

ABSTRACT

INTERDEPENDENT LEADERSHIP: PRACTICES THAT DEVELOP INTERDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS

by

Brian W. Scott

The Ohio Valley District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance is made up of approximately seventy churches and over two hundred official licensed workers. The population of the district, which spans across the western part of Ohio, all of Kentucky, and the western two-thirds of Tennessee, is over fifteen million. Over half of the churches in the district have been attempting to implement interdependent leadership structures believing this philosophy of leadership is biblical and the most effective approach to leading in their respective churches.

Through conducting three personal interviews, assembling a focus group, and deploying a survey, data was collected to explore the best practices of leaders and churches in their pursuit of interdependent relationships. The data collected produced evidence that interdependent relationships were largely created through deep relationships formed outside of formal meeting spaces. Humility in the leaders and increased stability and peace in their churches were also significant outcomes of furthering interdependence in their environments. Research gave evidence that championing self-awareness and the pursuit of unity around a common vision and values enhanced the opportunity for stronger interdependence in the leadership group. These findings can be a roadmap for future teams desiring to see interdependence increase in their leadership cultures.

**INTERDEPENDENT LEADERSHIP:
PRACTICES THAT DEVELOP INTERDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS**

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 1 provides the framework for investigating the best practices in developing interdependent leadership teams within the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA. I provide a rationale for the project evolving from personal experience supported by research. Included in the overview of the research project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and how results were collected and analyzed. To add support for this type of project, themes of the literature review and contextual factors were identified. Further discussion of the anticipated project results established the significance for and impact on the practice of ministry.

Personal Introduction

The inner workings of mankind's heart and mind often desire recognition, notoriety, power, and authority when pursuing leadership positions. This disposition stirs an unhealthy striving that can only bring frustration, depression, and division. Society celebrates emerging and established leaders who passionately pursue greater position. Leaders abuse authority and manipulate others in order to further their selfish desires and ambitions. In relating to other leaders, they represent competition and not compliment. This kind of abuse thrives in unilateral leadership structures where humility and submission are absent.

I recognized these characteristics in leadership early in life in athletics. It was also evident as I began my career in the business world. The gross abuse of leadership could be explained given the telos of most was not to demonstrate biblical or Christ-like

leadership. Stepping into occupational ministry, I witnessed the same environments and identical desired selfish outcomes.

While wrestling with disappointment and criticism of what I was witnessing around me, the Spirit of God pointed to these very elements in my own heart. He began a spiritual surgery that brought great pain deep in my soul. It was a crisis that has permanently changed my pattern of thinking. Before I could address the error in the leadership structures around me, the change had to occur in my own heart.

I am driven to facilitate healthy interdependence within leadership groups. Based on my experience, outcomes that result from humility and mutual submission are not being obtained in the leadership in most churches within the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA. Paul speaks of certain outcomes that result in leadership that is multiple, diverse, and interdependent in Ephesians 4. The body of Christ is built up in unity, gaining increased knowledge of the Son of God. People mature and develop stability regardless of what mankind or culture is teaching. Ultimately, a fullness of Christ is experienced in them which works through them. These outcomes are in jeopardy when leadership works outside of how Jesus designed her.

Kenotic leadership is the essence of what it means to operate in the fullness of Christ and is essential if interdependence is to be obtained. Peers, authority, and subordinates become pivotal as they compensate for the deficiencies that are present in every leader when interdependence is practiced. A more complete understanding of what Jesus Christ, as the Head of the Church, is saying to local expressions of his body exists when leaders are dependent on one another.

The challenge comes when inward and outside pressures of performance weigh on leaders who practice unilateral leadership. Leaders experience a downward spiral as they give effort to try and perform better to meet the expectations of others and their own unreasonable expectations. God has determined that the challenges of ministry are to be confronted in a plurality of leadership who delight and submit to one another. This is modeled within the relationship of the three Persons of the Godhead. Great potency prevails when diverse leaders come together in mutual submission and unity to obey the voice of Christ.

Statement of the Problem

Spiritual and emotional obstacles hinder a full manifestation of the Spirit's power through interdependent leadership. Underlying distrust remains unseen within most leadership groups. This distrust is emphasized as leaders see every other person as competition or a threat to their own ideas and desires. Unity is not a tangible characteristic; instead, division is what is replicated into the greater body.

The majority of leaders have been formally or informally developed in unilateral and self-serving leadership principles. Scripture has been misinterpreted to justify selfish pursuits or improper leadership cultures. The Western mentality of independence and quantifiable metrics of success only aids in developing dysfunctional relationships. Interdependent leadership is the gift to the Church to replicate healthy, mature and unified disciples into the Mission of God.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to discern best practices in producing interdependent relationships in the core leadership of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the Christian Missionary Alliance (C&MA).

Research Questions

Research Question #1

What do leaders in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA describe as best practices to produce interdependent relationships in core leadership of established churches and church plants?

Research Question #2

What do those being equipped out of interdependent relationships in the Ohio Valley District of the CMA say are the best practices for interdependent relationships?

Research Question #3

What cultural beliefs or practices are prohibiting interdependent relationships?

Research Question #4

Moving forward, what are best practices for producing interdependent relationships in core leadership of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA.

Rationale for the Project

The vehicle for the Mission of God in the world is the Church. God is aggressively moving through the earth, drawing mankind to himself by his Spirit operating through those who have been reconciled. The effectiveness of the Church is directly impacted by the maturity or immaturity of those that carry this message of

reconciliation. The gift that has been given by the Head of the Church to the Church to produce healthy disciples is leadership.

Paul's commission to leadership in Ephesians 4 has outcomes that are not readily seen in the Western evangelical church. If leading cores have multiple and diverse voices that are operating in dependence on the Head of the Church and with one another, disciples will mature in unity and ultimately will experience the whole of the fullness in Christ in and through them. What is typically found in churches is unilateral leadership that ultimately produces divisive cultures.

If disciples are immature in their understanding of Jesus at a level of depth, the expression of the Great Commandment and Great Commission is restricted through them. The Church has an obligation to multiply its effect in order to express the undeniable love and acceptance of a loving Savior to people who are totally oblivious without a witness. She is a vehicle to the Mission of God in the world of reconciling mankind back to a relationship that was intimate at Creation.

Interdependence is vital in creating disciples who will carry this message of reconciliation. Without interdependence, immaturity becomes the defining characteristic of disciples who are released into a hostile world which is postured to bring opposition to the Mission of God.

Definition of Key Terms

Interdependent—The characteristic of a group that demonstrates a depth of relationship within the members of that group to the point where reliance on one another for life, edification, insight, perspective, and direction is demonstrated. The uniqueness of the

individual brings strength and completeness to whatever is produced or equipped out of the group.

Core Leadership—Those leaders who constitute the pivotal leading voice responsible for culture development, equipping, and overall direction of a local expression of the Church.

Delimitations

I included participants in this study who were attempting to create leadership cultures formed on interdependence. They were leading ministries within the district where I had role and responsibilities. This district of churches is a part of the C&MA.

I included those participants with pivotal leadership in the church, not restricting participants who may not have had formal titles or positions. These participants were diverse and ranged in age, occupation, personality, and spiritual giftings. I did not include leaders outside of this district. I excluded leadership groups that did not pursue interdependent leading cultures.

Review of Relevant Literature

The crucial nature of interdependent leadership to holistically developing disciples demands a broadness of reading. To begin, a deep study of the characteristics of healthy disciples is needed. There are metrics that can be traced back to a diversity of leading voices, as can be seen in the Ephesians 4 APEST (apostolic, prophetic, evangelist, shepherd, teacher) model. This passage speaks to the effectiveness of leaders in their purpose of equipping disciples into maturity. Certain elements of humility and submission must be present for leadership structures to become interdependent. A careful study of kenotic leadership will be relevant. Paul wrote his letter to the Church of Philippi with the understanding that the Philippians lived in a culture that promoted and honored a

pursuit of formal titles and positions of authority. Much literature explores elements of kenosis needed in those who desire to lead.

Unity amidst diversity is a main subject of many of Paul's writings. I gathered research on the subject of diversity in the pursuit of unity. I examined how the potential of diversity was released in leadership structures.

The understanding of the characteristics of the diversity found in APEST taken from Ephesians 4 needs developed. Each function expresses itself differently in the process of equipping the body of Christ. Natural conflicts also exist as leaders operate in their leadership gifts. Research and material are available on APEST, including the work done by Alan Hirsch and Dwight Smith.

Because spiritual and emotional health can be either a deterrent or enhancer of interdependence, an exploration of the dynamics of emotional and spiritually healthy leaders is warranted. Spiritual formation can aid in the development of interdependent leadership cultures.

Research Methodology

This dissertation involved the disposition of pre-intervention.

Type of Research

I used a variety of qualitative and quantitative types of data gathering. Surveys were distributed to all participants. A selection of those participants were formally interviewed. Other participants not interviewed took part in a focus group.

Participants

The participants were ministry leaders who explored and implemented principles intended to develop interdependent leadership cultures. These ministries included

established churches and church plants. These were men and women of differing ages and social backgrounds, representing a variety of ethnicities and social economic backgrounds. I assessed the participants for spiritual gifts, personality, and leadership functions.

The participants were part of a leadership core that consistently met and developed spiritual intimacy. They experienced the struggle of unifying highly diverse leaders in the tension of leading a church.

Instrumentation

A threefold approach to gathering information was used: surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Of the eighty-one surveys sent to church leaders who were a part of environments pursuing interdependent leadership cultures, thirty-five responded. The survey intended to gather qualitative and quantitative data related to the demographics of leadership teams and the consistency of times teams met.

A focus group gathered consisting of leaders from three different environments. People placed in leadership roles were asked mostly qualitative questions addressing their characteristics and abilities.. The dynamics of leadership meetings, including the nature of disagreements and disunity in those meetings, were also explored.

Finally, four leaders from three separate environments were interviewed. The purpose of these interviews was to gather details on the relational intricacies of developing unity. Leaders were asked questions to understand best practices in creating vulnerability, learning cultures, and shared language.

Data Collection

The survey, distributed to 50 participants, utilized a variation of the Likert Scale. If the participant answered with a “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree,” the survey requested an explanation. The interviews were with ten leaders. They were one-on-one and recorded. The questions asked were uniform or identical. The focus group was with six leaders who were not interviewed. The questions were less uniform and were recorded.

Data Analysis

I averaged the answers from the survey with a “1” attached to the “Strongly Disagree” and sequentially arriving at a “5” for the “Strongly Agree.” This was informative as to the general perspective from all the participants.

From the one-on-one interviews, there was an extensive analysis performed on the answers to find themes or reoccurring responses. The focus group recordings and documentation was analyzed to identify themes that were similar to the interviews.

Generalizability

Based on the truth of Scripture that calls for leadership to be multiple, diverse, unified, and interdependent, my belief is that this truth is transcendent across the Church as God has created her. Therefore, identification of similarities found in other districts within the C&MA family of churches will be important. The C&MA church in the West is comprised of only 45 percent English speakers. The C&MA family is also present in seventy countries with seven hundred workers ministering outside of the US. We must explore the transcendence of these findings across ethnicity, geography, and various cultures.

The findings will be applicable to the international communities within the Church in the West as a whole. As there are opportunities for kingdom collaboration with C&MA partners, edification of leadership cores with the findings of this dissertation will be opportune.

This project will be difficult to introduce to the cultures that are hierarchical in nature. If an organization has been developed through a culture of unilateral leadership, they will not be receptive to the whole counsel of Scripture when it comes to principles of the plurality of leadership. Some truths can be applicable, but desired outcomes from interdependent leadership will not be feasible.

Project Overview

This project explores the best practices in developing interdependent relationships within a leadership team. Chapter 2 discusses the most influential writers and practitioners regarding the factors that impact interdependence. Chapter 3 outlines the various ways I investigated my research questions. Chapter 4 analyzes the findings that emerged from such qualitative methods as a semi structured interview, a focus group, and document analysis. Chapter 5 outlines the study's major findings with implications for each discovery now and in the future.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

In these last days, the Holy Spirit has been given to indwell the hearts of all God's people and to be the Catalyst Who would develop an intimacy that will shape a person's life. God has also given a gift to his Church to equip her on this journey of a restored relationship with him. Leadership is that gift. Ultimately, a leader's main responsibility is to hear the voice of the Head of the Church and to lead and disciple his people into a deeper life with him based on his wishes. God desires for this gift to hear his voice and equip people out of a posture of obedience. He has created his leadership to be diverse and to operate in unity and oneness in this responsibility. He has created leadership to be interdependently related to one another. To clearly receive the fullness of the voice of Christ to his Church, leadership must operate in oneness and interdependency.

The goal or outcome of this project is to discover the best practices in the development of interdependent leadership teams that will hear clearly from the Head of the Church in order to produce holistic disciples. This chapter focuses on the scriptural and theological understanding of God's intention on speaking through leadership to ultimately reveal his heart, mind, and intent to his people. In addition, this review summarizes relevant literature on polycentric leadership structures and the multiple variables involved in the development of interdependence.

Biblical and Theological Foundations for Church Health

Prior to Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was not available to everyone who feared God. Instead, God gave his Spirit to individuals to accomplish certain tasks or objectives and to relate his will to his people. His heart was always for intimate relationship with mankind, but only a select few had the opportunity to know God's will or mind that was spoken through his Spirit. Leaders depended on their connection with the Spirit in order to properly lead in the manner God intended for the benefit of his disciples.

The Holy Spirit's presence gave witness to these chosen leaders to the moral and spiritual qualities that should be present in those who follow God. He empowered people to carry out his bidding, but there was also qualitative evidence in the life of those anointed with the Spirit, albeit temporal at times. A person's character, continence, and priorities are noticeably different when the Spirit is present. Multiple prophets foretold a time when God's Spirit would reside or dwell in the heart of all believers and bring this kind of distinction. Joel prophesied that there would be a transition when God's Spirit would be poured out on all believers, including those marked as ordinary (Joel 2:28, 29).

In fulfillment of this prophecy, Jesus said that he would send the Spirit to dwell with us (John 14:16, 17). He would encourage, correct, rebuke, and point the world to Jesus. It would be through his Spirit that Jesus Christ would draw mankind to himself. The evidence of the Spirit's work would proclaim his presence. His work would be an undeniable witness, manifested through the Church. As a means to an end, God determined that the Church would be the equipping agent for the development of his disciples.

God's intention in both the Priest and Priesthood models was to speak and equip his people through leadership that he placed in positions of influence, in order for there to be a tangible witness in the lives of those who believe. The Source of understanding, power, and qualitative distinctiveness has always been the Holy Spirit. However on the surface, the dynamics in each model seem contradictory based on the expression of God's Spirit.

Even though the time had not yet come for the Holy Spirit to indwell the heart of the believer, God's desire was to equip people through leadership. Almost exclusively, leadership was expressed through singular leaders who mostly operated without the aid of others. This can be seen in the process of releasing God's people from the bondage and slavery of the Egyptians, so God related to his people through the leadership of Moses.

Old Testament

Exodus 18

Moses primarily led unilaterally. This took a toll on Moses physically, mentally, and emotionally to the extent that he often longed for death instead of continuing to lead God's people. His father-in-law, Jethro, saw this leadership philosophy as a threat to Moses's health and overall well-being.

Jethro heard all of what God was doing through Moses's leadership in bringing the Israelites out of captivity as well as caring for their needs. Jethro recognized that God was acting on the behalf of his people. God's reputation was spreading. However, God was doing more through Moses than he could handle on his own ability or strength. Even with Moses being anointed with God's Spirit, it was causing stress and frustration in Moses, and Jethro saw the effect.

Moses had become the center of provision and wisdom. He was carrying the majority of the weight of leading, yet was a man with great limitations. Israel was without history or statutes that would legally govern the people. Moses was the only voice and the only source to communicate what he knew of God's statutes and laws. When people came to inquire of God, Moses was the sole voice in deciding every case.

Moses was the most qualified given his God-given role and call. He was God's instrument on whom the Holy Spirit rested. Still, Moses was drained of energy and patience. This system was unsustainable. To ease the strain on Moses, Jethro suggested a system by which some of Moses's responsibility would be spread to a plurality of leaders. This suggestion did not remove Moses's role or call as being God's instrument of revelation. Moses still had to convey God's statutes to those he empowered. This, to look to the anointed to discover God's will, was appropriate. Yet, a pattern of polycentric leadership brings health to leaders and to the organization.

Polycentric leadership has a pragmatic element to the formulation of system and structure that girds or supports what God is producing. Deliverance, freedom, and rescue are the Lord's responsibility. Empowered by His Spirit, God has given leaders the responsibility to represent him and to bring health and order. Jethro's suggestion did not lessen the glory that was due God for his awesome acts, but it released some of the stress that was placed upon one person.

For the God-fearer, the desire is ultimately to know the mind and heart of God, regardless of source or vehicle. The statutes and laws that Moses handed down to qualified leaders were not his own. They were revealed to Moses by God and then passed down. These leaders were trustworthy, and most notably, hated bribes. The motivation

for taking bribes is always out of providing for one's own self-interest and not in operating in the best interest of those they serve. These are not the characteristics that represent one who is a God-fearer. Regardless of the number of people under their responsibility, the overseer's role is to represent and communicate God's declarations.

Numbers 11

Again, Moses is feeling the unbearable weight of carrying the people of God's dysfunction. When left to one's own devices, people tend to crave comfort instead of God's heart and mind expressed to them. Moses was consistently caught in the middle between the displeasure of the Lord and the peoples' spiritual condition. He questioned God's intention by placing him at the head of these people who seemingly lacked the desire for connection with God.

God's Spirit was on Moses as the primary leader. God instructed Moses to call on those who were known elders in the camp to gather at the Tent of Meeting. God took his Spirit Who was upon Moses and gave him to those men in order that they would share in the leadership of God's people.

Interestingly, two men were not at the Tent of Meeting, but were in the camp prophesying. Joshua was concerned and asked Moses if he wanted to restrict this from happening. Moses's reply gives a small foreshadowing of what was to come. He said, "Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" Moses recognized the positive effect when God's Spirit would rest upon a plurality of leaders.

New Testament

Pentecost had happened. The Holy Spirit had expressed himself in a new reality. His life now would mysteriously intertwine with the life of the believer. This would impact how God would declare his love and grace, not only to the visible world, but to all his created order. Yet the vehicle by which he would equip people with the knowledge of himself would not change. Leadership is still the gift. What has changed is the opportunity for a fuller expression of interdependence through a plurality of leadership.

Ephesians 4:1-16.

Paul finds himself in difficult circumstances being imprisoned for his faith. As a prisoner, he is restricted to operate largely out of the wishes and desires of those who have been given charge over him. Out of that experience, he writes to a fledgling group of believers.

Paul had experienced something more devastating in his life that went beyond any physical imprisonment. He had lived a life that was not operating out of the desires of God's Spirit, but he had been controlled by his own desires which ultimately played into the hands of the Enemy. He was highly motivated in his profession to ascend as a leader. He used his position of authority to manipulate and abuse his power. He was divisive, competitive, and self-focused. However, his letter to the church in Ephesus reflected not only a totally different personal perspective, but also represented a contrasting paradigm. He had been dramatically freed from a life of true slavery and was now operating in submission to the desires of he who had freed him.

Unity is the center point for much of Paul's letter to this church. Paul spent a large portion of his adult life persecuting and trying to impede God's movement through those

who called themselves part of the “Way.” He most probably carried a burden that came from the knowledge that he had imprisoned many who now he considered family. Nonetheless, the call for unity did not come primarily from a place of guilt or retribution from his past. Unity was the desire of him who had freed them. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, prayed for it and expressed through leadership his desire for it to be evidenced in his Church.

Unity is a desired outcome of Jesus. A depth of oneness is found in the dynamic of the Trinity that Christ wants for his Body. The only way that this kind of unity is achieved is when it is conditional and centered in the faith and knowledge in the Person of Jesus Christ. It also must be present in those he has called to lead in order to replicate unity in their equipping. Apart from God, this becomes challenging because God created his body in great diversity.

The first attribute of a disciple Paul lists seems to be strategically placed. Humility is the identifiable characteristic that seems to breed unity. He goes on to encourage gentleness, patience, and long-suffering. Love, then, becomes the key in the ability to bear with one another and remain in unity. Everything about being called into this life with Jesus, the dynamic of the Trinity, the way to salvation, the confirmation and proclamation of identification with Christ and his death through baptism, everything the Spirit oversees, has at its core unity or oneness. Leadership is not only to pursue this within relationship but also to disciple and equip people into this Trinity-like reality. It is to be evidence of a life lived in submission to the Holy Spirit as a testimony.

As a Victor who received the spoils for conquering his foe, Jesus distributes a diversity of gifts that will edify his people. Based on all that is his and with his priorities

and intentions, he gives these gifts or functions to enhance the fulfillment of his plan. The conduit is a multiple and diverse leadership gift expressed through groups of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers (APEST).

Jesus gifted the Church with APEST with specific outcomes in mind. Jesus's intention is that these groups of leaders would equip people into a fullness of himself. If someone is going to equip, there must be competence. Each group carries a function or competence that is essential to bring about maturity. Equipping does not happen with a primary focus on self-interest.

Keeping in the theme of a prisoner of Christ, captives that have been freed are the possession of their Redeemer. His purpose for them is that they would be developed into people who are working in service or ministry within a community. It is a ministry that is the responsibility of the individual for the edification of the community, a beautiful and harmonious dichotomy which creates unity. All unity is conditional and centered in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, Redeemer of those who were in captivity.

As a result, followers of God will grow and mature out of the infant stage. Infants live in a state of ignorance and selfishness. This is the antithesis to what Paul has already listed as desirable attributes. Love, then, will be expressed in those maturing in their faith in and knowledge of Christ. A progression or a building up of the unity ensues as each one serves under the direction and control of the Head of the Church.

2 Timothy 2

Paul and Timothy had a special bond forged through a discipling relationship. Out of that relationship, Timothy developed something of supreme importance. Timothy, while consistently in proximity and closeness to Paul, heard and received the essence of

Paul's teaching that was heard by many people in many settings. This truth brought the hearer deeper into the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This would also be the source of Timothy's leadership expression. When Paul says to entrust the truth he heard, that means to find people who are trustworthy, whose character could withstand the strain of the weight of the truth and be developed by it.

The progression of the gospel through Timothy's leadership would depend on his ability to surround himself with a plurality of leadership. He needed to find leaders who would be faithful, whose faithfulness is to the cause or the call. They are faithful to the very things that Paul is faithful to and the telos of Timothy's commissioning. These are the men that are to carry this message entrusted to Timothy. They must be committed. As Timothy was in proximity and closeness to Paul, these faithful men would be the same to Timothy if they followed this pattern. Not because of Timothy's leadership potential or competency, but because it was truth communicated by God's Spirit. Again, the strength of the leadership necessary to carry the truth and equip out of it would depend on their commitment, faithfulness, and trustworthiness.

Philippians 2:1-11

The popular voices of leadership believe that a leader's opportunity to express their talents, giftings, competencies, rights, and privileges ascend correlative to and proportionate with their ascension in title or authority. This is not how Paul describes Jesus Christ's ways of leading. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus in order to challenge the popular leadership models of the day that celebrated the pursuit of notoriety and public honor (Bekker 1). Title and position were used for self-promotion and entitlement in order to enhance their delusion of grandeur. Paul pleads with his readers caught up in a

culture where authority takes the seat of honor in order to push their rights to consider Jesus Christ's approach to leading.

Paul longs for oneness in the relationships of his spiritual children. In a world of striving for upward mobility to the detriment of friendships and unity, Paul asked that people take the posture of humility and consider other people more significant than themselves. Jesus Christ had every right to take advantage of his title, but he did not consider it appropriate to hang on to the rights and privileges that come with being the Son of God. Unfortunately, leaders often demand recognition and the opportunities and privileges that come with any earthly title.

The kenosis that was necessary to bring fallen mankind life and relationship with God was willingly experienced by Christ. Many facets of his obedience demonstrate self-surrender, humility, and sacrifice. To follow this example would be a fool's errand absent of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The pursuit of the leader to put themselves in a position that follows this kenotic example must be more than imitation, it must be a transformative endeavor directed by the Holy Spirit.

Kenosis places us in a state of receptivity (Bekker 10). This becomes essential for leaders in order to hear the voice of God on behalf of those they serve. The kenotic process places leaders more in a position of Christlikeness in how others are viewed. Opposed to popular belief, opportunity to express the leader's own talents, giftings, competencies, rights, and privileges descend in correlation and disproportionate with their ascension in title or authority.

Acts 15

One of the most contested issues of the early church was how to graft in Gentiles into the community of believers. Much of what was present in the early church started out of the traditions of Judaism. There were traditions that were necessary in the beginning stages of the church age, and there are traditions that were unnecessary or merely indifferent.

A governing authority or council of the early church was located in Jerusalem; it was a diverse council made up of apostles and elders with James, the brother of Jesus, having a leadership role. They were the authority who had a significant voice on how Gentiles were viewed by the church. This group of leaders had no small debate concerning this topic.

Paul and Barnabas were more progressive when eliminating old thinking and practice in regard to incorporating the Gentiles into the family of believers. They spoke of God's work in and through Gentiles wherever they spoke with fellow believers. This was of great encouragement to most who heard of these testimonies. However, Paul and Barnabas were confronted by men who had come down from Judea and had differing opinions on whether it was appropriate for Gentile believers to be circumcised as Paul and Barnabas did not require circumcision.

Paul and Barnabas demonstrated submission when a plurality of leaders appointed them to travel to Jerusalem to receive insight from the Council on this matter. As they went, they continued in their pattern of giving testimony of God's new work with the Gentiles. They gave these testimonies also before the Council.

Even though James apparently had some leadership role in this group, this debated topic demonstrated the fact that the main council that determined doctrinal stances within the church was polycentric and operated in interdependence. God appointed this group of leaders as overseers who were to pursue his mind and heart on spiritual matters that impacted the Church. Without God's voice, the foundation of the church would be faulty and susceptible to the erroneous and finite thinking of mankind.

In the process of coming to a conclusion on the matter of circumcision, multiple leaders, including Pharisees, asserted their perspective. Peter also spoke as he was no stranger to the conflicts that arose with the Gentiles. God had revealed truth to Peter in his sanctification process by sending him to the house of Cornelius. Peter's testimony opened the door for Paul and Barnabas to relate their stories to the Council.

God's voice was heard, through James, and gave foundational truth and direction to the church. In this example, neither a singular leader nor was man's genius ultimately set the course for this doctrinal stance of Christ's church. Instead, it was God's voice heard and obeyed through a plurality of leaders.

Paul also told the church in Corinth that they could know the mind of Christ because they had the Spirit of Christ (1 Cor. 2:11-16). God's interaction with leaders by his Spirit transitioned from being primarily unilateral to being dispersed to multiple leaders.

Therefore, how leaders relate and respond to one another when they hold a collective responsibility for a certain group of people is critical. Leaders must hear clearly the voice of God to know his mind if they are to lead and disciple effectively. If leaders

operate in unilateral postures, their ability to fully grasp what God is communicating will be limited.

Polycentric Leadership

In most cultures, especially in the West, to gain position and title is to have the opportunity to entitle oneself to express one's own giftedness. Upward mobility carries with it the expectation that one will utilize their talents, experience, competencies, and charisma to accomplish goals and objectives. The aggrandizement of the "exceptional" accompanies most promotions and causes rifts and division among peer leaders, team members, and those who are to be led.

Whatever the adverse ramifications or the cost to relationships or cultures, the American view of success is built on such values. J. R. Woodward and [Dan White, Jr.](#), write, "In our American imagination success means growing bigger, collecting more resources, consolidating power, creating strong hierarchical structures and growing rapidly" (24). This description reflects most business organizations, and sadly, this most appropriately describes most church cultures.

Unilateral leadership has definite positives. The efficiency of streamlining decisions enables churches and organizations to pivot and move in response to opportunities. People are comforted by a strong, visible leader who acts decisively. When multiple leaders are involved and consensus is pursued, leadership can appear slow to act or indecisive. To be able to approach one leader who can make a decision without consulting with others is often the most desirable solution when someone is facing difficulties or questions. However, efficiency, comfort, or perceived stability should not be the telos.

Some issues developed in unilateral leadership structures are unnoticed until they reach a point of visible dysfunction. These dysfunctions often render the organization debilitated. Leaders are also unaware of some of the tendencies that come with promotions and the securing of titles. In their research, Masuda et al. documented that once power or perceived power is gained by a leader in an individualistic society, a level of egocentrism and assertiveness to claim resources is demonstrated (1). This grasping of resources and more power or authority contrasts the element of humility and selflessness described previously in Philippians 2.

For those who are most connected to unilateral leaders, some of those dysfunctions restrict communication that is vital to the ongoing health of the leadership core, as well as the organization as a whole (Khademi, [Schmid Mast](#), and Frauendorfer 2). Every person or leader has deficiencies in many areas that are in need of edification or balance from others who carry other competencies, personalities, or experience. If communication between leaders is based on a hierarchy and a leader restricts input, the limitations of the primary leader will be passed onto the organization. The impact of leadership on the health of an organization cannot be overstated.

Ebben van Zyl and Andrew Campbell commented on a number of topics dealing with the influence or impact leadership has on the organization. For leadership to be well informed on the status and on-going concerns of the organization is essential. Unilateral leadership cultures can prohibit the amount of information known to leadership. Van Zyl and Campbell state;

The chief may be the only person who doesn't know certain things, because nobody will tell him. Or people may share information that is biased, or

incomplete, and they may not share the bad news, for fear that the chief will shoot the messenger. It is also hard for the chief to test ideas. People are reluctant to tell the chief that his or her idea is a bad one. The solution is obvious—servant-leaders create a team at the top (2).

If leadership is ignorant to essential information, the organization becomes vulnerable.

Cultures within leadership cores tend to replicate throughout the organization. The influence of leadership far surpasses job descriptions (Van Zyl and Campbell 2). If leadership structures are dominated by personalities characterized by being self-serving and self-promoting, a ripple effect will be felt in the dynamics of the relationships within the organization. The dysfunction or unhealth of leadership will spread like yeast and will develop obstacles to the desired outcomes of the organization.

Leadership of a local church should demonstrate the essence of leadership, as God has intended it, wherever it is expressed. Any leader's genesis point should be living within any community as a disciple with unique gifts, wiring, and background. As Paul described in 1 Corinthians 12, not one gift or personality or role within the body is greater or better than any other. Each one is essential to allow the body to function properly and must depend on all others for life and completeness.

Within the local expression of the church, disciple-making discipleship is one of the most important and universally desired outcomes of any leadership. The church's leadership culture and structures impact the church's ability to develop and replicate healthy disciples. Woodward and White are big proponents of polycentric or shared leadership in this quest. Their perspective is that, in order to develop healthy disciples, there must be invitations to qualified people into relationships at a leadership level.

“As we entrust people to join us in polycentric leadership and distribute new responsibilities to them, we still take the time to dwell with each other, to hang out with them and live together as much as we are able. As they start to disciple others, leading them through the stages of learning, and their disciples do the same with their disciples, we begin to see movement because we are growing in discipleship depth” (63).

The type of leadership that is desired in discipling relationships must be present at a leadership level.

Leaders who occupy a lone, hierarchical leadership title are not forced into the refining and difficult work of developing healthy relationships at a peer level. Therefore, that there would be an outcome of maturing discipling relationships that reach a level of depth within the local body should not be expected. Leaders in polycentric leadership structures have the opportunity to be submitted to and also to submit humbly to others. They will encounter situations where they will both lead and follow. These are essential elements required in any healthy discipling relationship.

Woodward and White comment, “Some have responded to hierarchical leadership by producing flat structures. This moves from ineffective leadership to an absence of leadership” (57). Polycentric leadership can exist without a characteristic of interdependence. Polycentric leadership approaches are also termed “team-oriented leadership.” Environments may be able to get to the point of “flattening” their leadership structures with more voices at the table or the development of teams, but they may be without the benefit of interdependence. Often, productivity or efficiency is the motivating factor, and, therefore, delegation is the main focus. Many times, when delegating, leaders

merely give away responsibilities separating themselves from activity that they either lack competency in or a desire to complete. Therefore, they avoid the need to humbly submit to people who do have competencies or passions in that area. In her work on a team analyzing different boards within a diversity of businesses, Luciano points out that, “[Theories]... that focus(es) on separation of duties is not sufficient in turbulent environments. Interdependence is needed” (Luciano et al. 681).

When interdependence has taken root, leadership is more complete, enduring, and able to address and overcome obstacles. Interdependence does not preach the avoidance of responsibility or of absent leadership, it is more complete as the shadows and deficiencies of each leader are complemented by the strengths of others.

Organizations/Churches are not restricted by the limitations of a single leader, instead the process of equipping becomes more holistic. Tod Bolsinger is not backward when describing the effects of unilateral leadership, “I would want to issue a decree that to lead alone is reckless and arrogant; it is foolish and dangerous to both self and others. To lead alone usually results in either a failure of nerve or a failure of heart, which is to squander the valuable time, energy, and commitment of organizations and followers” (125).

Many benefits are felt throughout an organization as a by-product of a plurality of leadership interdependently related. For a local church, the objective of leadership is to hear the voice of the Head of the Church as he expresses his heart for his disciples. If polycentric leadership is interdependently related, Jesus’s voice is clearly heard through diverse perspectives and wiring. As leadership becomes more decentralized through a plurality of leading, leaders must center themselves on what they have heard collectively from God.

When an interdependent leadership group hears the voice of Jesus, a strong understanding of purpose, mission, vision, and values develops. This becomes the centralized core of understanding shared within the leadership group that is guarded and sustained. When all voices of a leadership team speak into decisions and there is confidence that the voice of Jesus was heard through shared experience, leaders take ownership of the purpose, mission, vision, and values. Robert Fritz comments, “Everyone who makes critical decisions that affect the final product must have a common understanding of the vision” (200). Leaders owning the vision ensures that decisions are made in alignment to that vision.

Especially within a post-Christian culture, interdependent leadership teams function more effectively when one person takes the lead to facilitate all the voices and gifts that are represented around the table. In situations with great diversity and strong leadership voices, the role of a Lead Facilitator becomes even more important. Fritz supports this claim as stated in his recent study of a group of emerging business leaders that concluded, “Successful group performance consists of cohesiveness, inter-relationship, norm, diversity, and an appointed team leader” (6).

The desire for any leadership team should be to gather competent, mature, diverse, leadership voices to hear God’s heart for his disciples and then to lead and shape the culture in that vein. The greater the diversity; the greater the reach of the leadership. Each leader should be expressing their gifts, strengths, personalities, and perspectives in a manner that most reflects the kenotic leadership demonstrated by Christ. However, this can be misconstrued in many cultures. According to Peter G. Northouse, many cultures discourage promoting strengths because it is perceived as self-promotion (54). People of

diverse cultures are able to more easily express their strengths and perspectives when there is trust that develops within the leadership core. If diversity, in all aspects, is drawn out and celebrated within a leading community, it shapes a similar culture within the organizational community and allows leadership to express God's heart more fully. Victoria Gascho insists that the way people come into knowledge of a subject becomes powerful in how they live it. In her epistemology, knowing comes through community (2).

A question often asked of leadership after they have developed a strong leadership community is how they avoid becoming a separate, exclusive community. Leadership must have as its priority the equipping of the saints. This does not happen apart from building relationships with those whom God has given to leaders to shepherd, equip, and deploy in his mission to reconcile the world to himself. The intentionality of leaders to relationally influence, disciple, and equip people keep their telos outward. Imbalance inward toward the strength of the inner leadership core leads to unproductivity. Imbalance outward toward discipleship and extension leads to a lack of cohesiveness and chaos.

Bryan D. Sims says appropriately, "Shared leadership (as seen in teams) is the place where relationship and formation is integrated with mission" (50). Community, discipleship, and mission are complementary to one another as seen later in the exploration of APEST. If any are out of balance, dysfunction results.

One important dynamic with how leadership relates to the body is that leadership is not exempt from being disciplined by the word given by God. Leadership that are first disciples and a part of the body illustration, must experience transformation in like

manner along with all other disciples of whom they have responsibility. Terry Wardle comments, “Choices and actions position us to be changed or transformed by Christ” (61). If leadership elevates herself above the station of disciple or sees herself as an exception in the body illustration, she will not be transformed as the other disciples by the word of God spoken to the local expression.

For there to be transformation in an organization/church, leadership must be in a continual process of transformation, both individually and collectively as shared leadership. When a leadership core centers itself on the vision laid before them by God, there most certainly will be transformation on that journey. “And a vision of what is not yet before us, but that we can ‘see’ with eyes of faith, hope, and imagination—when captured and cast—creates the shared motivation for confronting resistance and continuing tenaciously toward the larger transformative goal” (Bolsinger 172).

Given what has been expressed thus far, there is a stark difference between unilateral leadership and interdependent leadership. Each form of leading brings significant outcome to organizations/churches. Sims proposes the following as characteristics of interdependent or shared leadership that distinguishes it from any other leadership style, structure, or culture.

- Shared responsibility
- Loving humility
- High trust, commitment, and accountability
- Collective intelligence
- Adaptive capacity
- Multiplication (53)

These characteristics can be the deciding factors of whether a polycentric leadership group is interdependently related or merely a team that distributes responsibilities or chores.

These discussions would be useless unless there was a model seen in Scripture. The ultimate polycentric, interdependent, leadership core is modeled by the Trinity. This model does not give us a picture of the kind of leadership that operates in isolation. Lesslie Newbigin states that the nature of relationship seen in the Trinity, “is not to be understood as a timeless, passionless monad beyond all human knowing, but as a trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit. This understanding is not the result of speculative thought. It has been given by revelation in the actual historical life and work of the Son” (26). As each person of the Trinity is described in Scripture, there is a model of interdependency that lays the groundwork for how we should pattern leadership. Each person has specific roles yet operate in complete unison. There is a delight and love in one another.

Watchman Nee describes characteristic roles of each Person of the Trinity,

In the Trinity, there is equality and harmony. But the Father became the representation of authority and the Son of submission. Those who know God will know authority and submission because it has always been there. Those who don't know God, don't know authority and position (42).

Polycentric leadership that exemplifies interdependence as seen in the Trinity simultaneously holds a posture of authority and yet demonstrates submission. Once a leadership group lacks significant submission, they produce a leading culture that is less in line with the model demonstrated in the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery. Even as each Scripture describes each person separately given their roles, A. W. Tozer calls out how each person of the Trinity is dependent on the others.

Keep in mind that the persons of the Godhead cannot fulfill their ministries separately. We may think of them separately, but they can never be separated. The early church fathers recognized this wholeness of God's person. They said we must not divide the substance of the Trinity, though we recognize the three persons (1).

Dependence, as modeled by the Trinity, produces the leadership cultures God desires.

Gregg Okesson describes the influence the Trinity should have on leadership cultures, “The doctrine of the Trinity confronts both individualism and authoritarianism at their core. Neither thin singularity nor static hierarchy faithfully represents the God of mission” (73). The culture that is within the Trinity needs replication in the core leadership of every movement of mission. This is the working of God’s design for leadership that Paul alluded to in Ephesians 4. Paul is moving from “the immanent Trinity to the economic trinity, from God as worshipped to God as working” (Ballenger 292).

The mission of reconciliation is God’s mission; therefore, the facilitating and equipping of people who carry a message of reconciliation must follow the pattern set by God himself. The evangelical community would not argue that each person of the Trinity is co-equal, co-substantial, and co-eternal. Therefore, leadership must demonstrate the same submission as they operate in God’s mission.

APEST

Brian Eno created the word “scenius” to describe the intelligence that does not come from a person, such as a genius, but intelligence that comes from a group of people (qtd. in Albiez and Pattie 2). It may logically be deduced that the intelligence of a group or the “scenius” of a group would be dependent upon how many geniuses made up that group. This may be true to some extent, but the expressed intelligence of a group cannot be fully realized until an element of collaboration or connectivity both relationally and functionally is present.

The gift of leadership described in Ephesians 4 was given in diversity, yet were of the same gift. Dwight Smith speaks of the importance each plays in equipping efforts,

But in order to accomplish the complex task of empowering Christ's people, the various members of the leadership group need to be different from each other.

This diversity will have a singular emphasis and effect upon the body. And finally, as we see in the Trinity, these various people listed by Paul, each representing differing functions (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher), are to be interdependent upon each other (67).

In many settings, the leadership functions, perspectives, or roles found in Ephesians 4, described as the Apostolic, Prophetic, Evangelistic, Shepherd, and Teacher (APEST), have largely operated in conflict at worst and isolation at best. This passage describes leadership as the gift given to the Church to equip her into unity and maturity. Favorable outcomes as a result of this gift have been difficult to see, because the gift operates more fully in polycentric, interdependent leadership cultures. These kinds of cultures do not populate the vast majority of leadership cores in the Church of the West.

Many obstacles that impede interdependence within leadership structures are explored in other sections. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., describes one such obstacle as being a lordship issue, “When we maintain lordship, our relationships will not be controlled by God's will but by our own agenda. Our relationships at this point become manipulative as we attempt to impose our agenda on them” (42). Especially in places where hierarchy is prevalent, the leader mostly operates out of their own personality and spiritual giftedness. Their particular APEST role usually comes to the forefront and dominates the conversation around the leadership table.

When there is a unilateral leadership structure, the diversity of APEST becomes even more divisive as each function is seen as a threat to the function possessed by the main leader. A leader can become defensive and is tempted to believe that their Ephesians 4 function or perspective is the most spiritual or indispensable. For instance, an “A”postolically functioning leader will argue that Jesus spoke mainly about the coming and extension of the kingdom. Jesus was passionate about making people aware of God’s reach and the opportunities afforded God’s children in that reach. A “P”rophetically functioning leader will counter with placing the importance on hearing God’s voice and responding in obedience. If anyone is found in an obvious position of rebellion to what God has said, correction is of utmost importance.

For the “E”vangelistic functioning leader, they will passionately proclaim that Jesus did not come for the healthy, but for the sick. His purpose was to seek and save the lost. This is our highest priority! The “S”hepherds will remind the group about how many times the language “one another” is used in the New Testament. They will emphasize the commanded responsibility to make disciples, focusing on those who are

committed followers of Jesus. Finally, the leaders who function as “T”eachers place high priority on scriptural truth as the main avenue to disciple and develop maturity.

The outcome of an APEST model of equipping is accurately stated by Thomas K. Stoner, “(It is) using spiritual gifts, loving one another, proclaiming the Gospel to the unsaved, making disciples, baptizing and teaching, loving God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, and understanding that his nearest neighbors are the members of his own family” (1). The full expression of APEST brings a holistic movement of disciples.

Many leaders and authors have penned their opinion on how each role of APEST functions within leadership structures. Listed below are just a sampling on how these roles are described.

Apostle

- Pioneer, Innovator, Designer, Entrepreneur, Strategist, Visionary (Hirsch 170)
- Responsibilities are to build up churches, evangelism, pastoring, teaching (Liu 84)
- (Apostles) extend the gospel purpose of the church (Smith 46)

Prophet

- Artist-poet, Mystic, Reformer, Activist, Questioner, Disturber, Agitator (Hirsch 170)
- Regional or national, sensitive to sin, speak for improvement, encouragement, and consolation (Liu 84)
- (Prophets) integrate the gospel foundations, foreknowing, train in discernment, rebuke (Smith 47–48)

Evangelist

- Mobilizer, Recruiter, Negotiator, Achiever (Hirsch 170)

- Regional or national, stay in one place temporarily, minister to unbelievers first (Liu 84)
- (Evangelists) expand the gospel story, focus on people, guard the heart of God for the lost (Smith 50–51)

Shepherd/Pastor

- Humanizer, Carer, Social cement/glue (Hirsch 170)
- (Shepherd/Pastor/Teacher) Regional and administrative, remain, ensure purity and maturity of faith (Liu 84)
- (Shepherds) nurture the gospel's truths in the church, reflect God's heart for peoples' pain (Smith 51)

Teacher

- Philosopher, Sage, Mentor, Guide, Translator (Hirsch 170)
- (Teachers) explain the gospel truths to the church, truth-tellers, disciplined (Smith 52–53)

A leader's holistic maturity plays a role in how the differing functions of APEST relate to one another. This dissertation will later explore how emotional maturity impacts relationships. The dynamic of where the leader is in their sanctification process also becomes a major factor in whether a team operates in diversity and interdependence, or it struggles under the weight of their differences. Unfortunately, the latter is the normal. "Sadly, we often turn our differences into moral superiority or virtues" (Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* 53).

Each function is an asset to hearing and understanding the voice of God spoken to his disciples. If Jesus gave the gift of leadership in diversity, it would be appropriate that

diversity needs to be present to fully understand God's communication to leadership. Each function of APEST hears and communicates God's communication differently based on their filters. If a function is missing or marginalized based on a unilateral structure or overbearing personality, the accuracy of what is perceived as God's voice should be questioned. Each perspective must have equal representation around a leadership table. This will need to be an intentional undertaking of everyone around the table because each function is usually irritated by another voice or function.

The role for the twelve Apostles was to be the sent ones who opened up new fields for the gospel's proclamation, but subsequent apostolically functioning leaders also carried similar commissions. John R. W. Stott explains,

there were the 'apostles of Christ,' personally appointed by him to be witnesses of the resurrection, who included the Twelve, Paul, and probably James. There is no evidence that Barnabas belonged to this group. On the other hand, there were the 'apostles of the church,' sent out by a church or churches on particular missions, as Epaphroditus was an apostle or messenger of the Philippian church" (229).

The apostolic function still operates today.

For an apostolically functioning leader, their main role is to keep the group moving. To be at a place of stagnation causes great angst in the heart of someone who is always pointing the group beyond its present realities. Their unique vision gives them opportunities to speak into leadership groups possibilities that are not currently in existence. The effect of the gospel is too important to remain centralized or contained to a certain group of people. The apostolic leader is the main voice that decentralizes the church. F. F. Bruce calls attention to such attributes of the early church planter, "Paul's

missionary [apostolic] eye picked out these strategic outposts and envisaged them as strategic centers in the spiritual kingdom which he was proclaiming and extending” (95).

To use a military illustration, when the apostolic has determined a hill to take, they have an inner drive to mobilize the army and proceed with the attack. They will see opportunities on that hill and will envision the people around them. They will also do the due diligence to understand the dynamics of the land that is to be conquered, even sending out reconnaissance in order to anticipate possible obstacles.

The apostolic leader also places a higher value on achieving victory at any expense with less attention on how the move affects people. Those who operate with apostolic imagination usually do not have the natural bent to come alongside those who are stragglers or late adopters. Mobility and advancement are too important and captivating to delay on the account of others. If need be, the apostolic leader will undertake the attack alone, which is a shadow of the apostolic leader operating in immaturity.

The apostolic voice is important when equipping people for the work God has prepared for them within his mission. Hirsch describes their purpose within the mission, “[Apostolic function], therefore is the inbuilt, culturally embedded drive to ensure that the church is faithful to its missionary calling” (278). Equipping cultures and structures are requisite to catalyze God’s vehicle, his church, to carry a message of reconciliation to people and places yet to be reached with the gospel. Without this particular voice or perspective, a leadership group can become paralyzed, unable to move because the target is unclear. People will naturally default into rhythms of apathy, content with experiencing the richness of community and freedom found in the gospel. This will be short-lived

because God has made the fulfillment of extending the gospel integral in the heart of every disciple. Without a push to extend, stagnation sets in and with it, division, unhealth, and conflict.

The Prophet has an awareness of God's desires and an ability to see direction with some level of clarity. This can be said for the Old Testament prophets who were given this knowledge or awareness of God's desire for a particular people at a particular time. Hobart E. Freeman describes the Old Testament prophet's role as follows: "The unique nature of the Old Testament prophecy stems from what might be called the prophetic consciousness—the unqualified conviction on the part of the prophets of a divine call and commission to proclaim the very words of God" (51).

This awareness or clarity can best describe the prophetic function as well. They have a sense of God's mind on certain elements of leading. They have this awareness because God has determined to make it known so that his people would be disciplined by that knowledge. The prophetic function carries a drive or passion for doing the right thing at the right time based on that knowledge. The path is always clear and direct, and that path must be followed or there will be consequences. In the military illustration, the prophet is comfortable with the apostle identifying the hill to take as long as there is a sense that it has been revealed by God's Spirit. The prophetic function will be most vocal when determining the "how" of getting to that hill.

The prophetic functioning leader may be silent or uncaring about much that is decided around a leadership table. However, when a topic relates to a conviction or a base of knowledge that is believed to be God-revealed, the prophet will rise to the

occasion. They will fight fiercely for what they believe to be God's intentions and will confront whatever or whomever in order to follow God's desire.

The prophetic leader benefits the leadership core in developing disciples to maturity by being the protector. When a leadership core in its diversity pursues God for insight and direction, God will communicate. Once God reveals his mind and it is established in the group, the prophetic function passionately guards that knowledge. They will keep the group focused like a bullet from a rifle, as opposed to an approach that looks more like a shotgun scattering fragments in many directions. Prophetic leaders are often the voice heard encouraging and exhorting people in what God has revealed to the team.

Unfortunately, a prophetic function can be just as destructive in immaturity as they are at building up the believer in maturity. The prophetic functioning leader has a tendency to be less people oriented if not connected to the Vine. This causes them to care more about the message from God than they do about the person who is to receive the message. In immaturity, their abrasiveness keeps the hearer from receiving the essence of God's intent for that person. Many prophetic leaders have not connected well to others; therefore, their voice is discounted and the edification they bring nullified.

The evangelistic function is similar to the apostolic function in equipping disciples to focus attention and energy away from the gathering of the believing community and onto what is outside. However, the evangelist focuses on the lost individual where the apostle is focused on the big picture or general area. Smith explains, "extension, by nature, is a strategic concept focused upon the whole grid of a people or place, while the evangelist focuses primarily on individuals to be won to Christ" (50).

The evangelistic functioning leader puts a heavy emphasis on the gospel and the outcome of transformation when it reaches the lost person. They will not stop telling their story of life with God and will spur on disciples to do the same. They are always looking for ways to connect with people who have not yet made a commitment; networking is natural for them. When equipping disciples, the evangelist exhorts people and finds the beauty in everyone's story of redemption. When an evangelist talks strategy, it is on an individual or family basis, and not a broad strategy that comes more naturally for the apostolic imagination.

If the apostolic function determines the hill and the prophetic function determines the path, the evangelistic functioning leader always has wandering eyes. They scan and search for those who should be on the path. They have no problem leaving the path, searching for the lost. When the hill to be conquered is brought up, they call attention to the lost people who currently occupy the hill. The wander of the evangelist can become their shadow. When they are a part of the believing community, they can lose interest and disengage if they are operating in immaturity. Their mantra is that while a world is dying and going to Hell, people are gathering. The evangelistic leader is the first one to leave the gathering to search for those on the street to invite into the banquet feast.

These first three functions mentioned, APE, are mostly non-centralized oriented. For various reasons, they are more comfortable focusing time and energy outside of the gathering of believers. Another view on APEST comes from A. Ewen Robertson who researched how Restorationists viewed these three functions.

The main difference is how they see the first three listed: Apostolic, Prophetic, Evangelistic. Apostles are the 'pioneers' who build churches by planting making

sure they are sustainable before leaving to the next place. Prophets give direction and steps in the building phase. Evangelists know how to bring people into a decision for Jesus (150).

APEs are also the first to be ostracized because they push back on the cultural elements that put the emphasis on the community of believers. The apostolic and prophetic functions are more principally driven, while the evangelistic function is more people driven. However, all three tend to place their passions looking outward. Many leadership teams have a strong presence of gathering focused leaders and are missing voices that keep the church focused outward on ministry opportunities in neighborhoods, cities, counties, and beyond.

The shepherd or pastoral function has been expressed in some form throughout history. There are examples and admonitions in Scripture of what it means to shepherd well and how disastrous it becomes when not done well. The title “Pastor or Shepherd” has been automatically given to those who hold leadership positions within the local church. This becomes confusing to leaders and disciples when teaching on the diversity within the gift of leadership. Smith points out that,

The word ‘pastor’ is only used one time in the New Testament, in Ephesians 4:11, and it is to be carried out in concert with the other functions. Calling everyone in leadership ‘pastor’ has created a travesty of expectation upon hundreds who hold the position of pastor but are given by Christ to His church for other functions (52).

The actual functioning of the shepherd, in context with the equipping of disciples, is to keep leadership caring and nurturing the community of believers. They bring an

aspect of bond and connection within the household of the Father that is strengthened by how disciples minister to one another. This function teaches how to be accessible to people, especially when a need arises in peoples' lives. They themselves will be seen coming alongside people in their experiences. Sympathy and empathy are characteristics of their interactions with people who are in places of difficulty. The shepherd places high priority on their availability to people; therefore, their time and calendars are usually at the mercy of those they serve (Smith 51).

Shepherds and teachers, here addressed subsequently, dominate the landscape of ministry leadership positions within the church in the West. In unilateral leadership structures, the shepherd function is prone to redirect focus on the ongoing concern of the institution losing a missional emphasis. Most post-Christian settings already have a tendency to be lulled into the comfort and individualized elements of the gospel message. Discouragement, depression, and division can manifest itself in the body of the church if God's mission is lost in the culture. Life becomes centered on the programs and activity within the church walls. In contrast, "to grow towards a 'missional existence' is to discover what makes life worth living. It is about developing a meaningful life by finding our role in the mission of God" (Paas 6).

The benefit of the shepherd is seen in many ways within the body. Especially in unilateral settings, the culture of the church reflects the strengths and characteristics of the main leader. Churches with hierarchical structures led by a shepherd functioning leader are extremely welcoming. They understand how to care and support one another. If the shepherd administrates well, they develop programs that meet the needs of the peoples' physical, emotional, and spiritual conditions. Terms such as "family,"

“vulnerability,” and “intimacy” are used as values. At the same time, the community is guarded and protective of the church and those considered part of the family.

Shepherds want to be aware of every situation or circumstance the individuals of the church face and want to have influence or a voice in resolving any pain or difficulty they experience. They take very seriously the idea that the “flock” is to be guarded and protected. When the church allows the shepherd to take the primary role of caring, nurturing, and protecting the body, it takes a toll physically and emotionally. People are in constant need of care, and this becomes too much of a weight for one person to carry. In the hill illustration, the shepherd holds fast to the idea that there should always be a sanctuary or hospital for people to enter to be cared for. If there is a hill to conquer, a path to take, people to reach, then there must be a hospital on wheels to move along on the journey.

Those who hold the title of “Pastor” and yet carry a different function of APEST experience great angst in their life based on the expectations of those they serve, the expectations they place on themselves, as well as the expectations of others who serve in the same profession. To alleviate this burden, many experts have advised leaders to delegate. John Maxwell describes his practice of delegation, “And I’ve discovered that I do only four things really well: lead, communicate, create, and network. I routinely give everything else, such as administrative and financial tasks, to the experts” (1). Delegating activities is a good practice, but a leader can eliminate the influence of another gift or function, i.e., the shepherd function, by disconnecting to avoid situations that are uncomfortable. The shepherd function is there to equip all of us, including other

functions around a leadership table, to care for the body. A leader who holds a title of “Pastor” but functions differently must be equipped to care for the body.

The teaching function is passionate about the exploration, process, and communication of truth. These leaders are rooted in truth themselves and passionately fight for every expression of the church to be fully equipped to rightly discern truth. They tend to be creative in how truth is presented and can find illustrations naturally around them. Often, the teaching function brings a sense of stability, because they tether discussions around Scripture. They can be a comforting presence in any leadership team as the culture becomes more and more disinterested in an absolute truth. Smith writes, “Without teachers the people of God do not plumb the depths of God’s written revelations, nor is the church prepared to withstand the penetration of cultural error around it” (53).

The formal training of most occupational ministers is most consistently centered on equipping these leaders in rightly exegeting and communicating Scripture. However, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch claim that not all ministers are leaders (213). When a person demonstrates a spiritual gift, propensity, or competency in teaching, many times they are identified as a leader within a church community, regardless of any lack of leadership ability. The development of their teaching gift becomes the priority, as opposed to equipping the person into leadership competencies. This can cause a void of leadership in churches, keeping local expressions of the church concentrating on the excellence of the communication and presentation of truth.

The gift of a teaching function to a leadership group purposed to equip disciples is seen in the effectiveness of communication to the body. As an interdependent leadership

team arrives at concepts, strategies, and plans, the teaching function is the bridge to the people through programs and curriculum. Their main contribution is to make sure that the delivery of the package given by leadership is received and put into practice. The teaching function is an essential part of creating robust discipleship cultures.

In the previously mentioned hill illustration, the teaching function wants people to be informed. They will be out front putting up signposts along the path with critical information. Their worst fear is that people will be walking along the path aimlessly or without stability. To them, the truth communicated about who God is, who disciples are as individuals, and where the group is going gives them that stability. They will be the ones who are walking alongside the people on the path, giving them clear directions but also helping people interpret what they are experiencing on the path.

When operating in immaturity, the teaching function operates similarly to the prophetic function. Both functions are not centered on people; instead, they are more principally driven. The teaching function can get so passionate about truth that they miss the point of how truth transforms the life of the recipient. Truth can be depersonalized. The teacher function operating in immaturity can warehouse so much information that they often are unable to distinguish between truth that has application in equipping disciples and information that is useless. They can communicate inconsequential information along with transformative truth, which can distort or detract people from what will be life changing.

Each function carries an important role in the equipping of the body of believers into the works God has created for them within his mission. The diversity of the functions present great potential, both for effectiveness and conflict. According to the Center for

Biological Diversity, in ecosystems, the greater the diversity, the greater the stability (1). The same can be said for leadership groups. The greater the diversity, the more stable the environment that is being led by an interdependent leadership team. Interdependence is the key, determining whether a diverse group of leaders will be effective or succumb to the conflict.

For instance, an apostolic's role is to keep people moving toward outward goals and objectives. If interdependence is lacking, the apostolic will be unrelenting and uncompromising in what they believe should be the next step of action. To the prophetic function, this disposition can come across as haste, making the prophetic uneasy about direction. The prophetic function will not allow a leadership team to operate in chaos or lack in clarity before movement. The prophet often feels like they are the ones who have to follow the apostolic function in order to clean up the mess left behind the apostolic's wake.

The evangelistic functioning leader resonates with the apostolic's vision and is one of the first to step in line. Initially, the evangelist will rally all their networks around the idea and vision of seeing lost people found in new areas. Because the evangelist is more people oriented, they are sensitive to how a vision will either impact or prohibit a person from finding a relationship with Jesus. As the apostolic gets more passionate and involved in the creation of new expressions, they are less inclined to recognize the impact on the individual lost person. The evangelist will also not move on to new areas at the expense of sacrificing a soul in their current environment.

The shepherd and teaching functions are normally agitated with the apostolic's push to new horizons, particularly when not demonstrating a submissive heart. The

shepherd will not feel comfortable diverting energy, money, and/or people away from the programmatic aspect of the gathering. They see a move forward as risking all that is deemed as inward momentum. They will question whether the people are healthy enough to experience the change necessary to follow an apostolic imagination. They will have concern that people, who are currently being ministered to, will falter on the journey to a new place of ministry. Shepherds question their own capacity to minister to the new people encountered at the new place of ministry. They also experience anxiety when considering how they will maintain both their current context and developing ministry in a new context.

The shepherd, most concerned with the health and wellbeing of the people, will not be pushed into places where they are not comfortable. Shepherds can be so overwhelmed with the needs of people that the thought of adding more would cause great strife. Shepherds who have administrative gifts or competencies can possibly develop infrastructure to support more needs that would arise with outward ministries. However, people have limits. For shepherds who are pressed with the current needs of the church, they will be constantly “looking back” to people who might be left behind as they are being pushed forward.

Teachers are concerned with the stability of the group involved in the current ministries. Any movement without a strong foundation of truth will most assuredly cause the building which has been built in sturdiness to falter and collapse. Therefore, the speed at which the group moves cannot be rushed, but must allow time for contemplation and planning, or people will lose their way.

The prophetic function brings clarity which cannot be sacrificed. For the apostolic, the prophetic function can reduce the joy in the creation of ministry. The prophet normally brings reality to the apostolic imagination, which can curtail the apostolic's enthusiasm. The apostolic wants to get to the new place as quickly as possible, not caring how or often with whom. The prophet wants to bring clarity to both of these aspects.

The prophetic function can work well with the evangelistic function, to a point. The prophet is unwilling to cross a line in order to see a lost person come into relationship with Jesus. For the evangelist, they want to see the person "cross the finish-line" however it will happen. This is not acceptable to the prophet, or for that matter, the teaching function.

The shepherd can see the prophetic function as harsh and unfeeling. Especially when operating in immaturity, the prophet will be clumsy and irresponsible with the feelings of those they serve. They do not naturally have the relatability the shepherd possesses, so their approach will be impersonable. The prophetic, along with the apostolic, can pose the biggest threat to the shepherd in a unilateral leadership infrastructure. The prophet tends to be the function the shepherd avoids the most.

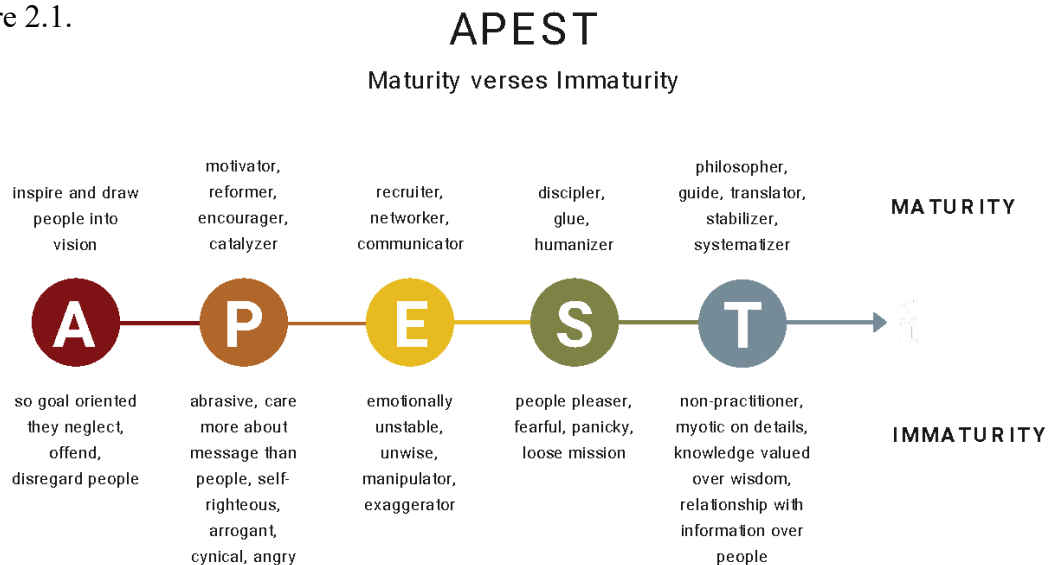
The teacher and prophetic functions can be the most difficult to distinguish in leadership settings. They are both principle focused instead of people focused. They both desire clarity above all else and will passionately fight for what they believe to be right. However, the teacher can be frustrated by the prophetic's approach. The prophetic will not be as diligent to the process of discovering truth as the teacher. The prophetic will

seem to be too abstract or charismatic in what they believe, compared to the teacher who will be more apt to tether every belief to Scripture.

The evangelistic function has some similarities to the shepherd function as both are attuned to the needs of people. For the evangelist, their drive to seek out those who have yet to be introduced to Jesus is not diminished by the gathering of believers in a community. More so, they are irritated by the focus gatherings receive in manpower and budget. The shepherd does not express frustration with evangelistic expressions, but they often demonstrate their perspective by their indifference to evangelism training or focus.

Figure 2.1 shows a sample of characteristics of each of the roles of APEST, both operating in maturity and immaturity.

Figure 2.1.



The gift of leadership is given in the context of Ephesians 4, where each voice needs to be heard in order to have healthy and holistic equipping of the body into

maturity and unity. In the context of the passage, the gift expressed through APEST has a priority of equipping the body. One or multiple missing voices of APEST would be inconsequential were it not for the fact that each voice is essential in seeing God's disciples raised up in health.

Self-awareness becomes a key element in the process of moving a leadership group into interdependence, specifically in the dynamic of APEST. If the goal of becoming more self-aware is to aid in submitting to those who cover one's deficiency, it is a powerful tool in the development of interdependence. Van Zyl comments, "Self-awareness allows a leader to be more proactive and less reactive because it provides a meta-perspective which is needed for being able to adapt to new situations" (Van Zyl and Campbell 75). This statement could be used by a leader to justify a proactive move in expressing hierarchical tendencies when feeling threatened by people or a new situation, manipulating a group around their own APEST bent. The better interpretation of this statement can be in support for self-awareness being a catalyzer in being intentional in submitting to others who hold different perspectives and/or functions.

Therefore, understanding one's APEST function alone does not guarantee a person's ability to humbly submit to other functions or to any other expression of diversity for that matter. Self-awareness includes more than just how one is gifted. Leaders must be aware of a number of other factors in themselves that will determine how submitted they are to the people around them.

Emotional Health

Mankind was made in God's image, which affords all people wonderful expressions of that beautiful truth. Mankind has a spirit, volition, creativity, and

emotions, to name a few of the benefits. At the same time, mankind has a sin nature that distorts or taints those attributes. Every leader has areas of brokenness, and environments will be directly impacted by those unique and specific deficiencies. If a leader operates out of their sinful nature, they will have self at the center of their motivation.

If leaders have self as their telos, they will view every other personality, position, or gift as a threat and will create environments that will be adverse to personal and corporate development. Daniel Goleman says it succinctly,

Only in rare cases, because Machiavellian behavior—which is where one takes your self-interest over and above every other goal, so basically you’ll do anything to get ahead—is a lapse in several emotional intelligence competencies, one of which is integrity. Another has to do with being able to cooperate well in a group. People who are Machiavellian, in other words who get a short-term gain, do it at a cost to other people. They leave a legacy of resentment, ill feeling, and anger, which very often catches up with them later in their career” (3).

Mankind’s tendency to think of self causes division and harm to people impacted by this type of leadership.

This is a typical disposition given our sinful nature. Stephen Stratton describes how this entered into mankind since the fall:

The fall came as a self-protective denial of purpose, a self-absorbed refusal of stewardship, and a self-centered rejection of love. Because of Adam and Eve’s choice, love was abandoned as the heart of the created order, and fear became the pervading theme. The kingdom of love, where another is a source of life, was cast off. The usurping kingdom of fear, where another is a threat, was accepted. (4)

Fear becomes a destroyer of relationships and a distortion of God's plan.

Above all else, this is a matter of the heart. Leadership as described in Scripture is a selfless and self-sacrificing endeavor. To operate out of kenosis, defined previously, becomes the primary motivation of a leader. Ken Blanchard, [Phil Hodges](#), and Phyllis Hendry drive to a pivotal question:

Leadership is first a spiritual matter of the heart. Whenever you have an opportunity to influence other people's thinking and behavior, you first need to decide whether to act out of self-interest or to benefit those you are leading.

Simply put, the heart question is this: Are you a serving leader or a self-serving leader?" (59).

The answer to this question will most assuredly have a direct impact on the trajectory of people equipped by a leader.

Leaders who operate with self as the focus, reveal signs to those around them. They operate out of a defensive posture to preserve their possessions, position, and personhood. If their ideals or values are attacked, they redirect blame. They probably will not have the capacity to take responsibility for their own actions or their own "emotional being and destiny" (Friedman ch. 1).

These are harsh realities to a life that is not controlled by the Holy Spirit. However, even with a desire or willingness to operate by the Spirit and a longing to lead selflessly, leaders can find themselves inhibited by emotional instabilities causing similar outcomes. This instability will be detrimental to the effectiveness of any team dynamic. Many try to separate the emotional from the cognitive in decision-making, yet Friedman explains, "'Mental' includes feelings. And the brain's method of processing data always

includes emotional variables” (Friedman ch. 3). One cannot separate the emotional dynamic in any leadership core, especially when interdependence is the desired outcome. A leader operating in a deficiency emotionally will pervade the relationships of the leading core, the culture of leadership, and the whole of the environment.

The healing of a leader’s emotional being is paramount in developing interdependence. The genesis point of healing is to understand one’s worth in the eyes of God. A leader can pursue a number of assessments that determine personality, motivations, gifts, talents, and ministries. However the most pivotal question when wrestling with self-worth in the midst of working relationships is to remember "Whose I am" as opposed to starting at "Who am I" (Dunnam 37). Insecurities can motivate comparisons to other teammates, and envy will be a hinderance to those relationships unless one is centered on their value to Christ.

Every spiritual leader must have a biblical worldview in light of a person’s worth. Bayer commented, “Identity, personal value, freedom, truth, and security—these are deeply existential questions, and we ought to wrestle with them in the light of the Gospel if we want to be authentic and to serve the world.” If a leader is to enculturate value and worth in a leadership community, they must live out of those truths. If their desire is to enculturate servant leadership in an environment, the characteristics Bayer listed must be present in individual leaders and within a leadership group. This was definitely evident in the life of Jesus, “It’s a subtle but crucial point worth pausing on as we consider what it takes to lead change well: before he had done anything, Jesus was already known and already loved and had already pleased his Father” (qtd. in Bolsinger 40).

Regardless of whether a leader is operating as a solo, unilateral leader or a part of a functioning, interdependent leadership team, the leader must be self-reflective on where they see their worth. “A leader is a person who must take special responsibility for what’s going on inside him- or herself, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good” (Barton 38).

Once a leader lives out of a reality of worth in the eyes of God, comfort can be taken in weaknesses or deficiencies, and leaders can avoid not striving to be someone they are not. Leaders are able to be vulnerable and pursue relationships at deep levels because of the security and confidence found in God’s approval in how he has created them. They are able to more fully give themselves to others, because people are made to create deep relationships, “God designed our bodies to respond physiologically to those in the world around us” (Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* 66). The differences become an element of strength instead of becoming a factor of dissension. Love will be expressed.

The greatest contributor to developing interdependent leadership teams is to have leaders who operate with kenotic tendencies. Love must be the identifiable characteristic that seals the relationships around the leadership table. The expression of love by a leader can best be described as their ability to “reveal the beauty of another person to themselves” (Vanier 22). With a leader who facilitates the diversity of the individuals around the table, who calls out worth and value in those people, interdependence is more naturally developed. The motivation behind being self-aware, then, is to give oneself fully and vulnerably to those who are a part of one’s leadership core.

Emotions sanctified and submitted to the Holy Spirit bring health and wholeness to leadership cultures. Leaders operating in emotional health are able to focus their attention and energies toward others they serve. They are able to discern the emotional temperature in their environment and can more readily meet the emotional needs of their environment. Especially in unilateral leadership cultures that focus on titles, emotionally unstable leaders are ignorant of the emotional needs of those they serve. This was seen in a recent study in a business environment, “An individual’s power was negatively related with his or her ability to decipher others’ emotional expressions among individuals experiencing higher work stress” (Ashkanasy, Zerbe, and Härtel ch. 1).

The pressures that come from expectations placed on leaders demand a high level of emotional and spiritual maturity. The pressures on a ministry leader come from many directions, such as the institutions where they trained and denominational authorities. Often, however, the more detrimental pressures come from the expectations of families within their parish. With a unilateral leadership structure, the lone leader carries the total weight of all these expectations.

Most ministry contexts operate with a solo pastor who often recognizes their limitations whether they admit to it or not. The proof is in most research that shows an alarming rate of leaders suffering emotionally and mentally under the weight of carrying the load of ministry. At least five hundred pastors leave the ministry every month. Below is a sampling of the results of a survey polling 1,050 pastors:

- 100% had a close associate or seminary friend who left the ministry because of burnout
- 90% are frequently fatigued or worn out on a weekly or even daily basis

- 89% considered leaving the ministry at one time, 57% would leave if they had a better place to go
- 71% stated they were burned out, and they battle depression beyond fatigue on a weekly and even a daily basis
- 23% felt happy and content on a regular basis with who they are in Christ, in their church, and in their home
- 85% feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastor (*FASICLD-Statistics-on-Pastors.Pdf*)

Interdependent leadership cultures relieve pressures placed on singular leaders as the weight of the emotional instability of parishioners and the expectations of others are distributed over multiple leaders. However, not all polycentric leadership cultures are interdependent. Often the determining factor is the emotional health of each leader around the table, especially the leader who is known to have the title or expectation as the lead leader. The ability of each leader to operate with differentiation in high stress situations and to relate to one another in love promotes and facilitates interdependence.

Edwin H. Friedman defines differentiation as follows:

Differentiation is the capacity to take a stand in an intense emotional system.

Differentiation is containing one's reactivity to the reactivity of others, which includes the ability to avoid being polarized. Differentiation is maintaining a non-anxious presence in the face of anxious others. Differentiation is knowing where one ends and another begins. Differentiation is taking maximum responsibility for one's own emotional being and destiny rather than blaming others or the context" (Friedman ch. 5).

Peter Scazzero gives another perspective that speaks directly to a leader's vulnerability, "Differentiation involves the ability to hold on to who you are and who you are not"

(*Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* 84). Each leader's ability to differentiate determines the health of a leadership culture.

When knowing one's worth in God's eyes, being vulnerable with one's weaknesses, expressing love by calling out the value and worth of others, and operating in differentiation and emotional maturity, leaders within a core group will naturally develop trust with one another. When these are not the attributes of a leadership group and trust is not developed, jealousy, defensiveness, fear, and suspicion set in.

"Reminiscent of the Garden narrative, humans run for a covering that affords a sense of security in a world that seems less than trustworthy" (Stratton 4).

Unity

It is not God does not intend for jealousy, defensiveness, fear, and suspicion to be present in his disciples; definitely, these are not characteristics that he desires his leaders to promote. In chapter 17, John gives the account of Jesus's prayer for his disciples. The overwhelming theme of this prayer is unity. The standard or the model that Jesus gives is the unity that is experienced within the Father and Son relationship, and elsewhere in Scripture, the unity found ultimately in the Trinity. Paul exhorted the church in Ephesians 4 to operate out of that same characteristic of unity given that they were connected by the Spirit. He focused on the unity that comes from the Spirit. He alone can produce this unity. It is his work. It is not a mechanical unity. It is not a "coalition or amalgamation... but the unity of the Spirit starts within and works outwardly." (qtd. in Zuber 47)

Jesus prayed for it. Writers expressed the need for it. In the book of Acts, Luke seemed to want to convey to his readers how "tightly bound the early church was in their exciting new journey with Christ" (Wardle 85). This takes intentionality on the part of the

disciple/leader if they want to experience the unity found in the Trinity. Emmanuel Gougaud writes,

Anchored in the commandment of Christ, action in favor of the unity of Christians proposes a spirituality that is particularly pertinent for us today. We have to enter unceasingly into the desire of Jesus for the unity of all of his disciples in order to manifest his unity with God the Father, in other words Trinity as communion” (329).

If this was primary in Jesus’s prayer and a way of being modeled by the Trinity, this must be lived out pragmatically in leadership groups. Disciples must become, “the plumbers and the electricians of unity— the practical people who can make what’s on paper workable” (Stoner 173). Leaders must be the testimony of God’s desire for unity within his Church.

Polycentric leadership structures can operate or function appropriately in settings where people rely on one another for what each member can do or accomplish. Teams can achieve goals as responsibilities are distributed amongst the leaders. In these settings, team members can be comfortable in their level of intimacy with the group while maintaining self-preservation and their individual goals. However, God’s nature and his mission demand a deeper and more unified relationship amongst leaders who are commissioned out of a triune Godhead to equip Christ’s body into that mission.

In the United States, rebellion birthed the culture to ensure the people’s right for independence. Compared to other ethnic or national cultures, the West view relationships as non-essential. Stephen A. Seamands writes,

That's why we generally define human dignity in terms of self-sufficiency and self-determination. Identity is conceived in self-referential terms, so that the authentic self is the inner self. Persons are autonomous and distinct from one another, determining their own goals and desires. Such an understanding has led to the individualism and hyper-individualism that pervade American culture" (ch. 2).

Therefore, the idea of interdependence can be a more difficult concept for people in the West to grasp.

Interdependence is the goal as modeled by the Trinity, not independence. As teams become more self-aware, including an understanding of their emotional state and APEST function, interdependence develops. A caveat to this statement is that self-awareness gives indication of where a leader is deficient and an understanding where they must submit to those around the table who cover these deficiencies. As a result, unity that goes beyond collaboration will be evident in the relationships. Instead of following patterns that have been deeply embedded in the culture in the West, leaders can operate in the pattern of the New Testament Churches who found unity through, "mutual encouragement and mission accomplishment" (Stumbo 207).

In places where unity is developed through interdependent relationships, characteristics of humility and submission are consistently seen. If humility is not a defining characteristic of a leadership group, interdependence is functionally impossible and submission becomes a façade to manipulate others for selfish gain. Division, separation, and isolation become the undercurrent that catalyzes a leader's approach to other leaders.

John Wesley defined humility as “seeing oneself correctly” (qtd. in Gorveatte ch. 6). Self-awareness becomes a tool in understanding “who” a person is and “who” they are not. The initial posture is to understand a leader’s place as an under-shepherd who serves the ultimate Shepherd. As leaders understand their place as serving the Head of the Church, all relationships have the opportunity to fall into their proper place. Leaders should then follow in obedience the priorities and movement of the Head in order to accomplish what he has laid out for his disciples.

This is not an easy task, especially when the ideals of the world call for leaders to demonstrate pride and self-reliance. These postures align themselves more to the flesh than the Spirit. A war is at work in the heart of the leader. When operating out of fleshly or selfish desires, leaders will look at other leaders as competition or threats to the claiming of authority. Humility operates in total contrast. Bryan Easley writes, “Humility is the voluntary abandonment of ego, self-agenda, and the claim to power, rights, or privileges” (Easley 199). Although difficult, leaders must understand that God created desires in the heart of mankind that align themselves to the desires of his heart that call for unity. The very elements that bring unity within the Triune Godhead are available to every leader who in humility submits themselves to the Head of the Church.

As image bearers, people carry a desire for intimacy that can be filled through a relationship with God or some other source. People also desire this intimacy with others. This is present in us from birth. “We long to be seen and to see others from the earliest moments of human development. Whether in our living rooms or on the playground, we long for connection—for an immediate felt experience of closeness to another” (Villodas 121). If a person is not submitted to the headship of Christ, connection with others will

again prove to be unfulfilling. However, the hope lies in the fact that God is the one who first gave people that desire, and Jesus prayed for it to be manifested in his followers.

Therefore, unity and interdependence are ultimately a spiritual venture.

The discovery process in the pursuit of self-awareness is how mankind first relates to God (Ross). For polycentric leadership teams to move into deep interdependence, the pursuit of God's heart and mind collectively is pivotal. Any leadership team that cannot pray together in vulnerability will be significantly hindered in developing deep relationships at any level. Therefore, an invitation into any leadership team must be "more than an invitation to be part of a winning team. This is an invitation to spiritual community at the leadership level" (Barton 173). In prioritizing the spiritual element of relationships within leadership, the characteristics of the relationships within the Trinity become available. For by "virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, and dwell in one another to such an extent, that they are one" (Villodas 157).

God has determined the means by which his mission is to be lived out. He could orchestrate the accomplishment of his mission to reconcile the world to himself by any means he chooses. However, he has chosen to operate through his Church, which is to be equipped by leaders into unity and maturity. The state of the institutionalized church tasked with being God's vehicle in his mission is in great need of renovation. "In America the basic growth of our Christian churches is through the spirit of division. It's a fact. Christianity grows in America because of division, not multiplication" (Meares 93).

A unified and interdependent leadership sets a pattern that confronts a self-seeking and divisive culture. It mirrors the pattern set by the Trinity and mobilizes people into the mission. Sims states, “Shared leadership (as seen in teams) is the place where relationship and formation is integrated with mission” (50).

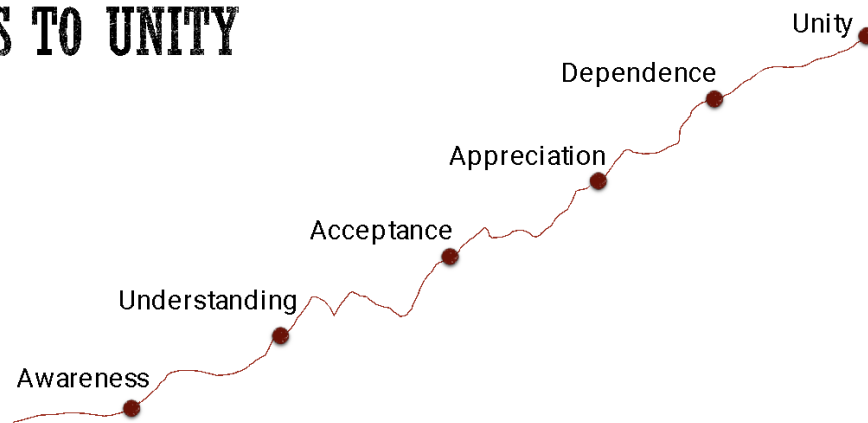
The characteristics of interdependent or shared leadership, shared earlier, become the fortified bridge that supports a leadership team to navigate through high intensity situations. “The quality of your relationships with other people influences how emotionally resilient you can be in the face of an emotional or physical crisis” (Bolsinger 120).


Every leadership group contains some level of diversity. Diversity should be pursued and recruited to bring a broader understanding and competency to leadership’s role in equipping people toward mission. However, often the greater the diversity, the more difficult it becomes to obtain unity. Leadership should not settle, then, for uniformity in order to achieve an easier path. “Uniformity does not require grace, but unity does” (Geiger 1).

Most relationships follow a similar path in the development of interdependence and unity given the differences that most assuredly accompany significant diversity in a group. Figure 2.2 suggests a possible sequence a relationship will follow to reach unity.

Figure 2.2.

PROCESS TO UNITY



 ConsentiaGroup



(Terpstra)

Within relationships within a leadership group, people become acutely aware of differences in background, competency, experiences, personalities, gifts, and talents. When opinions based on a person's uniqueness are shared, a group is faced with a decision of whether they will pursue the difficult work of unity. Unity comes at a cost of ego, rights, and preferences.

In this graph, each step toward unity comes with an element of sacrifice. A person can remain isolated, pursuing their own desires, if their journey stops at "Awareness." A pursuit toward "Understanding" demands more vulnerability and requires a leader to take the time to engage more relationally. A person may be led down a path of questioning their own opinions and beliefs about themselves and the world around them if they choose a path of understanding others.

Again, isolation is possible while coming to an understanding of the differences within the relationships of a leadership group. When someone takes the next step to “Acceptance,” they open themselves up to the reality that their opinion or perspective may not be fully accurate. This is a significant step marked by humility. As stated previously, if humility does not characterize a leadership culture, interdependence becomes impossible. Simply said, God does not require obedience to the things his disciples don’t know, but he does require obedience to that which his disciples do know. To reach the level of understanding another person, the Spirit often brings conviction to accept the differences in others.

Many have tried to jump from “Understanding” to “Appreciation” in an attempt to forego the cost of humbling oneself. For a true expression of appreciation, the humility acquired in accepting the differences of another person is non-negotiable. When in the “Appreciation” stage, leaders can call out the beauty and uniqueness of God’s creativity expressed in another person. No other task or process develops interdependence quicker than for leaders to champion and submit to the diversity in another leader. Comparison and competition is suppressed and love is catalyzed.

A dynamic is created in a leadership culture that is not so easily broken as a team moves past the “Appreciation” stage. “Dependence” becomes the natural progression as the Spirit does his work through the obedience and sacrifice of his leaders. Seemingly, the hard work of pursuing other leaders in order to understand them gives way to the longing for others’ insight and input. When leaders become dependent on one another, a tangible gap or incompleteness to their own holism is bridged by another leader. When a

leader has operated in dependence upon another, they are keenly aware of what their deficiencies are and the danger those deficiencies present to outcomes.

Unity that mirrors or is replicated from the heart of God can be developed through this path of relationship. This diagram emphasizes that unity can only be reached with a process and margin within the relationship to develop humility and submission. These are the characteristics that Jesus demonstrated to his disciples and the world through Scripture. Delight, love, and submission flows from the relationship from each Person of the Trinity. It is the very essence of what the Head of the Church desires from the gift he has given to his body, leadership.

Research Design Literature

Through questioning the meaning people place on themes characteristic of interdependent relationships, this project employed qualitative research. The research inquired on the interdependent, relational themes of polycentric leading, emotional health, APEST, and unity. John W. Creswell describes qualitative research as an approach to data gathering “that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation” (4). The process for researching through qualitative questioning is emergent, meaning that “the initial plan for research cannot be prescribed, and some or all phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data” (186).

This project can also be described as a pre-intervention. The objective of the project is not just to understand the dynamics involved in interdependent relationships, but to give leaders opportunity to enact change in their cultures in order to pursue interdependence (Sensing 63). This project is explicitly designed to pre-intervene in the

leadership of the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA in order to empower them to make these necessary changes.

Summary of Literature

Interdependent leadership can be described as polycentric or team leadership. However, interdependence goes beyond depending upon teammates for what they can do or accomplish. A dynamic of interdependence demands a selfless approach in the development of relationship within a leadership group. Most leadership structures, within and outside of the church, operate with a solo-heroic leader at the top of a unilateral leadership culture.

This kind of leadership culture can provide an organization an ability to arrive at decisions quickly, and it gives the people of that organization a visible leader to follow especially in times of turmoil. However, a number of aspects of unilateral leadership structures bring dysfunction and limitations to an organization. With a singular leader, that organization is restricted by the deficiencies or shadows of that leader. Studies show that even communication and reporting in such structures are hindered and sometimes misrepresented.

Discipleship, a directive to the Church, is impacted adversely in unilateral leadership cultures. Discipleship is built on vulnerability and depth often at a peer level. The attitude of solo leaders normally do not allow for such vulnerability and opportunity for others to bring edification to that leader. Therefore, they are not replicating essential discipling characteristics into the church or organization.

For effectiveness in equipping the body, diversity in leadership is essential. Diversity has the greatest potential for health and stability, but also for division. God has

provided such diversity for his Church in the gift of leadership through the functions of the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, shepherd, and teacher or APEST. In unilateral leadership structures, the diversity of APEST becomes more divisive than effective as each function poses a threat to the unilateral leader. Yet, each function hears, reflects, and communicates God's revelations differently. If one is missing, the receiving of God's heart and mind is significantly inhibited.

For leadership to be open to the independence of the diversity present, every leader must operate in humility and submission. This becomes difficult when each leader struggles with their own brokenness and sin nature. The healing of the leader in their emotional stability opens the door for authentic relationships with other leaders who share the responsibility for an organization.

Selfless love should be the defining characteristic of any leadership relationship, and this characteristic should be the outcome of the equipping of the saints. The Holy Spirit is able to bring emotional healing to the leader, enabling that leader to operate more selflessly with peers and those they serve. This process can allow a leader to consider other's interest more significant than their own, making what seems an impossible ask possible by God's Spirit.

This healing by God's Spirit that enables interdependent relationships also elevates the stress of striving to meet the expectations placed on the leader by themselves and others. Studies show that leaders, especially solo leaders, are falling under the pressures of ministry. As leaders become healthy and operate in humility and submission within interdependent leadership groups, they are able to equip others into the mission of God in the world.

With God's design of diversity within leadership, unity poses a significant challenge, yet it produces the greatest potential for impact. Unity amongst diversity is possible, in fact, it is the desire of the One who has given leadership to the Church as a gift. Jesus could have prayed for anything for the health and progression of his kingdom, and he prayed for unity. Not only an amalgamation of his followers but a unity that is found in his relationship with the Father. Unity, then, becomes the pursuit of a leadership core that equips disciples in their maturity.

Interdependence, at all levels of leadership, brings health to the individual leader, the leadership group, and the organization as a whole. Emotional stability, diversity, and unity distinguish a polycentric leadership culture as being either interdependent or simply a gathering of multiple leaders. This distinction is critical to the multiplication of healthy disciples and environments within the mission of God in the world.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

I provide a rationale for the project evolving from personal experience supported by research. Included in the overview of the research project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and how results are collected and analyzed. To add support for this type of project, themes of the literature review and contextual factors are identified. Further discussion of the anticipated project results establishes the significance for and impact on the practice of ministry.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

Leadership structures are pivotal in the development of cultures within organizations. Cultures where interdependence characterizes the relationships within leadership cores tend to reduce division, deception, and manipulation, and promote healthy environments. Many factors both enhance and prohibit a leader's ability to enter into such relationships. The discovery of these factors and the best practices of leaders who practice interdependence is the general purpose of this project.

All of the participants of this study were a part of the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA. This evangelical denomination places priority on the utilization of disciples in the global extension of the gospel. The participants also shared similar convictions as to the biblical basis for interdependence and its effectiveness in the leading of Christ's Church. Data was collected by questioning leaders with significant roles in the leading of local churches. The purpose of this project was to discern best practices in producing

interdependent relationships in the core leadership of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this project's research methodology and data analysis:

RQ #1. What do leaders in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA describe as best practices to produce interdependent relationships in core leadership of established churches and church plants?

The answer to this question would be inconsequential if asked of leaders who were not convinced of the biblical basis for interdependent leadership. However, every leader polled or interviewed was intentional in developing cultures within their churches that practice interdependent leadership. The information gathered to answer this question came from the following tools.

Survey: Questions 5 – 8, 12 – 15, 20 – 23

Focus Group: Questions 3, 4

Interview: 1 – 4

RQ #2. What do those being equipped out of interdependent relationships in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA say are the best practices for interdependent relationships?

Tangible outcomes from interdependent leadership are expressed in discipleship and leadership development. Gaining an understanding of these characteristics from those being led in these environments is important. The following tools tracked that data.

Survey: Questions 24 – 28

Focus Group: Questions 6, 7

RQ #3. What cultural beliefs or practices are prohibiting interdependent relationships?

Strong cultural and institutionalized beliefs and behaviors concerning leadership in the church have adversely influenced leadership development cultures. Biases and unhelpful expectations that most leaders carry are difficult to overcome in the process of practicing interdependence. When creating interdependent leadership structures, consistent themes that can become obstacles in this pursuit are important to know. The information gathered to answer this question is found in the following tools:

Survey: Questions 11, 12, 14

Focus Group: 1, 2, 5

RQ #4. Moving forward, what are the best practices for producing interdependent relationships in the core leadership of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA?

The main intent of this project was to understand those practices that produce cultures that are interdependently led. This question was asked to find ways to equip leaders who want to facilitate interdependent leadership cultures. The answers were solicited from the following tool.

Interview: Questions 5, 6

Ministry Context(s)

The ministry context included in this study included churches in the C&MA located in three states: Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The leaders selected to be surveyed or interviewed in this process represented churches that have gone through an

envisioning of the Ohio Valley District's convictions on the nature of the Church and the leadership cultures that are necessary to facilitate the described nature of the Church. These leaders have also entered into a formal coaching relationship with Ohio Valley District staff.

Even though there was a foundational knowledge base of interdependent leadership, the multiplicity of church experiences and scriptural interpretation on leadership was extensive. Each state had their own unique cultures and demographics, as well. Kentucky and Tennessee have largely been considered to be a part of the "Bible Belt" where church tradition was a strong element of culture, with Christian terms and concepts understood regardless of whether or not the people were largely evangelical. Each state has rural, urban, and suburban environments where polled leadership groups operated in ministry. Churches ranged from those established for decades to church plants planted as recently as three years ago. Participants included leadership groups selected that have been formally elected in their church settings and carried a title older, as well as leaders who operated in informal leadership roles. Further, some churches resembled more of a unilateral leadership style while others practiced interdependence in their leadership teams.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

The participants invited into this process represented a wide range of leaders who were pursuing the development of interdependent leadership cultures within the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA. These leaders had at least an understanding of the terminology of interdependence, and their main leader desired interdependent

relationships to develop. These leaders were attempting to create practices and infrastructure that would enhance leadership's development of strong, dependent relationships.

Description of Participants

Some leadership groups were male only, while others had a representation of both male and female. The C&MA operates in a structure where male elders have the main responsibility to lead. However, within the polity, churches may operate with a mixed board of male, female, and non-elected leaders where each member holds equal authority. The caveat to this structure is that the governing board must have a majority of male elders. Churches with formally elected leaders instituted staggered terms where leaders cycled off the leadership board for a period of time. Those invited into this process were leaders who operated as the central core, responsible for culture and direction.

These leadership cores had a diversity of age ranges from leaders in their 20s through leaders in their 70s. Their experience in church leadership varied from those who were in their initial years of leadership to those who had formally led churches for multiple decades. Some leaders held staff level positions and some had no experience or education in ministry. Leadership groups polled also were ethnically diverse, including leaders from Nepal, Bhutan, Congo, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

Ethical Considerations

I sent a consent form either by mail or personally which were signed and returned by all participants. I received these consent forms either through the mail or personally handed over to me. I subsequently placed them in my district office that was locked outside of business hours.

I stored all information gathered, including data received from the polling questions, field notes, and periphery discussions, in my personal Mac laptop. Files of information were named and password protected. In an effort to ensure confidentiality in this project, procedures were given to participants either as described in the consent form and survey or verbally expressed from the outset of the discussion with the focus group and in the interview.

Instrumentation

The key component in the development of interdependence is the depth of relationship that is experienced within a leadership core. The findings of the employed instruments would have been tainted if there were questions on whether leaders were actually experiencing interdependence. The receiving of qualitative data was necessary in understanding the level of interdependence achieved in leadership cores. Quantitative data was necessary to see the correlation of the depth of relationship to data such as the number of times groups gathered or the size of the leadership teams.

Survey

Participants were given a survey with the majority of questions being qualitative in nature. A Likert Scale was used in questions in order to gain understanding of the depth of relational connectivity within leadership cores. Quantitative questions asked in the survey determined the demographics of the team and frequency of personal connection. Finally, qualitative questions asked concerning the nature of leadership meetings and leader selection.

Focus Group

In order to gain an understanding of what a team was looking for in leader qualities and abilities when selecting team members, or in the case of elected leaders, what were the desired characteristics used in vetting potential leaders, a focus group was gathered and questioned. The focus group was asked qualitative questions concerning the dynamics of leadership meetings and what consistently prohibits unity. Questions asked of these participants pertained to the nature of possible conflict within their churches in regard to interdependent leadership structures.

Interview

Interviews were conducted with four leaders representing three separate leadership teams during which qualitative questions focusing on gathering information to determine practices used in their formal meetings. Further questions explored the development of unity in correlation to learning together and shared language.

Expert Review

The instruments used in this project were researcher-designed. It was important to solicit the input of three experts to evaluate the questions used in the three instruments in order to have the best opportunity to receive the needed data. These experts refined the questions to reduce confusion in the minds of those polled. They also added questions that focused on the same general area, yet from a different perspective.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

A high level of difficulty exists in measuring the essence or dynamics of relationships that are needed for interdependence. Best practices may have an element of quantitative data that could return easily implemented information. However, unity and

relational depth are characteristics that demand qualifiable measurements. Probing questions from differing viewpoints and in a diversity of venues increased the reliability of the data. Asking forms of the same question in all three instruments procured the same desired information. Expert reviewers refined these questions based on the reviewers' unique perspective and experience in pursuing interdependent relationships.

The diversity of personalities, experiences, and contexts required a variety of instruments to ensure the validity of the data in relation to the purpose of this project. For example, the research ensured that those who needed time to process had opportunity to answer survey questions without the pressure of time or peer influence. For those who were best questioned in group settings in order for them to process externally, focus groups became necessary. There were people who were best able to process questions relationally one-on-one; for them personal interviews were the best solution.

Data Collection

This project used three methods to collect data on the practices of leadership teams in developing interdependent relationships. These methods gathered qualitative and quantitative data. The first method used was a survey distributed through Survey Monkey. As the Director for Multiplication of the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA, a letter signed by me was attached explaining the process and desired outcomes of this project. An email of the survey was sent to the leadership of twenty-six church environments chosen by their engagement with a district coach. Participation in the survey was over 60 percent. This data collecting method procured both quantitative and qualitative data.

A focus group collected more quantitative data. Three environments took part in this collecting method, chosen based on their intentional development of interdependent relationships that have produced cultures further advanced than other environments surveyed. I contacted the Lead Pastor of each of these environments, asking them to inquire of their core team their willingness to take part in a focus group. When a date was set that accommodated the greatest number of participants, we then met in a church in Central Ohio as this location was centrally located for the three environments chosen. The interview was held in one of the churches during the evening hours as most of the participants were unavailable during the day.

The final method used were interviews. The Lead Leader from two church plants and one established church were contacted via phone to set up the interview. I conducted interviews in the office of each interviewee in order to have an atmosphere conducive to openness and vulnerability. These interviews took place during the day with only me and the interviewee in the room.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the three methods procured the perspective of a diversity of leaders within the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA. These leaders held roles of leadership within the environments, some elected formally to those roles and others informally. I received quantitative data primarily through the survey and entered it into an Excel spreadsheet.

I recorded and questioned the focus group in order to document important themes. Because this method produced qualitative data in narrative form, I listened to the

recording multiple times, coding themes and common language. This allowed me the opportunity to produce a report that would be used in my final analysis.

Similarly, I recorded the interviews, analyzing themes and comparing the information gathered with the content received from the focus group. I recorded the data in the same Excel file for the interview data as I did with the focus group, only adding an Excel sheet to the file. This enabled me to contain the cross-checked data and analysis in one file.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

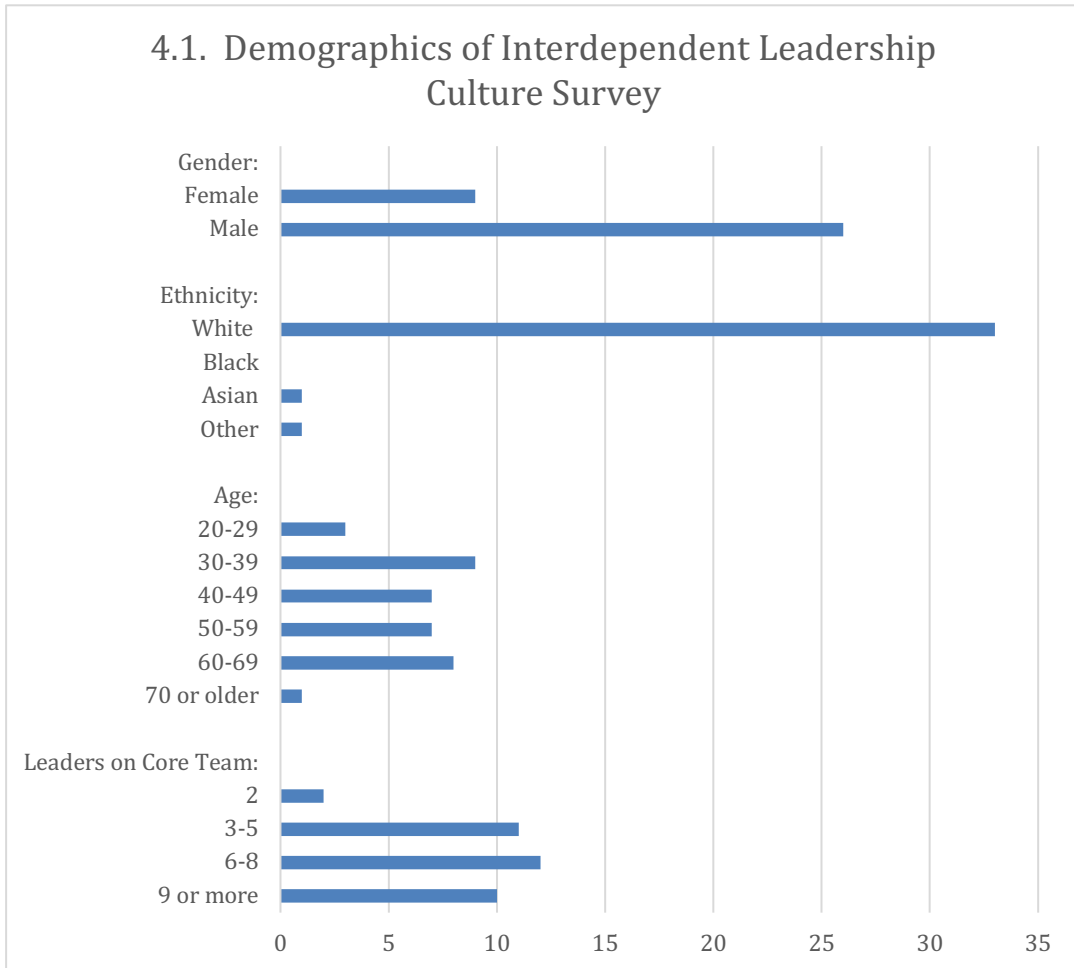
Healthy leadership structures are a necessity in equipping God's people into the works he has created in advance for them to do. Leadership structures consisting of a plurality of diverse leaders operating interdependently lead to outcomes that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4. The body of Christ is built up in unity, gaining increased knowledge of the Son of God. People mature and develop stability regardless of what man or culture is teaching. Ultimately, they experience a fullness of Christ in them which works through them. This is the desire for the leadership teams in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA.

The purpose of this project was to discern best practices in producing interdependent relationships in core leadership of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). This chapter identifies the participants in the study and their demographic makeup. Then the chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative data from the Interdependent Leadership Culture Survey, the focus group, and personal interviews. Finally, this chapter concludes with major findings derived from the data.

Participants

Leaders had to satisfy certain criteria to be a part in this study. First, they had to be leaders within the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA. Secondly, they had to have at least a minimal understanding of the terminology of interdependence. Finally, they held a role of core leadership in an environment pursuing interdependent relationships. The

demographics of those who took part in the Interdependent Leadership Culture Survey are in Figure 4.1.



Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

What do leaders in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA describe as best practices to produce interdependent relationships in the core leadership of established churches and church plants?

Research Question #1 procured the data through the use of three instruments. Questions five through eight on the survey sought to understand the participant's perspective on the optimal number of leaders that were necessary to have an effective and interdependent leadership team. These questions also gained quantitative data on core leaderships' practices of relationship building. Questions twelve through fifteen on the survey inquired of the participants about their team's practice of pursuing self-awareness, particularly their APEST functions. These questions also were designed to gain an understanding of the team's desire to place priority on seeking the Divine understanding of his intention on accumulating leadership in their place of ministry. Survey questions twenty through twenty-three attempted to gain perspective on whether leadership teams used their gathering times to deepen their relational connectivity (Table 4.1). Questions probed participants to determine if their meetings produced relationships that would be characterized by honesty, transparency, and authenticity.

Questions three and four from interaction with a focus group attempted to gain an understanding on the dynamics of the team during transition. Question three discovered how new team members on-boarded, and question four sought to understand how differences were handled in deciding direction. Similarly, interview questions one and two inquired about a leadership teams' process and criteria in selecting leaders to be part of the core team.

Table 4.1. Best Practices in Team Development					
		2 or 3	3-5	6-8	9 or more
5. What would you say is the most optimal number of leaders for a core team?		5.71%	34.39%	51.43%	8.57%
		More than Once a week	Once a week	Every other week	Once a month
6. How often do you meet as a whole team?			54.29%	14.29%	31.43%
	Less than 1 hour	1-3 hours	4-7 hours	8-10 hours	More than 10 hours
7. How many hours a week do you spend with individual members of the core team outside of team meetings?	14.29%	65.71%	17.14%		2.86%
8. How many hours a week do you spend with individual members of the core team outside of team meetings primarily for relational connectivity?		91.43%	8.57%		
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. Self-awareness plays a major part in developing relationships.			20.00%	22.86%	57.14%
13. Prayer plays a major part in team meetings.		8.57%	22.86%	31.43%	37.14%
14. I believe that team members pray for one another outside of meetings.		11.43%	22.86%	37.14%	28.57%
15. The Ephesians 4:11 APEST orientation plays a part in the team's decision-making.	2.86%	14.29%	25.71%	51.43%	5.71%
20. We take time in our meetings to develop relational connectivity.	8.57%	17.14%	22.86%	25.71%	25.71%
21. We ask one another hard questions in our meetings.		14.29%	22.86%	45.71%	17.14%
22. We are a leadership group that has the freedom to correct one another when appropriate.		8.57%	11.43%	42.86%	37.14%
23. The leadership group is a safe place for me to express my thoughts and emotions.			20.00%	42.86%	37.14%

The data from the survey showed that the majority of participants believed that there was an optimal number of leaders that should be a part of the core leadership team.

Based on the percentages, the closer the total number was to six to eight leaders, the

better a leadership group was able to lead a believing community. Most participants believed that any less than three or more than nine leaders would hinder a leadership team.

Fifty-four percent of the participants made it a practice to meet as a leadership weekly, and 31 percent met monthly. However, 91 percent of the leaders polled met with other leaders individually at least an hour weekly to strengthen their relational connectivity. Based on these results, participants had intentionality or practice to gain depth in relationships individually in order to strengthen the collective bond relationally.

These findings correlated to survey questions twelve through fifteen and twenty through twenty-three where there was inquiry into the culture and dynamics of group meetings. Eighty percent of those polled believed that self-awareness played a significant role in developing relationships within a leadership group. Fifty-seven percent indicated that the Ephesians 4 APEST model has a part to play at arriving at decisions at a group level. Discovering one's APEST orientation comes through relationship with others in a leadership community. Also, pursuing God's heart collectively as a team was a priority, with sixty-nine percent at least agreeing that prayer played a major part in team meetings.

Results from questions twenty through twenty-three indicated an outcome to focus on relational strength within leadership groups. Fifty-two percent indicated some relationship development within the structure of their meetings. However, strong percentages showed a benefit in whatever work was done in relationship building, either in individual or corporate meetings. Sixty-four percent revealed that hard questions were not shied away from in their team meetings. Eighty percent of the leaders polled both felt

the freedom to express their thoughts and emotions in team meetings, as well as give and receive correction to and from other team members.

Plurality and Diversity of Leadership Group

As the survey data reflected a preference toward a larger leadership group, the focus group confirmed the benefits of having more voices around the leadership table. The focus group also spoke of the necessity to explore, through assessments and intentional inquiries, the make-up of team members as to giftings, personality, experiences, etc. The APEST functionality of the leadership team was particularly important to discover in each leader.

This discovery process was vital when bringing on new leaders onto the team in the eyes of the focus group and with data received from the interview process. In interview question one, one interviewee emphasized the importance that an invitation is not made to a potential core team leader unless they are already in a learning community where self-awareness was the focus. In fact, these formational spaces are where this particular leader recruited leaders to empower. This interviewee also commented that their team was able to communicate the gravity of the importance placed on formation to the extent that many leaders disqualify themselves.

Each new member was largely unknown and unaware of the common language and experiences shared by the current leaders. Data from both focus group question three and interview question one indicated that introducing new members into the team takes time and patience. Because the new team member usually starts at ground zero, a demand for significant energy is placed on the current leadership to embrace them into the leadership culture. It is a slow process that sometimes causes frustration to both current

and new team members. The focus group also spoke in response to question three of the necessity to define and tutor the new members in the core values and vision that had been birthed out of the diversity of the leadership team. As the new team member becomes more self-aware in the on-boarding process, they must also know their role in the fulfillment of their leadership call and its correlation to the vision.

Meeting Structures and Disagreements

As stated earlier, the survey indicated a majority of leadership teams put an emphasis on prayer in team meetings. However, in interview question three, one interviewee commented, “We are more trying to flip the script that more spiritual development is done outside of formal meetings.” Also in interview question three, one interviewee described consistent meetings have been established called “Feedback Sessions” where they comment on development and performance. These sessions tend to be more “heart issues” than skills or performance. They also have created spaces for confession separately for men and women. This has developed a culture where they talk about “things that other churches hold private.” They also “celebrate disclosure that really cost that person.”

Again, the survey responses indicated that a great majority of leaders felt the freedom to correct and be corrected by other team members. In focus group question four, practices described were preemptive in creating leading environments that put disagreements in perspective. One response was that the unity found in the Trinity is the model and telos of their leadership team. Also from that question, one participant commented that leaders had a tendency to have an attitude described as, “God gave this to me, so you must be the unspiritual one.” Therefore, humility is an essential

characteristic of a leadership team. To “admit that my idea is not the best” takes strength of character and courage.

Focus group question four responses also included the emphasis that “shadows or blind spots” must be addressed lovingly without “tearing each other apart.” Participants commented on the need to step down from the emotion of the encounters in order to gain insight on God’s desire for unity. “You need differences. Differences will always be there, but disagreements can be divisive. That’s the issue.” One participant commented that many disagreements can be eliminated by realigning to values and vision.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

What those being equipped out of interdependent relationships in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA say are the best practices for interdependent relationships?

Survey questions twenty-four through twenty-eight (Table 4.2) and focus group questions six and seven gathered data concerning leaders’ perspective on the dynamics of the congregations where they serve. From the survey data, leaders believed that nearly 90 percent of the people they serve have an understanding that their church is being led by more than one person. Of that 90 percent, 80 percent of leaders believed that their people had confidence and comfort in how they were being led by a plurality of leaders.

Questions twenty-six and twenty-seven determined the engagement the participants of the survey had with their people relationally. The key to healthy equipping from an interdependent leadership team is how consistent they were in connecting with the people. Seventy-seven percent of those polled connected with their people in a meaningful way. This gave some basis that leaders polled had an awareness of how well their interdependent leadership model was received. Based on their familiarity with their

people, 65 percent of those who participated in the survey believed that the congregation viewed interdependent leadership as a benefit.

The final question of the survey attempted to gain insight on exactly what the congregation saw as the benefit of interdependent leadership. Two of the three options to the multiple-choice question dealt with the culture of the environment, and the third option was more about the functionality of the structure. The majority of the leaders who took part in the survey believed their people saw benefit in having a diversity of perspectives speaking into vision, and 31 percent spoke to the characteristics of humility and submission that their people witnessed.

Table 4.2. Congregational Perspective					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
24. Our people understand that there isn't one person making decisions.	2.86%	2.86%	5.71%	34.29%	54.29%
25. Our people have confidence in our leadership and are comfortable with our leadership structure.		8.57%	11.43%	48.57%	31.43%
26. I regularly have meaningful contact with those in the congregation outside of the leadership.		11.43%	11.43%	28.57%	48.57%
27. Our congregation sees the benefit of interdependent leadership and believe this is the best way to lead.		8.57%	25.71%	42.86%	22.86%
	The benefit of multiple, diverse voices speaking into vision	The humility and submission demonstrated by the team		Having multiple people to go to with questions	
28. Those who are being disciplined by our interdependent leadership team believe the best aspect of this philosophy is...	54.29%	31.43%		14.29%	

Focus group questions six and seven questioned leaders as to some of the negative feedback they received as a result of instituting an interdependent leadership structure. Statements such as, “Just tell me who the leader is!,” or “Who has the final say?” had been commonplace. There was one leader who was asked if this leadership structure was

“some kind of gimmick.” One participant stated how important it was to not respond to questions by referring the questioner to the pastor. People must be equipped or trained to see a multiplicity of leading.

Other participants answered these questions by emphasizing the need for an overabundance of communication, “Don’t assume anything!” People must be given enough information to grow into their understanding of interdependent leadership. Without communication or teaching, one participant stated that people can look upon this kind of leadership as a form of rebellion.

Interestingly in response to question seven, one leader spoke of a disappointing encounter. This leader thought that they “knew” someone in their congregation, but instead, teaching and trusting this person “backfired.” This person, who was operating out of an immature Prophetic function, attempted to sabotage the leadership group by trying to divide the leaders. That is why this leader emphasized the need to “guard the unity of the group, continue interdependence, and protect the core values.”

One leader commented that the biggest pushback came from different backgrounds more comfortable with hierarchical structures where it was easier to sit back. For example, one person’s father was a Baptist pastor so they went to him and asked for biblical clarification. Many leaders in the focus group commented that pushback to interdependence has led to healthy discussions, “Unity is forged in the crucible of difficult discussions.” Another leader stated, “The pushback is equally bored by the multiplicity of leading.” Still another leader placed the importance of each function of APEST being available and submitted to when leading a congregation into a

paradigm of interdependence, “When God moves, He moves quickly. APEST needs to move together.”

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What cultural beliefs or practices are prohibiting interdependent relationships?

Questions eleven, twelve, and fourteen give indication of whether characteristics with leaders and in the structure of meetings become obstacles in developing interdependent relationships (Table 4.3). Focus group questions one, two, and five inquired about what was essential in leader selection and what tendencies or dynamics in leadership meetings restricted interdependence.

Meetings Dominated by a Singular Leader

A majority of those polls, 51.43 percent, did not experience meetings dominated by a single person. Unfortunately, 22.85 percent indicated that their leadership meetings were usually dominated by a single voice. Again, a strong indication emerged of the practice of focusing on self-awareness in leadership relationships.

Table 4.3. Leadership Characteristics					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. Usually, there is one person that dominates the conversation during meetings.	17.14%	34.29%	25.71%	17.14%	5.71%
12. Self-awareness plays a major part in developing relationships.			20.00%	22.86%	57.14%
14. I believe that team members pray for one another outside of meetings.		11.43%	22.86%	37.14%	28.57%

Leader Characteristics that Qualify or Disqualify a Potential Core Leader

Data collected from focus group questions one and two gave insight on why leadership meetings experienced a smaller percentage of dominance by a single leader, based on the characteristics that qualify or disqualify leaders from joining the core team.

Terms such as, “teachable,” “humble,” and “self-aware,” described leaders who were invited to the core team. At the same time, participants also stated the need for diversity and those who would challenge to be added. Participants were not looking for mere “yes” men and women; they desired elements of contrast to bring edification. A dissimilar or distinct idea brought up a need to explore, not only the idea, but why the person had a different perspective. “We have to understand why our team members look at things differently and be comfortable in sitting in that tension.”

Terms such as, “pride,” “fear,” and “antagonistic to values,” described elements that disqualified leaders from the core team. Pride was the overwhelming characteristic stated by the participants. However, fear was surprisingly the topic that catalyzed much discussion. Fear evident in a person’s life indicates some element of bondage that must be addressed. The group also agreed that the potential leader must be already engaged in the culture, reflecting the values. “The doing is being lived out of who they are.” Finally, the group discussed the main pursuit and outcome of unity must be present in the team.

Personal Experiences

Replying to question five, the discussion turned to their experiences in previous or even current leadership teams that became unhealthy or divisive. Participants spoke of the difficulty in shifting from a paradigm where hierarchy or unilateral leadership is practiced in most churches, especially those within a mainline denomination. Ethnic cultures create increased confusion and difficulty. For example, Korean culture is extremely hierarchical. The topic of the Western mentality of independence was discussed as a prohibitor of interdependence.

One discussion point that brought synergy to the group and stirred a collective passion was the fact that no ten-year models are readily available to leadership groups pursuing interdependent leadership structures. Leaders are trying to shift cultures from a deeply rooted hierarchical mentality to an interdependent leadership model, while carrying their own baggage and erroneous thinking based on their history in the church. Participants described the difficulty in trying to see the next steps as change leaders, given their own personal struggles coming out of an old paradigm.

Research Question #4: Description of Evidence

Moving forward, what are the best practices for producing interdependent relationships in core leadership of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA?

Interview question five inquired of the interviewees their view of how shared language and alignment to vision and values has brought synergy to the core team and those they lead. Question six was an introspective look on what the participants would have changed in their process knowing what they know now of leading a group into interdependent leadership.

Shared Language/Values/Vision

In response to interview question five, one interviewee referred to a tolerance and patience necessary in developing shared language. Another interviewee gave insight to their leadership's process of growing from a place with no shared language as words were used without definition. This leadership team had a practice of using a word, and then stating, "This is what I mean when I say (the word)."

One interviewee stated that learning to listen to one another was a main contributor in the development of values and vision. Another interviewee reflected on his team taking three years to develop values and vision. He remarked, “We could have spent more time in this process.” Because of these practices and others not mentioned, the three interviewees unanimously agreed with great confidence that their team could describe their vision and values with great accuracy.

“What I would have done differently.”

One interviewee stated he had been a pastor for 12 years. “If I knew about (interdependence), I would have done it from the beginning. I would have had 10 years of developing it!” Nonetheless, he went on to say that it is “never too late.” Another interviewee described a process his team calls “Feedback Times,” a formal space set aside to ask challenging and possibly difficult questions on a monthly basis. This is similar to a performance evaluation that most environments practice yearly. For this team, having shared time has become a place of spiritual accountability more than a typical performance review. He stated, “Feedback doesn’t come naturally for people. We wanted to develop a culture where you were expected to ask deep questions and be asked deep questions.” In this leader’s opinion, waiting for the annual review is too late. Incorporating a monthly feedback session is a practice this team wished they would have started from the beginning.

Summary of Major Findings

A number of conclusions can be made on the pursuit of interdependent leadership models based on the data collected. I have described five conclusions in the list below:

1. The most significant development of spiritual formation and depth of relationship happen outside of formal meeting spaces.
2. Interdependence produces humility in leaders and gives disagreements perspective.
3. Congregations that employ interdependent leadership experience stability and reduced conflict.
4. Developing and focusing on self-awareness is a consistent practice in developing interdependence.
5. Strong adherence to and alignment with agreed-upon values and the pursuit of vision are essential for strong, relational bonds of interdependence.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

A minority of leaders and churches of the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA desire to experience an interdependent leadership culture and have intentionally put practices in place to aid in the development of such culture. For a vast majority of churches, interdependent leadership is a significant paradigm shift from traditional, unilateral leadership. Spiritual and emotional obstacles hinder the development of interdependent relationships. The purpose of this project was to discern best practices in producing interdependent relationships in core leadership of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA).

This chapter lists five conclusions drawn from the research of this project and explains how they correspond to my personal observations, the literature survey, and the biblical foundations of the project. Also included in this chapter are an explanation of the limitations in the study, my unexpected observations, recommendations, and personal reflections.

Major Findings

- I. The most significant development of spiritual formation and depth of relationship happen outside of formal meeting spaces.**

Personal Observation

In my personal experience over the past years prior to this project, I observed that each environment had strengths and weaknesses in the development of interdependent

leadership cultures. Where authenticity, vulnerability, and dependence were greatest, relationships were at a depth that could not be obtained primarily in group meetings. Leaders in other environments, especially those that did not pursue interdependent relationships, struggled with trust issues within the group that manifested itself in disagreements and a lack of alignment.

These observations aligned with the data collected in this project. Survey data indicated that 91.43 percent of those polled spent more than one hour a week meeting with leaders solely for relational connectivity. This may explain how 80 percent of the survey participants felt safe to express thoughts and emotions during team meetings. Focus group discussions had indications that leaders spent enough time to recognize blind spots and develop trust. Unity was a significant value shared by all environments who took part in the focus group.

Literature Review

This observation can also be confirmed in the literature researched for this project. Rich Villodas described a natural longing that all human beings have in wanting to be seen and to see others and to have a “felt experience of closeness to another” (121). For interdependence to occur, that closeness of relationship is essential. These shared leadership cultures are where “relationship and formation is integrated with mission” (Sims 50). Many other authors described the necessity of vulnerability and relational depth that go beyond team administration. R. Ruth Barton described the necessity of inviting leaders into a spiritual community (173).

Times spent outside of the meeting room are needed for personal relationships to gain areas of trust. A leader can begin to be instrumental in facilitating and championing

the strengths and gifts of others in a relationship of trust. Jean Vanier described a good leader as one who would “reveal the beauty of another person to themselves” (22).

Biblical Foundation

Jesus had a desire for his present followers and those who would come after to be bound by a unity that mirrored the bonds found in the Trinity. He expressed this desire in his prayer found in John 17. Unity is a topic that can be seen consistently in Paul’s writings, as well. Paul tried to systematically take apart and divide the church before his Damascus Road encounter with the living Christ. In chapter 4 of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he spoke of how their calling was to be lived out with humility, gentleness, and patience. If disciples take Paul’s admonition seriously, they will live this journey together in love, making every effort to keep the unity that comes through the Spirit. This requires a significant investment of time and energy relationally.

A journey of love and unity catalyzed by the Spirit was not a foreign concept to Paul. His letters to Timothy and Titus are characterized by a depth of relationship developed through perseverance and commitment. He expresses his heart and instruction to these men from an informed perspective. He even knew Timothy’s apparent ailments with his stomach enough to suggest a remedy of wine.

II. Interdependence produces humility in leaders and gives disagreements perspective.

Personal Observation

In observing leaders who have done the hard work of remaining connected to other leaders of diverse personality, passions, and gift mix, I have witnessed a refining of inner motives and perspectives through the working of God’s Spirit. These leaders have

outwardly expressed a desire for humility and submission wrought by the Spirit within the relationships of their leading core group. Trust developed where there was once strife, frustration, and distrust. An intention to hear and understand conflicting opinions replaced a leader's natural tendency to grasp tightly to their opinion and defend it despite all costs.

Differences will consistently be a part of leadership meetings. If there is margin and energy, both inside and outside of the meeting room, to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal blind spots, then perspective and unity of purpose are possible. Interdependence brings a more loving, humble, flexible, and tolerant leadership culture. One focus group participant spoke of those precious moments when the interdependent leadership team experienced a result of this relational work to obtain a desired outcome. He spoke of a sweetness when both "victory and vision (were) shared."

Literature Review

Multiple authors referenced the unity amidst diversity within the Trinity. Nee introduced the idea that the Son's role is to incorporate humility and submission into the kingdom economy just as the Father represents authority (42). For most leaders, the focus of their expression of leadership is on authority. Yet, humility and submission are essential within leadership cultures based on the workings and desires of a Triune God.

The development of humility and submission is a journey each leader takes with the Holy Spirit. Barton defines a leader as one who takes on the responsibility for "what's going on inside him- or herself, inside of his or her consciousness" (38). If careful attention is not placed on the condition of the soul, leaders can be deceived in either their own self-importance or a lack in another team member's importance. John Wesley saw

humility as “seeing oneself correctly” (qtd. in Gorveatte ch. 6). To recognize one’s place humbled before the Head of the Church, as well as within a leadership group, is critical for an interdependent leadership team to function as God has intended.

Biblical Foundation

Luke describes one of the first major controversies in the church and how it was handled by leadership in Acts 15. The issue of circumcision posed a threat of division to the early church. Luke describes the scene with leaders who passionately expressed their opinions and insights. Even with a high level of conflicting positions on the matter, the relationships within the leadership held a level of trust required to sustain the discussion.

If the leaders of the early church had operated in a posture of pride and self-defense, each manipulating the situation in order to be heard, they would have had difficulty hearing the voice of the Spirit in order to know his heart. Humility and a concern to hear a diversity of voices enabled these leaders an opportunity to know and understand the direction God desired them to take in a very controversial matter.

III. There is stability and reduced conflict in congregations where an interdependent leadership is employed.

Personal Observation

From conversations catalyzed by the questions in the interview and focus group, churches and leaders clearly had experienced a reduction in divergences and conflict within their church environments moving from a unilateral leadership model to interdependence. The survey data confirmed this finding. Following a leadership structure is right when it puts emphasis on transparency within relationships of the core leadership group that has direct impact on the people they lead. Stability and peace may

not be the outflow of every congregant, as there is conflict with some who were disciplined in a traditional or solo leadership model. Questions such as, “So who really is the leader?” or “Can you just tell me who is making the decisions?” can be unsettling to the leadership and the environment. Where there is an emphasis on over-communicating values, vision, and the qualities of interdependence, environments experience stability and overcome the tensions produced from transitioning to an interdependent leadership culture.

Literature Review

Don D. Meares accurately describes the state of the American Church in regard to her disposition and activity. When the nature of the Church is one of health, diversity, unity, and multiplication when equipped through interdependence, Meares sees the church moving out of conflict and division (93). The stability and unity of a church or environment is largely determined by the condition and equipping of her leadership. Bolsinger speaks to emotional resilience during times of crisis being dependent on the health and quality of your relationships with those whom you influence (120).

Eric Geiger speaks of grace being instrumental in the sustaining of unity within relationships. Uniformity can be created with little to no grace (1). If grace is not a defining characteristic within the relationships of the leadership core, little hope exists that grace and unity can be replicated into the corporate environment. However, interdependent leadership cores have an opportunity to equip out of a culture of grace and acceptance, leading people into more unity than division.

Biblical Foundation

If the Church emulates the character of Christ, the rights, privileges, and preferences of each individual will be secondary to the well-being of those within their relational circles. A world, where self-seeking pursuits were the norm and even celebrated, engulfed the culture of the church in Philippi. In Philippians 2, Paul explains another way of approaching people within and outside of the church. Instead of basing relationships in competition and manipulation, Paul says to take the example set by Christ. If every leader would lay down their right to be right or make their own desires or preferences secondary, considering the interests of others, a distinct culture would be created within that leadership group, with a natural template for churches to imitate in their own relationships.

IV. Developing and focusing on self-awareness is a consistent practice in developing interdependence.**Personal Observation**

Eighty percent of those polled in the survey indicated that self-awareness was critical in the development of the relationships within a leadership group. The survey did not define self-awareness. However, in the focus group and interviews, participants reflected on the criticalness of each leader knowing their gifts, passions, ministries, and functions. Also, each leader needs to know where to humbly submit to the other gifts around the leadership table. “We have to understand why our team members look at things differently and be comfortable sitting in that tension.”

Being self-aware of emotional and spiritual obstacles should also be included in the definition of self-awareness. In the focus group and interviews, participants indicated

that leaders who are not self-aware of their weaknesses, shadows, and biases express unhealth in their interactions with the team which leads to disunity. Unity and depth develop in relationships where leaders are aware and vulnerable with their shortcomings. This was indirectly confirmed in the survey where 80 percent indicated that their leadership group is a safe place for the expression of thoughts and emotions.

Literature Review

As a result of Van Zyl and Campbell's research, they made the claim that self-awareness allows a leader to be proactive versus reactive in the face of new or changing situations (75). This claim was confirmed in the discussions and interviews conducted with leadership in this project. Recounting one particular interview documented in Chapter 4, the establishment of "Feedback Times" brought an awareness of differences or potential relational roadblocks well before they become destructive. The team saw this as a proactive practice of awareness that can avoid division.

Multiple authors made reference to the responsibility each leader has to understanding themselves in order to lead effectively. Barton warned of a leader who is unaware of what is "going on inside him- or herself" that could cause harm to those they lead (38). Bolsinger illustrated the leader's vulnerability in understanding the truth of their weakness as "steel that is thrown into the fire" (80). Scazzero speaks of the importance of the differentiation of the leader in light of difficult relationships and circumstances. He defines differentiation as the leader's ability to know and understand "who they are and who they are not" (84).

Biblical Foundation

According to Ephesians 4, God gave the gift of leadership to the Church universal in order to equip her into unity and maturity, and the culmination of that equipping would result in people experiencing the fullness of Christ. The Church receives this one gift through individuals who are unique, specifically in this context in their functions.

Therefore, diversity is a natural part of the gift being expressed in the Church. Paul writes in Ephesians 2 that disciples all are a masterpiece created by the hand of God, different from every other masterpiece, uniquely suited to walk into the work he has prepared in advance.

In the account of Paul and Barnabas's presentation before the Jerusalem Council, leaders of different gifts, ministries, and experiences were evidently there giving input into the decision concerning circumcision. The subject matter of the discussion had the potential to be combusive and divisive. The openness and receptivity of each leader to consider the position of other leaders was evidence that self-awareness, humility, and submission were present in their relationships. Also, in Paul's interactions with Timothy, Paul was mindful of how God created Timothy uniquely, and also made reference to Timothy's family history of faith.

V. Strong adherence and alignment to agreed-upon values and the pursuit of vision are essential for strong, relational bonds of interdependence.

Personal Observation

The priority of accomplishing a goal or reaching a desired outcome would have varied importance depending upon a leader's APEST function. For example, a Shepherd functioning leader would place a high priority on the inter-relational dynamics of a

leadership, congregation, or group of followers of Jesus regardless if anything was accomplished. Not that a Shepherd functioning leader does not prioritize the mission or accomplishment of goals, but that tends to be a secondary priority where an Apostolic functioning leader would place the mission as the highest priority. Jesus gave the gift of leadership functioning in APEST with three functions focused on principle and two focused on people.

Specifically in focus group question four, leaders communicated that recommitting or refocusing on core values and vision was the remedy for disagreements that arose within their leadership teams. Other leaders commented that their process at arriving at vision and values developed ownership by each leader. Relational bonds are formed in the wrestle of arriving at core values and vision as God shapes a leadership team through the agitation of the diversity around the table.

Literature Review

Meares makes the statement that in America, growth comes from division and not multiplication (93). The research of this project showed that division within churches and leadership groups are relational in nature. Keith R. Krispin, Jr., references Amanuel G. Tekleab, Narda R. Quigley, and Paul E. Tesluk's research when he speaks of conflict that is not merely "task conflict," which he conveys is needed and healthy, but relational conflict that becomes unhealthy and hinders the team's effectiveness and cohesion (qtd. in Krispin 48).

In regard to the actions of Jesus's disciples, Gougaud writes that followers all must enter into the unity Jesus desired for the Church (329). This replication of communion and unity in leadership equips people for God's mission in the world. This

unity, communion, and commitment can also become the expression of witness that draws people into a relationship with Jesus.

Biblical Foundation

The very nature of what Christ has commissioned his Church to be and do is multiplication. The responsibility that leadership carries within the church is ultimately to make Jesus known through the love and unity that is seen within the body of Christ. Jesus's commission to his followers in Matthew 28:18-20 gives disciples an outcome to their lives of making disciples. Jesus explains that in going, those commissioned should be singularly focused on multiplying people who would become followers as well, obeying everything he commanded. As seen in the letters written by those who gave their lives to fulfilling Jesus's commission, relationships existed that went beyond mere acquaintance. Peter used the term "beloved" to address the recipients of his letters.

In Paul's missionary journeys, he disciplined, developed leaders, and planted churches. He was driven by a vision and values shaped through pursuing Christ's mission of extending the kingdom. Paul also developed deep, abiding relationships as he equipped leaders to give their lives to the cause of seeing God's kingdom come to earth. The language Paul uses proves that he considered both Titus and Timothy as his authentically loved children. In Acts 20, Luke described a scene with the Ephesian elders that was wrought with strong emotion as Paul foretold his death.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

1) The first ministry implication pertains to how people are equipped. These findings provide pathways of producing effective discipling cultures in churches through leaders interdependently related to other leaders. Diversity and unity signify the presence of a

holistic approach to developing purpose, vision, and values. Every diverse voice around a leadership table is freely given and received in a trusted environment. The purpose, vision, and values develop a culture that in turn produce disciples of that culture.

Therefore, every perspective strategically placed by the Head of the Church in leadership shapes the discipleship outcomes of that particular environment.

Disciples of said environment also experience more stability as there will not be a solo voice in how the disciple is developed. A solo leader is limited in their perspective and can only influence others in the limitations of their personality, gifts, and functions. In these environments when disciple-making is occurring, the diversity of disciplers can cause conflict with different approaches and desired outcomes than those of the solo leader. In putting interdependence into practice, a disciple receives the blessing of an investment of multiple personalities, gifts, and functions without the tension of competing voices.

2) The second implication is an increase in churches who take ownership of the lostness of people in their context and less on preferences within the church. In many established churches, the majority of solo leaders possess a gathering function, gift mix, talents, or competencies. A leader in their circle who passionately promotes extending or missional activities is typically marginalized. Therefore, the church becomes the center of conflict as disciples, who have not been equipped to look outside of the gathering, fight for their rights to have a church shaped by their preferences.

In interdependent leadership cultures, each voice carries the same amount of weight or influence. The evangelization of a church's areas of responsibility becomes a vital part of their vision and discipling efforts. Disciples are equipped to utilize their

relationships and connection to the church to focus on people within their area of influence who do not have a relationship with Jesus.

3) The third implication concerns the actual wellbeing of leaders who take part in an interdependent leadership structure. There are consistent reports of leaders who struggle with mental health such as depression and anxiety. Leaders feel incapable of handling the responsibilities and stresses that come in church leadership. Often leaders take on responsibilities that are outside of their gifts because of unreasonable expectations placed upon them from those they report to, care for, or even expectations they place on themselves.

When a leader is self-aware, they can navigate their own emotions and the expectations of others. Even when given responsibilities that are outside of their competencies, leaders involved in interdependent relationships have resources that edify and support them in their leadership. Isolation that intensifies feelings of insufficiency is avoided in interdependent leadership cultures.

Limitations of the Study

This study addressed the implications and outcomes of interdependent leadership structures and best practices. Literature research and data collection involved those led in such structures, yet the polling instruments did not include those directly impacted. Therefore, instruments asked questions of leaders concerning their environments without directly gathering data from the environments.

Ethnic leaders received surveys, however, there were no ethnic leaders interviewed and only one ethnic leader who was a part of the focus group. Discussions that catalyzed data collection had very little cultural diversity. Yet roughly twenty percent

of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA are ethnically diverse. I collected little data on the ramifications of interdependent leadership structures in ethnically led churches.

The data collection occurred in churches who have journeyed through the coaching process within the district. Those churches who are not being coached may be implementing practices that are developing interdependent relationships. Therefore, there would be missing data from healthy environments produced by principles and outcomes of interdependent leadership cultures.

Unexpected Observations

In my own practice of developing interdependent leadership structures, I have experienced and promoted a smaller number of leaders for an ideal opportunity to develop healthy leadership cultures. In the data collection segment of my research, those polled apparently preferred a larger number of leaders. I believed four leaders would represent a reasonable representation of diversity while deepening relationships at a level unattainable with a larger number of leaders. Also, this would streamline processes and allow leaders to move at a greater speed in implementation. Yet, a majority of those surveyed believed that leadership would be more effective if more than six leaders were a part of the team.

Prior to the study, I held a more pessimistic view of the health of many of the church's leadership environments. Normally, disagreements and possible issues within our churches become the most notable and reported incidents. Yet those surveyed had no leaders who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question of whether they considered their environments to be a safe place to be vulnerable. This observation can be

emphasized even more coupled with the above unexpected observation of a preference toward a larger number of leaders. It would seem that the larger the group, the more difficult the attainment of an environment where one would feel safe to express their thoughts or emotions.

Finally, I did not expect such a positive response when leaders evaluated how their congregants received interdependent leadership structures. Leaders believed eighty percent of their congregants trusted this counter-cultural way of leading. Again, what is most normally reported are the complaints and obstacles as leaders attempt to laterally posture and decentralize their leadership. People express confusion and instability when multiple leaders submit to other leaders. This is not how leaders polled would describe the corporate environment where interdependence is practiced.

Recommendations

One glaring misstep in the gathering of data was the absence of a reasonable representation of an ethnic perspective. Prior to this study, I worked with several ethnically diverse leaders from Korea, India, Nepal, Laos, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Congo, and Bolivia currently serving in our district. Most, if not all, of those cultures place a high value on hierarchical leadership. I usually receive questions on best practices to develop interdependence in these hierarchical cultures. These questions are difficult to answer.

However, this research can be applicable to those practices or principles that transcend culture. The development of relationships that move to depth is needed in the progression to unity, which is Christ's desire for his Church represented in every culture. Where practices may differ is in cultures that are shame-based. These cultures make it

difficult for leaders and non-leaders alike to become vulnerable or transparent. This is research that is not represented in this project.

This project was aimed at a particular district within a particular denomination with leaders in an evangelical church setting. However, the information studied in the Literature Review was not restricted to research performed in only church settings. God's design for leadership was seen in the outcomes in other settings, including research performed in businesses. If these are biblical principles for healthy leadership, this project will be applicable where leadership is practiced. Businesses, school systems, athletics, and other places where leadership is needed can benefit from practicing interdependence because every leader is deficient or dysfunctional in multiple facets of their leadership. Healthy outcomes of the expression of biblical leadership will be seen in all settings. Anytime biblical principles are implemented, a witness to the character and reputation of Christ is expressed.

Postscript

Convictions that relate to interdependent leadership were already firmly established in my heart and in my mind. As I have intentionally studied and carefully observed leadership in action, these biblical convictions have been reinforced. As I have promoted these convictions, it has largely been on a theoretical or conceptual level. The practical or pragmatic pieces have received less attention which has been frustrating to leaders who need to have answers to their questions of "How?" This project gave me new insights and perspectives that can be implemented in the forming of cultures and environments around the convictions that we hold with great passion.

Another unintentional outcome of this study was a greater sense of unity with leaders who are attempting to create interdependent leadership structures in differing environments. Particularly in the focus group, leaders took great comfort as they shared their experiences, both positive and negative, in the implementation of interdependence. This form of leadership is not culturally accepted fully in both church and societal settings. Therefore, feelings of isolation and sabotage are experienced in common with all these leadership teams. To journey with other leaders and churches brings encouragement and synergies not experienced in isolation. This will be a focus within my role moving forward.

In conclusion, the work of developing interdependent leadership is difficult due to consistent obstacles both individually, internally within teams, and externally in congregations. A strong connection and filling of the Holy Spirit is necessary in forming these controversial cultures because of the transformation that is needed within every leader and within those they lead. Kenosis is not natural to mankind, nor is humility and submission a typical characteristic of leadership teams. Yet, these—kenosis, humility, and submission—are the foundational elements of any interdependent leadership team. May we walk in God's sufficiency to transform us and his power to catalyze us to persevere in this quest.

APPENDIX A**INTERDEPENDENT LEADERSHIP CULTURE SURVEY****Survey Questions**

1. Gender:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

2. Ethnicity:
 - a. White
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Asian American
 - d. Other

3. Age:
 - a. 20 – 29
 - b. 30 – 39
 - c. 40 – 49
 - d. 50 – 59
 - e. 60 – 69
 - f. 70 or older

4. How many leaders do you currently have as your core team?
 - a. 2 or 3
 - b. 3 – 5
 - c. 6 – 8
 - d. 9 or more

5. What would you say is the most optimal number of leaders for a core team?
 - a. 2 or 3
 - b. 3 – 5
 - c. 6 – 8
 - d. 9 or more

6. How often do you meet as a whole team?
 - a. More than once a week
 - b. Once a week
 - c. Every other week
 - d. Once a month

7. How many hours a week do you spend with individual members of the core team outside of team meetings?
 - a. 1 - 3 hours
 - b. 4 - 7 hours
 - c. 8 - 10 hours
 - d. More than 10 hours

8. How many hours a week do you spend with individual members of the core team outside of team meetings primarily for relational connectivity?
 - a. 1 - 3 hours
 - b. 4 - 7 hours
 - c. 8 - 10 hours
 - d. More than 10 hours

9. I'm confident that each team member believes in our vision and can communicate it effectively. 1-5

10. The core team makes the most pivotal decisions in your organization. 1-5

11. Usually, there is one person that dominates the conversation during meetings. 1-5

12. Self-awareness plays a major part in developing relationships. 1-5

13. Prayer plays a major part in team meetings. 1-5

14. I believe that team members pray for one another outside of meetings. 1-5

15. The Ephesians 4:11 APEST orientation plays a part in the team's decision-making. 1-5

16. I believe my APEST orientation is utilized and championed. 1-5

17. I am aware of what topics of leadership and vision the team is especially dependent on me to speak into and act accordingly. 1-5

18. I am aware of what topics of leadership and vision that I am especially dependent upon other giftings and voices to speak into and act accordingly. 1-5
19. There tends to be only a couple of APEST orientations that are expressed in our meetings. 1-5
20. We take time in our meetings to develop relational connectivity. 1-5
21. We ask one another hard questions in our meetings. 1-5
22. We are a leadership group that has the freedom to correct one another when appropriate. 1-5
23. This leadership group is a safe place for me to express my thoughts and emotions. 1-5
24. Our people understand that there isn't one person making the decisions. 1-5
25. Our people have confidence in our leadership and are comfortable with our leadership structure. 1-5
26. I regularly have meaningful contact with those in the congregation outside of the leadership. 1-5
27. Our congregation sees the benefit of interdependent leadership and believe this is the best way to lead. 1-5
28. Those who are being disciplined by our interdependent leadership team believe the best aspect of this philosophy is...
 - a. The benefit of multiple, diverse voices speaking into vision
 - b. The humility and submission demonstrated by the team
 - c. Having multiple people to go to with questions

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What characteristics of a potential leader are essential in developing your core leadership team?
2. What characteristics of a potential leader disqualify them from leadership in your environment?
3. What do you do to update and equip a new team member?
4. How do you handle disagreements or differences in deciding direction?
5. What has been a reoccurring theme that prohibits interdependence in your group?
6. What would your congregants say is confusing about your leadership philosophy?
7. Where has there been the most pushback from your congregants in how your church is led?

APPENDIX C

PERSONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your process in leader selection? IV
2. What are the guidelines in determining who is a part of your core leadership team? IV
3. How are your meetings structured? IV
 - a. Do you utilize Scripture in your meetings? IV
 - b. How do you encourage openness and vulnerability in your relationships? IV
4. How do you learn together? IV
5. Is there a shared language that has helped to shape culture? Are you confident that team members communicate values and vision similarly in a way that brings synergy to the team and the church?
6. If you were able to go back and change your process of developing an interdependent leadership culture, what would you do differently?

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

PURPOSE: Discerning the best practices in producing interdependent relationships in core leadership of established churches and church plants in the Ohio Valley District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Brian Scott, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are a leader intentionally pursuing the development of interdependent leadership cultures within the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in an on-line survey that will be sent to your email between September 9th and September 15th, 2022. You may also be asked to be a part of a focus group or be interviewed. If anyone is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

A singular MacBook Air will be used in the compiling of data. The file used to collect the data will be password protected. Coding will be utilized to protect the anonymity of the participants in this study. Confidentiality will be encouraged in each research tool used; however, regarding the focus group, it cannot be guaranteed due to the presence of other participants. The data collected will be destroyed three months after the defense of the dissertation.

The risk to the study of interdependent leadership cultures can encourage unhealthy approaches to the changing of leadership paradigms in the local church. A deconstructionist mentality is possible where division in the church body and a lack of trust in leadership sets in.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please inform Brian Scott who can be reached at bscott@ovdcma.org. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Brian Scott at bscott@ovdcma.org.

Placing your initials on this document means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Initials of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

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