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A Biblical Perspective of Group-Centered Groups in Organizations: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

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Leadership styles and methods greatly impact how groups function and their effectiveness. Group dynamics are also dependent on the application of the leader's style, meaning either individual, group, or organizationally centered. Leader-centered leaders can be characterized based on the active and imposing role of the leader over the group. Group-centered leaders, in contrast, may be identified by the promotion of group discussion and growth in which information is exchanged between members. This study will analyze 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 using socio-rhetorical analysis to identify the main message of the text and if there is a connection between it and group-centered leaders. Overall, church leaders should consider using group-centered leadership to promote unity and purity in their congregation through self-directed methods. This involves using a hands-off facilitating approach by enabling followers with the necessary tools for growth. Future research should be conducted to further the scope of group-centered leaders in Scripture.

It is not uncommon for media-based ministers to name their organizations and ministries after themselves. Broadcasting-based Christian ministers have been popular among consumers. Some of the largest broadcasting ministries have included *Billy Graham's Classic Crusades*, *Joel Osteen Ministries*, *The 700 Club with Pat Robertson*, *T.D. Jakes Ministries*, *The Jim and Tammy Show*, and *Joyce Meyer Ministries*. The common denominator with each of these ministries is that they market the names and personalities of the people bringing forth the message.

While most local church ministers and pastors do not name their church after themselves, an increasing number of them are setting themselves up as the pinnacle of their ministry success, creating more of a cult of personality rather than a community of believers. The modern church has been equated with a pastor, exchanging the plurality of the congregation with a singular entity. Therefore, when a pastor leaves a church, the church descends into chaos because of the structure previously created (Zens, 2011).

Televangelists and media-based ministers have built a brand out of their personalities by which they find success in publishing devotionals, books, podcasts, and other modern media. While these resources may make decent companions to the work done by the local church, a socio-rhetorical analysis of the writing of Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 reveals that the church setting should be different and centered more on the whole congregation rather than on the minister only.

A plain reading of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 can offer a surface understanding of Paul's primary message about church leaders and workers. The discipline of socio-rhetorical analysis can help deduce a more relevant and specific meaning in this text as it relates to group and organizational structure. This process was originated by Robbins (1996) and was furthered by Henson et al., (2020). The main components of socio-rhetorical analysis include inner texture analysis, inter-texture analysis, and social and cultural texture analysis, all of which contribute to the meaning of the text.

Theoretical and Literature Base

Leader-centered and group-centered groups have been the subject of limited study exegetically, quantitatively, and qualitatively. The following section of literature examines the existing, but limited, empirical literature on leader-centered and group-centered groups. Additionally, 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 has been the subject of extensive study in the realm of conflict, conflict resolution, and cooperation (Bailey, 2011; Ciampa, 2010; Henderson, 2008; Karwowski, 2005; Mihaila, 2009; Pickett, 1997; Starling, 2014). This literature review will also examine the previous research done on this periscope.

Leader-Centered Groups

According to Faith Communities Today, there has been a drop in median worship attendance among Christian congregations in the United States from 137 in 2000 to 65 in 2020 (Thumma, 2020). As small and large congregations continue to get smaller, it is important for Christian researchers to consider how the leader impacts group dynamics. Leadership styles and methods greatly impact how groups function and their

effectiveness. Group dynamics are also dependent on the application of the leader's style, meaning either individual, group, or organizationally centered (Haynes, 2012).

Leadership styles have been explored extensively in organization and group contexts, focused both on the Christian Church and Biblical texts. However, little research exists on the application of styles, meaning with a focus on the individual (the leader) or the followers (the group) in the life of the Christian Church. Leader-centered leaders focus on being directive to the group (Wischmeier, 1995). This leader is more traditional, taking an active role in the group, imposing their role over others, and giving more direct feedback (Haynes, 2012).

The leader-centered group structure can be successful in the secular realm, as qualities such as productivity, organizational culture, and onboarding can be increased with a single individual as the main influencer (Wischmeier, 1995; Haynes, 2012). In the Christian world, leader-centered churches can also be helpful in seeing transformational changes come about in individuals. As Bass' (1985) theory noted, role models are useful in helping to invigorate change in individuals toward a common ideal. While leader-centered churches can be successful, they are not the primary prescription for structure biblically.

Group-Centered Groups

In contrast to the leader-centered leader, group-centered leaders focus mainly on facilitating the group's growth and progress (Wischmeier, 1995). Further, the dynamic of these groups is more dynamic and democratic, raising the voices of others (Haynes, 2012). The concern for the leader in this context is not on their own goal or desired outcome as traditional leaders are, but rather on equipping their followers and group members to the best of his ability. One main identifier is that group-centered leaders generally guide group discussion and allow self-directed progression while leader-centered leaders are unilateral, giving information and expecting the group members to receive and follow (Wischmeier, 1995).

Another benefit of group-centered leaders and groups is that they promote diversity and inclusion. Group satisfaction, job satisfaction, obligation, and divergent thinking have all been found to be increased within group-centered groups as compared to leader-centered ones (Chun et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2017; Lorinkova et al., 2017; Yang, 2009).

Background and Previous Study of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

The Apostle Paul is attributed as being the author of 1 Corinthians. The Apostle Paul was, by trade, a tentmaker and, at an early age, was sent to Jerusalem to study and become a Pharisaic teacher (Ciampa, 2010). His upbringing in the Pharisaic community led him to have a strong foundation in the Torah and Hebrew scriptures, which is evident in his writing. As such, there are clear distinctions by which 1 Corinthians can be attributed to Paul, including the use of Hebrew parallelisms which identify larger patterns throughout Scripture (Bailey, 2011). He noted in the first verse of

the text and as is made evident in the style of writing (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 1:1). In addition to Paul noting that he authored the letter, he made note of a special “signature” by stating, “The greeting is in my own hand – that of Paul,” (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 16:21). This signature of authorship is present across many of his other works and communicates that Paul did not personally write the letter himself, but used amanuensis, or secretary (Baker, 2009).

The church in Corinth that Paul addressed in his epistle was located in an economically well, cosmopolitan city that focused on the status of individuals and self (Ciampa, 2010). The cultural impact of the surrounding city that the church was in was significant enough for Paul to write a letter and address the motif of self-interest and status. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to the church in Corinth for a purpose, which is made evident in the specific individuals, scandals, and conflicts he addressed (Bailey, 2011). This occasional writing makes 1 Corinthians stand out as compared to the other Pauline writings. A major theme that occurs throughout the book is that of unity. One of Paul’s main purposes in his writing of 1 Corinthians was to unify the congregation and prevent further conflicts from arising (Ciampa, 2010).

As researchers have frequently studied the contents of 1 Corinthians the overwhelming application seems to be in the category of unity (Karwowski, 2005; Mihaila, 2009; Pickett, 1997). Mihaila (2009) noted that viewing all of 1 Corinthians 1-4 together, Paul wrote concerning earthly versus heavenly wisdom to combat disunity within the church based on a human understanding of wise leaders. This would explain the comparisons made between Paul and Apollos. Similarly, Pickett (1997) identified the overall moral concern of 1 Corinthians to be the Christian community and its unity. This unity could be sustained through the purity and holiness of the community, driving each individual toward the same ideal (Pickett, 1997). There have been exegetical studies on 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 in relation to Christian unity, however, there are little to none conducted on group-centered groups. Similarly, while there are quantitative and qualitative foundations for the benefits of group-centered groups as compared to leader-centered ones, there has not been significant exegetical support. Therefore, based on the existing literature in examining 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, the research questions at hand are:

Q1: What is the primary message of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9?

Q2: What connection, if any, is there between the message of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 and Group-Centered Groups theory?

Methodology

The selected methodology for this exegetical analysis is socio-rhetorical theory. The specific areas of focus are inner texture analysis, inter-texture analysis, and social and cultural texture analysis (Henson et al., 2020). This methodology is based on Robbins’ (1996) process and supported by Henson et al.’s (2020) process for understanding the intricacies of scripture.

Inner Texture

The hermeneutical discipline of socio-rhetorical analysis seeks to tackle the meaning of Scripture by paying close attention to the text itself, as well as the place the text had in the time and place of the author and audience, then applying meaning to a contemporary perspective (Henson et al, 2020). Inner texture analysis is the first dimension of this which analyzes the individual parts of the text that contribute to and form the whole (Henson et al., 2020). Within inner texture analysis, there are several primary areas of texture and pattern to consider including repetitive, progressive, opening-middle-end, argumentative, and sensory-aesthetic. By observing the language of the text, the analyst can deduce meaning from words, patterns, and literary devices used by the author (Robbins, 1996).

Repetitive Texture and Pattern

Repetitive texture and pattern within the text describes the reoccurring appearance of words or phrases within the selected text (Robbins, 1996). These repetitions reveal greater patterns and topics of consideration. The data in Table 1 highlights the repetition of names and topics in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9. The names of Paul and Apollos are repeated twice in the text while God is repeated five times, three of which occur in the same verse. This repetition of three in the last verse is significant, as it gives insight into the primary point of Paul, which is that he and Apollos, as servants, as well as the church in Corinth, as the field and building, belong to God (Ciampa et al., 2010).

Similarly, the twice repeated question of “What?” in relation to the reference by Paul to himself and Apollos take the emphasis from the individual people and redirects it back to the work and function they perform (Morris, 1985). This is significant because, as Paul emphasized in the last verse with the threefold repetition of “God’s,” the work and function of Paul and Apollos all are because they belong to the Lord. This further reveals Paul intent to communicate with the Corinthians that they, too, belong to God, not to Paul or Apollos (Ciampa et al., 2010).

Table 1

Repetitive Texture in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

Verse						
5	Apollos	What then?	Servants	Lord		
	Paul	And what?				
6	I (Paul)				Planted	
	Apollos			God	Watered	Growth
					Growth	

				Plant		
7			God	Water	Growth	
				Growth		
				Plants		
8				Waters	Reward	
				Labor		
			God's			
9		Workers	God's	Field		
			God's			
Total	4	2	2	4	10	3

Progressive Texture and Pattern

Progressive texture and pattern works in conjunction with the repetitive elements of the text to unfold the advancement of what the author is communicating (Henson et al., 2020). The primary form of progressive texture present in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 is development. Development occurs when a theme shifts within the text to unfold a new meaning (Henson et al., 2020). Paul used the metaphor of crops and agriculture. This metaphor has three primary forms in the text. The first is the illustration of the topic by the image, the image itself, and the point of similarity revealed for the comparison (Osborne, 2010).

The illustration was first introduced when Paul wrote "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth," (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 3:6). Paul continued to reiterate the metaphor, more directly revealing the imagery. Finally, he concluded by drawing a connection between the metaphor and the message, namely that Paul, Apollos, and other ministers are the workers, the planting and watering is the teaching and admonishing by them, and God's field is the congregation receiving the letter (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 3:9).

Open-Middle-End Texture and Pattern

Open-middle-end texture describes the purpose behind the communication in Biblical writing by analyzing the plot, including the exposition, rising action, and resolution, to deduce what the author intended for their audience to understand (Henson et al., 2020). Within the scope of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, the opening texture is the shift from the people of Apollos and Paul and to their function as servants of the Lord. The middle texture is Paul's explanation of the work that he and Apollos did in terms of

agriculture. The end texture and resolution of the text is that the Lord is the one who provides the growth for His kingdom.

Argumentative Texture and Pattern

Argumentative texture and pattern describe the thesis of the text in question (Henson et al., 2020). Argumentative patterns include the structural elements of an argument or position, namely the thesis, defense points, rationale, analogy, example, and conclusion. Within the scope, Paul's primary thesis is that the whole church, including the leaders and congregation alike, belong to God. He established this position by asking the questions, "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul?" (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 3:5). Immediately after asking, Paul answered by saying servants of the Lord.

The second aspect of the argumentative pattern Paul built was his example and analogy of the church as being a field. This field required workers, Paul and Apollos, who planted and watered in cooperation (Ciampa et al., 2010). The growth, however, was beyond their control and reliant on the Lord. Paul concluded this example and brought it to his main point by specifically stating that the Corinthians church is God's field (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 3:9).

Sensory-Aesthetic Texture and Pattern

Sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern refers to idioms that bring sensory-specific language into illustration (Henson et al., 2020). There are three main forms of sensory-aesthetic textures and patterns present in socio-rhetorical analysis, including emotion-fused thought primarily concerning the eyes and heart, self-expressive speech primarily concerning the mouth and ears, and purposeful action primarily concerning the hands and feet (Robbins, 1996). The primary form of this pattern in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 is purposeful action.

The metaphor of agriculture present provokes a specific sensory aesthetic for those who would hear Paul's letter during the time it was written. As the listener would hear that Paul planted and Apollos watered, they would be able to connect those purposeful actions to the labor involved in church leadership (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 3:6). For the listener to then hear a break in this metaphor with Paul communicating that neither him nor Apollos matters as God supplies the growth, would make them reflect on the harvest that they experience each year. Normally for the farmer, if they do the planting, watering, and nutrients properly, then growth automatically happens (Ciampa et al., 2010). However, Paul's use of this metaphor to provoke sensory connections reveals that despite the labor he supplied, only the Lord knows what the efficacy and outcome would be (Morris, 1985).

Intertexture

The world surrounding the writing of Scripture lends significant insight into understanding the text. Intertextual analysis refers to the place of a Scripture by taking into consideration the outside world that perhaps shaped it (Henson et al., 2020).

Intertextual analysis brings clarity to a scope by bringing in important background information, as it provides the context for when, where, and to whom a Scripture was written (Henson et al., 2020). Intertextual analysis dives into the oral-scribal, cultural, social, and reciprocal textures of the scope.

Oral-Scribal Intertexture

Oral-scribal intertexture describes the presence of outside sources in the closed source of the text (Henson et al., 2020). This may include other Biblical texts from the Torah or other works from prophetic literature. There are several primary forms of oral-scribal intertexture, however, the one present in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 is recontextualization.

Recontextualization in Biblical literature involves the author reframing or reciting a previous or “old” story in a new light for the audience (Henson et al., 2020). The recontextualization present in this text is the belief of the Israelites that the Lord causes the earth to grow as is evident in the creation narrative (Ciampa et al., 2010). Because 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 is a narrative that cites a narrative, there is no direct reference to the “old” story that Paul gives. However, one of the most explicit references is to Psalm 65 where the author comes to the Lord to give his sacrifice and fulfill the vow he made. Specifically, verses 9-10 evoke a similar repetition and image to 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, as the Lord prepared grain, watered the group, and caused the earth to overflow with produce and harvest (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020.).

Another explanation for the recontextualization in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 could be seen in Ezekiel 17:5, which again attributes the planting of the seed, fertile soil, watering, and growth to the Lord (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020.). Paul took the imagery from Psalm 65 and Ezekiel 17 and drew on it for the Corinthians by reframing the agricultural process to emphasize that the Lord used him and Apollos to plant and water and that the Lord ultimately is responsible for the growth of the church, just as He is for the earth (Ciampa et al., 2010).

Cultural Intertexture

Cultural intertexture describes the inside knowledge that both the author and reader have that the interpreter is missing (Henson et al., 2020). In the case of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, cultural references are present in the agricultural comparison made. While any Jews present during the reading of 1 Corinthians in Corinth would have been privy to the oral-scribal intertexture and allusion to Psalm 65 and Ezekiel 17, the others present from diverse backgrounds would not have had the same knowledge. However, the metaphor of agriculture itself is a form of cultural intertexture that everyone would have been aware of. The social dynamics of Corinth were greatly impacted by its geographical location being between the Corinthian Gulf and the Saronic Gulf. This location guaranteed commercial prosperity (Morris, 1985). Further, this city was a capital, promoting frequent visits from Roman political figures and speakers (Ciampa et al., 2010). The individuals in Corinth were initially Romans, as the city was replanted after being destroyed, but grew to include a significant population of Greeks and Jews,

too. These factors all made Corinth a cosmopolitan city, intellectual, prosperous, and morally corrupt (Morris, 1985).

This agricultural illustration Paul used would have resonated with all congregational members. Because of the commerce in the city of Corinth, each member would have been familiar with the agriculture process. Paul used this metaphor to his advantage as he built to the culmination of saying that the planter and waterer work in cooperation toward the same goal of seeing growth and product (Pratt, 2000). This further emphasized his point that the leader of the Corinthians did not matter, as their end goals were like that of those who were commerce-minded; increase production to increase profit for the business, which in the metaphor is growth for the church.

Pickett (1997) suggested that, from 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, Paul and Apollos were probably opposing ideals in the eyes of the Corinthians, who valued image and status. Apollos may have been a wealthy, strong individual with influence that conducted his ministry in style, while Paul was weaker and poor. Paul, then, would have written 1 Corinthians 3 from the perspective of valuing the function of ministry over the style of ministry to promote the theme of unity among believers (Pickett, 1997). Mihaila (2009) furthered this perspective after evaluating Acts 18 and Luke's perspective on the rhetoric of Apollos, which might have promoted a "campaign" mentality, thus causing division.

Social Intertexture

Social intertexture describes any social structure language present in the text that the original audience would have been familiar with despite cultural location (Henson et al., 2020). Of the four categories as defined by Robbins (1996), the social intertexture present in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 is social roles. Paul used two words to describe the social role that he and Apollos have in the church. The first word used was "servants" or δῆκονοι which was typically used to describe a table attendant or assistant (Arndt et al., 2000). The word "servants" also has the sense of being a worker of an unskilled trade, which emphasizes the later description of Paul and Apollos of farm work (Ciampa et al., 2010).

Another element of social roles present in the scope is related to personal identity. Three times in the final verse the subjects of the text, Paul, Apollos, and the Church, were referred to as "God's," or belonging to God. In the ancient world and culture of the Corinthians, most often someone was identified by the question, "Whose are you?" Social roles, including slavery and sexual ethics, were perceived in terms of property and possession (Ciampa et al., 2010). Therefore, Paul chose this possessive language to evoke the idea within the Corinthians that they were not possessions of Paul or Apollos, but rather all of them were belonging to God.

Reciprocal Intertexture

Robbins' (1996) original method of intertextual analysis fell short in that it did not leave room for placing the text observed within the context of the entire canon of the

Bible. Studying the entirety of the Bible and placing portions of Scripture accurately within its frame is significant to having full illumination of what the text means (Henson et al., 2020). The premise of Paul's metaphor comparing the church to a field is reminiscent of Isaiah 61:3, which concluded by noting that those who are mourning in Zion, "will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020.).

The entirety of Isaiah 61 detailed how, before He would appear in total glory, God would send an Anointed One to bring salvation (Smith, 2009). It is no coincidence that Jesus, the Anointed One and Messiah, quoted the first two verses of Isaiah 61 when He taught in the synagogue in Luke 4:16-21. Jesus self-identified with the first two verses, as He was the one to proclaim the full liberating, forgiving, and redemptive Word of God in flesh (Edwards, 2015). Jesus, however, omitted from His reading the second half of Isaiah 61:2, which noted that, in addition to proclaiming the year of jubilee, He would proclaim the day of vengeance of the Lord. The reason for this omission is likely that Jesus' first coming was, as Isaiah 61 illustrated, intended to be the securing of salvation, not the execution of vengeance or judgment, which would come later (Stein, 1992).

Similarly, the allusion that Paul picked up in his illustration from Isaiah 61:3 of "the planting of the Lord" is really the foretelling of the Church. These plantings are only grown by the Lord, and the care they receive is also from the Lord in the form of servants such as Paul and Apollos. They, as Paul emphasized, belong only to the Lord, and are intended to glorify Him (Smith, 2009).

Sacred Texture

Henson et al (2020) defined sacred texture analysis as being concerned primarily with the relationship between man and God, as well as religious life. The relationship, dynamics, and issues between the human and divine are analyzed in a piece of literature. Robbins' (1996) method of sacred texture included several categories of consideration, including deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics.

Deity

Describing the deity aspect of a text sets the stage for sacred texture (Robbins, 1996). Deity relates specifically to the role of God in the text as either a background or mainstay (Henson et al., 2020). In the span of these five verses, God is used five times. In the final verse of the scope, God is juxtaposed in relation to man three times, "we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building," (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 3:9). The use of this possessive noun three times puts an emphasis on the divine action present within the agricultural process of God's kingdom (Morris, 1985).

The two metaphors present within the closing text were that of a field and of a building. These two metaphors illustrate one of Paul's primary points, there cannot be

division within the Church based on which leader one follows. A functional field and building is not fragmented or divided, but rather unified and functioning for the same purpose (Pratt, 2000). This can only be achieved by each person recognizing that they are God's possession.

Holy Persons

The holy persons component of sacred texture analysis refers to the impact and role that those who specifically have a closer or more permeating relationship to God. These people may be representatives or communicators of God, such as Moses, or it could be someone divine themselves, such as Christ (Henson et al., 2020). Within the scope of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, the two holy persons present are Apollos and Paul.

Apollos was a friend of Paul who was also a church leader. Acts 18 details some of Apollos' ministry as a traveling evangelist and apologist who preached and instructed the church. He is a holy person in this text as he was seen as working with the Lord as a leader in the church. Paul, the second holy person mentioned in the text, is also the author of the text. Paul was a leader of the church who, before he was a Christian, was sent to school to be a Pharisaic teacher (Ciampa et al., 2010). Because he was a Jew who became an apostle to the Gentiles, he had the unique ability to address Jewish believers and Gentile ones, such as those in Corinth, alike (Ciampa et al., 2010). Paul served as a holy person in this scope as he authored at least half of the New Testament.

Divine History

The past, future, or present and specific events that unfold in a text pertaining to the purposes of God to bring about salvation are identified in the text through the process of divine history (Henson et al., 2020). This scope has the texture of divine history in identifying the future event of each worker of God's kingdom receiving their reward according to his labor (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 3:8). This reward comes for the laborer in their eternal life with the Lord.

The concept that Paul referenced was previously explained by Jesus in John 4:36-38. Jesus' metaphor was referencing the work that those who preceded Him did prepare the "harvest" of believers and how He now has come into the field to finish the reaping. Jesus, though, referenced that He and those who labored rejoice together in the harvest despite their separate roles in the process (Kruse, 2003). Paul, in a sense, picked up this metaphor and applied it to himself and Apollos. He noted that the future rejoicing and reward for the laborers is that they will, in eternity, get their reward and see those who received from their labor.

Human Commitment

The divine calls of being a Christian, discipleship, or other formal offices within the text, as well as the human compliance and support to those positions, is defined as the human commitment element of the text (Henson et al., 2020). This is the major element present within the scope, as it is the driving texture of the narrative. The three

dimensions of human commitment present within this text are Paul and Apollos' functions as church leaders, the congregation's function as being unified in pursuing the Lord, and every party's commitment as believers in Christ.

The call of Paul and Apollos is illustrated through the metaphor of planting and watering (Morris, 1985). These functions represent that of the church leaders and unfold through the progressive texture. The call of Paul for the Corinthians in this scope is unity under the Lord, despite the leader. This is illustrated through the metaphor of the church being the Lord's field and building in which unity is necessary. Finally, each is God's possession, as the repetition at the end of the scope indicates, indicating that each has a responsibility to the Christian call (Ciampa, 2010).

Religious Community

The larger component of human commitment is religious community, in that it involves the grouping and growing of individuals together for the purposes of God (Henson et al., 2020). The main purpose of the scope of study is to help individual believers function together as the church in unity (Morris, 1985). The Corinthians began to identify with their leaders rather than the Lord. This identification ultimately led to a divided and fractioned church. This was Paul's occasion for writing to the church, as he had heard from an outside source of the issues facing the Corinthians (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 1:11). He wanted to ensure that the church would come back into unity and function well as a community of believers (Ciampa, 2010).

Ethics

Finally, ethics describes the moral obligation to think, act, and be a certain way to align with values, whether instituted by a human or the divine (Robbins, 1996). The ethical issue that Paul addressed in the Corinthians was identification with the Lord, or idolatry. Many of the Corinthians had begun to identify with the servants of the Lord, Paul and Apollos, rather than with the Lord Himself (Ciampa, 2010). This led the Corinthians to focus on the individuals they identified with and, in a sense, make them their idols. The Lord instructed the Israelites in the Old Testament and the new covenant believers in the New Testament to not give themselves to idols, but rather to submit to Him. This rule was being violated slowly by the Corinthians. Rather than identifying with the Lord, whom they belonged to, they used their identification with either Paul or Apollos to mark their owner.

Another ethical concern of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 is that of the Christian community. The Christian community was defined in the Old and New Testaments as being a place where holiness and unity are present (Pickett, 1997). Unity in the community is sustained through the commitment to purity and holiness of each individual member. This concept contrasts what the Corinthians were actively doing by making commitments to leaders rather than to the Lord.

Discussion of Analysis

The primary message of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 is unity in the local Christian community. Because the members of the Corinthian church became more focused on their leader, either Paul or Apollos, they were disunified. Paul recommended that they pursue unity by recognizing that they are God's possession. To illustrate this for the Corinthians, Paul first noted that he and Apollos belong to God as His workers. He then expanded the metaphor to show that the church in Corinth is God's field, belonging to Him the same way that Paul and Apollos did (Morris, 1985). The social element of belonging in the time of the writing of this letter also lends to the concept of possession that Paul outlined (Ciampa et al., 2010).

Viewed in relation to group-centered versus leader-centered groups, 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 reveals insights into the dynamic of leaders in their group. Paul presented the congregation of the Corinthian church as a group that remains together despite the leaders that come and go. Paul came and went in the Corinthian church as one who planted and continued instruction from another location while the congregation itself continued. Further, Paul presented Apollos in a similar light; he came, watered, and left, allowing the Corinthians to grow and flourish as the Lord would allow.

This hands-off and distant instruction is reflective of group-centered leadership. The goal of the leader in group-centered groups is to facilitate the group's growth in a dynamic way, raising up others from within (Wischmeier, 1995). This pattern is evident in the functions that Paul laid out for himself and Apollos in 1 Corinthians 3, as well as the instructions laid out for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020). Further, the goal of group-centered leaders is to equip their followers for self-guided growth and progress rather than simply giving information and expecting the members to follow unilaterally (Wischmeier, 1995). Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians, which had the ethical background of promoting unity and purity within the Christian community, modeled the group-centered leadership methods by providing the Corinthians with the tools needed to achieve purity and unity (Pickett, 1997).

Considering the above research on 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 and the presence of group-centered leadership within, it would benefit Christian leaders and communities to consider embracing group-centered leadership within their contexts. Group-centered leaders focus on facilitating the group's growth and progress by allowing the voices of individuals to be heard. The desire of the leader is not to promote their own agenda or goal, but rather to equip the followers to achieve theirs on their own (Wischmeier, 1995; Haynes, 2012).

Individual church members would benefit from this model, as not all individuals will be corralled to grow in the same direction. Seeing as the church is diverse and comprised of many different individuals who have different strengths and weaknesses, this model of group-centered leadership would give everyone an opportunity to grow (*New American Standard Bible*, 1960/2020, 1 Cor. 12). Further, there would still be

opportunity for the Word to be preached and taught outside of the conventional pulpit, which would give necessary tools for individuals to use to grow.

Not only does a group-centered model pose many benefits to individuals, but it also solves long-standing organizational difficulties within the church. This is because the group-centered model promotes a plurality of input from diverse individuals from many different backgrounds. The modern church is typically identified by a pastor, especially in a single elder-led congregational polity structure. Churches that identify themselves by their pastor or that have structured themselves around a single leader have exchanged the plurality of the congregation with a singular entity. Paul's teaching proposed an opposite perspective, where a plurality of laborers contributes to the growth of the group. By having a plurality, this can be achieved. Further, the dilemma of a church without a pastor can be remedied with a plurality of laborers to fill the gap until the position is filled (Zens, 2011).

Conclusion

Group-centered leadership is a useful tool for Christian leaders in the church setting today. In a culture where church leaders and personalities take precedence over healthy church structure, group-centered leadership can be beneficial for cultivating an environment in which unity may be achieved. Group-centered leaders take a hands-off approach by enabling their followers or group with the tools needed to grow. They then facilitate growth in a dynamic way that allows for self-discovery and realization. In the church context, this can be accomplished against the background of the Word of God and in a context by which understanding the Word is a guided, group process. Further, the group-centered model invites a plurality of leadership and input, like the dynamic of Paul and Apollos. Overall, this method should be considered and explored further in the modern church setting.

There is significant room for future study in the realm of exegetical studies and group-centered leadership. Topics of future study to consider would include how identity is impacted by group-centered leadership as exemplified in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9. Another consideration would be an exegetical study on how the biblical examples of small home churches compare with group-centered leadership. Finally, the functional aspect of group-centered leadership within the church context should be explored by implementing group-centered leadership in organizations and studying the outcome.

About the Author

Maddison Frye serves as Executive Pastor at her local churches, South Bay Community Church in National City, California, and Hemet Church in Hemet, California. She also serves as the director of North Central University with SoCal's academic program. Before beginning her pursuit of a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership from Regent University, Maddison earned her M.A. in Christian Leadership from Dallas Theological Seminary following a Bachelor of Ministry from South West Bible College. Much of Maddison's work focuses on how to improve the church's function as an organization,

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