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**Biblical Servant Leadership
LDR 5313-90**

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Biblical Philosophy of Leadership

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Abstract

This paper provides a Biblical philosophy of leadership that emphasizes its importance in an organizational context (especially the ministry). It identifies how leadership is defined, placing priority on the spiritual, while acknowledging God as its source. It gives a theological basis for spiritual leadership with attention given to its various components. It also calls attention to the proper focus of leadership in ministry along with the importance of relationships and their vital place in building trust in the organizational progress. Discussion related to motivation and values also receives due attention. Since it offers these observations with mention made to my current ministry context, some discussion of existing leadership challenges is included as well.

Introduction

At a very young age, I came to learn a vitally important lesson about leadership. I can still remember my very first leadership experience! At about age five, I mounted the merry-go-round, stood in the middle and declared, "I'm the boss!" As other children gathered around, I gave orders for them to grab hold and turn it around. The other kids dutifully followed my instructions while I continued to bark out orders from my perch, standing with my chest out and arms akimbo. And so we continued for a while, until one other child asked a very disturbing question: "Who made you the boss?" My inability to answer that question to anyone's satisfaction cost me my lofty position and secured me a place around the merry-go-round pushing with the other children! That day I learned, among other things, that just calling myself "the boss" was not enough to make me a leader. If I hoped to have any future as a leader, I had to learn a more effective way to function in that role.

Importance of Leadership

Since that time, I have come to appreciate the importance of effective leadership. According to Henry and Richard Blackaby (2001), "The greatness of an organization will be directly proportional to the greatness of its leader. It is rare for organizations to rise above their leaders" (p. 31). George Barna, also noting the importance of leadership in the church, attributes the decline of the American church to the lack of effective leadership (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, pp. 8-9). John Maxwell (1993) sums up its importance when he declares, "Everything rises and falls on leadership" (p. ii).

Definition of Leadership

Among the many definitions of leadership, influence emerges as the central component (Finzel, 2000, p. 16). Leadership simply involves exerting influence in a way that prompts

people to act. As Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) put it, “The ability to influence others is undoubtedly a pivotal requirement for leadership” (p. 147). This suggests, that those who use their influence must have someone to follow their lead (Maxwell, 1993, p. 1). Otherwise, that person cannot claim to be a leader. However, in ministry, one must have a claim on more than that. Leadership that makes a tangible, positive difference has to do more than merely give orders and force people to act. It must inspire people to follow willingly (Maxwell, 1993, p. 5). That means viewing any leadership opportunity as more than a position. One must see it as a divine stewardship (Wood, 2007, p. 13). Along with this comes the responsibility to challenge people and processes (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 18) that stand in the way of what God wants to accomplish (Stanley, 2003, p. 51). Because leadership in ministry includes this critical spiritual component, Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) summarize it this way: “Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda” (p. 20).

Source of Leadership

This suggests that successful leadership, at least from a kingdom perspective, means more than just accomplishing great things. It means doing them in such a way that affirms and applies Biblical principles. Ultimately, we find that our calling to leadership comes from God (Malphurs, 2003, p. 149). Therefore, it has to reflect the values that govern his kingdom. The Christian leader bears the responsibility of doing God’s business in a way that pleases the Lord. He or she cannot make outward success, as measured by this world, the primary goal. Rather than seek to attract a large following and project a particular image of success in leadership (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 87), the believer must find his or her direction and empowerment in the Holy Spirit (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 14), acting as guided by the Lord. In this light, Aubrey Malphurs (2003) summarizes the definition of leadership and expands

it further by describing it as follows:

First, Christian leaders are servants with the credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction. The second builds off the first. Christian leadership is the process whereby servants use their credibility and capability to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction (p. 10).

Theology of Leadership

Servanthood of Leadership

Since God himself is the one who calls men and women into the ministry, any discussion of this topic should begin with some principles that the Bible gives for effective leadership. Because Jesus Christ holds all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), any theology of leadership should begin with him. Jesus best demonstrates servant leadership (Wilkes, 1998, p. 9). The Bible describes how Christ “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28, NASB95). Not only did Jesus regularly demonstrate this by the way he served people throughout his ministry, but he gave his disciples a powerful demonstration of this as he washed their feet during the Last Supper (John 13:5-15). Philippians describes Jesus in this way: “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6–7 NASB95). Though he could have claimed authority as God, instead he chose to demonstrate his leadership in submission to God the Father.

Authority and Stewardship in Leadership

This leads to another matter that the Bible discusses concerning leadership, namely that

of authority. Jesus clearly demonstrated his leadership as one who exerted authority (Luke 4:32). However, he exercised that authority in submission to the Father (John 5:30). In fact, the Bible shows this manner of leadership exhibited elsewhere in a way that drew praise from Jesus himself. When the Roman centurion appealed to Christ to heal his servant, Jesus offered to go to his home (Matthew 8:7). However, the centurion refused, instead asking Jesus to speak the word, and his servant would be healed. He revealed his understanding of both the extent of Christ's authority and the concept of delegated authority when he declared, "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it" (Matthew 8:9 NASB95). Notice the centurion refers to himself as "a man under authority," not "a man with authority." In saying this, he recognized that the authority he exerted in his leadership was really an extension of that which belonged to someone higher (in his case Caesar's authority) not his own. Likewise, we could say that the Christian leader also acts as one under God's authority. This shows that leadership, and the authority that goes with it, is a stewardship exercised in the service of God.

Elements of Leadership

Along with this, one could see some basic elements of leadership demonstrated in the ministry of Joshua. Having received his appointment from God, Joshua acted in leadership as one submitted to God's authority (Joshua 4:15-17; 5:13-15). Because of his faithful stewardship, God exalted Joshua and gave him favor and affirmation as a leader, which inspired the respect of the people (Joshua 4:14). He regularly demonstrated decisive action, proactive behavior, and strategic planning throughout Israel's conquest of the Promised Land. For example, in Joshua 2, he sent out spies to Jericho in order to gather intelligence that he could use in his battle plan. His action in response to their initial defeat at Ai (Joshua 8:2-5) also showed strategic thinking, as

well as resilience in the face of failure (Joshua 8). He was able to learn from that experience and continue to make progress.

Responsibilities of Leadership

The Apostle Paul showed the impact of one who fully weighed and embraced the responsibilities associated with leadership. In his epistles he demonstrated care and concern for the well-being of the churches, even as a father cares for his children (1 Corinthians 4:15; 2 Corinthians 11:28). He willingly sacrificed for the cause of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:22-27). In so doing, he provided an example to those who follow (2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9). Likewise, he demonstrated in his ministry and in the guidance that he provides for young pastors like Timothy and Titus the priority of training, mentoring and preparing others for the task of leadership (2 Timothy 2:2).

Ethics in Leadership

Those who have received the trust that goes with ministry leadership responsibility know that it carries a strict set of ethics. Joseph gives us an example of someone who served in leadership, yet acted according to his deeply held values. For example, he demonstrated a superior work ethic, which resulted in his receiving several promotions (Genesis 39:4, 21-23). He also disciplined himself and kept his appetites in check, adhering to a Biblical moral standard (Genesis 39:7-13). Likewise, Daniel had exemplary ethical standards, as demonstrated by his service in support of several kings, and he was elevated and rewarded accordingly (Daniel 2:48; 3:30; 5:29; 6:3). He showed a steadfast devotion to prayer (Daniel 6:10), refusing to compromise his Scriptural ideals (Daniel 1:8; Daniel 6:13). Both of these men held fast to their Scriptural principles, even though at times it caused suffering for them. In the same way, those who serve as spiritual leaders must observe the Bible's ethical standard without compromise.

Model of Leadership

The godly leader needs this kind of high standard in order to serve the body of Christ, for God places a great trust in his servants. He commits to them the care of his people. The Bible uses the model of a shepherd (Malphurs, 2003, p. 26) to demonstrate the kind of care that a leader must have for the community of faith (Psalm 77:20). In fact, David provides an example of this kind of care in leadership (Psalm 78:70-72). Of all the images that God could have used to depict spiritual leadership, the shepherd provides the best portrait of how a godly leader cares for the church (Anderson, 1997). Perhaps it makes sense that God provides this model as one he prefers for those who would lead his people (Wilkes, 1998, p. 91), since he also identifies himself this way (Isaiah 40:11; Psalm 23:1; John 10:11).

Focus of Leadership

Because the Bible provides this as the most prevalent model for leadership, Lynn Anderson (1997) asserts that spiritual leaders must “embrace the concept of shepherd” (p. 12). He takes it further as he describes the kind of relationship fostered by this model when he writes,

This is the essence of spiritual leadership: sheep following a shepherd because they know and trust him. This kind of trust and allegiance can be gained only one way—by a shepherd touching his sheep, carrying them, handling them, tending them, feeding them—to the extent that he smells like them (p. 17).

This is the model that our Lord Jesus demonstrated, and he passed it on to those who followed him (Anderson, 1997, p. 18). Relationship lies at the heart of this model, communicating love and nurturing trust (Wilkes, 1998, pp. 27-28). For example, Coach Bobby Bowden demonstrated this kind of caring relationship with his players. According to Tony Dungy, “From their very first week on campus—when he would take every one of his freshman players to church—they

could be sure that he was concerned about them not just as athletes, but as men. He made sure they knew that he would always be there for them, long after their last game as a Seminole” (Bowden & Schlabach, 2010, p. viii).

Shepherding the Congregation

Because relationships serve as the building block of this leadership model, the shepherd must have the kind of character that can keep relationships in good repair. While some may be tempted to use human relational techniques, or others may feel compelled to control followers (McIntosh & Rima, 2007, p. 71), these things do not make for lasting success in relationships, nor do they cultivate trust over time. According to Stephen R. Covey (2004, p. 26), American success literature in recent years has taken a turn in this direction. As he put it,

Some of this literature acknowledged character as an ingredient of success, but tended to compartmentalize it rather than recognize it as foundational and catalytic. Reference to the character ethic became mostly lip service; the basic thrust was quick-fix influence techniques, power strategies, communication skills, and positive attitudes (p. 27)

This emphasis on “quick fix” methods will eventually erode the quality of relationships over time, thereby breeding distrust (Covey, 2004, p. 28). Kouzes and Posner (2007) sum it up well, writing that, “Leadership is not at all about personality; it’s about practice” (p. 75).

Priority of Character

On the other hand, an emphasis on personal character development will strengthen relationships over time and increase one’s prospects for success as a leader. Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) put it this way: “Leadership development is synonymous with personal development. As leaders develop personally, they increase their capacity to lead. As they increase their capacity to lead, they enlarge the capacity of their organization to grow. Therefore,

the best thing leaders can do for their organization is to grow personally” (p. 31). In order for this to take place, one must commit to a long-term (dare I say lifelong?) commitment to personal growth and development. In other words, in order to achieve success with people, one must cultivate it from the inside. Covey (2004) writes,

The Inside-Out approach says that Private Victories™ precede Public Victories™, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping promises to others. It says it is futile to put personality ahead of character, to try to improve relationships with others before improving ourselves. Inside-Out is a process—a continuing process of renewal based on the natural laws that govern human growth and progress. It's an upward spiral of growth that leads to progressively higher forms of responsible independence and effective interdependence (p. 50).

This, of course does not come easily, nor does it provide the most comfortable path. However, personal comfort or quick fix solutions do not provide the impetus for significant inner growth. As Andy Stanley (2003) puts it, “Character is the will to do what's right even when it's hard” (p. 133).

Development of Leaders

However, development of self is not the end goal. Instead, this better equips the leader to build and develop others. Too often, leaders forget that this as the ultimate destination. Self-development is the price leaders pay to qualify for the all-important job of preparing others to lead. According to Blackaby and Blackaby (2001), “Leaders lead others. Great leaders lead leaders. One of the most tragic mistakes leaders commit is to make themselves indispensable” (p. 134). In fact, Stanley (2003, p. 28) says that leaders who fail to develop others have only themselves to blame for such a critical shortcoming. This is a significant leadership failure, yet it

is all too common, and leaders owe it to their organization to prepare people for their departure by having someone ready to replace them. John Maxwell (1993, p. 10) rightly observes, “Success without a successor is failure.” Hans Finzel (2000) adds, “After falling into leadership, we tend to do what comes naturally—we ‘wing it.’ And that's what gets us into trouble, because good leadership practice is often the opposite of conventional wisdom” (p. 13). He observes further that “winging it” causes a perpetuation of bad leadership habits, since people have a tendency to lead the way they have been led themselves (p. 16).

Importance of Accountability

In order to help develop one's own leadership skills (while at the same time developing others), a leader could benefit from having some coaching in his or her life. In fact, Coach John Calipari (2009) recommends taking a team approach in this endeavor: “Every high achiever has a powerful team of personal advisors to turn to for assistance, advice, and support. In fact, this team is so critical, it pays to begin assembling them early on in your success journey” (p. 30). Likewise, Stanley (2003, p. 104) affirms the value of coaching, noting that it can help a person go much farther than he or she could go without it. McIntosh and Rima (2007, pp. 207-208) likewise recommend accountability groups as a way of facilitating growth and responsibility. Calipari (2009, pp. 32-33) recommends his own variation of this, comprising people from a variety of backgrounds that can serve as a “Kitchen Cabinet.” They should include people who care about the leader's personal growth and development, but who are willing to tell the truth without coddling. McIntosh and Rima (2007, p. 208) concur with this, stating that openness and transparency are absolutely essential in order for these accountability relationships to have value in overcoming one's “dark side.”

Relationship with Congregation

Knowing that God has called me to serve as the pastor of the church causes me to view that calling as a divine trust. In all things I endeavor to fulfill that calling in a manner pleasing to God, and I make it my goal to serve our body, doing all things as unto the Lord. With this in mind, I know of no other way than to view our congregation as my family. Paul said to the Thessalonians, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thessalonians 2:8 NIV). This verse sums up my feelings about our congregation and reflects my heart toward them. Malphurs (2003, p. 41) states that love acts as a servant leader’s primary motivation. Wilkes (1998) adds to this, “Relationship is everything in leadership.... Leaders lead most effectively when relationships are open and strong between them and their followers” (p. 68). Since I have always believed that, I welcome building those relational bonds, while endeavoring to facilitate the building of relationships, rather than replace relationships with an excessive focus on events.

Level of Trust

While I trust the people in our congregation in a personal, relational sense, I find that I do not always trust them with responsibility. Some of that has come as a response to past ministry failures that led to unmet expectations. My reluctance to trust carries with it the consequence of failing to build their trust in me. Covey (2004) describes this dynamic in relationships by comparing them to a bank account. He writes, “An Emotional Bank Account is a metaphor that describes the amount of trust that’s been built up in a relationship. It’s the feeling of safeness you have with another human being” (p. 188). The way to build trust in the relationships is by making “deposits into the emotional bank account” through such things as love, support, honesty, respect and keeping commitments (p. 188). This is just like putting money into the bank. As the account builds, the trust goes higher. However, violations of trust cause “withdrawals” from the

account, causing the balance of trust to go down. At the point when trust fails, the “account is overdrawn.” As a result, relational tension and lack of trust fuel misunderstanding and cause a decrease in credibility. Oddly enough, a genuine deposit that’s not perceived as a deposit can have the effect of a withdrawal. So, it’s not enough to make deposits; others have to perceive them as such, and trust helps to facilitate that perception.

Development of Trust

An important way to build trust comes through empowerment of people, which Jesus himself demonstrated with his disciples (Wilkes, 1998, pp. 214-215). Knowing that trust has to start somewhere, Kouzes and Posner (2007) write, “If we could offer you only one bit of advice on how to start the process of creating a climate of trust it would be this: be the first to trust” (p. 227). I take that as a personal challenge to begin the process of extending trust. They write further, “If you want the higher levels of performance that come with trust and collaboration, demonstrate your trust in others before asking for trust from them. Leaders go first, as the word leader implies” (p. 227).

Motivation for Leadership

Vision for Ministry

My motivation for ministry comes from the vision that God has given me for our church. Malphurs (2003) defines vision as “a clear, challenging picture of the future of the church, as leaders believe that it can and must be” (p. 60). He states further that clearly communicated vision provides firm direction and inspires credibility. Also, it strengthens resolve during times of uncertainty (Stanley, 2003). Kouzes and Posner (2007) describe what makes vision such a potent force:

Leaders gaze across the horizon of time, imagining the attractive opportunities that are in

store when they and their constituents arrive at a distant destination. They envision exciting and ennobling possibilities. Leaders have a desire to make something happen, to change the way things are, to create something that no one else has ever created before. (p. 17).

The vision serves as a vehicle that, not only fuels ministry, but also mobilizes people. Wilkes (Wilkes, 1998, p. 11) describes how Jesus inspired people with God's vision for their lives as the could be and what reality would look like at the fulfillment of his mission.

Passion for Ministry

Leaders tap into a force that will propel the organization forward because it appeals to that which matters most to people and touches them in a very personal way. Rather than having to force people to do their job, leadership appeals to a much higher motivation. According to Malphurs (2003), "Passion is a God-given capacity to commit oneself fervently over an extended period of time to meeting an objective" (p. 77). Covey (2004, p. 279) would describe this as a driving force, something that provides a positive motivation. This puts proactive people in the position of bringing about positive change by seizing the initiative. As he puts it,

Our basic nature is to act, and not be acted upon. As well as enabling us to choose our response to particular circumstances, this empowers us to create circumstances. Taking initiative does not mean being pushy, obnoxious, or aggressive. It does mean recognizing our responsibility to make things happen. (Covey, 2004, p. 75).

This will lead people to experiment and take risks, something Kouzes and Posner (2007, p. 190) describe as necessary.

Necessity of Change

This puts the organization on a path for implementing a strategy for success. By creating

a safe environment that encourages risk and embraces change, effective leaders put their organization in a position to make a break with practices that stifle growth and stand in the way of progress. According to Kouzes and Posner (2004), “Exemplary leaders search for opportunities by seeking innovative ways to change, grow, and improve. They're always on the lookout for anything that lulls a group into a false sense of security, and they constantly invite and create new initiatives that can make a difference” (p. 22). Likewise, Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, viewed maintaining the status quo as a poor strategy for business (Slater, 2004, p. 3), instead favoring a strategy that welcomes change (Slater, 2004, p. 7). Effective leaders do not implement change for the sake of change, nor do they intentionally seek to create conflict. Kouzes and Posner (2004) summarize its importance by stating,

Leaders don't have to change history, but they do have to change ‘business as usual.’ To them, the status quo is unacceptable. Leaders challenge the process. They search for opportunities, and they experiment and take risks. Exemplary leaders also know that they have to be willing to make some personal sacrifices in the service of a higher purpose. (p. 22)

Values in Leadership

In order to guide the ministry through risk and change, leaders must maintain and emphasis on core values. These will provide the stability for the church during times of change and uncertainty. According to Wilkes (1998), “Acknowledging and living by strongly held core values can build unity and effectiveness in a church” (p. 94). In my pastoral ministry, I would express those values in terms of what I view are my pastoral priorities—devote myself to the word and to prayer (Acts 6:4), shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2), equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12), and do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). Our

church has the following core values: Visionary Leadership, Biblical Worship, Spiritual Community, Discipleship Ministries, Community Outreach, Responsible Stewardship and Pentecostal Distinctive. Regarding values, Wilkes (1998) point out further, “When followers try to define new values, the leader’s responsibility is to restate the core values of the group. Businesses, organizations, and families benefit from knowing and living by their core values” (p. 93). In this way, the aforementioned values provide us with direction for our ministry.

Priorities in Ministry

In ministry, as with any organization, people have an emotional stake, which is proportional to their level of involvement. In order for them to have a high level of involvement, their ideas should figure prominently in the direction of the organization, as well as in its regular activities. The organization will take on the character of its people and should reflect their thinking in its total operation. Yes, as with many things in leadership, the leader must maintain an effective balance between the people’s ideas and his or her convictions. The leader’s job is to seek to understand and provide a forum for the expression and implementation of those ideas. When leadership and membership disagree, then they must have the courage to commit to a process of seeking a principled resolution, based on an understanding of God’s word, in the spirit of *agape* love. In the end, it is not who is right (or who has to be right) that is as important as doing the will of God. The Lord is always right! Therefore, as long as his people (whether leadership or membership) endeavor to discover and do his will to, they will enjoy God’s blessing, and God should get the glory!

Preeminence of Ideas

Early in my ministry as senior pastor of my current church, I had more of an inclination to invite others to share ideas. I viewed this as seeking their advice, knowing that “in the

abundance of counselors there is victory” (Proverbs 11:14 NASB95). However, the Board of Deacons communicated (through the president) that they viewed it as a lack of decisiveness. Instead, they preferred that I pretty much think through everything and present to them the course of action that I recommended. I didn’t realize it at the time, but that placed a pretty heavy burden on me and cheated everyone out of some of the best thinking in our organization. Stanley (2003) rightly observes, “Saying, ‘I don't know’ when you don’t know is a sign of good leadership. Pretending to know when you don't know is a sign of insecurity. The only person a pretender deceives is himself” (p. 94). Even so, in the end, whether he or she acts on advice or according to personal conviction, the leader must have the courage to take responsibility for those decisions. Former president George W. Bush (2010) states that one of his primary reasons for writing his memoirs was to give the reader “a perspective on decision making in a complex environment. Many of the decisions that reach the president’s desk are tough calls, with strong arguments on both sides” (p. xii). Knowing this, the leader must have a willingness to take personal responsibilities for decisions and their outcome, taking the blame for failure, while sharing the credit for success. Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) make this point well:

Coaches of professional sports teams are well acquainted with this reality. If the team wins the championship, the athletes assume much of the credit and often demand more lucrative contracts. But when the team performs poorly, the coach is usually the first person to be fired. Mature leaders know this. Good leaders don't make excuses. Great leaders understand and accept that the performance of their organization will be viewed as equal to their own performance (pp. 139-140).

Measures of Success

Success in ministry is important, much as it is in any other venture. However, it is how

we measure success that makes the difference. Results matter, but we have to balance them with Scriptural principle. After all, gaining outward success in doing God's work (as measured by visible, worldly standards) at the cost of Biblical values undermines the very foundational principles of God's kingdom. Indeed, McIntosh and Rima (2007, p. 21) believe that placing priority on an appropriate success paradigm can reduce the possibility for failure. Because of this, I have always tried to view success in maintaining an optimal balance between results and process. Success is good, but not at the cost of sacrificing values or developing people. In the end, Blackaby and Blackby (2001) describe the ultimate measure of success as whether or not they fulfill God's will. They write, "People often look for tangible results such as head counts or profit margins, but these only serve as partial indicators of what God considers success. The accomplishment of God's purposes is the only complete and infallible indication of success. (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 111)"

Dealing with Problems

Even in the best of circumstances, leaders and the organizations they serve will face problems. However, viewing them as a healthy part of growth and necessary component of success creates a much healthier view of the inevitable challenges that leaders face (Maxwell, 1993, p. 80). According to Maxwell (1993), "The same law, that obstacles are conditions of success, holds true in human life. A life free of all obstacles and difficulties would reduce all possibilities and powers to zero. Eliminate problems and life loses its creative tension" (p. 78). One important key in problem solving, then, is to find ways in using them to our advantage. Malphurs (2003) adds, "The idea is that we must proactively pursue God's purposes in spite of the risks. Wise servant leaders are proactive risk takers" (p. 45). Learning from their mistakes helps leaders to learn valuable lessons through experience, while cultivating that healthy

organizational environment that embraces creativity and innovation. I find that I am best able to maintain this attitude toward problem solving by inviting God into the challenge through prayer, while viewing each challenge through the best application of Scriptural principles.

Conclusion

The apostle Paul writes, “And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns” (Philippians 1:6 NLT). As a leader, I find this greatly encouraging, knowing that it affirms the fact that the believer (leader or otherwise) is a work in progress. While I, like all leaders, have a “dark side,” it can be redeemed for God’s glory (McIntosh & Rima, 2007, p. 159). I take comfort in this observation offered by McIntosh and Rima (2007):

Overcoming our dark side is not an event, it is a lifelong process that every leader must be continually working through. As we gain a progressively deeper understanding of our dark side and consistently practice the steps necessary to redeem it, we can protect ourselves and those we love from the painful, humiliating, and often devastating failures produced by the dark side (p. 217).

This inspires hope and confidence that God will not leave me until the work he is doing in my life is finally finished. That does not absolve me of responsibility, but it does help me to keep my current status as a leader in a proper perspective. I can view my ability and performance, knowing that God has already developed some good things in me, while also acknowledging the need for improvement. Yet, even in this, I find encouragement, knowing that God remains a constant resource and companion in this lifelong process.

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