THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN THE CONTEXT OF LEADERSHIP

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In the study of leadership many models have been proposed based upon sociological research and concepts. While there is a need for a values based model of leadership, values have often been an addendum to a more empirical base for leadership models. Theology can add to this study through applying Biblical studies to the field of leadership and leadership theory, especially in the area of values. This study begins with the nine fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23 and contextualizes them into leadership theory. The leadership model develops a values based theory. This model includes different aspects of leadership from relational issues to vision, integrity, and humility. Though this model is based upon values as listed in Scripture it contains behaviors that could be validated empirically.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the study of leadership, many areas have been examined in the search for a foundation for leadership and its proper development. Leadership has been a topic of study for much of the twentieth century but there is no universal consensus on the definition of leadership except that all the definitions include the ability to influence others to accomplish objectives (House, Hanges, Javidian, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). As a result many theories of leadership focused primarily on behavior like leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 1995), transformational leadership, and the skills or style approach (Northouse, 2004), while others focused on the culture of the organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2006) including an emphasis on changing leadership behavior.

However, into this conversation has entered the discussion of virtues in leadership. Are virtues valuable in leadership and, if so, which virtues; who determines these needed attributes? Servant leadership has brought some virtues into the leadership discussion such as love, or agapao, in leadership (Patterson, 2003), while others have brought humility to the discussion as important for effective leadership (J.
Collins, 2001; Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004). In addition, there have been issues of spirituality brought into the discussion of leadership recently. At the turn of the century came an accompanying turn to spirituality in the study of leadership with some descriptive approaches to Christian leadership (Bekker, 2009). In the integrative definition of leadership Winston and Patterson (2006) bring together values and spirituality in showing leadership based upon the Beatitudes of Matthew 7 in the Christian Scriptures declaring this to be the base of the virtuous theory of Servant Leadership. Can virtues in the context of spirituality, specifically Christian spirituality, provide foundational issues for leadership in the contemporary context?

One result of neglecting the spiritual dimension in leadership is a void of values; but recently, in response to many public failures, a movement of spirituality is awakening in businesses across the country (Gibbons, 2008b). This return to spirituality includes a focus on values in leadership. The core spiritual values are not only desirable in themselves, they also create greater personal competence and organizational effectiveness and these values are reflected either directly or indirectly by the fruit of the Spirit as described by Paul in the book of Galatians (Gibbons, 2008b). The fruit of the Spirit reflect core values that are spiritual and can build a foundation for effective leadership. These characteristics, as found in Galatians 5, can then help form a values-based leadership model that is ontological, theological, and effective. Spirituality and one’s theology help to form the person or one’s being and from this personhood one responds to life. On some level leadership begins with the inner person; once formed with important values, the person lives out those values that become a foundation for effectiveness in life and leading.

Galatians 5 lists nine fruit of the Spirit that seem important for spirituality as well as being core values for life and leadership. Certain values are important for organizational effectiveness and are spiritual: love, joy, peace, patience and kindness are exact matches with Paul’s list in Galatians. Other important values of equanimity, humility, integrity and service so closely align with the fruit of the Spirit of self-control, gentleness, faithfulness, and generosity that they are synonymous (Gibbons, 2008b). The fruit of the Spirit represents the outworking of the spiritual life of the Christian through the indwelling Christ bringing the person to real maturity (Dunham, 1982). This fruit grows and is expressed so that the Spirit may bring the person to new life in Christ (Dunham). This Christian spirituality is connected to these nine fruit of the Spirit producing life. So, what are these nine fruit and what do they look like; can they be understood so as to be useful in understanding and developing leadership?

II. THE NINE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The fruit of the Spirit consists of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, which represent godly ethical characteristics for all believers — including leadership - that reside in the heart of a person (Collins, 2006). This good fruit makes up the character of the leader (Collins). Character is of vital importance to leadership since externally it provides the point of trust that links leaders with followers and internally it provides the leader’s deepest source of bearings and strongest source of restraint in the use of power (Guinness, 2000). Since these nine characteristics are considered important for organizational
effectiveness and foundational for character in values leadership it becomes important to properly define and describe these nine qualities. In addition, it is important to find these nine qualities in organizational and leadership studies to develop convergence between the spiritual values for character and the effectiveness of leadership.

The Fruit of Love

The list in Galatians begins with love. It is eminently fitting that love (agape) should be at the head of the list of virtues for love is the measure and goal of freedom wherein one is set free for the purpose of mutual service in one’s ability to place themselves in loving service to others (Fung, 1988). The key here is not power but love; faith working through love is the sign of true life and this love leads to mutual service (Wright, 2000). Love as an inner characteristic of a person is manifest in service to others or by serving. Love in this form of the word is serving others even though the love may be unmerited (Boice, 1976; Boles, 1993; Hansen, 1994; Kiehl, 1991; Longenecker, 1990). This love concerns the will just as much as it does the emotions; it is a deliberate effort never to seek anything but the best even for those that seek the worst (Barclay, 1958). It is an attitude of appreciation resulting from a conscious evaluation and choice – alternatively, it could be said to be devotion (Friberg & Friberg, 2000). Love is not only an issue in theological discussions, it is also an item of interest in the organizational literature as well. Love is the cornerstone of servant leadership; it is moral love or doing the right things at the right time for the right reasons and the leader must consider the needs of the follower. This includes understanding the gifts and talents of the individual follower to focus on them first (Patterson, 2003). Patterson’s model of servant leadership begins with agapao love which leads to service with outward behavior toward others (Winston, 2007). Love, as found in connection to Galatians 5:22, is agape which is the noun form of agapao (Friberg & Friberg, 2000). This type of leader focuses on the individuals who are being led as an expression of love. This love leads to serving the best interest of others, illuminating the corporate culture, and freeing the leader from self-doubt and self-imposed criticisms (Patterson).

Love is an attribute not only of spirituality as found described in Galatians 5:22 and other places in the Christian Scriptures but also of organizational effectiveness and an important component of leadership. Leadership is a relationship between those who lead and those who follow and effective leaders encourage the hearts of their constituents to carry on through genuine acts of caring to draw people forward (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Love is an important component of leadership that begins in the person. It can have theological roots but manifests in attitudes and behaviors that provide for leadership effectiveness. Some of these behaviors include serving others (Boice, 1976; Boles, 1993; Kiehl, 1991; Longenecker, 1990), devotion (Friberg & Friberg, 2000), doing the right things (Patterson, 2003), understanding and focusing on the needs and talents of the followers (Patterson, 2003), and genuine acts of caring to encourage the hearts of the followers (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). In this context love is follower focused, considering the needs and best interests of others freeing the leaders from self-focus.
The Fruit of Joy

The immediate question is how can joy, such an emotive word, be a part of effective leadership in the modern context? This word denotes an inner feeling of delight or gladness or a state of blessedness in the person (Friberg & Friberg, 2000). The author of Galatians in another place instructs his readers to be always joyful and to rejoice with others who are rejoicing (Fung, 1988). How can one be always joyful or lead with joy? Joy is not the same as happiness; whereas happiness depends on circumstances, joy comes from a relationship with God. Through joy, the spirit of man is satisfied bringing an important characteristic for leadership of inner confidence in the midst of a storm (Collins, 2006). This joy does not depend on circumstances but is found in triumph over difficult circumstances (Boice, 1976; Boles, 1993; Bruce, 1982; Cole, 1996; Longenecker, 1990; MacGorman, 1971; Stamm & Blackwelder, 1953). Joy is part of an individual’s state of being that develops a confidence in the midst of pressure and trouble. One cannot lead effectively from a position of anxiety and distress in the time of difficult situations or important decisions. This joy is unperturbed by sorrow and trouble but gives proof of its power in the midst of them (Fung). In an organizational setting joy would manifest itself in the leader in both positive and negative situations. Positively it would manifest as an inner delight or confidence in the performance of leadership in the organization. In the negative sense it would manifest as a calm presence or confidence in the midst of pressure and difficult situations or decisions.

Self-confidence includes other concepts such as self-esteem and self-efficacy and most studies on leaders traits find that self-confidence is positively related to effectiveness and advancement. These leaders are more persistent in difficult objectives despite initial problems and setbacks (Yukl, 2002). This calm assurance of one’s ability to accomplish difficult tasks in difficult circumstances becomes an important aspect of leadership effectiveness especially in adverse circumstances. Joy is expressed through confidence in the midst of pressure and self-efficacy for effective leadership.

The Fruit of Peace

Peace means more than the negative notion of an absence of war and trouble; it denotes rather a positive state of wholeness, soundness, and prosperity (Fung, 1988). Peace is a disposition characterized by inner rest and harmony as a state of reconciliation with God and figuratively as an agreement between persons (Friberg & Friberg, 2000). This word expresses total well-being, harmony or wholeness in one’s soul (Barclay, 1958; Boles, 1993; Bruce, 1982; Dunham, 1982; Huxtable & Croskery, 1962; Longenecker, 1990; Stamm & Blackwelder, 1953). Peace is not the absence of conflict in life but the ability to cope with it (Collins, 2006). Peace is wholeness in one’s soul where all of the parts fit together; there is no inner conflict giving the peaceful person not only the ability to have confidence in the midst of pressure but also the presence of mind to make effective decisions to bring change in the midst of the trouble. Joy and peace are intimately connected with joy bringing inner confidence in the midst of pressure while peace brings the ability to move forward to address the pressure in a positive way (Collins, 2006). In the Christian scriptures, Jesus exemplified this peace
and modeled it for his disciples. Jesus’ peace was rooted in love for His Father and borne of His perfect relationship with Him; it was characterized by composure, quiet confidence, courage, and single-mindedness throughout his ministry and He wanted this for his disciples so they would not stumble and they could see beyond the hostility of this world (Gibbons, 2008a).

Peace is an inner quality that manifests in certain characteristics important for leadership. These qualities include quiet confidence, courage, composure and single-mindedness, as well as ability to bring progress in the midst of pressure. In his study of successful organizations Collins (2001) found that level 5 leadership was a significant part of successful organizations. Great leaders are those that have a deep personal humility and intense professional will and who are developed partially through the Stockdale paradox of dealing with the brutal facts of the current reality while maintaining faith that you will prevail (Collins). Great leaders are the ones with quiet confidence and composure or deep personal humility and intense professional will or the ability to bring progress under pressure. They are the ones while calm under pressure (joy), can make decisions and move forward with resolve (peace) while maintaining confidence in the process. Peace is quiet confidence and composure in leading and can best be seen as humility, as described as important to leadership by Collins (2001).

The Fruit of Longsuffering

Longsuffering characterizes the person who in relation to those who annoy or oppose exercises patience and refuses to yield to outbursts of anger (Hendrickksen, 1977). This is patience under trial and constraint exercised toward others (Friberg & Friberg, 2000). Patience is the work of the Spirit of God when one endures difficult situations and people without losing one’s equanimity (Schreiner, 2010). It is patience and steadfastness: not short-tempered (Barclay, 1958; Boles, 1993; Bruce, 1982; Cole, 1996; Dunham, 1982; Hansen, 1994; Kiehl, 1991; Longenecker, 1990; MacGorman, 1971; Stamm & Blackwelder, 1953). God’s longsuffering toward mankind constitutes the reason for the believer’s patience toward others deferring one’s anger under provocation and refusing to retaliate for wrong done to one’s self (Fung, 1988).

Longsuffering is patience with other people even when provoked: not surrendering to anger and retaliation. Regardless of the situation patience requires a conscious effort to restrain the first impulse to complain or strike back to consider the broader implications of the action (Gibbons, 2009b).

Longsuffering or patience involves relationships with other people and is therefore important not only in human relations but leadership as well. Patience emerges as one of the most desired spiritual values at work on Krieger and Seng’s list of values (Gibbons, 2009b). In the organizational environment, patience becomes an important attribute of leading people and organizations. The humility and patience of its leaders will lead an organization to greatness as this organization will be positioned to serve (Rentfrow, 2007). In discussing servant leadership Ndoria (2004) says that it is based upon love and this kind of leadership is patient in hoping and thinking the best of the followers. Even when they make mistakes, the leaders will correct them with love and patience. Patience then is relational in being tolerant of those who oppose, while hoping and thinking the best of followers, and correcting mistakes with patience. In fact,
patience goes beyond tolerance to believing the best and inspiring others to rise to the new level of living. It is a desired spiritual value but a needed organizational value as well in bringing the organization to greatness. Longsuffering is patience in relationships, hoping and speaking the best to the followers, and encouraging the heart similar to one of Kouzes and Pozner's (1995) aspects of leadership.

**The Fruit of Kindness**

The word kindness is used of God’s kindness in providing salvation. Believer’s imitate God whenever they are generous to others but especially in extending benevolence to those who are not loving in return (Schreiner, 2010). It is a gracious attitude (Friberg & Friberg, 2000). It is a gracious disposition in one who is active in meeting the needs of others (Boice, 1976; Boles, 1993; Dunham, 1982; Hansen, 1994; Huxtable & Croskery, 1962; Lange, 1980). Kindness is truly the activity of love with an emphasis on the gentleness of character that produces pure motives for the actions it will take (Gibbons, 2009a). Kindness is a gracious attitude toward others - even toward the unwilling and resistant; but it includes pure motives as well.

People in organizations want to be treated kindly according to the list from Kreiger and Seng and these acts can be simple like being fully present just to listen to someone - or it can be practiced through sensitivity to what someone else is feeling (Gibbons, 2009a). Practically, kindness can be expressed through being aware of the realities or the needs of the people who are around the leader. Servant leaders show more care for the people than the organization’s bottom line, are genuine and real without pretense, show appreciation, listen attentively, and are empathetic (Patterson, 2003). People follow servant leaders freely because they trust them and this theory of leadership provides a rich foundation of ideas for developing future normative theories of leadership (Ciulla, 2004). Kindness is showing appreciation and listening to followers in the tradition of servant leadership.

**The Fruit of Goodness**

Goodness is a quality of moral excellence or of uprightness (Friberg & Friberg, 2000). It is to be righteous and generous (Boles, 1993; Bruce, 1982; Cole, 1996; Kiehl, 1991; Longenecker, 1990; MacGorman, 1971; Stamm & Blackwelder, 1953). This means those that have the Spirit of God are strengthened to live lives of moral beauty and their decency shines brightly in a world blighted by evil (Schreiner, 2010). Marcus Aurelius said that one should waste no time arguing what a good man should be but be one (Guinness, 2000). Moral excellence or goodness flows from the being or character of the person but affects that person’s actions as well. Character is the inner form or the core of the person and is revealed by what the person does consistently rather than through a random act. Good character is of vital importance to leadership (Guinness). Goodness is to have good character and live in moral excellence; it goes beyond a desire to do good and extends to living a consistent moral life that can be seen.

However, is this moral excellence important to leadership? According to Guinness (2000) good character is vital to leadership. According to Ciulla (2004), ethics is the heart of leadership. While ethics is not moral excellence, ethical behavior can be
one manifestation of moral excellence. Leader personality and cognitive moral development interact with aspects of the situation in the determination of ethical and unethical behavior and emotionally mature leaders with a high level of cognitive moral development are more likely to resist social pressure to use unethical practices (Yukl, 2002). Goodness is moral excellence and it can be seen in ethical behavior in leaders which is important to effective leadership. Goodness is godly character or moral behavior and good ethics which is viewed as the heart of good leadership (Ciulla).

The Fruit of Faithfulness

The word here refers to those led by the Spirit that are loyal and dependable; one can count on them to fulfill their responsibilities (Schreiner, 2010). This is the quality that describes the person on whose faithful service one can rely, whose loyalty one can depend, and whose word can be accepted without reservation (Fung, 1988). It is the quality of loyalty and keeping commitments (Barclay, 1958; Boice, 1976; Boles, 1993; Bruce, 1982; Dunham, 1982; Hansen, 1994; MacGorman, 1971; Ridderbos, 1974; Stamm & Blackwelder, 1953). Faithfulness demands honoring our commitments to God and to others even when it is not convenient and it demands standing firm in gospel values (Gibbons, 2010). Faithfulness is the attribute of one who is loyal, who keeps commitments that have been made even when it is difficult. This leader is a person who not only fulfills the proper responsibilities but is a person of integrity. The most basic definition of integrity is honesty and consistency between a person’s values and behavior and that the person is trustworthy (Yukl, 2002). This consistency can be seen in the behavior of leaders in several ways. The leader with integrity is truthful rather than deceptive, keeps promises, fulfills the responsibility of loyalty to followers, can be trusted with confidences, and takes responsibilities for decisions and actions (Yukl).

Faithfulness is an internal commitment but it can be seen by the behavior of the person. Since this attribute is easily seen and experienced by others around the person it is an important aspect of leadership. Personal integrity is an attribute that helps explain leadership effectiveness and it was found that lack of integrity was common among the managers whose careers derailed, whereas the successful ones were regarded as having strong integrity (Yukl, 2002). This faithfulness is a key ingredient in becoming effective in leading others and establishing loyalty among followers. Kouzes and Pozner (1995) call this attribute, credibility in that the leader has actions that are consistent with words spoken, promises are fulfilled, and what is said is done. When followers perceive that their leader has high amounts of this attribute the followers are committed to the organization, have a sense of ownership of the organization and have a strong sense of team spirit (Kouzes & Pozner). Faithfulness reveals itself as integrity and credibility. Faithfulness in the context of leadership is integrity, a core issue for values based leadership and credibility.

The Fruit of Self-Control

Gentleness is a quality of considerate friendliness or meekness, a strength that accommodates to another’s weakness (Friberg & Friberg, 2000). This describes one who is considerate and meek, an evenness of disposition (Barclay, 1958; Boles, 1993;
Bruce, 1982; Dunham, 1982; Longenecker, 1990; MacGorman, 1971). Forceful and harsh behavior is not the mark of the Spirit’s work but meekness reflects a transformed heart (Schreiner, 2010). Meekness describes a calm disposition particularly under fire, it describes a way of responding; this person pardons injuries, corrects faults, and rules his own spirit well (Collins, 2006). This word combines two contradictory thoughts both strength and considerate friendliness. This word is used to describe a person in whom strength and gentleness go together. It signifies a humble disposition to the divine will and the unique capacity for avoiding quarrels and it is seen in humility and forbearance toward others (Fung, 1988). Meekness is then seen in relationships with others in one who is gracious and humble in relationships in spite of power, yet is able to correct without being harsh. People are more willing to follow someone they trust, therefore, the leader must trust others: that means being open to others in relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Building relationships through getting to know followers and allowing them into the leader’s life through considerate friendliness is an expression of meekness that builds people which promotes effective leadership.

The proper building of relationships builds trust. Trust is the central issue in human relationships within and outside of organizations. Without trust one cannot lead. Thus, the most effective leadership situations are those in which each member of the team trusts the others; in fact the more trusted people feel, the better they innovate (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). To develop trust the leader should trust others first, be open to the influence of others, share information and resources, and facilitate relationships (Kouzes & Posner). Building trust is building relationships that are open and are initiated by the leader but also includes a sharing of resources. This type of leadership is not full of secrets or hidden agendas but is full of communication, sharing, and innovation. Effective performance of a collective task requires mutual trust that is more likely when people understand each other, appreciate diversity, and are able to confront and resolve differences in a constructive way (Yukl, 2002). Many of the fast track managers who failed to reach their potential were found to lack skills in relating to others rather than in technical skills (Ciulla, 2004). Effective leadership involves developing trusting relationships in the context of the organization and its purposes. Gentleness is meekness in developing good open relationships with followers, thereby building trust, and creating a climate of collaboration.

III. CONCLUSION

This study establishes a beginning understanding of values based leadership from the fruit of the Spirit in the context of organizational needs and effectiveness. This conceptual framework is based upon research in the literature while contextualizing each of the nine attributes in leadership theory. The fruit of the Spirit can be defined not only from a theological and ontological perspective but also from the perspective of leadership and organizational effectiveness. This leadership perspective focuses on behaviors as well as attitudes that are empirical and can be seen. There are aspects of other leadership theories involved, however; it forms a new theory or model upon which to build leadership. Therefore the model should be investigated and validated through empirical investigations of the components of this construct. This theory has the advantage of being established from a foundation of Christian Scripture but it can be
empirically tested since the attributes that begin ontologically can be contextualized in leadership theory as behaviors and attitudes.

These nine attributes for values based leadership in the context of the Fruit of the Spirit can be summarized for further exploration. Love is follower focused considering the needs and best interests of others freeing the leaders from self-focus. Joy is confidence in the midst of pressure and self-efficacy for effective leadership. Peace is quiet confidence and composure in leading and can best be seen as humility. Longsuffering is patience in relationships, hoping and speaking the best to the followers and encouraging the heart of the individual follower. Kindness is showing appreciation and listening to one’s followers. Goodness is godly character or moral behavior and good ethics. Faithfulness reveals itself as integrity and credibility, core issues in values based leadership. Gentleness is meekness in developing open relationships with followers, thereby building trust while creating a climate of collaboration. Self-control in the context of leadership is fierce personal resolve while developing vision and accomplishing the goals which proceed from the vision of the leader.

Once more fully developed and tested this model could provide a values based model for church leadership based in its primary document, the New Testament. If this model proves effective the church would be uniquely qualified to build this construct of leadership for ministers, instead of copying business models which begin from a different foundation than Scripture and values. The church needs to become the leader in leadership instead of simply following cultural norms. The opportunity to break out of cultural norms could be found in this model for leadership found in Scripture and contextualized in leadership theory but not into an existing model. This model if found viable through research could provide the church with a new way of leadership and set the pace for organizational leadership rather than the church continuing as the step child of a culture enamored with itself.

About the Author

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