CRITICAL REFLECTION PAPER ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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by

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss my personal philosophy of leadership and to interact with precedent literature and the courseware textbooks for 96100 Leadership and Management Theory. In this paper I will examine the character traits of, the role and goal of leadership that detail my philosophy.

The beginning of establishing a philosophy is first to define the subject. The attempt to define leadership is daunting at best. Of the three problems with leadership studies according to Joseph C. Rost, the second problem is directly related to definition. Rost states "that neither the scholars nor the practitioners have been able to define leadership with precision, accuracy, and conciseness so that people are able to label it correctly when they see it happening or when they engage in it" (Rost 1991, 6). Rost goes on list a few hundred definitions of lead, leader, leadership used from 1900 to 1990. Rost also holds the position that it is a myth to believe "that the researchers and scholars are making progress in understanding leadership" (Rost 1991, 33). He states "scholars and practitioners of leadership are no more sure of what leadership is in 1990 than they were in 1930" (Rost 1991, 17). His definition of leadership is "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (Rost 1991, 145).

Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* define leadership "as the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations" (Kouzes and Posner 1995, 30). Like DePree, Kouzes and Posner view leadership as an art. In *The Ascent of a Leader*, the authors Thrall, McNicol and McElrath contend that their "book is about becoming the kind of leader whom others want to follow. It's about finding God's plan for your life and following it, and about leading others where they need to go" (Thrall, McNicol and McElrath 1999, 4). Robert Dale says "leadership is an action-oriented, interpersonal influencing process. In essence

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leadership involves vision and initiative (Dale 1986, 14). John Maxwell says "After more than four decades of observing leadership within my family and many years of developing my own leadership potential, I have come to this conclusion: *Leadership is influence*" (Maxwell 1993, 1).

Like Rost, George Barna states "there is no universally accepted definition of leadership" (Barna, George 1997, 21). Barna also agrees with DePree, Kouzes and Posner by viewing leadership as an art and not a science. In his studies of leadership, Barna narrows down a number of definitions to six. Some of the following definitions and descriptions are also listed by Rost.

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus
"Leadership is …doing the right things."

James McGregor Burns
"Leadership is when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers."

Vance Packard
"Leadership is getting others to want to do something that you are convinced should be done."

Tom Peters
"Leadership is mastering paradoxes and what they stand for."

J. Oswald Sanders
"Leadership is influence."

Garry Willis
"Leadership is mobilizing others toward a goal shared by the leader and followers" (Barna 1997, 21).

Barna in the subsequent paragraphs critiques the above definitions and finds all but Willis' deficient. Barna says "a leader is one who **mobilizes**; one whose focus is influencing **people**; a person who is **goal driven**; someone who has an orientation **in common** with those

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who rely upon him for leadership; and someone who has people willing to **follow** them" (Barna 1997, 23). My criticism of Barna's definition from a Christian worldview is the lack of the spiritual dimension in his definition.

Henry and Richard Blackaby write the definition of leadership I am most comfortable with. They qualify leadership as "spiritual leadership" and say "Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda" (Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby 2001, 20).   This definition gives leadership and eternal perspective whether one is working in the "sacred" or "secular." This definition flows from Henry Blackaby's work *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. Blackaby's main thrust is to help people see where God is at work and to join Him in that work. This echoes Thrall, McNicol and McElrath's position of finding God's plan and following it. In Spiritual Leadership the main objective of the leader is to see where God is at work in the organization and join Him and to teach the followers to how to listen to God's voice and follow God's agenda.

To effectively communicate my philosophy of leadership, I first ask the question what are the character traits of a spiritual leader? What does a spiritual leader look like? Henry and Tom Blackaby in *The Man God Uses* speak directly to the character traits found in people God uses. They list the qualities of good character as holiness, a pure heart, a contrite heart, fear of God, faithfulness, obedience, seeks and loves God and is a servant of the Lord (Henry Blackaby & Tom Blackaby 1999, 9).

Holiness is being set apart for God's service. This is a relational character trait. The enduring principle is consistently working on one's relationship with God and experiencing His grace, so that when one operates in the role of leader they will consistently demonstrate what Thrall, McNicol and McElrath call environments of and relationships of grace.

A pure heart speaks of motive. It is demonstrating an alignment with the truth. A pure heart is the heart of integrity. "Integrity in all things precedes all else" (DePree 1992, 10). Bill Pollard says "We must be people of integrity seeking to do that which is right even when no one is looking and staying committed whether the test is adversity or prosperity" (Pollard 1996, 66). Kouzes and Posner quote J. W. Driscol who says "Trust has been shown to be the most significant predictor of individuals' satisfaction with their organization" (Kouzes and Posner 1995, 165). One's lack of integrity is evident. When word and deed are out of alignment the leader looks like human leaning tower of Pisa. When actions do not correspond with the words the credibility of the leader is diminished in the eyes of the followers.

A contrite heart communicates humility. One of the most important character traits I personally appreciate in a leader is one who demonstrates a willingness to do whatever is necessary to accomplish the job task. Leadership is never asking anyone to do what you are not willing to do yourself. Bill Pollard tells the story of his first assignment at ServiceMaster as senior vice president. He had a mop and bucket "at Lutheran General Hospital cleaning corridors, patient rooms, and even bathrooms and toilets" (Pollard 1996, 14). A humble heart aligns with Thrall, McNicol and McElrath's position on vulnerability. I see a humble heart as the key to servant leadership. Jesus speaking on leadership said "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 20:26 NASB95).

The fear of God is proper reverence and awe toward God. That awe is noted by Max DePree when he reminds leaders that "we are dealing with God's mix, people made in God's image, a compelling mystery" (Depree 1992, 57). "I believe that God, for reasons that we may not always understand, has provided us a population mix—a population mix for which leaders

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are held accountable" (Depree 1989, 56). Jesus reminds us that how we treat people in God's view is how we treat Him. Thrall, McNicol and McElrath remind us of the need to maintain an environment and relationships of grace. According to them environments and relationships of grace form the "rails of the character ladder."

Faithfulness is likened to integrity and honesty. Faithfulness is a key aspect to relationships. "Being faithful is more important than being successful. If we are successful in the world's eyes but unfaithful in terms of what we believe, then we fail in our efforts at insidership" (DePree 1989, 61). DePree is discussing the necessity of being inclusive and open to all members of the team. DePree speaks of the need of covenantal relationships rather than contractual relationships. "A covenantal relationship rests on shared commitment to ideas, to issues, to values, to goals, and to management processes" (Depree 1989, 51). People want to see honesty and integrity in practice by their leaders. Kouzes and Posner say "regardless of what leaders say about their own integrity, people wait to be shown." The old saying I was told as a child still rings true. "It's not what you say that counts, it's what you do." As a leader I can mouth all the right words, but those who are to follow my leadership are paying more attention to what I do and whether my actions are consistent with my words.

How do I as a leader establish integrity? Thrall, McNicol and McElrath speak of a leader's vulnerability. They contend that the leader who allows himself to be vulnerable will gain access to the lives of those he leads. What will kill my integrity is the failure of my actions to match his words. "The trust others have in us depends on our level of integrity. Integrity is essential to trust" (Thrall, McNicol and McElrath 1991, 83). DePree, Thrall, McNicol and McElrath, Kouzes and Posner all agree that paying the price and doing what one says they will do establishes creditability for the leader.

Obedience is first understood as obedience to God. The effective leader understands his accountability to God. Thrall, McNicol and McElrath discuss obedience and compliance. Obedience is not "setting aside our God-given right to question or appeal." It is a heart response saying "I'll do this because I trust you and believe it is for our best" (Thrall, McNicol and McElrath 1999, 104). Compliance says "yes" with the nodding of the head while the heart is being drug kicking and screaming "no!" Compliance is concession and the readiness to cast blame when failure occurs.

The one who seeks and loves God consistently learns what Thrall, McNicol and McElrath speak of in their discussion of trusting God and others with yourself and discovering one's destiny. The last character trait that the Blackabys' discuss is being a servant of the Lord. I view these character traits like a row of dominos. The leader who demonstrates being a servant of the Lord will serve those whom he is entrusted to lead. "To be an unselfish servant, we must become something we cannot be by nature. Our very hearts must be changed" (Thrall, McNicol and McElrath 1999, 172). The major change that must take place in the life of a servant leader is the shunning of a self-sufficient mindset and the embracing of a God-dependent mindset.   God dependency is the heart of being a servant of the Lord. I believe the foundational character traits for a person God uses are the love of God and the willingness to be God's servant. If the leader is God dependent and serves the Lord there should be a natural flow, like falling dominos, to seeking God's will, which should then naturally flow to obedience to God's will, faithfulness, reverence, awe, humility, purity and holiness.

Other character traits worthy of note include courage, which is linked to paying the price. The leader must have the courage to do what is right over what is expedient. The leader must have the courage to never sacrifice God's best for something that is good. A leader is to be

optimistic as opposed to pessimistic, lest the leader engender an "impossible to accomplish" spirit in those who follow. The leader should have a sense of humor and have a spirit of joy. Followers need not be apprehensive when the leader enters the area. Being even tempered, compassionate and forgiving when things do not go as planned flow from the grace rails of the Character and Capacity Ladder.

The research discussed thus far include a number of character traits and definitions of leadership, which I favor Blackaby's definition that "Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda." I agree that leadership is influencing people, doing the right things, doing things right, and mobilizing people to achieve shared goals.

Management says Rost "is an authority relationship between at least one manager and one subordinate who coordinate their activities to produce and sell particular goods and/or services" (Rost 1999, 145). Based upon research for this paper, leadership can be a formal or informal position of influence where as management appears to be a formal position of influence with responsibilities and obligations. The same character qualities of a leader are mandated in a manager if that person is to be effective in their position. One distinction seen between leaders and managers is in the end product. Leaders deal with ideas, concepts and relationships. Managers deal with goods and services. Another distinction as is in relation to time. Managers are dealing with present situation, with "the hear and now," the "nuts and bolts of the details of how to implement a specific plan. Leadership casts the vision and managers are the "bean counters" who work out the details of implementation. Leaders casts the vision and managers get the job accomplished. Leaders say "what if." Managers say "to do this you must…."

DePree says "leadership is a job, not a position" (DePree 1999, 168). DePree's statement implies that managers and leaders are similar. I find that I am struggling with a clear

understanding and distinction between leaders and managers. They appear to be opposite sides of the same coin. This is demonstrated in the small church or company where the leader or pastor is the manager who casts the vision and creates a plan of implementation and evaluation.

Rost sees a clear distinction between the two. I believe a leader can be a manager but not necessarily at all times or in all places. In the preface to their book, Kouzes and Posner say "The most significant contributions leaders make are not today's bottom line: they are to the long-term development of people and institutions who adapt, prosper and grow" (Kouzes & Posner 1995, xxv). Possibly an understanding of the difference between leaders and managers can be stated that leaders are concerned with "being" while managers are concerned with "doing." We will next draw our attention to the competencies, the role and goal of a spiritual leader

George Barna in *Leaders on Leadership* lists sixteen competencies of a Christian leader. These abilities cross any leadership boundary Christian or non. Kouzes and Posner, Blackaby, DePree and Maxwell agree with many competencies in Barna's list. I will select four and make a few comments.

The first competency that Barna lists is communication. All of the above authors discuss the necessity of effective communication. It is through communication that leadership motivates and inspires, casts the vision, persuades, resolves conflict, delegates authority reinforces commitment to the values of the organization, celebrates success, makes decisions, builds the team, evaluates success and failure, maintains priorities, and upholds accountability.

Communication is the initial domino that when used effectively the other competencies should fall into place. The Blackabys' say, "You cannot be a poor communicator and a good leader" (Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby 2001, 3). "I have learned that if you're a leader and you're not sick and tired of communicating, you probably aren't doing a good enough job"

(DePree 1992, 100). A leader cannot expect coworkers to read his or her mind. As a leader, I must communicate my expectations, vision, daily work assignments and any necessary information that will help my team to work effectively and efficiently. Communication is a constant flowing faucet that must never be allowed to shut off.

DePree says in *Leadership is an Art* "the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality." My understanding of defining reality is clearly establishing "who we are," "what are we doing," "why are we doing it," and "can we do it better" with the work force. This is accomplished through the leader communicating with the work force. DePree also speaks of the need for leaders to connect voice and touch. This is the relational aspect of leadership. Leaders should have trusting, cordial and even friendship relationships with members of the work force. Ron Hunt became my boss at Moody Bible Institute in 1987. He has been and continues to be one of my best friends.

The second competency Barna lists is identifying, articulating and casting a vision. I appreciate the Blackabys' treatment of vision in *Spiritual Leadership*. They discuss illegitimate and legitimate sources of vision. The vision cast for an organization is not "because it's there," or trying to duplicate the success of another organization. It's not to be from vanity or the perceived needs of the leader or the availability of various resources. The Blacakbys' also reject leader-generated vision because "leaders' best thinking will not build the kingdom of God. Why? Because people do not naturally think the way God does" (Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby 2001, 66).

As a Christian, I am to operate by revelation. That can only take place as I maintain a dynamic relationship with God through prayer, searching the scriptures and learning to hear God's voice. These characteristics demonstrate a posture of God dependency and humility.

The third competency that Barna lists is motivating people. Motivation flows into another important competency, which is recognition and reward and celebrating success. What motivates one to want to follow a leader? Salary is a motivator, but only to a point. Kouzes and Pozner discuss the need to be challenged as a motivating factor. The leader's personal integrity is another factor. "Praise is a significant and underutilized form of recognition. Not enough people make adequate use of a very powerful and inexpensive two-word reward—"thank you" (Kouzes and Posner 1995, 179). It is absolutely necessary that I respect my employees and say "thank you" for a job well done. I recently received a card from an employee who resigned her position to take another position closer to home. She thanked me for seeing her as a person and being concerned about her. Leaders make a huge mistake when they forget that people are the main resource and they are to be handled with care and prayer.

Another important competency is the necessity of delegation. As a leader it is impossible to accomplish all the necessary work tasks. Thrall, McNicol and McElrath speak of "trusting God and others with me" and "choosing vulnerability" as the first two rungs of the character ladder.

I view these two aspects of leadership as components of delegation. If my employees are my greatest and most important resource, then I must invest in them and delegation of responsibility and authority is one of the best ways to motivate, train and develop my greatest resource. Delegating authority communicates that I feel that person is important and competent. It communicates that they are worthy of the investment and that they can be trusted with more than what they are currently doing. A final word of delegation is its' necessity. A leader trains his replacement. As a leader, I am neither invincible nor irreplaceable. One of the

best gifts I can give to my organization is to effectively train my replacement, so that the job or ministry maintains cohesion whether I am present or not.

Finally what is the role and goal of a leader? The following principles are articulated by Henry and Richard Blackaby in *Spiritual Leadership*.

The role of a spiritual leader is:

1. to move people from where they are to where God wants them to be.

2. to depend upon the Holy Spirit.

3. to be accountable to God.

4. to influence all people, not just God's people.

5. to work from God's agenda.

The Leaders goal is:

1. to lead those I am entrusted with to spiritual maturity.

2. lead others to lead

3. bring Glory to God.

My Personal Philosophy of Leadership

My philosophy of leadership is to lead people to God's agenda and to teach them to listen and hear God's voice. It is to live a God dependent life and walk with integrity. My philosophy includes the appreciation of those who work with me and let them know it regularly. It was interesting that in researching this paper there was little mention by the leadership experts, who were Christian, of the "fruit of the Spirit. As a leader it is an ongoing prayer that I be filled with the Holy Spirit consistently bearing the fruit of the Spirit so that the fruit of the flesh will not be found in me. I pray for wisdom to do the right things and do things right. I do not ask anyone to do anything I am not willing to do. My philosophy is to develop my people and celebrate our

successes. It is to raise questions and cause my people to think and evaluate who we are, what we are doing, why we are doing it and can it be done more efficiently. My philosophy is to love them and give them the freedom to disagree with me, and the ability to vent their frustrations and not take it personally. My goal is to see them fully develop their potential and celebrate their growth even if it means leaving my area of responsibility. It is to see where God is working join Him and teach and lead those whom God has entrusted to me to love, choose and follow God's agenda.

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