the account of King David, characterizes leaders who are incapable of coping with and responding to power and success in an ethical way. The story of David and Bathsheba illustrates the dangers of pride and moral weakness for people in leadership; personal immorality, accompanied by the abuse of power, caused great harm to David's followers. The Bathsheba Syndrome reveals the potential outcome that can occur when leaders abuse their power and privilege by using them for selfish purposes. Leaders often develop Bathsheba Syndrome after becoming successful, making it complicated to determine who will become a casualty of such a turn in character. Consequently, the development of leaders must include serious consideration of the ethical challenges accompanying power.<sup>49</sup>

The power gained in leadership creates a temptation for leaders to use their influence in self-serving ways. Likewise, leaders eager for power and control are inclined to ignore social norms and are not as likely to embrace suffering, indicating that a leader's true character is revealed when given power.<sup>50</sup> Plato and Aristotle's counsel on this matter proved to be an important and timely warning; their arguments suggested that great care must be taken when selecting individuals for leadership positions because the power gained will magnify a person's

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<sup>47</sup> Joanne B. Ciulla, “Ethics and Effectiveness: The Nature of Good Leadership,” in *The Nature of Leadership*, eds. John Antonakis and David V. Day, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2017), 443-460.

<sup>48</sup> Ciulla, “Ethics and Effectiveness,” 460.

<sup>49</sup> Ciulla, “Ethics and Effectiveness,” 460-461.

<sup>50</sup> Jacob B. Hirsh, Adam D. Galinsky, and Chen-Bo Zhong, “Drunk, Powerful, and in the Dark: How General Processes of Disinhibition Produce Both Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science* 6, no. 5 (September 2011): 415-427.

character. Power has the propensity to lead an individual to pursue personal gain above all else, making their leadership corrupt.<sup>51</sup> The corruption of power violates social norms and is destructive to the common good of society.<sup>52</sup> Two essential qualities that assist in avoiding corruptive power are an exceptional ability to lead an organization and others as well as the capacity for leadership of self.<sup>53</sup>

In speaking of the corruptive nature of power, Aristotle indicated that power is not inherently bad but becomes so when a person's character is weak and immoral. He further suggests that virtuous character results from habitually choosing virtuous behavior. Consequently, good leadership is developed when leaders exemplify good character, and good character can assist leaders in subverting the corruptive nature of power.<sup>54</sup> Character is, in essence, a set of virtues that contribute to well-being and goodness.<sup>55</sup> Traits advantageous for virtuous leadership and positive organizational performance include judgment, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence, accountability, drive, collaboration, humility, and integrity.<sup>56</sup> Judgment is particularly essential because it allows leaders to manage the challenges

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<sup>51</sup> Sturm and Monzani, "Power and Leadership," 288.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Bendahan et al., "Leader Corruption Depends on Power and Testosterone," 101-122.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Crossan, Dusya Vera, and Len Nanjad, "Transcendent Leadership: Strategic Leadership in Dynamic Environments," *The Leadership Quarterly* 19 (October 1, 2008): 569-581.

<sup>54</sup> Gerard Seijts, *Good Leaders Learn: Lessons from Lifetimes of Leadership*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 50-56.

<sup>55</sup> Sturm and Monzani, "Power and Leadership," 290-291.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Crossan, Gerard Seijts, and Jeffrey Gandz, "Developing Leadership Character in Business Programs," *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 12 (June 1, 2013): 285-305; Gerard Seijts et al., "Character Matters: Character Dimensions' Impact on Leader Performance and Outcomes," *Organizational Dynamics* 44 (2015): 65-74; John J. Sosik, William A. Gentry, and Jae Uk Chun, "The Value of Virtue in the Upper Echelons: A Multisource Examination of Executive Character Strengths and Performance," *The Leadership Quarterly* 23 (2012): 367-382.

and temptations associated with power responsibly; power must be managed competently because of its potential to be corrupt. Sturm and Monzani conclude,

Echoing the sentiments of Plato and Aristotle, we believe that virtuous leaders are the ones best suited to wield power because they will use it in prosocial ways. Thus, in light of the ever-expanding list of power abuses by leaders, we see that we might not be in a crisis of power and corruption today, but one of a lack of leader character.<sup>57</sup>

#### Foundational characteristics of kingdom ministry leadership

*Identifying the potential problem.* The kingdom of God was not only the most important priority for Jesus but also the primary motivation and central purpose of his mission and ministry.<sup>58</sup> He exclaims, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43). The kingdom of God defined Jesus' entire life and ministry. He devoted forty days after his resurrection to teaching the disciples about the kingdom.<sup>59</sup> Luke wrote, “He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). The kingdom of God was of great importance to Jesus, and he made it a priority to teach the disciples about its significance. He not only stressed the importance of the kingdom of God to the disciples but commanded them to seek it first. Jesus urged them, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). He was conveying to the disciples that the kingdom of God was the necessary foundation that they would

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<sup>57</sup> Sturm and Monzani, “Power and Leadership,” 292.

<sup>58</sup> Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom*, 87.

<sup>59</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 62.

need for everything in life. The message to the disciples was a critical reminder to pursue the eternal principles and characteristics of the kingdom rather than the temporal and fleeting things of the world.<sup>60</sup>

Leadership in the kingdom of God is countercultural, as it is not defined or understood by the values of this world. Leaders in God's kingdom are representatives and ambassadors of Jesus in his absence, and they should always lead and point people toward God's kingdom. Robert Stacy writes, “Leaders, therefore, are living, breathing intimations of the kingdom, foreshadowing in this world the vision and values of that world. They are ‘kingdom guides,’ and as such express ‘leadership’ appropriate to the new reality in which they live.”<sup>61</sup> Leaders in God's kingdom should reflect the kingdom principles that Jesus embodied, and their character should radiate kingdom values.<sup>62</sup> Leadership under God's reign will shape the whole character and behavior of the leader. Kingdom leadership should be distinct and countercultural—unwilling to compromise in devotion to Christ and the mission of the kingdom of God.<sup>63</sup>

Some ministry leaders are driven by cultural trends and business principles rather than the values characterized by the kingdom of God and embodied by Jesus; the result, therefore, is that such ministry leaders prioritize secular leadership principles instead of allowing themselves to be led by the Word of God. Ultimately, it becomes problematic when these ministry leaders are attempting to execute God's work according to worldly standards. Paul Tripp writes, “Could it be that we are looking to the wrong models to understand how to lead? Could it be that as we

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<sup>60</sup> Carson, Wessel, and Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 181-182.

<sup>61</sup> Stacy, “Following Jesus in the Kingdom of God,” 319-320.

<sup>62</sup> Keener, *Matthew*, 174-175.

<sup>63</sup> Treat, *Seek First*, 57-81.

have become enamored with corporate models of leadership, we have lost sight of deeper gospel insights and values?” He continues, “I am convinced from conversation after conversation with pastors and their leadership that we have a *leadership crisis*.”<sup>64</sup>

*Commitment to God's agenda: The Gospel is the standard.* The Gospel of Jesus Christ informs followers of Jesus about how they should live in the world, presenting a system of values that shape and form how Christians ought to think and behave as representatives of Christ. Similarly, the gospel is instructive in developing leaders within the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul writes this encouragement to the Ephesians: “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:1-3). Paul reminded the Ephesians of the gospel truths that were to shape the way they thought and how they related to each other.<sup>65</sup> He established a new standard of behavior that is expected of God's people, a standard that calls a holy people to live counterculturally and distinct from secular society.<sup>66</sup> Leaders in God's kingdom will value and embody gospel characteristics, and their leadership should be founded upon and informed by its truths. Tripp writes,

The model for the community that is the church, and most importantly its leadership, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, I know that this seems both obvious and vague, but I am persuaded that it is neither, and that if the primary driving force of leadership in local churches around the world was the gospel of

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<sup>64</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 1-3.

<sup>65</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 22-23.

<sup>66</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1984), 146.



Jesus Christ, many of the sad things we have seen happen in the lives of leaders and their churches would not have happened.<sup>67</sup>

The gospel should be the guiding foundation that shapes how leaders understand and carry out their leadership responsibilities in the church, as it provides everything necessary for a kingdom leader to be encouraged, strengthened, and empowered for ministry leadership effectiveness. Ministry leaders can serve faithfully and fruitfully by rooting their leadership in biblical wisdom and receiving the authority given to them by Jesus.<sup>68</sup>

Leadership in God's kingdom carries enormous responsibility that includes understanding God's will and wholeheartedly pursuing his purposes through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Kingdom leaders must be committed to leading God's way and according to his agenda. The Holy Spirit should be their guide, their leadership principles should be informed by biblical truth, and scripture should be the standard by which their leadership is measured.<sup>69</sup> James writes, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (Jas 3:1). Luke further illustrated the tremendous accountability that is required of those in leadership when he wrote, "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more" (Luke 12:48). Scripture provides uncompromising standards that should be honored by those who are ambassadors of Christ, as significant personal responsibility is involved for those who serve God and lead his people.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 22.

<sup>68</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 21-24.

<sup>69</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2011), 19-38.

<sup>70</sup> Carson, Wessel, and Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 967.

*Commitment to God's agenda: Jesus is the model.* Jesus exemplified kingdom leadership committed to the Father's agenda; his priority was doing God's will and fulfilling his purposes. An essential characteristic of the leadership of Jesus was that he was dependent on the relationship with his Father. Jesus knew the voice of his Father and was, therefore, able to recognize his will and avoid diversion from it. Jesus declared, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise" (John 5:19). Jesus is always submissive to the Father and committed to pleasing him; he can do nothing outside of what he observes the Father doing. Donald Carson writes, "The Father initiates, sends, commands, commissions, grants; the Son responds, obeys, performs his Father's will, receives authority. In this sense, the Son is the Father's agent...though much more than an agent."<sup>71</sup> Jesus established the standard for leadership in the kingdom of God and provides a model for ministry leaders to follow in pursuing God's agenda for their ministry and leadership. Christ-centered leaders will cultivate an intimate relationship with the Father as they follow his will and build the kingdom of God.<sup>72</sup> May the heart song of every ministry leader be, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10).

*The cost of leadership: Servanthood and humility.* There is a cost to leadership that intensifies the sufferings and anxieties experienced in life, and it is a high price that those in kingdom

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<sup>71</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 251.

<sup>72</sup> Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 42-48.

ministry leadership must be prepared to pay. Leadership costs include self-sacrifice, loneliness, fatigue, criticism, rejection, and intense pressure.<sup>73</sup> Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley write, “Leadership is forged in the furnace...it is a set of life experiences melded by intense heat.”<sup>74</sup> Billy Graham experienced the profound burden of ministry leadership; he was intimately acquainted with the cost of living a life wholly surrendered to God. Sherwood Wirt, the longtime editor of Graham's *Decision* magazine, wrote, “All attempts to explain Billy Graham fail unless they begin at the cross.”<sup>75</sup> Graham lived under the intensity and crucible of the call to ministry leadership, and it refined, purified, and empowered him throughout his life and ministry. He never retreated from the furnace's heat but instead used its pressure to form himself into a faithful and passionate kingdom leader.<sup>76</sup>

The Apostle Paul understood the pressures that accompany leadership in the church as he experienced the loneliness, depression, and discouragement symptomatic of life as a servant of God. His hardships are illustrated in scripture:

Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (2 Cor 11:23-28)

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<sup>73</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence For Every Believer*, reissue ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2017), 139-147.

<sup>74</sup> Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 19.

<sup>75</sup> Myra and Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*, 31.

<sup>76</sup> Myra and Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*, 26, 31, 183-184.

Paul qualified his status as a servant of God through the trials that he endured. He experienced imprisonment, beatings, near-death, traveling dangers, hardship, and anxiety. These trials produced extreme and constant tension for Paul, yet he continually embraced life in service to Christ Jesus.<sup>77</sup> He confidently proclaimed, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). Christ crucified was the purpose and guide for Paul's life and ministry.<sup>78</sup>

A call to leadership within the church includes adopting a life of sacrifice and self-denial marked by suffering.<sup>79</sup> Tripp writes, “There simply is no such thing as a call to ministry leadership that isn't also a call to a life of servanthood, and there is no such thing as a call to servanthood that isn't also a call to suffer.”<sup>80</sup> The disciples struggled to grasp an understanding of servanthood. Scripture illustrates the disciples arguing over who was the greatest among them:

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” (Mark 9:30-37)

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<sup>77</sup> Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 187-191.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship: Moving from Shallow Christianity to Deep Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 76.

<sup>79</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 128-136.

<sup>80</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 135.

The disciples were more concerned with their own status than they were in mourning the suffering and death that Jesus was about to experience. Jesus teaches them that the way to greatness is through servanthood. Leadership in the kingdom of God is not characterized by power and position but by a heart of sacrifice and service.<sup>81</sup> Scripture provides another example of the misguided thinking of the disciples:

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:35-45)

The disciples fail to recognize and understand the content of Jesus’ teaching regarding his impending affliction and death. James and John are instead consumed with self-focus, position, and entitlement. They were motivated by rank, superiority, and desire for authority over others. Jesus responds to the disciples by using a personal example and reminding them that they are not called to lordship but to a life of servanthood. Jesus was the only person entitled to a life of power, position, and authority, yet he exemplified a life of service and sacrifice. He sacrificially came to earth as the Son of Man and took the form of a slave to serve unto death.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 130-132.

<sup>82</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text With Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 378-383.

Leadership is a heavy responsibility that requires great sacrifice; it must begin at the cross. Jesus described this to the disciples in his own words: “Then Jesus told the disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it’” (Matt 6:24-25). Jesus embodied suffering and denial; he embodied the cross. The cross not only belongs to Jesus but also to all those who follow him. Stacy writes, “There is no path to the kingdom of God that bypasses the cross. The cross is not merely the consequence of being a disciple; it is constitutive to it.”<sup>83</sup> Leadership in God's kingdom will require relinquishing personal control and embracing the truth that God is in complete control; cruciform leadership is a non-negotiable for Christ's followers.<sup>84</sup> Self-denial is a characteristic of following Jesus and is required of leadership in the kingdom of God.<sup>85</sup> Kingdom leaders demonstrate servant leadership in the care and concern they express for the wholeness of those they lead and shepherd. Servant leadership must be marked by a willingness to become humble, deny oneself, and suffer for the kingdom's sake; these characteristics are the heart of the gospel message and the example modeled by Jesus.<sup>86</sup>

Leaders in God's kingdom should embody the cruciform way of the cross in their leadership by rejecting popularity, success, and the desire to be great; leaders should instead embrace suffering and failure. Jack Hayford commented the following when asked about leadership:

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<sup>83</sup> Stacy, “Following Jesus in the Kingdom of God,” 324.

<sup>84</sup> Stacy, “Following Jesus in the Kingdom of God,” 324-327.

<sup>85</sup> Carson, Wessel, and Liefeld, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 379.

<sup>86</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 140-142; John F. Carter, “Power and Authority in Pentecostal Leadership,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12, no. 2 (July 2009): 185-207.

True leadership is found only at *Jesus' feet* and is shaped and kept only *in the heart*. Fruitful leadership is not the capacity to 'produce results' but the 'capacity to bring those I lead to their deepest enrichment and highest fulfillment.' Fruitful leadership is not getting others to fulfill my goals (or even my God-given vision for our collective enterprise and good), but helping others realize God's creative intent for their lives.<sup>87</sup>

Jesus condemned any behavior that coveted the affection and approval of others, and his disciples were expected to rebuff all conduct motivated by selfish desires and personal gain. Their identity and contentment were to be found wholly in God. The lessons that Jesus taught to the disciples are today's guiding principles for leaders in the church.<sup>88</sup> Peter Scazzero writes, "The pathway Jesus calls us to walk is an intentional move away from greatness-ism to being little or lowly. Jesus said, 'Whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven' (Matt 18:4)."<sup>89</sup> A biblical concept of servanthood is understood and established through Jesus. He models leadership through embracing love and abandoning power.

Servant leaders need to be motivated by a heart of humility rather than driven by egotistical desires. Power, control, and the pursuit of platform and position are not appropriate priorities for servant leaders; instead, they must follow the example of Jesus by seeking God's will and lovingly serving others.<sup>90</sup> Walter Wright explains, "The greatest ones in the kingdom of God will be the servants, those who invest their lives in the people around them, not from positions of leadership, but in relationships of service."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> George Barna, ed., *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's People* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1998), 111.

<sup>88</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 61-69.

<sup>89</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 72.

<sup>90</sup> Jae Kwang Kye, "Principles from Jesus Christ's Life That Inform a Biblical Perspective on Servant Leadership," *한국기독교신학논총* 72 (December 2010): 263-288.

<sup>91</sup> Walter C. Wright, *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Leadership Service*, corr. 3rd printing ed. (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2000), 83.

*Spirit-empowered leadership: Spiritual warfare.* Ministry leadership is spiritual warfare, and those in ministry leadership positions are on the front lines of spiritual attack. Tripp writes, “Leadership in the church of Jesus Christ is not just a battle for theological faithfulness, gospel purity, and methodological integrity; it is also always a war for the heart of every leader.”<sup>92</sup> Ministry, in and of itself, is the principal means by which the enemy attacks and defeats ministry leaders. Tripp continues, “Leaders unaware of the spiritual war that is ministry begin to minister with kidnapped hearts, distorted vision, and misguided motivations.”<sup>93</sup> Scripture clearly warns about the spiritual warfare that is present in the world; therefore, leaders must remember that they engage in a spiritual battle every day.<sup>94</sup> The Apostle Paul fervently warned the church about the realities of the spiritual battle that was taking place, writing, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). Paul is concerned with making the dark spiritual powers known and equipping the church in overcoming them. The spiritual principalities are powerful, cunning, and have great authority. Spiritual principalities operate in darkness, and Satan unleashes them for destruction and wickedness.<sup>95</sup> John Stott explains,

The devil seldom attacks openly, preferring darkness to light, that when he transforms himself into 'an angel of light' we are caught unsuspecting. He is a dangerous wolf, but enters Christ's flock in the disguise of a sheep. Sometimes he roars like a lion, but more often is as subtle as a serpent. We must not imagine, therefore, that open persecution and open temptation to sin are his only or even

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<sup>92</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 115-116.

<sup>93</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 115.

<sup>94</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 114-126.

<sup>95</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 261-264.



his commonest weapons; he prefers to seduce us into compromise and deceive us into error.<sup>96</sup>

Ministry leaders should be aware of the spiritual battleground surrounding them, remaining aware of such dangers and avoiding behavior that makes them susceptible to demonic attacks. Paul Tripp warns ministry leaders, “Pride in ministry achievements puts you in battle danger. Lack of openness to the pastoral care and concern of fellow leaders exposes you to danger. Surrounding yourself with leaders who are no longer willing or are too fearful to challenge and confront you is to leave yourself exposed.”<sup>97</sup> Spiritual warfare must be a primary concern for those in ministry leadership because they are on the front lines of the battle and must be both prepared and equipped to break strongholds and defeat the enemy.

*Spirit-empowered leadership: Spirit empowerment.* In the article “Power and Authority in Pentecostal Leadership,” John F. Carter claims, “It can be said that the exercise of leadership is ultimately an exercise in power.”<sup>98</sup> Leadership occurs when a leader exercises authority over another individual. The power wielded through human effort and personality is defined as human power. Conversely, God's power is manifested supernaturally through the work of the Holy Spirit. Leadership that involves the Spirit in its authority over others is considered spiritual and is categorized as Spirit-empowered leadership. Jesus is the model for this type of leadership as he exercised power (*dynamis*) and authority (*exousia*).<sup>99</sup> The Gospel of Luke illustrates, “And they

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<sup>96</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 265.

<sup>97</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 123.

<sup>98</sup> Carter, “Power and Authority,” 186.

<sup>99</sup> Carter, “Power and Authority,” 186-187.

were all amazed and said to one another, ‘What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!’” (Luke 4:36). Jesus also affirms his authority: “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’” (Matt 28:18). James Shelton writes, “Jesus is the Spirit-led man *par excellence*.”<sup>100</sup> He employed supernatural power and authority through the work of the Holy Spirit, and his followers are expected to imitate this same model of Spirit-empowered leadership. The final commission that Jesus gave to his disciples before his ascension is found in the book of Acts. His commission demonstrates the critical role that the Holy Spirit fulfills in empowering followers of Jesus to continue his ministry.<sup>101</sup> Jesus proclaimed, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

*Dependence on God.* Billy Graham understood that his spiritual power and effectiveness as a ministry leader came directly from God, and prayer and time in God's presence were characteristics of his life and ministry.<sup>102</sup> Cliff Barrows said the following in describing Graham: “He was confident in God. He sought God's will, he was God-dependent, motivated by his love for God and man. He was self-effacing, but he was secure in the place of God's appointment. He was anointed of God. He was considerate. He was not authoritarian.”<sup>103</sup> David was also a man

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<sup>100</sup> James B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word & Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 65.

<sup>101</sup> F. Scott Spencer, *Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 215.

<sup>102</sup> Myra and Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*, 21, 125, 289, 293, 295.

<sup>103</sup> Myra and Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*, 51.

who was deeply convinced of the power of the presence of God. He was confident that he could accomplish incredible feats through the power of God within him. Scripture observes David saying, “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam 17:37). David recalled God's presence and power in the previous moments of danger, and it encouraged and emboldened his spirit. His complete dependence on God is also observed in the Psalms. He exclaimed, “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God” (Ps 62:5-7). Ministry leaders must dwell in the presence of the Almighty to be equipped, empowered, and guided forward. God's presence is the hope, confidence, motivation, and refuge for leaders within the church.<sup>104</sup>

Silence and stillness in the presence of God are essential for nurturing a leader's relationship with God and strengthening them for ministry. Ministry leaders must prioritize time away from the demands and concerns of their work in order to allow space for God to renew and refill them. Solitude offers an invitation to pray and abide in the presence of God.<sup>105</sup> Peter Scazzero writes, “Integrating silence and stillness utterly transforms the way we follow Jesus and the way we lead.”<sup>106</sup> Solitude provides an opportunity for ministry leaders to surrender their ambition in favor of the Father's will. God performs the profoundly transformative work necessary for spiritual and emotional health in times of solitude, a place where he can minister

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<sup>104</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 219-221.

<sup>105</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 54-56.

<sup>106</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 54.

without the interruption of outside noise. Spiritual transformation provides the opportunity for an encounter between God and the leader. Ruth Haley Barton explains,

In the process of transformation the Spirit of God moves us from behaviors motivated by fear and self-protection to trust and abandonment to God; from selfishness and self-absorption to freely offering the gifts of the authentic self; from the ego's desperate attempts to control the outcomes of our lives to an ability to give ourselves over to the will of God which is often the foolishness of this world.<sup>107</sup>

Seeking God and spending time in his presence is crucial for the life of a ministry leader.

Transformative encounters with God take place in solitude and are necessary to nourish and strengthen the soul of leaders so that they can guide others into those same spaces.<sup>108</sup> Henri Nouwen writes, “We are responsible for our own solitude. Without such a desert, we will lose our own soul while preaching the gospel to others. But with such a spiritual abode, we will become increasingly conformed to him in whose Name we minister.”<sup>109</sup>

Jesus modeled a life that prioritized time in God's presence because he knew that dependency on the Father was vital for his life and ministry. His life was characterized by solitude and prayer, and the disciples witnessed his commitment to these spiritual disciplines. Jesus prayed unceasingly; he exemplified a prayerful life. The morning was when he would retreat for moments of solitude, while the evenings found him in the mountains praying alone.<sup>110</sup>

The following scriptures demonstrate Jesus' practice of prayer:

And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray (Matt 14:23).

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<sup>107</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>108</sup> Barton, *Strengthening the Soul*, 97.

<sup>109</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1981), 30.

<sup>110</sup> Meyer, *Inherit the Kingdom*, 8-9, 99.

And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray (Mark 6:46).

In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God (Luke 6:12).

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed (Mark 1:35).

But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray (Luke 5:16).

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1).

God changes people to become more like him through prayer, transforming individuals' thoughts, desires, and affections to align with his own.<sup>111</sup> Richard Foster writes, “Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father.”<sup>112</sup> The purpose of this supernatural communion with God is to become increasingly conformed to the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>113</sup> The Apostle Paul repeatedly spoke about the necessity of prayer because he recognized its power. The following scriptures reveal his heart concerning prayer:

Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thess 5:17-18)

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. (Rom 12:12)

Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph 6:18-20)

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<sup>111</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth Special 20th Anniversary Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 2000), 33.

<sup>112</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33.

<sup>113</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 57.

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (Col 4:2-4)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)

Prayer is a continual and growing relationship of love and devotion with the Father.<sup>114</sup> Jesus speaks to this divine relationship in scripture when he says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Jesus invites every leader to enjoy the abundant life that is rooted in him. When leadership flows out of this loving communion with Jesus, it will be fruitful and life-giving. Peter Scazzero offers a word of caution to leaders who neglect seeking God and spending time in his presence, noting, “Whenever we find ourselves wanting the ministry impact *of* Jesus while simultaneously resisting spending time *with* Jesus, we are positioning ourselves for a beating and some variation on being run ‘out of the house naked and bleeding.’”<sup>115</sup> Abiding with Jesus provides adequate strength, encouragement, and protection for the pressures and challenges of ministry leadership. Jesus consistently removed himself from the demands of ministry to spend time with the Father. He knew that this time of rest was essential for rejuvenating his mind, body, and spirit. In this divine relationship, ministry leaders can find a place of deep rest and rootedness with God.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Foster, *Prayer*, 13.

<sup>115</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World*, illustrated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 130.

<sup>116</sup> Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 119-130.

*Love: Love for others.* Jesus prepared the disciples for his absence by giving them the following command: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). Jesus' words to the disciples outline his expectations as they continue ministering in his absence. Love is the standard by which he expects followers to live and lead. Jesus modeled and demonstrated his love for the disciples by washing their feet.<sup>117</sup> He said to them, “If I then, 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” (John 13:14-15).

Ministry leaders are followers of Jesus and are therefore commanded by God to love the people they lead. A practical way to demonstrate love for others is by being fully present for them. Henri Nouwen articulates what it looks like to love people in this way:

To care means first of all to be present to each other. From experience you know that those who care for you become present to you. When they listen, they listen to you. When they speak, they speak to you. Their presence is a healing presence because they accept you on your terms, and they encourage you to take your own life seriously.<sup>118</sup>

Leaders must recognize every individual as being created in the image of God and worthy of their time and wholehearted attention; intentionality is essential in connecting authentically with others. Love always listens well and speaks respectfully.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 483-484.

<sup>118</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2004), 36.

<sup>119</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, 144-145.

*Love: Love for Jesus.* Paul Tripp writes,

The most powerful protection from the dangers that every leader faces is not his relationship to his fellow leaders but a heart that is ruled by deeply rooted love for Jesus. It is love for Jesus that has the power to crush leader pride. It is love for Jesus that ignites and protects our love for one another. It is love for Jesus that turns ministry achievement from a cause for self-glory into a reason to worship. It is love for Jesus that protects a leader from both fear of man and fear of failure.<sup>120</sup>

Love for Jesus is paramount for ministry leaders. The lives of ministry leaders should be characterized by a deep devotion to him that is evident in their priorities and behavior.<sup>121</sup> Jesus' last words to Peter reflect the value he places on love. His words are so important that he repeated the same question to Peter three times. Jesus wanted to know if Peter loves him. Scripture illustrates,

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17)

The lesson in this passage is that love for Jesus should be evident in the behavior and practices of ministry leaders. Jesus desires to know if Peter's love for him is sincere, and he acquires the answer by questioning Peter's devotion.<sup>122</sup> He indicates this intention when he responds to Peter by saying, "Feed my lambs." To love Jesus also means to love his flock; Peter's love for Jesus must be displayed in his caring for God's people. Leaders in God's kingdom will demonstrate

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<sup>120</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 56.

<sup>121</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 56-57.

<sup>122</sup> Alex Sosler, "Love in the Ordinary: Leadership in the Gospel of John," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 11, no. 2 (2017): 10-16.



their love for Christ in guiding and protecting the people they are entrusted to lead; this assignment is the shepherd's responsibility and the commission of every pastor and ministry leader.<sup>123</sup>

Jesus demonstrated through washing feet and dying on the cross that love for others should be shown through active service. The most significant expression of love that can be made for another person is in sacrificing one's life. Love for Jesus is displayed in concern for and service to others. The Good Shepherd models that leaders in God's kingdom lay down their life for the people they lead. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Jesus called Peter to the same self-sacrificial leadership when he said to him, "Follow me" (John 21:19). A deep and devoted love for Jesus must compel kingdom leaders to lay down their lives in guiding and caring for his sheep.<sup>124</sup>

*Accountability.* Community is critical in ministry leadership, providing a place for leaders to find accountability that protects them from the dangers of sin and temptation. Tripp asserts,

Accountability means living as if I really do believe that isolated, individualized, independent Christianity never produces good fruit. It means acknowledging that every leader needs to be led and every pastor needs to be pastored. It means confessing that as long as sin remains in me, and that apart from restraining grace and the rescuing ministry of those around me, I continue to be a danger to myself.<sup>125</sup>

Accountability invites others inside the normal boundaries of leadership to help care for the leader's soul. These individuals can help identify areas of concern before they become

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<sup>123</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 677-678.

<sup>124</sup> Sosler, "Love in the Ordinary," 11-13.

<sup>125</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 25.

destructive to the leader's integrity and credibility. Deep relationships with other leaders protect a leader's heart from stepping outside the safe boundaries established by God.

An essential part of accountability is establishing plans for dealing with sin, weakness, and failure. Leaders will inevitably need to address sin and failures in their community at some point, making preparation necessary.<sup>126</sup> Billy Graham fully understood the value of accountability and actively worked to develop safeguards to protect against the temptation of sin. He established distinct boundaries as sources of wisdom and protection. These principles formed what Graham called the Modesto Manifesto, guidelines designed to hold himself and his team accountable. Credibility was an essential value for Billy Graham; he understood that it was critical to have credibility to lead others, so it must be guarded carefully.<sup>127</sup> Graham said the following concerning the Modesto Manifesto: “In reality, it did not mark a radical departure for us; we had always held these principles. It did, however, settle in our hearts and minds, once and for all, the determination that integrity would be the hallmark of both our lives and ministry.”<sup>128</sup> Wise ministry leaders take precautions to provide protection from the dangers of temptation; including the enlistment of friends to provide transparency and accountability and establishing guidelines that protect the leadership team's credibility.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 25-27.

<sup>127</sup> Myra and Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*, 44, 57.

<sup>128</sup> Myra and Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*, 57.

<sup>129</sup> Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 322.

### *Summary*

Leadership is essential for an organization to operate effectively, making the development of leaders a vital priority. Secular and ministry resources indicate that leadership involves an influential relationship between leaders and followers with the purpose of achieving a particular goal. The leader's character will determine whether he or she leads poorly, successfully, selfishly, sinfully, or wisely. Power in leadership must be handled responsibly and ethically because of its capacity to affect others.

Leadership traits are critical for secular and ministry leaders because they determine the effectiveness and health of the leader and the organization. However, leadership requires more than a characteristic-driven means of operating. Leaders—both in secular culture and the church—often fail in their character and practice, making it important to pursue holistic and healthy leadership development. Characteristics often focus on external behavior modification rather than genuine inner transformation.<sup>130</sup> The Apostle Paul pointed toward a sanctified transformation that produces selflessness, humility, and love for others. He wrote, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:3-5).

Leadership in the kingdom of God is distinct because God is the one who authorizes, guides, and empowers it. Kingdom leaders are ambassadors of God who are commissioned to use their power and authority to achieve his purposes; this distinction is the differentiating factor between secular and kingdom ministry leadership. Faithful ministry leaders honor God when they use their influence well to lead his people and fulfill his mission. Benjamin Forrest and

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<sup>130</sup> Forrest and Nemitz, “Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership,” 513-515.

David Nemitz conclude, “Being called by God to be his ambassador, to lead his people or to lead other people to him is a high and holy calling. Because of this honor, invest intently in the tasks before you and work to understand the demands that Scripture places on you.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Forrest and Nemitz, “Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership,” 517.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROJECT NARRATIVE & FIELD WORK

#### *Introduction*

The ministry challenge for this project addressed the concern that many present-day ministry leaders are not practicing the biblical concept of kingdom leadership that Jesus exemplified in his life and ministry. Qualitative research, in the form of a survey, was conducted to assess the validity of the ministry challenge. The survey engaged pastors and full-time church staff, focusing on the leadership characteristics of lead pastors. The information gained through the survey proved valuable in evaluating whether twenty-first-century lead pastors embody the leadership characteristics necessary for effective kingdom ministry leadership.

#### *Research Methodology*

##### Research context and participants

The research context for this project centered on lead pastors of churches. Pastors and full-time church staff members were chosen to participate in an anonymous survey. They were asked to complete the survey based on their experience in ministry to date, and their evaluation of each statement was to reflect their personal experience with a specific lead pastor. The participants chosen were either known by the researcher personally or through ministry contacts.

Participation was requested by email and social media invitation.

Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, denominational affiliation, current staff position, and the number of years they have served in ministry. The geographic location of participants was represented by eighteen states, including Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. A total of fifty-six individuals completed the survey; there were forty-eight male respondents and eight female respondents. Figure 4.1 shows the age distribution represented by the participants.

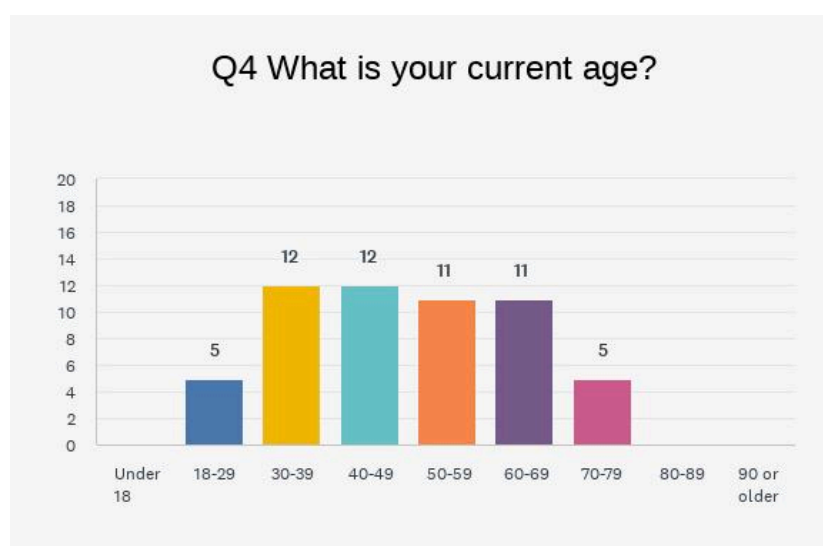


Figure 4.1. Age distribution of survey participants

Table 4.1 shows church denominations represented by survey participants.

Table 4.1. Church denominations represented by survey participants

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Assemblies of God	31
Non-Denominational	14
Church of God (Cleveland)	4
Baptist	3
Southern Baptist	2
Vineyard	1
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship	1

Table 4.2 shows staff positions represented by survey participants.

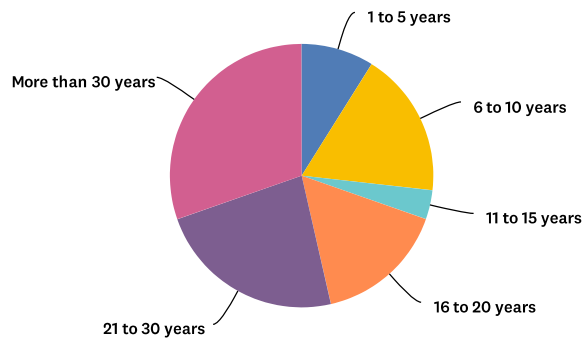
Table 4.2. Staff positions represented by survey participants

Position	Number of Participants
Staff Pastor	25
Lead Pastor	22
Staff (Non-Pastor)	6
Staff (Former)	3

Figure 4.2 shows the number of years that participants served in ministry at the time of the survey.

Q7 How many years have you served in ministry?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 1 year	0.00%	0
1 to 5 years	8.93%	5
6 to 10 years	17.86%	10
11 to 15 years	3.57%	2
16 to 20 years	16.07%	9
21 to 30 years	23.21%	13
More than 30 years	30.36%	17
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>56</b>

Figure 4.2. Number of years participants served in ministry

Instruments used in data collection and procedures used

SurveyMonkey was the instrument used for data collection; the researcher provided a link to this survey in the invitation to participants. The survey was comprised of two terms and conditions questions, five demographic questions, and seventy-four statements for participant response (see Appendix A). The statements were developed from the research investigating the characteristics necessary for effective kingdom ministry leadership. They were derived from relevant literature devoted to ministry leadership that is both gospel-centered and modeled after the leadership that Jesus taught and embodied. Six foundational aspects of kingdom ministry leadership emerged from this research: Commitment to God's Agenda: The Gospel is the Standard and Jesus is the Model, The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility, Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Spiritual Warfare and Spirit-Empowerment, Dependence on God, Love: Love for Others and Love for Jesus, and Accountability.

### *Narrative Description of Project Execution*

Formulation of the survey

The methodology chosen for this research project is qualitative. Qualitative research in the form of a survey was conducted to determine if present-day lead pastors embody the kingdom leadership taught and exemplified by Jesus. The survey focused on the practical application of kingdom ministry leadership characteristics for ministry leaders. Participation was limited to pastors and full-time church staff members, and the survey was specifically focused on evaluating lead pastors.



Previous research engaged relevant literature devoted to ministry leadership that is both gospel-centered and modeled after the leadership of Jesus to discover the specific attributes necessary for effective kingdom ministry leadership. Statements used in the survey were developed from this research. The survey will serve as an evaluation tool for pastors and ministry leaders to assess their areas of strength and weakness based on the characteristics that emerged from the previous research.<sup>1</sup> Secular leadership resources and experts were not consulted or used to develop the survey statements.

#### Gathering survey data

A survey link was posted on social media and sent via email invitation during the week of March 28th, 2022 through April 4th, 2022. Pastors and full-time church staff were requested to participate in the survey.

Survey participants were asked to rate each statement on a five-point scale that included the following options: “never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” “usually,” and “always.” The responses were each assigned a point value of zero through four or four through zero, depending upon whether the desired response to the statement was “always” or “never.” Overall scores were calculated based on this scale. A score of one hundred percent reflects a lead pastor exemplifying the characteristics of kingdom ministry leadership perfectly. Conversely, a score of zero percent reflects a lead pastor who is completely failing in his or her embodiment of kingdom ministry leadership characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James, “Contextual Study of the Ministry Challenge,” 3, 24.

<sup>2</sup> James, “Contextual Study of the Ministry Challenge,” 23-27.

### Analyzing survey data

Upon closing the survey, SurveyMonkey generated summary charts and graphs for each statement. Statements were categorized by the researcher based on the six foundational aspects of kingdom ministry leadership that emerged from the previous research. The researcher analyzed these results to determine areas of strength and weakness for the lead pastors evaluated. The researcher also examined individual statements within these categories to determine specific areas of weakness. This examination aimed to identify areas of needed remediation and development for lead pastors.

### *Summary*

SurveyMonkey was utilized to analyze whether present-day lead pastors exemplify kingdom leadership characteristics. The survey was employed to measure and provide a meaningful assessment.

Prior research investigated the characteristics that are necessary for effective kingdom leadership. The research considered and explored relevant literature devoted to ministry leadership that is both gospel-centered and modeled after the leadership that Jesus taught and embodied. Several foundational aspects of kingdom ministry leadership were identified from this research: Commitment to God's Agenda: The Gospel is the Standard and Jesus is the Model, The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility, Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Spiritual Warfare and Spirit-Empowerment, Dependence on God, Love: Love for Others and Love for Jesus, and Accountability. These essential aspects of kingdom leadership provide a foundation and standard

for leadership in God's kingdom. They are beneficial and necessary in the life and leadership of every ministry leader.

The survey used in this research presented seventy-four statements to participants for consideration. These statements were developed from the previous research investigating the foundational aspects of kingdom ministry leadership. The survey results were analyzed to provide insight into areas of strength and weakness in the leadership of lead pastors.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE PROJECT EVALUATED

#### *Introduction*

The primary purpose of this qualitative research was to examine whether present-day ministry leaders are practicing the essential characteristics of kingdom leadership that Jesus personified in his life and ministry. The anonymous online survey administered by SurveyMonkey contained seventy-four statements for pastors and full-time church staff members to score based on their personal experience with a specific lead pastor. The statements were developed from the research, which focused on gospel-centered ministry leadership resources that reflect the leadership that Jesus taught and practiced.

The nature of this research project does not lend itself to an analysis by which the research question could be either confirmed or disproven through qualitative assessment. Instead, the research is designed to produce a ministry leadership framework for developing kingdom leadership characteristics in pastors and ministry leaders. The one aspect of the research project that can be evaluated is the survey conducted and utilized for this research. The survey results were compared to the foundational aspects of kingdom ministry leadership that were revealed in the research, providing a means of measuring areas of strength and weakness in lead pastors. The conclusions drawn from this assessment will inform the necessary action steps for leadership improvement and development.

*Analysis of Data*

An anonymous survey was administered to participants to evaluate whether present-day lead pastors exemplify the leadership characteristics necessary for effective kingdom leadership. The following graphs and tables contain vital aspects of the survey data that are principal to the research.

The scores in Figure 5.1 represent the overall average score for all statements and all respondents. Each bar in the graph indicates the number of respondents for the given score range; the highest score was 94% and the lowest score was 24%. The average score was 66%, with most responses falling into the median range.

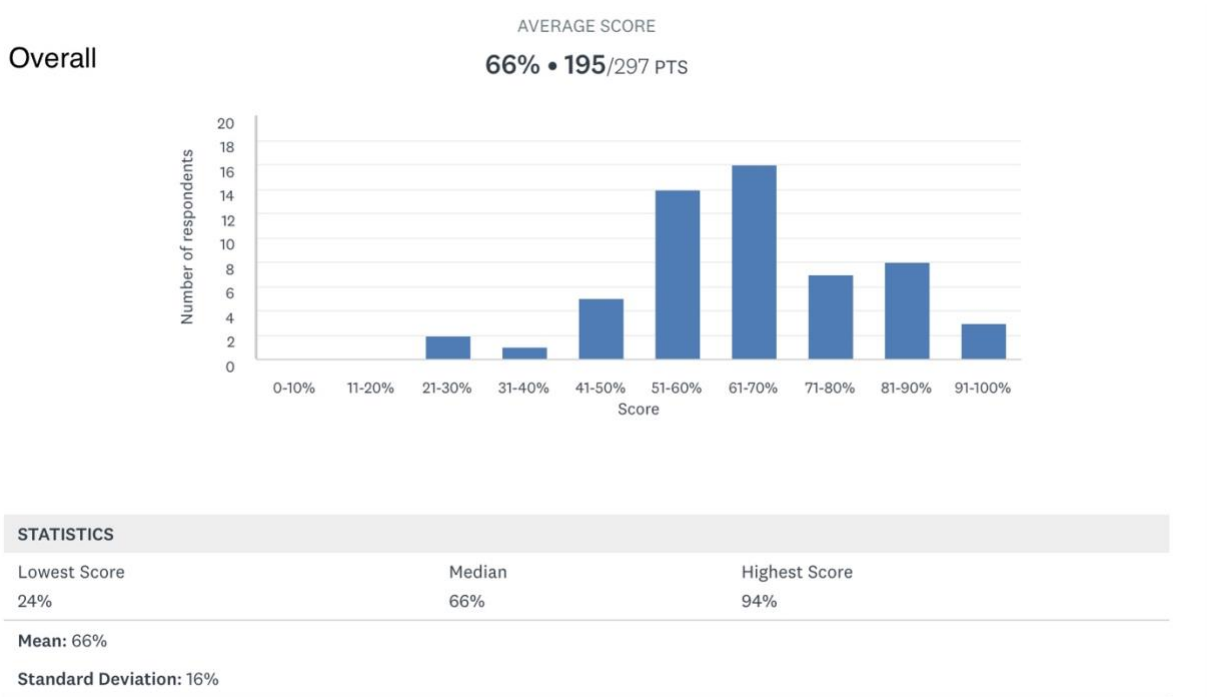


Figure 5.1. Overall average score for all statements and respondents

The statements shared in Table 5.1 represent the ten statements that received the highest average score in the survey. These statements reflect the areas of greatest strength for the lead pastors the survey participants evaluated.

Table 5.1. Ten statements receiving highest average score

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
Lead pastors are dependent on a relationship with God.	84%
Lead pastors are committed to doing God's will and fulfilling his purposes.	84%
Lead pastors are committed to studying scripture.	79%
Lead pastors embrace a life that is in service to Jesus.	79%
Lead pastors use scripture as the standard for developing and informing their leadership principles.	79%
Lead pastors seek God's will.	78%
Lead pastors follow the example of Jesus as a model for their leadership.	78%
Lead pastors demonstrate purpose, resolve, and commitment in their leadership.	76%
Lead pastors embody a life that is totally surrendered to God.	76%
Lead pastors have a heart that is ruled by a deeply rooted love for Jesus.	76%

The statements shared in Table 5.2 represent the statements that received an average score below 60%. These statements reflect the areas of greatest weakness for the lead pastors the survey participants evaluated.

Table 5.2. Statements receiving an average score below 60%

Statement	Average Score
Lead pastors exhibit pride in their ministry achievements.	42%
Lead pastors seek the affections and approval of others.	43%
Lead pastors engage in behavior that makes them susceptible to demonic attack.	48%
Lead pastors allow personal ambition to move and shape their leadership.	49%
Lead pastors embody a life of suffering.	51%
Lead pastors prioritize rest as important for renewing their mind, body, and spirit.	52%
Lead pastors retreat from the intensity and pressures that are experienced in ministry leadership.	54%
Lead pastors seek accountability.	55%
Lead pastors prioritize silence and solitude as spiritual disciplines.	55%
Lead pastors approach their leadership from a position of superiority.	55%
Lead pastors invite other leaders into their lives in order to see concerning things that they would not see on their own.	56%
Lead pastors pander to the crowd.	56%
Lead pastors prioritize performance over character.	57%
Lead pastors embody a life of self-denial.	57%
Lead pastors are domineering leaders.	57%
Lead pastors demonstrate entitlement to a level of power, position, and lifestyle.	58%
Lead pastors demonstrate superficiality.	58%
Lead pastors boast about their qualifications.	59%
Lead pastors are more concerned in dealing with the failures of their leadership community than they are in defending the reputation of their leadership community.	59%

Statement	Average Score
Lead pastors reject popularity, success, and the desire to be great.	59%

The information in Figure 5.2 reflects the overall score disseminated into the six foundational aspects of kingdom leadership. The average score for each of the six foundational aspects is shown in Figure 5.2 and listed in Table 5.3. Commitment to God's Agenda was the foundational aspect that reported the highest score of 77.3%. Conversely, the foundational aspect that reported the lowest score of 61.8% was The Cost of Leadership.

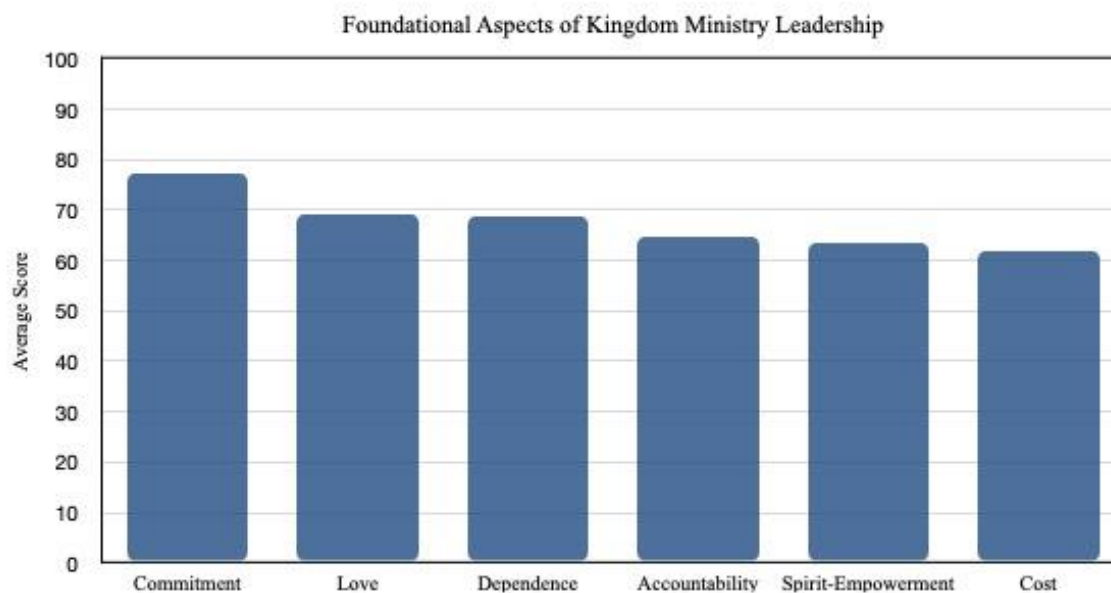


Figure 5.2. Average score disseminated into six foundational aspects of kingdom ministry leadership



Table 5.3. Average score for each of the six foundational aspects of kingdom ministry leadership

<b>Foundational Aspects of Kingdom Ministry Leadership</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
Commitment to God’s Agenda: The Gospel is the Standard and Jesus is the Model	77.3%
Love: Love for Others and Love for Jesus	69%
Dependence on God	68.8%
Accountability	64.6%
Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Spiritual Warfare and Spirit-Empowerment	63.3%
The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility	61.8%

Foundational aspects of kingdom ministry leadership

*Commitment to God’s agenda: The Gospel is the standard and Jesus is the model.* Participants responded to ten statements related to this foundational aspect. The statement “Lead pastors are dependent on a relationship with God” received the highest score of 85%. The statement “Lead pastors are committed to doing God’s will and fulfilling his purposes” received the second-highest score of 84%. The statement “Lead pastors remain focused and clear in their leadership” received the lowest score of 71%. The statements “Lead pastors demonstrate courage in their leadership” and “Lead pastors demonstrate an inner resolve to move forward in spite of obstacles and frightening situations” both received a score of 74% (see Appendix B).

*The cost of leadership: Servanthood and humility.* Participants responded to twenty-nine statements related to this foundational aspect. The statement “Lead pastors embrace a life that is in service to Jesus” received the highest score of 79%. The statement “Lead pastors embody a life that is totally surrendered to God” received the second-highest score of 76%. The statement “Lead pastors seek the affections and approval of others” received the lowest score of 43%. The statement “Lead pastors allow personal ambition to move and shape their leadership” received a score of 49%.

*Spirit-empowered leadership: Spiritual warfare and Spirit-empowerment.* Participants responded to seven statements related to this foundational aspect. The statements “Lead pastors depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit” and “Lead pastors depend on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit” received the highest score of 76%. The statement “Lead pastors exhibit pride in their ministry achievements” received the lowest score of 42%. The statement “Lead pastors engage in behavior that makes them susceptible to demonic attack” received a score of 49%.

*Dependence on God.* Participants responded to eight statements related to this foundational aspect. The statement “Lead pastors seek God’s will” received the highest score of 79%. The statement “Lead pastors demonstrate an understanding that their spiritual power and effectiveness as a ministry leader comes directly from God” received the second-highest score of 76%. The statement “Lead pastors prioritize rest as important for renewing their mind, body, and

spirit” received the lowest score of 53%. The statement “Lead pastors prioritize silence and solitude as spiritual disciplines” received a score of 55%.

*Love: Love for others and love for Jesus.* Participants responded to eleven statements related to this foundational aspect. The statement “Lead pastors have a heart that is ruled by a deeply rooted love for Jesus” received the highest score of 76%. The statement “Lead pastors demonstrate their love for Jesus in how they guide, protect, and care for those they have been entrusted to lead” received the second-highest score of 75%. The statement “Lead pastors lay down their life for the people they are leading” received the lowest score of 61%. The statements “Lead pastors demonstrate their love for others by being fully present to them” and “Lead pastors demonstrate a heart of love even when experiencing criticism and hurt from others” both scored 63%.

*Accountability.* Participants responded to nine statements related to this foundational aspect. The statement “Lead pastors demonstrate a life of integrity” received the highest score of 74%. The statement “Lead pastors make personal purity a priority” received the second-highest score of 73%. The statement “Lead pastors seek accountability” received the lowest score of 55%. The statement “Lead pastors invite other leaders into their lives in order to see concerning things that they would not see on their own” received a score of 57%.

*Data Analysis Summary*

This research investigated whether present-day ministry leaders practice the biblical concept of kingdom leadership taught and exemplified by Jesus. The survey results indicate that present-day lead pastors do not effectively embody most of the foundational aspects of kingdom leadership depicted in the research. The lead pastors evaluated were found to be the strongest in the foundational aspect of Commitment to God's Agenda, receiving an average score of 77.3%. Although this category was the highest-scoring category, there remains significant room for improvement. The lead pastors evaluated were found to be the weakest in the foundational aspects of Accountability, Spirit-Empowered Leadership, and The Cost of Leadership. All three foundational aspects scored lower than 65%; however, the most significant results were found by analyzing the lowest-scoring individual statement responses. Twenty statements scored lower than 60%. These responses indicate some significant areas of deficiency in the leadership of the lead pastors who were evaluated.

The survey results provide evidence that many lead pastors are falling short of the standard of leadership outlined in scripture and exemplified in the kingdom leadership of Jesus. The data reveals that lead pastors may be influenced and driven by cultural trends and business principles rather than the values characterized by the kingdom of God and modeled by Jesus. This deficiency is especially notable when observing the lowest scoring statements found in the foundational aspects of The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility and Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Spiritual Warfare and Spirit-Empowerment. The following statements, presented in Table 5.4, scored below 50%.

Table 5.4. Statements scoring below 50%

(Q29) Lead pastors exhibit pride in their ministry achievements.
(Q23) Lead pastors seek the affections and approval of others.
(Q28) Lead pastors engage in behavior that makes them susceptible to demonic attack.
(Q76) Lead pastors allow personal ambition to move and shape their leadership.

The four statements in Table 5.4 indicate character traits such as egotism, attention-seeking, arrogance, and avarice. These traits, when present in a lead pastor, are compelling evidence of a departure from kingdom values and principles. The statements are not only contradictory to the characteristics of kingdom leadership and the leadership modeled by Jesus but are also representative of the values of leadership found within secular culture and secular business models. Paul Tripp suggests that reliance on the wrong leadership models—in an attempt to understand how to lead—may have caused ministry leaders to lose sight of deeper gospel insights and values in their leadership.<sup>1</sup> The survey data demonstrates that there is merit to Tripp’s concern.

Conclusions drawn from the survey prove beneficial in revealing the need for the education and development of ministry leaders. The survey measures areas of strength and weakness as they align with kingdom leadership characteristics. Ultimately, this survey is beneficial in the development of a model of leadership for ministry leaders that is biblical and patterned after the kingdom leadership of Jesus.

The survey revealed some concerning trends even with its limited engagement. Future research will benefit from a broader base of respondents in number, ministry leadership position, denominational representation, and geographic location. Additionally, participation from a higher number of individuals representing a more comprehensive range of denominational

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<sup>1</sup> Tripp, *Lead*, 17.

affiliations and leadership positions would add significant insight to the survey's findings. An important consideration for future research will be to include church size as a factor in the qualitative survey. This information will enable the researcher to evaluate and compare participant responses based on church size.

Implicit bias may have presented a potential limitation in the research. Respondents were asked to evaluate lead pastors with which they had personal ministry experience. The nature of those relationships could have affected participant responses to the survey statements. The survey results are nonetheless valid in providing evaluation and insight into the effectiveness of present-day lead pastors and their leadership.

### *Synthesis within Ministry Context*

Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer provide insightful concern regarding the contemporary evangelical church, writing, "Something radical has seeped into the church in the last fifty years. The American meritocracy has reshaped pastors and churches, and a new culture has taken root, based on achievement and accomplishment rather than holiness and Christlikeness."<sup>2</sup>

Meritocracy is a self-confident moral system that changes the meaning of words toward an economic vocabulary. Character is not distinguished by love, service, and care but rather as a set of workplace characteristics defined by grit, productivity, and self-discipline. In this system, a

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<sup>2</sup> Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Elevate, 2020), 201.

community becomes a group of gifted individuals in competition with one another.<sup>3</sup> McKnight and Barringer explain the effects of meritocracy within churches:

Churches today have been so greatly influenced by meritocracy, by the achievement and accomplishment culture of the business world, that they now define *pastor* with business-culture terms instead of biblical terms. In business terms, a pastor is a “leader,” and *leader* is defined by the meritocratic system of American culture. But when pastors are defined primarily as *leaders*—or *entrepreneurs* or *visionaries*—they’ve already ceased to be pastors in any biblical sense. Further, when the church becomes an *institution* or *organization*—or worse, a *corporation*—it ceases to be a church (that is, a vital part of the body of Christ). Moreover, “pastor as leader” blurs the lines of headship in the church, and people begin to lose sight of the church’s one true and only head, Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Leadership culture turns pastors into leaders who are driven by the church's success through measurable, performance-based achievement.<sup>5</sup> However, Jesus did not model this example for his followers.

The Bible establishes Christ as the model for leaders to follow; therefore, becoming Christlike should be the ambition of every pastor and ministry leader. In turn, as Christ’s ambassadors, ministry leaders shepherd others to become more like him. The goal for every pastor and ministry leader should be Christofornity—to become like Christ and to nurture others in the same way. The life and ministry of Jesus provide a guide for ministry leaders to follow as they shepherd God’s people toward spiritual formation.<sup>6</sup>

The primary goal of this project was to establish Jesus as the leadership model for ministry leaders and to identify the characteristics that he exemplified in his life and ministry to construct a kingdom model of leadership for the education and development of ministry leaders.

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<sup>3</sup> David Brooks, *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2020), 23.

<sup>4</sup> McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov*, 203.

<sup>5</sup> McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov*, 204-205.

<sup>6</sup> McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov*, 212-219.

The researcher's objectives include (1) Research will be formatted into a book that can be resourced by ministry students, pastors, and ministry leaders. (2) Research will be developed into a teaching and training curriculum for ministry students, pastors, and ministry leaders. (3) The survey on foundational aspects of kingdom leadership will be provided as an evaluation tool for pastors and ministry leaders. (4) Additional ministry leadership resources, focused on the areas identified as insufficient in the research project, will be developed.

The research has affirmed that ministry leadership education and development are necessary to form Christlike kingdom leaders. It is essential that this process be integrated into the curriculum for ministry students, allowing them to be trained and spiritually formed from a Christ-centered, biblical model. This education will provide a biblically based foundation of leadership that will shape and guide students as they mature into faithful shepherd-leaders.

### *Summary*

This research project aimed to answer the primary research question: How can ministry leaders formulate a framework for developing kingdom leadership characteristics exemplified by the person and ministry of Jesus? The method for constructing a kingdom leadership framework consisted of a comprehensive combination of biblical and theological research, a literature review, and human subjects research. The results yielded from the research will be used to create a kingdom leadership model to educate and develop ministry leaders while providing a biblically based leadership standard established on kingdom principles and demonstrated in the life and ministry of Jesus.



Biblical and theological research produced a biblical definition of the kingdom of God and identified its characteristics. A theology of leadership was developed through an in-depth study of scripture focusing on the life and ministry of Jesus. Specifically, the research focused on the role of Jesus as a shepherd-leader as well as the purpose and motives of his ministry. A literature review engaged resources devoted to gospel-centered ministry leadership and modeled after the life and ministry of Jesus. This research established specific characteristics that are necessary for effective kingdom leadership.

The analysis of the qualitative survey engaged by fifty-six pastors and full-time church staff members identified areas of strength and weakness in the leadership characteristics of the lead pastors evaluated. The survey confirmed that present-day lead pastors are deficient in exemplifying the kingdom leadership that Jesus demonstrated in his life and ministry. Further qualitative research will be necessary to evaluate the leadership characteristics of ministry leadership positions outside of lead pastors, thereby providing a more comprehensive assessment. This survey's weaknesses include limited participant engagement and the absence of an evaluation of all ministry leadership positions. The strength of the survey is that the statements were formulated from credible and comprehensive ministry leadership resources.

Research investigating relevant literature devoted to gospel-centered ministry leadership and modeled after the leadership of Jesus was conducted to identify specific attributes necessary for effective kingdom leadership. This research revealed six foundational aspects of kingdom leadership that are essential for the fruitfulness and effectiveness of ministry leadership:

Commitment to God's Agenda: The Gospel is the Standard and Jesus is the Model, The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility, Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Spiritual Warfare and Spirit-Empowerment, Dependence on God, Love: Love for Others and Love for Jesus, and

Accountability. Seventy-four survey statements were formulated from this research to measure lead pastors' effectiveness in demonstrating kingdom leadership characteristics. Statements related to each foundational aspect were derived from the research. The number of statements found within each foundational aspect was determined by the available information and resources, highlighting areas of sufficiency and deficiency in resources covering specific aspects of ministry leadership. For example, the foundational aspect of The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility provided twenty-nine statements while the foundational aspect of Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Spiritual Warfare and Spirit-Empowerment provided seven statements. The deficiency in particular facets of ministry leadership resources reveals areas where further resources need to be produced. The lack of resources covering specific aspects of ministry leadership creates difficulty for pastors and ministry leaders who desire to improve in these areas.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

#### *Introduction*

Functioning as a pastor or ministry leader in the American church is a challenging task. American culture and values permeate every facet of society, including the church, and pastors and ministry leaders are not immune to the influences and pressures of the secular world. The weight of expectations and the desire for success cause many church leaders to lose sight of their role as defined by scripture. Consequently, many pastors and ministry leaders rely on secular leadership principles for guidance; such instruction promotes achievement and positive results, creating churches that become businesses, corporations, or institutions. McKnight and Barringer suggest that when this practice happens within the church, it creates a toxic culture, writing “It turns pastors into leaders whose primary aim is the success of the organization based in some way on achievable metrics. The more ambitious the leader and the more narcissistic the leader, the less of a church the church becomes.”<sup>1</sup> Churches need pastors and ministry leaders who shepherd under the leadership of the Good Shepherd, nurturing their personal Christofornity while guiding the congregation in the same way. The goal is to become more like Jesus with the purpose of redemption and restoration, not profit, position, or power. Christlikeness is the measurement of success in God’s kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov*, 204-205.

<sup>2</sup> McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov*, 209-219.

Pastoral leadership is unique from leadership within any other entity of society, primarily because leaders in ministry are followers of Jesus. Pastors and ministry leaders must carry out their responsibilities while immersed in a society driven by values and principles that conflict with—and are often opposed to—the kingdom of God. Eugene Peterson speaks to the difficulty of this situation, writing,

I don't love rampant consumerism that treats God as a product to be marketed. I don't love the dehumanizing ways that turn men, women, and children into impersonal roles and causes and statistics. I don't love the competitive spirit that treats others as rivals and even as enemies. The cultural conditions in which I am immersed require, at least for me, a kind of fierce vigilance to guard my vocation from these cultural pollutants so dangerously toxic to persons who want to follow Jesus in the way that he is Jesus. I wanted my life, both my personal and working life, to be shaped by God and the scriptures and prayer.<sup>3</sup>

Peterson's sentiment embodies the heart and motivation behind this research project. The purpose of the project is to offer insight to church leaders about the concerns surrounding secular leadership principles and models while providing a biblically based leadership framework established from scripture and modeled after Jesus. Throughout the project's development, it was critical that scripture was the foundation and guiding resource, making God's wisdom and instruction the leading voice.

### *Lessons Learned*

The research project revealed the following important lessons:

First, God has provided instruction in scripture to guide pastors and ministry leaders in developing their leadership. As the primary resource, scripture educates and equips ministry leaders with biblically based leadership principles and practices that are Christ-centered. Secular

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<sup>3</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir*, reprint ed. (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2012), 5.

leadership resources contribute valuable insight into the subject of leadership and often promote practices derived from biblical principles. However, secular resources are not a substitute for scripture and should never be the leading source or primary reference for developing church leaders. It is important to note that these sources often endorse leadership perspectives that oppose clear biblical teachings.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the metaphor of a shepherd is used repeatedly in scripture to provide an understanding of the biblical concept of leadership. God established the role of a shepherd as the model for leadership throughout scripture, demonstrating it through his example as the Great Shepherd and Jesus' example as the Good Shepherd. Shepherd-leaders prioritize the protection, guidance, and provision of God's people while trusting God as their personal, divine Shepherd.

Third, the pastor or ministry leader's purpose and motivation in ministry will directly impact the health and development of the church and the people under the leader's care. Ministry leaders who are focused on achievement, numerical growth, influence, and success will produce institutions characterized as corporations and businesses. When this approach to ministry occurs, churches become organizations focused on producing a product, and people become commodities with which to procure success. Conversely, pastors and ministry leaders who prioritize Christlikeness produce healthy church cultures committed to the spiritual well-being of the congregants. A spiritually healthy church will nurture truth, healing, grace, and love from a heart of humility and service. Jesus modeled a perfect example of the heart attitude a true shepherd should embody in the leadership of God's people, motivated by sacrificial love, compassion, and care.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Forrest and Roden, *Biblical Leadership*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> McKnight and Barringer, *A Church Called Tov*, 23, 201-216.

### *Considerations for the Future*

The research project's qualitative survey provided evidence that education and development are needed for pastors and ministry leaders, specifically in the biblical concept of kingdom leadership that Jesus exemplified. Education and development can be provided through textbook resources, educational curricula, and teaching and training seminars. It is crucial that this process be integrated into ministry students' academic programs, providing biblically based, Christ-centered education for spiritual formation and ministry leadership development.

As pastors and ministry leaders are being educated and developed, they should receive instruction focused on secular leadership resources. Currently, many ministry leaders consult these resources to improve their leadership skills without understanding the dangers of the principles they promote. Educating about these matters will, therefore, enable leaders to engage the resources and utilize principles in a way that honors scripture and is faithful to the example provided by Jesus.

The research project revealed a deficiency in the resources available for ministry leadership development, particularly related to certain aspects of ministerial leadership. Ministry leadership resources are critical for the learning and growth of pastors and ministry leaders, making producing these types of resources a priority.

### *Limitations to the Project*

The research project was limited by two factors: ministry leadership resource availability and the narrow scope of the survey. Although these factors created some limitations, they did not affect

the overall results or effectiveness of the project. Additional resources and a more diverse survey pool would benefit the research findings.

The qualitative survey limited the research project due to several factors. First, the survey statements were used to evaluate lead pastors, excluding associate pastors and ministry leaders. Second, participant demographic information on the survey was limited to gender, age, denominational affiliation, current staff position, and the number of years the participant has served in ministry. Additional demographic information, such as the church location and church size of the pastor or ministry leader being evaluated, would strengthen the survey findings. Third, the survey results were limited by the low number of participants. Fourth, survey statements were limited because they did not include information from the project's theological research. The theological work was conducted after the survey concluded.

Ministry leadership resources were limited in the following ways. First, resources about the kingdom of God were in short supply, and the majority were published over thirty-five years ago. The quality of the research was not affected by this fact; however, further resources on the subject, in addition to more current information, would enhance the research project. Next, resources covering specific ministry leadership areas were insufficient, affecting the information available for the research project. For example, more information was available on servanthood and humility than on spiritual warfare and Spirit-empowerment topics. The resource deficiency also limited the number of survey statements provided in certain foundational aspects of kingdom leadership. Finally, many ministry leadership resources were popular rather than scholarly sources. Although popular sources were valuable for the research project and provided essential information, additional scholarly sources would strengthen the project's results.

### *Concluding Remarks*

The most remarkable example of leadership is found in the Lord himself; he provides a perfect model demonstrating how to lead and guide others. Psalm 23 paints a vivid picture of the Lord as a shepherd-leader, establishing how subsequent shepherds are to care for his people. He is the chief mentor and trainer, demonstrating how to shepherd the flock with sacrificial love and care. The Lord is the Great Shepherd of all undershepherds; their authority, influence, and leadership come from him alone.<sup>6</sup>

The distinction of Christian leadership is that all authority comes from God, the King, who endows a portion of his authority and rule to his undershepherds. Shepherd-leaders submit their will to the Lord and perform their role in—and under—service to him. Forrest and Nemitz write,

True Christian leadership never sets a new course; it is always directionally oriented because it is following the charge of the King. Christian leadership and leaders receive their commissioning from the King, and use their authority *for* accomplishing his purposes. Therefore, in God's position as King, he has granted leaders the opportunity to serve. We, as leaders and subjects of this King, serve on his behalf. We are stewards of what he has tasked us with and in this way we are always directionally focused, keeping a watch on our bearing and trajectories, making sure that our leadership is in accordance with our manifest.<sup>7</sup>

The example of Christ illustrates that this service to the Lord should be carried out with humility and altruism, the posture of a servant-hearted shepherd (Phil 2:1-11).

This research project culminates over five years dedicated to studying ministry leadership, an endeavor that has been one of the greatest honors of my life. Throughout this time, God has continuously shown his love and care for me, providing healing, restoration, and

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<sup>6</sup> Kaiser Jr., "The 'Shepherd' as a Biblical Metaphor," 155-156.

<sup>7</sup> Forrest and Nemitz, "Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership," 515.



redemption. He walked with me through the valleys and provided rest in the safety of green pastures, teaching me how to trust completely while comforting my fearful heart. The Lord is *my* Shepherd, and his goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.

I began post-graduate work over twenty-five years ago with the dream of earning a doctoral degree in ministry. Unexpected life challenges abruptly ended my graduate work and, with it, the hope of ever continuing. God provided me the opportunity to finish my post-graduate education in the past several years, with this research project being the final piece in fulfilling a lifetime aspiration. Significant difficulties were experienced throughout the process, including the sudden loss of both parents, numerous health issues, and intense spiritual warfare. However, God sustained me through each circumstance, shepherding my heart by supplying strength, courage, and healing. He cultivated my voice and affirmed my gifts while equipping me for the purposes and plans ahead.

God's presence has proven unmistakable from the beginning to the end of this research project, his Spirit guiding and providing everything needed for its completion. Moments of feeling inadequate and uncertain were quickly met with the provision and peace that only a loving Shepherd can provide. I pray that the work in these pages will guide and encourage pastors and ministry leaders in their role as undershepherds, shepherds after God's own heart who will feed his people with knowledge and understanding (Jer 3:15).

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APPENDIX A  
MINISTRY LEADERSHIP SURVEY

**(Q1)** Project Title: Ministry Leadership Survey

Investigator: Meredith James—B.A. Communications, M.A. Ministerial Leadership

Purpose: You are being asked to participate in a study investigating ministry leadership. We are interested in determining how ministry leaders construct their leadership framework. It is hoped that the results of this study can be useful in determining what elements of leadership are effective and useful in ministry contexts.

Procedures: If you agree to participate you will be surveyed. You will be presented a series of statements designed to ascertain information regarding your experience with ministry leadership.

Risks of Participation: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: There will be no personal benefit from your participation in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. The data collected will be located in a password-protected laptop and will be kept in a locked office. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and well-being of people who participate in research.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in this research.

Contacts:

Co-Investigator: Meredith James—[mljames@seu.edu](mailto:mljames@seu.edu)

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sam Hemby—[sshemby@seu.edu](mailto:sshemby@seu.edu)

To contact the IRB, email [IRB@seu.edu](mailto:IRB@seu.edu)

Participant Rights: Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to discontinue your involvement in the research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty.

Do you agree to the terms and wish to participate?

- Yes
- No

**(Q2)** Please respond to the following statements based on your experience in ministry thus far. Your evaluation of each statement should reflect your personal experience with a specific lead pastor. These responses will be anonymous and confidential. Do you understand and agree?

- Yes
- No

**(Q3)** Are you...

- Male
- Female

**(Q4)** What is your current age?

- Under 18
- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90 or older

**(Q5)** What is your denominational affiliation?

**(Q6)** What is your current staff position?

**(Q7)** How many years have you served in ministry?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 16 to 20 years
- 21 to 30 years
- More than 30 years

**COMMITMENT TO GOD’S AGENDA: THE GOSPEL IS THE STANDARD AND JESUS IS THE MODEL**

1. **(Q51)** Lead pastors are committed to studying Scripture.
2. **(Q8)** Lead pastors use Scripture as the standard for developing and informing their leadership principles.
3. **(Q9)** Lead pastors are committed to doing God’s will and fulfilling His purposes.
4. **(Q10)** Lead pastors are dependent on a relationship with God.
5. **(Q11)** Lead pastors follow the example of Jesus as a model for their leadership.
6. **(Q75)** Lead pastors faithfully represent the message, methods, and character of Jesus in their life and leadership.
7. **(Q78)** Lead pastors demonstrate purpose, resolve, and commitment in their leadership.
8. **(Q79)** Lead pastors remain focused and clear in their leadership.
9. **(Q80)** Lead pastors demonstrate courage in their leadership.
10. **(Q81)** Lead pastors demonstrate an inner resolve to move forward in spite of obstacles and frightening situations.

**THE COST OF LEADERSHIP: SERVANTHOOD AND HUMILITY**

11. **(Q12)** Lead pastors embody a life that is totally surrendered to God.
12. **(Q13)** Lead pastors retreat from the intensity and pressures that are experienced in ministry leadership.
13. **(Q14)** Lead pastors use the intensity and pressures that are experienced in ministry leadership to form themselves into faithful and passionate kingdom leaders.

14. **(Q15)** Lead pastors embrace a life that is in service to Jesus.
15. **(Q16)** Lead pastors embody a life of sacrifice.
16. **(Q17)** Lead pastors embody a life of servanthood.
17. **(Q18)** Lead pastors embody a life of suffering.
18. **(Q19)** Lead pastors embody a life of self-denial.
19. **(Q20)** Lead pastors reject popularity, success, and the desire to be great.
20. **(Q21)** Lead pastors love serving more than they crave leading.
21. **(Q22)** Lead pastors are more concerned with the commitment of their pastoral staff to Christ than they are about the loyalty of their pastoral staff to themselves.
22. **(Q23)** Lead pastors seek the affections and approval of others.
23. **(Q24)** Lead pastors find their identity and contentment completely in God.
24. **(Q52)** Lead pastors demonstrate humility.
25. **(Q53)** Lead pastors defer credit for their success to God.
26. **(Q54)** Lead pastors defer credit for their success to their pastoral team.
27. **(Q55)** Lead pastors approach their leadership from a position of superiority.
28. **(Q56)** Lead pastors boast about their qualifications.
29. **(Q57)** Lead pastors demonstrate superficiality.
30. **(Q58)** Lead pastors pander to the crowd.
31. **(Q59)** Lead pastors desire hype and attention.
32. **(Q60)** Lead pastors are manipulative.
33. **(Q61)** Lead pastors are teachable.
34. **(Q62)** Lead pastors seek their own glory.
35. **(Q72)** Lead pastors are domineering leaders.

36. **(Q73)** Lead pastors demonstrate entitlement to a level of power, position, and lifestyle.
37. **(Q74)** Lead pastors demonstrate Godly character.
38. **(Q76)** Lead pastors allow personal ambition to move and shape their leadership.
39. **(Q77)** Lead pastors prioritize performance over character.

#### **SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LEADERSHIP: SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND SPIRIT-EMPOWERMENT**

40. **(Q25)** Lead pastors depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
41. **(Q26)** Lead pastors depend on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
42. **(Q27)** Lead pastors are aware of the spiritual warfare that surrounds them.
43. **(Q28)** Lead pastors engage in behavior that makes them susceptible to demonic attack.
44. **(Q29)** Lead pastors exhibit pride in their ministry achievements.
45. **(Q30)** Lead pastors are open to the pastoral care and concern of fellow leaders.
46. **(Q31)** Lead pastors demonstrate spirit-empowered leadership.

#### **DEPENDENCE ON GOD**

47. **(Q32)** Lead pastors seek God's will.
48. **(Q33)** Lead pastors demonstrate an understanding that their spiritual power and effectiveness as a ministry leader comes directly from God.
49. **(Q34)** Lead pastors demonstrate a life of prayer.
50. **(Q35)** Lead pastors prioritize time in God's presence.
51. **(Q36)** Lead pastors prioritize silence and solitude as spiritual disciplines.
52. **(Q37)** Lead pastors are increasingly being conformed into the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.
53. **(Q38)** Lead pastors embody a life that is shaped by a loving communion with Jesus.
54. **(Q39)** Lead pastors prioritize rest as important for renewing their mind, body, and spirit.



## **LOVE: LOVE FOR OTHERS AND LOVE FOR JESUS**

55. **(Q40)** Lead pastors demonstrate a genuine love for others.
56. **(Q41)** Lead pastors model the example of Jesus in how they love others.
57. **(Q42)** Lead pastors demonstrate their love for Jesus in how they guide, protect, and care for those they have been entrusted to lead.
58. **(Q43)** Lead pastors lay down their life for the people they are leading.
59. **(Q44)** Lead pastors demonstrate their love for others by being fully present to them.
60. **(Q45)** Lead pastors recognize individuals as being created in the image of God and worthy of their time and whole-hearted attention.
61. **(Q46)** Lead pastors are intentional in connecting authentically with others.
62. **(Q47)** Lead pastors listen well and speak respectfully to others.
63. **(Q48)** Lead pastors have a heart that is ruled by a deeply rooted love for Jesus.
64. **(Q49)** Lead pastors demonstrate a heart of love even when experiencing criticism and hurt from others.
65. **(Q50)** Lead pastors demonstrate warmth and concern for others.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

66. **(Q63)** Lead pastors seek accountability.
67. **(Q64)** Lead pastors demonstrate a life of integrity.
68. **(Q65)** Lead pastors submit themselves to authority.
69. **(Q66)** Lead pastors make personal purity a priority.
70. **(Q67)** Lead pastors are intentional in dealing with their own sin, weakness, and failures.
71. **(Q68)** Lead pastors are more concerned in dealing with the failures of their leadership community than they are in defending the reputation of their leadership community.
72. **(Q69)** Lead pastors invite other leaders into their lives in order to see concerning things that they would not see on their own.

73. **(Q70)** Lead pastors are willing to live under loving, grace-infused, patient, and forgiving biblical inspection.
74. **(Q71)** Lead pastors establish guidelines as safeguards for dealing with sin, weakness, and failure.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY STATEMENT AVERAGES

<p align="center"><b>Commitment to God’s Agenda: The Gospel is the Standard and Jesus is the Model</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Average Score</b></p>
<p><b>(Q51)</b> Lead pastors are committed to studying scripture.</p>	<p align="center">79%</p>
<p><b>(Q8)</b> Lead pastors use scripture as the standard for developing and informing their leadership principles.</p>	<p align="center">79%</p>
<p><b>(Q9)</b> Lead pastors are committed to doing God’s will and fulfilling his purposes.</p>	<p align="center">84%</p>
<p><b>(Q10)</b> Lead pastors are dependent on a relationship with God.</p>	<p align="center">85%</p>
<p><b>(Q11)</b> Lead pastors follow the example of Jesus as a model for their leadership.</p>	<p align="center">78%</p>
<p><b>(Q75)</b> Lead pastors faithfully represent the message, methods, and character of Jesus in their life and leadership.</p>	<p align="center">75%</p>
<p><b>(Q78)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate purpose, resolve, and commitment in their leadership.</p>	<p align="center">77%</p>
<p><b>(Q79)</b> Lead pastors remain focused and clear in their leadership.</p>	<p align="center">71%</p>
<p><b>(Q80)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate courage in their leadership.</p>	<p align="center">74%</p>
<p><b>(Q81)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate an inner resolve to move forward in spite of obstacles and frightening situations.</p>	<p align="center">74%</p>

<p align="center"><b>The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Average Score</b></p>
<p><b>(Q12)</b> Lead pastors embody a life that is totally surrendered to God.</p>	<p align="center">76%</p>
<p><b>(Q13)</b> Lead pastors retreat from the intensity and pressures that are experienced in ministry leadership.</p>	<p align="center">54%</p>

<b>The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
<b>(Q14)</b> Lead pastors use the intensity and pressures that are experienced in ministry leadership to form themselves into faithful and passionate kingdom leaders.	64%
<b>(Q15)</b> Lead pastors embrace a life that is in service to Jesus.	79%
<b>(Q16)</b> Lead pastors embody a life of sacrifice.	75%
<b>(Q17)</b> Lead pastors embody a life of servanthood.	73%
<b>(Q18)</b> Lead pastors embody a life of suffering.	52%
<b>(Q19)</b> Lead pastors embody a life of self-denial.	57%
<b>(Q20)</b> Lead pastors reject popularity, success, and the desire to be great.	59%
<b>(Q21)</b> Lead pastors love serving more than they crave leading.	63%
<b>(Q22)</b> Lead pastors are more concerned with the commitment of their pastoral staff to Christ than they are about the loyalty of their pastoral staff to themselves.	65%
<b>(Q23)</b> Lead pastors seek the affections and approval of others.	43%
<b>(Q24)</b> Lead pastors find their identity and contentment completely in God.	65%
<b>(Q52)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate humility.	68%
<b>(Q53)</b> Lead pastors defer credit for their success to God.	71%
<b>(Q54)</b> Lead pastors defer credit for their success to their pastoral team.	61%
<b>(Q55)</b> Lead pastors approach their leadership from a position of superiority.	56%
<b>(Q56)</b> Lead pastors boast about their qualifications.	59%
<b>(Q57)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate superficiality.	58%
<b>(Q58)</b> Lead pastors pander to the crowd.	57%

<b>The Cost of Leadership: Servanthood and Humility</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
<b>(Q59)</b> Lead pastors desire hype and attention.	60%
<b>(Q60)</b> Lead pastors are manipulative.	63%
<b>(Q61)</b> Lead pastors are teachable.	62%
<b>(Q62)</b> Lead pastors seek their own glory.	63%
<b>(Q72)</b> Lead pastors are domineering leaders.	58%
<b>(Q73)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate entitlement to a level of power, position, and lifestyle.	58%
<b>(Q74)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate Godly character.	75%
<b>(Q76)</b> Lead pastors allow personal ambition to move and shape their leadership.	49%
<b>(Q77)</b> Lead pastors prioritize performance over character.	58%

<b>Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Spiritual Warfare and Spirit-Empowerment</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
<b>(Q25)</b> Lead pastors depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.	76%
<b>(Q26)</b> Lead pastors depend on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.	76%
<b>(Q27)</b> Lead pastors are aware of the spiritual warfare that surrounds them.	72%
<b>(Q28)</b> Lead pastors engage in behavior that makes them susceptible to demonic attack.	49%
<b>(Q29)</b> Lead pastors exhibit pride in their ministry achievements.	42%
<b>(Q30)</b> Lead pastors are open to the pastoral care and concern of fellow leaders.	61%
<b>(Q31)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate spirit-empowered leadership.	70%

<b>Dependence on God</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
<b>(Q32)</b> Lead pastors seek God's will.	79%
<b>(Q33)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate an understanding that their spiritual power and effectiveness as a ministry leader comes directly from God.	76%
<b>(Q34)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate a life of prayer.	74%
<b>(Q35)</b> Lead pastors prioritize time in God's presence.	70%
<b>(Q36)</b> Lead pastors prioritize silence and solitude as spiritual disciplines.	55%
<b>(Q37)</b> Lead pastors are increasingly being conformed into the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.	72%
<b>(Q38)</b> Lead pastors embody a life that is shaped by a loving communion with Jesus.	75%
<b>(Q39)</b> Lead pastors prioritize rest as important for renewing their mind, body, and spirit.	53%

<b>Love: Love for Others and Love for Jesus</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
<b>(Q40)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate a genuine love for others.	74%
<b>(Q41)</b> Lead pastors model the example of Jesus in how they love others.	71%
<b>(Q42)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate their love for Jesus in how they guide, protect, and care for those they have been entrusted to lead.	75%
<b>(Q43)</b> Lead pastors lay down their life for the people they are leading.	61%
<b>(Q44)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate their love for others by being fully present to them.	63%
<b>(Q45)</b> Lead pastors recognize individuals as being created in the image of God and worthy of their time and whole-hearted attention.	70%

<b>Love: Love for Others and Love for Jesus</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
<b>(Q46)</b> Lead pastors are intentional in connecting authentically with others.	66%
<b>(Q47)</b> Lead pastors listen well and speak respectfully to others.	69%
<b>(Q48)</b> Lead pastors have a heart that is ruled by a deeply rooted love for Jesus.	76%
<b>(Q49)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate a heart of love even when experiencing criticism and hurt from others.	63%
<b>(Q50)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate warmth and concern for others.	74%

<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
<b>(Q63)</b> Lead pastors seek accountability.	55%
<b>(Q64)</b> Lead pastors demonstrate a life of integrity.	74%
<b>(Q65)</b> Lead pastors submit themselves to authority.	67%
<b>(Q66)</b> Lead pastors make personal purity a priority.	73%
<b>(Q67)</b> Lead pastors are intentional in dealing with their own sin, weakness, and failures.	67%
<b>(Q68)</b> Lead pastors are more concerned in dealing with the failures of their leadership community than they are in defending the reputation of their leadership community.	59%
<b>(Q69)</b> Lead pastors invite other leaders into their lives in order to see concerning things that they would not see on their own.	57%
<b>(Q70)</b> Lead pastors are willing to live under loving, grace-infused, patient, and forgiving biblical inspection.	66%
<b>(Q71)</b> Lead pastors establish guidelines as safeguards for dealing with sin, weakness, and failure.	65%