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Toward a Vision for Distinctively Christian Educational Leadership

Sean-Jason Schat

Toward a Vision for Distinctively Christian Educational Leadership

Abstract

Educational leaders set the tone for their institutions. Their leadership embodies their vision for and valuing of the people they work with, as well as their actual understanding of the mission and vision of their organization. Research into the nature of leadership and followership demonstrates the importance of both leading from a vision and leading people, building a culture of respect and trust in order to establish a community committed to a shared task. Leaders in Christian schools are called by God to the office of leadership in order to be used by Him to continue His self-revelation and to equip His children to serve Him through their gifts. Often the "good theory" of leadership and followership is not embodied in "lived practice" in Christian schools, preventing the appropriate development of an authentic, vibrant community and a shared educational and discipling task. Leaders who are committed to serving God and serving the people they work with can have a transformative impact on their community, and the students in their school will be provided with authentic opportunities to become active members of the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

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Toward a Vision for Distinctively Christian Educational Leadership

by
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Research Thesis
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Toward a Vision for Distinctively Christian Educational Leadership

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Abstract

Educational leaders set the tone for their institutions. Their leadership embodies their vision for and valuing of the people they work with, as well as their actual understanding of the mission and vision of their organization. Research into the nature of leadership and followership demonstrates the importance of both leading *from a vision* and leading *people*, building a culture of respect and trust in order to establish a community committed to a shared task. Leaders in Christian schools are called by God to the office of leadership in order to be used by Him to continue His self-revelation and to equip His children to serve Him through their gifts. Often the "good theory" of leadership and followership is not embodied in "lived practice" in Christian schools, preventing the appropriate development of an authentic, vibrant community and a shared educational and discipling task. Leaders who are committed to serving God and serving the people they work with can have a transformative impact on their community, and the students in their school will be provided with authentic opportunities to become active members of the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

Introduction

Leadership is a gift. Leadership makes a difference. Leadership is tough to define. There is more than one "right" way to lead. Highly effective leadership can transcend any context, bringing about successes and accomplishments that can seem to defy expectations.   Yet culturally we don't really seem to know what leadership is. Everyone is certain it exists and that it makes a difference. People can tell stories of the times where it worked . . . and times when it didn't.

Our culture is in the midst of a paradigm shift when it comes to leadership. The insights of cognitive psychology, neurological research, and social learning theories are beginning to come together, and a sense of "leadership" is beginning to emerge. But old myths and images of "leaders" continue to endure, particularly at the unconscious level— just below the surface at the worldview/action shaping level. While an understanding that the nature of leadership may be in flux, the potent formative impact of leadership is undeniable. It is an essential aspect of any organization or community.

The original source of my interest in educational leadership came from the image of Christ washing his disciples' feet in John 13. There is, of course, an irony in the fact that the King of the universe stooped down to wash the sweaty, stinky feet of his uneducated-former-fishermen-followers. His disciples struggled with the same irony— they didn't quite get it, at least at first. But Jesus still washed their feet, physically demonstrating His vision for their leadership. The image of Christ washing their feet, a task typically reserved for the lowest of household servants, serves as a powerful contrast to the actual leadership of Christ and the followership of his disciples. There was no

doubt who was in charge. There was no doubt who was responsible for casting the vision

that was followed unswervingly (even sacrificially) by those who were called to follow

him. The paradox is that Christ's leadership somehow captured the heart of both

servanthood and "leadership." This incident (along with the larger servant-pattern of

Christ's life and purpose) provides the roots of the idea of Christ as a "Servant Leader,"

establishing a crucial Biblical model for leadership that must shape any of our attempts to

lead (or follow). Jesus leads by serving, then clearly tells us to do it, too. We are called

to follow his lead. What does this mean for today's leaders? More importantly for my

purposes, what does this mean within the specific realm of Christian education? How

can a Christian educational leader lead by serving?

Statement of the Problem

I believe that something is not quite "right" when it comes to the leadership that is

typically seen in Christian schools in North America. I believe there is a need to attempt

to develop a vision for leadership in Christian education that is driven by both research

about leadership in general and in a Biblically-rooted approach to leading others.   I

believe that such a vision, put into practice, can affect change and growth and faithful

obedience in North American Christian schools, and that as students in these schools

grow in their participation in the Body of Christ and Kingdom of God, God will bless the

fruit of our labours in ways we ourselves do not even dare imagine.

Research Questions

- What does current research and theory about leadership reveal? What does this
  have to do with leadership in Christian education?

- What does current research and theory about Christian approaches to leadership

reveal? What does this have to do with leadership in Christian education?

- What does the Bible say about leadership? What does this have to do with leadership in Christian education?

Based on the results of this research, it is my objective to produce a resource that will allow Christian schools and Christian educational leaders to examine and explore the topic of Christian educational leadership more effectively and faithfully, seeking to be more "true" to a vision for Biblical servant leadership that will bless leaders, their teacher colleagues, their school communities, and, most importantly, the students they serve and educate to be contributing members of the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

Definition of Terms

I have identified a number of specific definitions/concepts that are central to understanding the thrust and objectives of my thesis. Because I found almost nothing published on the topic of leadership in Christian education, and because I earnestly desire to root my own work in a vision for distinctively Christian education in all aspects of our calling, it will be helpful to be very clear about a number of foundational concepts: distinctively Christian education, influence, leadership, and the purpose of Christian education.

Distinctively Christian Education: I believe that Christian education must be distinctively Christian, faithful and obedient to God's Word and His Plan for His children and "excellent" in terms of the various dimensions of educational practice within our school communities. To that end, I submit that we need to be more reflective and intentional about ensuring that this is the case. When I speak of distinctively Christian education, I mean that I believe we need to examine a number of aspects of our craft and

calling in Christian schools to make sure that we are excellent, faithful, obedient, and

distinctive. The specific areas that I have targeted in my work include (but are not

limited to) the following:

- Vision and Mission

- Program

- Curriculum

- Instruction/Pedagogy

- School Culture

- Classroom Management/School Discipline Vision and Practices

- Leadership

- Extra-Curricular Programs

- Professional Development

- Service Opportunities/Community Involvement

This thesis, then, is simply my attempt to address one of the many dimensions of

distinctively Christian education.

Influence: The Bible has three overarching commands for God's children, and they all

have implications for our call to be an influence. In the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:

28), God commands us to continue to develop and unfold the Creation He made for

us . . . and assigned us the task of caretakers. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 18-

20), Jesus clearly commands us to go out and tell others about who He is and what He

has done. In the Love Command (Matthew 22: 36-39), Jesus commands us to do two

things: love God and love others. They are inter-related because one of the ways we can

show our love for God is through our love for others. I submit that we are called by God

to do all we can to influence the world for Him. Each of us will do this in different ways

and with different people and communities. This is part of God's plan for His children.

Central to my thesis on leadership is a conviction that we are all called to positions of

influence to one degree or another. Some of us will have opportunities to have an

influence on only a handful of people or events, while others will have opportunities to

influence more. But I believe that all Christians are called to have an influence on people

and events they have an opportunity to interact with.

Leadership: I define leadership as the ability to influence others to develop their gifts

and abilities in the context of serving as a member of the Body of Christ in order to

continue Christ's transformational work of revealing His Kingdom. Leadership is a gift

for Kingdom service. God gifts and equips all Christians to have influence on others in

each unique context in which they are called to serve. For some, their sphere of

leadership influence will be small. Others will exercise a phenomenal impact on others—

who will in turn influence those around them. Leadership is an opportunity to be used by

God for His purposes. God calls all of His children to leadership. All of our leadership

takes place in the context of following Him.

The Purpose of Christian Education: I believe that the central task of Christian

education is to guide and equip our children as they grow in knowledge of God, of others,

and of their own unique God-given personalities, gifts, and skills in order to serve and

grow the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God.   Our children are members of both

the Body and the Kingdom by the very fact of their existence: they are God's children,

and they are a part of His Plan. Our educational task, then, is to help them grow in their

knowledge of God, His Plan, and their unique role in it. In our interactions with our

students in the classroom, in the hallways, and in other school-related activities, we are

providing them with opportunities to both be members of the Body and the Kingdom and

to practice growing in their participation in the Body and the Kingdom. This is the

paradoxical nature of our educational task: we are equipping our students for both life in

the here and now and for their future role in God's plans. I believe this has important

leadership implications for both the students and their various adult leaders.

Review of the Literature

To say there is a lot "out there" on leadership would be a massive understatement. Leadership is a hot topic in many different sectors, and it is impossible to explore all the research and writings on the topic. The past decade or two has also seen a greater focus on what can be loosely termed a "Christian approach to leadership." There is not nearly as much on the topic of educational leadership. And, perhaps most notably, there is almost nothing on the topic of Christian educational leadership.

During the research stage of my project, I identified a number of key authors and insights that directly connected to either general leadership theory or a Biblical approach to leadership and my specific thesis focus on Christian educational leadership.

Bill Hybels - Leading with Courage and Vision

Bill Hybels' *Courageous Leadership* (2002) described courageous leaders as people who must yield their hearts to God, work from a compelling vision, effectively cast the vision to the followers they have been entrusted with, and enable others to have the freedom and creativity to follow. Throughout the book Hybels identifies the immense challenge this will be for leaders. In his experience, many Biblical leaders courageously struggle in the face of complex and ongoing challenges. Hybels (2002) writes, "These leaders at the peak of their ministry careers with years of successful church work behind them were all struggling with the same issue: Am I going to survive my calling? Am I going to make it across the finish line?" (p. 231) He urges leaders to be courageous and to endure.

As a first step to endurance, Hybels encourages leaders to focus first on their calling. Hybels (2002) writes, "Fulfill your ministry. The one that flows out of a sincere

spirit of humility and submission; one that matches the exact role God assigned you in the worldwide redemptive drama; the one that corresponds with your true spiritual gifts, passions, and talents; the one that is proportionate to the measure faith that God has given you" (p. 234).

Secondly, Hybels (2002) reminds leaders to "stay the course," challenging them to review the Biblical narrative to keep our struggles in perspective: "Heroic Christian leaders throughout redemptive history have always looked at the difficulty of their short-term struggles against the backdrop of eternity" (p. 250). For authentic, lasting change in distinctively Christian educational leadership, courageous, vision-rooted leadership will be needed.

Every leader needs to have a vision that shapes and directs their leadership. Hybels (2002) defines vision as "a picture of the future that produces passion" (p. 32). It is vision that inspires a leader to lead, and gives them the strength and energy to persevere. The primary task of the leader is to cast the vision. Leaders need to cast their vision all the time, in words and in deeds. For a vision to be effectively cast, it must be embodied in the leader's leadership, because a leader is always casting a vision, even when they are not aware of it. It is critical for leaders to be very intentional about what vision they are casting and how they are casting it. But casting a vision is not optional.

Robert Greenleaf – Servant Leadership

Robert Greenleaf's Servant Leadership model has clearly had a significant shaping impact on leadership reform in the business world, and much subsequent work leans heavily on this Greenleaf's insights. Greenleaf is a Quaker who has attempted to apply Biblical principles in what is viewed primarily as a secular context, with both

authenticity and significant success. Greenleaf published his landmark book in 1977,

shortly before his death. In his introduction he stressed that he sees hope in these times

because there is an awakening awareness and recognition of servant leadership. I was

also struck, however, by the fact that I have heard Servant Leadership downplayed, both

in the leadership literature in general and in my own experiences in the area of Christian

educational leadership. More than 25 years later, we still ride the line between the hope

to which Greenleaf aspired and the frustration that comes from failing to appreciate and

build on his vision, particularly in the context of Christian leadership which should be an

ideal fit for his theories, given where he got the idea in the first place.

Greenleaf's book was the culmination of a lifetime of observing and experiencing

leadership and followership, and it serves as a critical wake-up call for modern

leadership. Greenleaf is convinced that much of modern leadership is fatally flawed, and

that there is both a fundamental need for a paradigm shift and an authentic and legitimate

alternative vision ready to be put in place. Underlying his vision is a challenge given by

one of his former professors. Greenleaf (1977) recalls his suggesting that "nothing of

substance will happen unless there are people inside these institutions [churches,

businesses, governments, labour unions, universities] are able to (and want to) lead them

into better performance for the public good. Some of you ought to make careers inside of

these big institutions and become a force for good—from the inside" (p. 2). For

Greenleaf, this was a personal wake-up call and the starting point for his own leadership

work. Greenleaf laments the modern dilemma whereby education has not led to better

leaders and an improved culture in general.   He believes that educational institutions are

partially to blame. Greenleaf (1977) writes,

. . . how can it be that we are in a crisis of leadership in which vast numbers of

'educated' people make such gross errors in choosing whose leadership to follow,

and in which there is so little incentive for able and dedicated servants to take the

risks of asserting leadership? The conclusion I reach is that educators are

avoiding the issue when they refuse to give the same care to the development of

servant leaders as they do to doctors, lawyers, ministers, teachers, engineers,

scholars. Even schools of administration give scant attention to servant

leadership. I have spent a great deal of time and energy trying to persuade

educators to accept the obligation, and I am certain that, generally, they recognize

neither the obligation nor the opportunity. Thus far in my experience, they appear

unpersuadable. An occasional gifted teacher will take some initiative, but the

institutions rarely sanction the effort. The outlook for better leadership in our

leadership-poor society is not encouraging. (p. 4)

Robert Greenleaf – Servant First? Or Leader First?

One of the most important distinctions that Greenleaf (and those he has

influenced) makes is the difference between personality and strategy. Specifically, for

Greenleaf, a true servant leader is first a servant, and then a leader. This is markedly

different than a leader who chooses to use servant-based strategies in their leading. It is

important to note "Servant-First Leaders" and "Leader-First Leaders" are extremes, and

the bulk of leaders will fall somewhere in between. Greenleaf (1977) writes,

The servant-leader *is* servant first…It begins with the natural feeling that one

wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.

That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of

the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.

For such it will be a later choice to serve—after leadership is established. The

leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are

shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. (p. 13)

This is a critical point. Servant leadership can be based on personality, but it is also a

matter of choice. A leader who is not naturally a servant leader can choose to become

one, but reality reminds us of how difficult a choice this will be to make, and how

difficult it will be for followers to notice or to believe the change. And here is the crux of

the matter. *Servant leadership and servant followership is a choice every single time.*

And it is one that will always be tinged with doubt. This is a tough choice for the leader-

first leader; why take the risk when something else seems to work so well? Greenleaf

(1977) reminds us that it is much, much easier for someone who is a servant first to

become a true Servant Leader: "The natural servant, the person who is *servant first*, is

more likely to persevere and refine a particular hypothesis on what serves another's

highest priority needs than is the person who is *leader first* and who later serves out of

promptings of conscience or in conformity with normative expectations" (p. 14). This is

a key challenge, of course. For the leader-first leader, this choice will require convincing

to see there really is a difference. For the servant-first leader the convincing is already

engrained into their very character and personality. They do not need to be convinced,

but instead are liberated. Perhaps the distinction between assimilation and

accommodation can be helpful here. A person who is a servant-first leader can simply

assimilate the insights of the servant leadership model into their natural *modus operandi*,

while the person who is a leader-first leader must accommodate themselves in order to

attempt to make the model work for them. The latter is much, much harder, which

explains the hesitation to use or even explore Greenleaf's model.

A Servant leader must first of all listen. Listening is the heart of true service, and

Servant Leadership implies responding to and serving others. Greenleaf (1977) stresses,

> I have a bias about this which suggests that only a true natural servant
>
> automatically responds to any problem by listening *first*. When one is a leader,
>
> this disposition causes one to be *seen* as servant first. This suggests that a non-
>
> servant who wants to be a servant might become a *natural* servant through a long
>
> arduous discipline of learning to listen, a discipline sufficiently sustained that the
>
> automatic response to any problem is to listen first. I have seen enough
>
> remarkable transformations in people who have been trained to listen to have
>
> some confidence in this approach. It is because true listening builds strength in
>
> other people. (p. 17)

Greenleaf is suggesting that leaders can change and become better listeners, and

therefore better leaders as well. This is an essential distinction, one that is also clearly

supported by the research of other leadership theorists as well.

Robert Greenleaf - Exercising Power

Greenleaf reminds us that leaders must tread very carefully when it comes to exercising

power, particularly given the nature of the perceptions of their followers. Greenleaf

(1977) writes:

> In a complex institution-centered society, which ours is likely to be into the
>
> indefinite future, there will be large and small concentrations of power.
>
> Sometimes it will be a servant's power of persuasion and example. Sometimes it

will be coercive power used to dominate and manipulate people. The difference

is that, in the former, power is used to create opportunity and alternatives so that

individuals may choose and build autonomy. In the latter, individuals are coerced

into a predetermined path. Even if that is "good" for them, if they experience

nothing else, ultimately their autonomy will be diminished. (p. 41-42)

Sometimes it is appropriate to guide and lead people towards an ends that only the leader

can see, but this has to be done intentionally and rooted in vision. This cannot be the

only leadership style followers experience, or they will downshift (see Caine & Caine,

1997) or disengage. This is why a servant leader is not simply democratic and

consensus-driven. A true servant leader will know which decisions to make, when to

make them, why to make them, and how to make them. Greenleaf reminds us that the

use of power is not avoidable—it will happen. This is not where the problem lies. The

problem lies in the perception of the use of power, both by those wielding it and by those

who are shaped by it. Greenleaf makes an essential point when he stresses that an

institution must remind itself of the potential for evil in whatever we do, despite the best

of our intentions. Everyone is influenced by the leader's actions. This is the obligation

of the responsibility of a position of authority: a leader must not forget or lose sight of

this. Checks and balances must be in place. All stakeholders must have an appropriate

balance of power. It is too easy to lose sight of this when we are in a position of

leadership and have the power to make an impact on others, almost without thinking

about it. There is a significant obligation to intentionality and humility here.

Max De Pree - The Significance of Communication

Throughout his writings (*Leadership Jazz*, *Leadership is an Art*, *Leading Without*

Power), Max De Pree stresses the significance of communication. DePree (1992) writes, "If you're a leader and you're not sick and tired of communicating, you probably aren't doing a good enough job" (p. 100). Effective communication is a hallmark of successful leadership . . . and a key contributor to leadership that fails to follow through on its promise. Communication is essential to successful vision casting. It is also one of the key building blocks for trust and vulnerability. Communication falters when it is incomplete or unclear. As De Pree suggests, a leader should never stop communicating. In actual fact, a failure to communicate actually does communicate something. Successful leaders seek out opportunities to communicate, particularly when it comes to casting their vision. They also find ways to re-cast and re-articulate their vision and insights to ensure that their communication is not reduced to slogans and overly-familiar catch-phrases that can become an obstacle to clear communication. Effective communication seeks to find the fine line between over- and under-communicating.

Max De Pree - The Importance of Trust

De Pree (1997) stresses that trust "cannot be bought or commanded, inherited, or enforced. To maintain it, leaders must continually earn it" (p. 125). Trust may be the single most important factor when it comes to enabling and empowering followers to join you in embodying your vision. Trust is a very tricky thing. It takes time to build and earn. It needs to be constantly nourished and affirmed. Trust can be "banked," allowing you to work through controversy and tension. But it can also all be lost in an instant. Once lost, it will take an incredible amount of patience, persistence, and grace to regain (if it can even be completely and truly regained at all). Trust often ends up being the definer of a leader's legacy and impact. Leaders who consistently demonstrate love and

respect and seek to earn trust empower others and develop sustainable leadership and grow their vision. Leaders who lose the trust of their followers are at best able to earn only compliance and a "going through the motions" obedience in task completion, rather than the vulnerability and community investment that is required for distinctively Christian education.

Walter Wright - A Crisis of Forgiveness

Walter Wright (2000) suggests that the crisis of leadership is a crisis of forgiveness. Organizations seem to expect error-free leadership, and the reality is there is no such thing. For leadership to be successful, there needs to be room for grace and forgiveness, because leaders are simply human beings, doing their best but also making mistakes, just like everyone else. Leaders, too, must be characterized by forgiveness, because all of their followers, too, are in the process of becoming. Wright (2000) writes,

> Relational leadership is a risky business. We are entrusted with a vision; we are entrusted with the dreams and gifts and hopes of the people. We are accountable to God and to the organization. We fail and others will fail us. Without the hope of forgiveness, we would never have the courage to take up leadership—to offer ourselves as servants of the shared vision and the shared values of our organizations. Without forgiveness, we would never commit ourselves to the interdependent relationship of our communities. But forgiving comes with the gift of leadership. It is the empowering side of accountability. And forgiveness flows from the heart of the leader's relationship with God. (p. 205)

In a broken world, sin and error are a simple fact of life. In a complex, multi-faceted, people-based field like education, mistakes and incomplete or limited successes are to be

expected. Teachers and students (and leaders) are always in the process of becoming, learning and growing. At times we progress forward. At times we make mistakes . . . and need to learn from them. This is true for every single individual in every single school.

James O'Toole - Cultural Assumptions About Leadership

Leadership has always been a "hot topic," but it is particularly controversial as our culture transitions from Modernity to Post-Modernity. Leadership finds itself at the forefront of this shift. Leadership in the Modern era tended to be rooted in a perception of power, and tended to be strongly hierarchical. In this dominant "Top-Down" model, power and authority flowed from "The Boss" down to the lower levels of management down to the lower level workers. This model "fit" with the secular humanist ideology, and degrees of success at the business level established it firmly in the mindsets of an entire culture as "the way to lead." Just as significantly, this model also fits very well with the personality of many individuals who are drawn to leadership positions. Our culture has always placed a high value on driven, passionate, charismatic leaders who are able to improve the "bottom line," and there will always be individuals who are naturally inclined (and gifted) for this type of leading (just as there will always be organizations who pursue them).

The emerging paradigm for leadership places a much higher emphasis on relationships, vision, and organizational culture. An increased sense of entitlement in many members of our culture coupled with a marked decrease in company loyalty also play a role—workers are much less inclined to stick around if they feel out of place. I am not convinced this transition will completely revolutionize leadership models and

practice. Some people will always be drawn to power-based leadership, and it will be a long time before a renewed vision for leadership overcomes the legacy of the Top-Down model. It is deeply rooted in the personality and mindsets of both leaders and followers in our culture.

James O'Toole (1995) helps us understand why it is so hard for our culture to let go of the dominant leadership model: because it is deeply embedded in our unconscious perceptions of leadership. Individuals raised in Western culture are most accustomed to and familiar with Top-Down leadership: in their homes, in their schools, in their peer relationships, in their work settings, almost all they know about leaders and leading is rooted in power-based leadership. O'Toole (1995) suggests that it is very difficult for an individual steeped in the Western mindset to be able to even envision, much less experience anything else. O'Toole (1995) stresses that many current leadership assumptions in our culture are invalid conclusions drawn from valid observations. It seems self-evident that in those moments of crisis people need a decisive leader who is willing to take action—this is what we are accustomed to, familiar with, and, in many ways, comfortable with. Many people can't imagine leadership any other way. In today's leadership climate, there are always perceived crises of various levels. Thus a leader who is willing to act decisively will always be needed, and decisive action will always be highly valued in our culture. A second (and deeper and more complex) challenge is the long-term impact of such a leadership style. What happens to followers (and other lower-level leaders) in such a context? Will they be enabled to develop as leaders? Will they be encouraged to voice concerns and input that could further complicate the issue and, just as significantly, increase the amount of time needed before

a decision can be made? O'Toole (1995) suggests that it is precisely this issue and the breakdown of a culture of trust and collaboration that is at the heart of the modern leadership crisis.

Daniel Goleman - The Emotional Impact of Leadership

Goleman's research-based insights into emotions and their impact on leadership is ground-breaking and essential for our purposes. The title of Goleman's ground-breaking book, *Primal Leadership*, serves as a critical starting point for understanding his unique insights into the relationship between leadership and emotions. Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee (2002) write: "This emotional task of the leader is *primal*—that is, first—in two senses: It is both the original and the most important task of leadership" (p. 5). Goleman stresses that primal leadership is *resonant* leadership; at a formative emotional level, primal leadership is leadership that resonates with those who follow.

Goleman et al. (2002) clearly emphasizes the importance of his work in the introduction to *Primal Leadership*: "We believe this primal dimension of leadership, though often invisible or ignored entirely, determines whether everything else a leader does will work as well as it could. And this is why emotional intelligence—being intelligent about emotions—matters so much for leadership success: Primal leadership demands we bring emotional intelligence to bear" (p. ix). Emotions shape reality, but they are very complex and often lie just below the surface, so they can be very easy to overlook. Yet they shape perceptions, responses, and performance, and they play a formative role in shaping a culture. This is particularly important for educational contexts, where there is an incredible potential for emotional impact, given the different developmental levels and the complex diversity of the school culture (staff relationships,

student culture, community, staff/student relationships, etc.). Educational leaders
(administrators and teachers) must explore the emotional culture in their classrooms and
in their schools as well as reflect on their own emotional impact on those around them.

Goleman's insights have a lot of intuitive validity, but it is his clear link to
neurological research that sets his work apart. Since the popularization of his work on
Emotional Intelligence in the mid- to late- 90s, Goleman has increasingly researched his
theory, particularly in the realm of leadership, which is where his emphasis has been for
the past decade. Goleman et al. (2002) write, "Perhaps uniquely among management
theories, the primal leadership model builds on links to neurology. Breakthroughs in
brain research show why leaders' moods and actions have enormous impact on those they
lead, and shed fresh light on the power of emotionally intelligent leadership to inspire,
arouse passion and enthusiasm, and keep people motivated and committed" (p. ix-x).
This is the single most important contribution Goleman makes that sets him apart from
other authors. He clearly communicates what brain research actually reveals about
leaders and followers and emotions and performance and culture.

Goleman's concept of an "*Open Loop System*" helps explain how our emotions
impact the emotions of others, particularly for leaders. Goleman et al. (2002) suggest

> The reason a leader's manner—not just what he does, but how he does it—matters
> so much lies in the design of the human brain: what scientists have begun to call
> the *open loop* nature of the limbic system, our emotional centers. A closed-loop
> system such as the circulatory system is self-regulating; what's happening in the
> circulatory system of others around us does not impact our own system. An open-
> loop system depends largely on external sources to manage itself. In other words,

we rely on connections with other people for our own emotional stability. (p. 6)

Goleman effectively explores the impact we can have on other people's emotions: even a

simple smile or encouraging tone can infectiously impact strangers. Because our brains

are "open loop systems," they are wired to be shaped by the emotions of others. This

places a significant amount of responsibility on leaders, particularly given how easy it is

to overlook emotions and emotional impact at work. Exploring the concept of an Open

Loop system in a school setting is even more complex and potentially significant,

particularly given the pace and natural busyness, as well as the plethora of potentially

formative moments.

The concept of *resonance* also plays a key role in Goleman's writings. When

leaders have a predominately positive emotional impact on their followers they create

resonance, a sense of working together and heading in the same direction. Goleman et al.

(2002) suggest, though, that there is something even more important going on.

Resonance does not just create a safe and comfortable work environment, it actually

improves the climate and productivity: "resonance amplifies and prolongs the emotional

impact of leadership" (p. 20). The reason for this is very simple: people feel like they

belong, they feel understood and valued, and the leader's emotional impact not only

resonates but is amplified. Goleman et al. (2002) continue, "Under the guidance of an

emotionally intelligent leader, people feel a mutual comfort level. They share ideas, learn

from one another, make decisions collaboratively, and get things done. They form an

emotional bond that helps them stay focused even amid profound change and uncertainty.

Perhaps most important, connecting with others at an emotional level makes work more

meaningful" (p. 21).

Conversely, when a leader's emotional impact is negative, it creates dissonance. Dissonance, too, is more significant than it first seems. Not only does it create an uncomfortable work environment, it negatively impacts performance on both the individual and communal levels. More importantly, the baggage of dissonance at work gets carried beyond the work environment. Goleman et al. (2002) point out that "In short, dissonance dispirits people, burns them out, or sends them packing. There's another personal cost to dissonance: People who work in toxic environments take the toxicity home. Stress hormones released during a toxic workday continue to swirl through the body many hours later" (p. 22). Dissonance is the antithesis of community (and Kingdom building), and leaders need to be aware of and watch out for dissonance in their communities (particularly students and the staff) at all times. It is important to stress that dissonance is not the same as having differences of opinion and disagreements at work. Goleman picks up on this in his writings as well, focusing more on the climate in which such differences exist and are (or are not) expressed.

Daniel Goleman - Different Leadership Styles/Approaches

Drawing on their extensive research, Goleman et al (2002) identify six specific approaches to leadership:

      1. Visionary

      2. Coaching

      3. Affiliative

      4. Democratic

      5. Pacesetting

      6. Commanding (p. 53)

In a sense, there is nothing new in Goleman's six approaches. As he himself clearly

states, they are simply a list of the different leadership styles that previous theorists have

explored and identified. What makes Goleman's work unique is that he applied his

research to each of the approaches, with revealing results. Goleman et al (2002) term the

first four approaches as *resonance-building* because when leaders use the visionary,

coaching, affiliative, or democratic style, they create resonance (p. 85). However, the

final two styles Goleman et al (2002) label as *dissonant* because by their very nature they

have the potential to create dissonance and destroy resonance (p. 69). Goleman is careful

to not suggest one leadership style as superior to the others. Leadership is far too

complex for this. What he does do is suggest that various approaches can be successful

at different times and in different contexts. He urges caution, however, when it comes to

the two dissonant forms. A leader should only use these approaches when the situation

clearly calls for it. What stands out, though, is how often these last two forms are used as

the baseline style, and how predominant coercive leadership has become. Goleman et al

(2002) lament, "In spite of its many negative effects, however, coercive leaders thrive the

world over in surprisingly large numbers, a legacy of the old command-and-control

hierarchies that typified twentieth-century businesses" (p. 77). Goleman et al. (2002)

advocate wisdom, discernment, and intentionality for leaders. A wise leader will mix

approaches, "…on any given day of the week, they used many of the six distinct styles—

seamlessly and in different measures—depending on the business situation" (p. 54).

Goleman et al. (2002) take this one step further: "The more of the six styles a leader can

deploy, then, the better. Leaders who have mastered four or more, our data suggest—

especially the resonance-building styles—foster the very best climate and business performance" (p. 85).

Interestingly, Goleman et al. (2002) specifically cite educational leadership in his section on dissonant leadership: "When school leaders were flexible in their style repertoire—able to take a teacher aside for one-on-one, or to articulate inspiring goals for the whole group, or just to listen, as needed—the climate among teachers was most positive. When the leader's style was rigid—stuck in the command-and-control mode— teachers were most demoralized" (p. 85).

Daniel Goleman - Seeking Feedback . . . and Two Important Pitfalls

Goleman also reminds us of the importance of leaders seeking out feedback about their leadership impact. Goleman suggests that not only does this not happen often enough, even when it does happen, the results can be misleading or misinterpreted. Goleman is very clear. Leaders must seek out feedback from others about their leadership performance. But receiving honest and candid feedback can be very difficult, particularly in an emotionally charged context where giving honest and candid feedback can be perceived as very risky. Goleman et al. (2002) suggest that the results of some surveys and feedback processes can be misleading. Goleman describes two critical related phenomena involved in this process, what he calls "CEO Disease" and "Information Quarantine." Goleman et al (2002) define CEO Disease as, "the information vacuum around a leader created when people withhold important and usually unpleasant information" (p. 93). Goleman et al (2002) also suggest that "to become more effective, leaders need to break through the information quarantine around them—and the conspiracy to keep them pleased, even if uninformed" (p. 133).

Goleman et al (2002) point out that "Rare are those who dare to tell a commanding leader he is too harsh, or to let a leader know he could be more visionary, or more democratic. That's why emotionally intelligent leaders need to seek the truth themselves" (p. 133). Clearly, this is much more easily said than done. Teachers are often unwilling to share criticisms or raise controversial issues with an administrator that they do not entirely trust. They are much more likely to simply "say the right things" when asked, rather than speaking the truth in love. This is not an easy situation to address, but it is necessary for the growth of our schools and for the development of leadership in others.

Goleman et al (2002) emphasize that a leader must seek and receive authentic feedback about their leadership. "Clearly, then, soliciting negative information may be vital to a person's continued growth and effectiveness. But to whom do you turn for advice—and for feedback that might not necessarily affirm how you view yourself? How, in short, does a leader test reality?" (p. 133). Goleman et al (2002) also advocate what they call "360 Degree Feedback:"

> By collecting information from many people—your boss, your peers, your subordinates—you benefit from multiple perspectives about how you act and how others see it. The 360-degree view offers a consensual image of your profile of competencies. Whether this consensus is an image of the real you depends on two givens: (1) that the people who participate in the 360-degree evaluation actually interact with you on a regular basis; and (2) that you reveal yourself to them. (p. 135)

Goleman cautions that it is essential for those involved in the feedback process to ensure

that all are involved and that all have an opportunity to provide candid and honest feedback. He suggests that some leadership evaluation mechanisms can be misleading, because there are often different voices that need to be heard (e.g. a boss who treats his front-line workers well but is impatient and insensitive with office support staff).

Goleman's research has clearly shown that seeking such feedback is not only important, but it is essential for a realistic appraisal of the leader's work. Goleman et al (2002) emphasize "Of all these perspectives, the views of subordinates and peers—rather than that of the bosses themselves—appear to have the most predictive validity of a leader's actual effectiveness" (p. 136). Too often in Christian education, leadership evaluations do not often take place, and when they do, the methods used (personal interviews, surveys) and the people involved in collecting the data (e.g. the administrator being evaluated, members of the school board, etc.) too often tend to be a significant obstacle to authentic, 360-degree feedback, particularly when it comes to ensuring that all stakeholders are given a voice that is actually listened to.

It is important to stress that leaders who demonstrate a willingness to seek out and respond to criticism and feedback from others will very likely ironically invite more criticism! Leaders who are tentatively exploring a different approach to leadership need to keep this in mind. By demonstrating openness to criticism we make ourselves vulnerable, and this vulnerability will very likely encourage vulnerability in others, making them feel safe enough to continue to provide criticism and feedback. A wise leader is able to sift through the criticism and respond appropriately.

Daniel Goleman - Can Leaders Change? - Old Dogs and New Tricks

Goleman's research reveals an essential insight: old dogs can learn new tricks. In

other words, leaders who receive constructive feedback and take it seriously and are convicted of a need to change CAN do so. Goleman et al (2002) note, "Yet we have seen evidence that points emphatically to the contrary: Old leaders can learn new tricks. Leaders can and do make significant, in some cases life-altering changes in their styles that ripple into their teams and trigger important changes throughout the entire organization" (p. 96). We often assume that a leader can't (or won't) change, so authentic and needed feedback is not always given. Yet Goleman's research suggests that leaders can change—it is just not easy to do. Goleman et al (2002) write, "But changing habits, particularly ones that are deeply ingrained is very difficult. It just takes more effort and energy to learn in adulthood lessons that would have come more readily in our early years, because these new lessons fight an uphill battle against the ingrained patterns the brain already has in place" (p. 104). Goleman et al (2002) continue, suggesting, that the "task is *doubled*—we have to undo habits that do not work for us, and replace them with ones that do" (p.104). Goleman's neurological research pushes this further, exploring the way the brain itself works when it comes to such change. He makes a critical distinction between the *limbic brain* (which involves the emotions) and the *neocortex brain* (which involves thinking). Goleman et al (2002) write, "Because the limbic brain learns more slowly—and requires much more practice—than the neocortex, it takes more effort to strengthen an ability such as empathy than, say, to become adept at risk analysis. But it can be done" (p. 104-105). This distinction between the limbic/emotional brain and the neocortex/thinking brain is a critical one for leadership and leadership growth. For a leader to change their instinctive habits takes a great deal of mental energy, intentionality, and perseverance.

Leadership change can be difficult, particularly for a veteran leader. But changing one's leadership style or approach is just the start. It is hard enough to change yourself. It can be even harder to have others notice and/or believe the change. What makes this even more complicated is the actual practice of the change process. A leader who chooses to change their leadership approach will be highly motivated at first, but this is the time when their followers will be most skeptical . . . and watching the closest to see if the change is real. Goleman et al (2002) caution of the danger of what he calls the *honeymoon effect* (p. 99). Real change can result from training, but that the change itself is rarely sustained. Goleman et al (2002) write, "All of the new learning slips away as old, knee-jerk responses take over. Soon he is acting the way he always has—not the new way committed to at the end of the training" (p. 98). Unfortunately, this can have an even more poisonous impact on the organizational culture, particularly if the leader has declared his or her intent to change (or has done so repeatedly . . . with the same results). It takes time for people to change and to develop patterns. It also takes time for other people to notice. The second factor may be even more important than the first one. By the time this happens, many leaders have already rejected the change—they believe that it just does not work for them.

Carl Mulder - Leadership is both a Gift and a Skill

Leadership is both a gift and a skill. Carl Mulder (1990) stresses that leadership is a gift from God, but it is also an ability that can be developed and grown: "Biblical leadership, it seems, is a gift or capability, but also a capacity which can be identified and developed. Leadership, like all other gifts, is to be used as a ministry for the personal and communal development of the body" (p. 90). Mulder (1990) particularly emphasizes that

the unique purpose of Biblical leadership to minister to and serve the body as it seeks to accomplish its mission:

> Leadership as described and modeled in the Scriptures differs from many forms of leadership observed and described in modern societal institutions. Biblical leadership must, first of all, be understood as one of many gifts or capabilities that is possessed by members of the body of Christ. Leadership, as any gift, is to be discovered, developed, and dedicated as a ministry to the people of God, the body of Christ. This purpose and function of leadership in the body of Christ is relevant to informal and formal organizations, structured and unstructured situations, and applies to leadership as office or position as well as leadership as charismata. This gift, this talent, as all individual and communal gifts, is to be used to assist the body members as a whole, to achieve their mission. (p. 93)

The apostle Paul clearly identifies leadership as one of many gifts given by the Spirit, so it makes sense that some people will be uniquely and clearly gifted for leadership. Yet leadership skills can be developed and refined in all of us, which also fits with the fact that all of us are called to lead.

William Purkey - Leadership is Inviting

William Purkey provides an invaluable insight with his emphasis on invitation. An effective leader is an invitational leader—a leader who invites others to work with him or her. Leaders who are truly invitational are always inviting others, and are always reflecting on the nature of their invitations. Purkey & Siegel (2003) write, "We must practice the art of intentionality in each and every interaction. Every single invitation has the potential of influencing the course of another person's life" (p. 152). Picking up on

much of what Goleman's research has confirmed, Purkey & Siegel (2003) stress what he

calls *circular causality*: "When two or more people interact, an open system is created

which has a life of its own. The behaviour of either person acts as both cause and effect

on the other. This "*circular causality*" transcends the behaviour of either person, and

contains risks as well as promises" (p. 154). This is why a leader is under so much

pressure and must avoid making decisions too quickly. Every single interaction can have

a significant impact on another person and every single subsequent interaction. And

leaders usually do not know when that moment happens or what triggers its significance .

. . or how long its legacy will last. As Purkey & Siegel (2003) remind us, this is part of

the complexity and vulnerability of leadership: "Sending an invitation inevitably contains

risks" (p. 154). For Purkey, extending invitations is an essential aspect of leadership.

Purkey & Siegel (2003) note, "When an invitation is extended, there is no guarantee that

it will be accepted. However, if an invitation is not extended, there is the absolute

guarantee and assurance that it will not be accepted, no matter how beneficial the

invitation might be. The rule is *Don't decide in advance about whether or not an*

invitation will be accepted. Give the other person the opportunity to choose" (p. 155).

Purkey appropriately reminds us that leaders are inviting (or dis-inviting) by their very

nature. It is essential that invitational leaders constantly be aware of the invitations they

send--and to ensure that they are received. Purkey & Siegel (2003) point out that "Some

invitations are never accepted because they are never received" (p. 156). Often receiving

an invitation is not sufficient. Perception is just as important as reception. Purkey &

Siegel (2003) note, "An acceptable invitation requires a match between the sender's

intentions and the receiver's perceptions" (p. 159). Our own intentions are not good

enough. The receiver's perceptions are also significant. And the context we generate for the sending and receiving can play a significant role. Every interaction not only has the potential to be significant—it IS significant, no matter who is participating. This is an essential aspect of a people-first mentality that is easy to overlook. It can also be very hard, particularly when time is tight and tensions are high.

William Purkey - Leaders Anticipate Conflict

Instinctively, many of us seek to avoid conflict. This is particularly true in the context of Christian education, where many teachers, inclined to care deeply for their students, their colleagues, and their communities, tend to avoid contributing to any potential for tension or disagreement. This is an issue that warrants a much closer look. Effective leaders do not avoid conflict, but are called to anticipate and even seek it out.

William Purkey spends a great deal of time in his book working through conflict management. Purkey & Siegel (2003) write, "Conflicts are a normal aspect of human interactions. Crises are normal, problems arise, tensions are inevitable, and complications can be expected. Often these innovations are opportunities for new ideas and fresh innovations" (p. 85). This is another important leadership topic. How do leaders (and their followers/colleagues) perceive conflict? Is it invited or avoided? What is the leader's response to conflict? How do people react in moments of conflict? Is conflict management a skill that can be developed? In a people-based, complex organization, conflict is unavoidable. This is particularly true for teachers, who must interact with students, parents, colleagues, and administration. A leader's stance towards conflict will have a marked impact on the response of his or her entire organization. Given the reality of the people-based field of teaching, how conflict is perceived and

handled is critical. Purkey & Siegel (2003) specifically connect their vision for conflict management with their vision for invitational leadership: "Conflict management, from the perspective of Invitational Leadership, requires that we apply the principles of respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality to the most difficult concerns, problems, and challenges. In our judgments, failure to apply these principles is among the major causes of conflict, both personal and professional" (p. 86). In essence, how a leader responds to conflict and disagreement is a key defining factor in demonstrating to others what they truly believe about their value.

Walter Wright (2000) provides an additional reminder, suggesting that a true Christian community living in a sinful world should be characterized by conflict: "Conflict is not only possible in Christian community, it may be a necessary by-product of community that is an important catalyst for growth as we learn to adjust to the differences caused by the diversity of community. No conflict may suggest no diversity and possibly no growth" (p. 109). Conflict, therefore, is not necessarily a negative, but is a sign of community and growth.

Rather than mistrusting and avoiding resistance, Michael Fullan (2001) urges us to redefine resistance and to see it as a fantastic opportunity for growth: "We are more likely to learn something from people who disagree with us than we are from people who agree. But we tend to hang around with and over-listen to people who agree with us, and we prefer to avoid and under-listen to those who don't" (p. 41). Fullan suggests that we need to not only expect resistance, but that we need to encourage and enable it. Fullan (2001) discusses the importance of respecting resisters because, "(1) they sometimes have ideas that we might have missed, especially in situations of diversity or complexity or in

the tackling of problems for which the answer is unknown. (2) resisters are crucial when it comes to the politics of implementation" (p. 42). Fullan (2001) makes an essential additional point, reminding us that many leaders fail to recognize the need to seek out and enable resisters: "Even when things appear to be working, the supposed success may be a function of merely superficial compliance" (p. 43).   Too often the leadership culture is structured so that there is no real place for resistors to go, when in fact their voices need to be heard.   Too often leaders tend to either work alone or to surround themselves with people whose minds are in the same box. People who want to get outside of the box of the leader's mind are often seen as malcontents and complainers, often to the detriment of the growth of the organization and the leaders themselves. Elsewhere Fullan (2003) addresses this directly: "There is much, perhaps everything to be learned from resistance. It is not just that resisters often have valuable knowledge about the system and good ideas about what should change and how change should occur but that they point to the places where teachers experience the most stress" (Silin & Schwartz, 2003, p. 1588).

Michael Fullan - Leaders Equip Future Leaders

An ongoing theme throughout Fullan's work is an emphasis on developing future leaders and enabling a culture of sustainable leadership. In fact, Fullan insists that the most important responsibility for modern leadership is to develop future leaders. One of the obstacles to this is a tendency in Western culture to value and seek after what Fullan calls "Super Leaders." Fullan (1998) notes that "Charismatic leaders inadvertently do more harm than good because, at best, they provide episodic improvement followed by frustrated or despondent dependency. Superhuman leaders also do us another disservice: they are role models who can never be emulated by large numbers" (p. 1-2).   Fullan

stresses that while an individual Super Leader can do great things, his or her success is hard to replicate and very rarely has an impact beyond that specific leader's tenure. What is more important is a culture of sustainable leaders. Fullan (1998) suggests "Deep and sustained reform depends on many of us, not just on the very few who are destined to be extraordinary" (p. 2). This is a key distinction for Christian educational leadership. We need to create a culture of sustainable leadership so that we are also training the next generation of leaders (both students and teachers) while we are seeking to enable a Kingdom transformation of the world through those who lead and follow with us. We should not want super-leaders, even though many of our school boards seem to want to hire one.

There is a need for an intentional reflection on the need for a change in leadership in Christian schools in North America. But changing a leader is not enough. It is an essential starting point. But changing an organizational culture is also not enough. Effective change, in order to be real and enduring, must be sustainable. This is where the paradox of leaders and followers is essential. Goleman et al (2002) aptly note that "Individual leaders alone cannot change a culture. For a vision to take hold, it must spread throughout every level" (p. 232). A leader cannot change things by themselves. They must invite and equip others to enable an ongoing process of ongoing and reflective growth and change.

Thomas Sergiovanni - Living, Not Playing School

Thomas Sergiovanni (1992) believes there are far too many examples of schools *playing* school, as opposed to *living* school (p. 27). What is needed, says Sergiovanni (1992), is a transformation, a shift to a new paradigm where a school is transformed to a

living organism, a true community (p. 28-29). This requires moral leadership, one which

is fundamentally concerned about people and relationships. And this, suggests

Sergiovanni (1992), is the only way to transform our schools—by starting with their

culture: "All schools may have cultures, but not all schools are communities. The idea of

a school as a learning community suggests a kind of connectedness among members that

resembles what is found in a family, or neighbourhood, or some other closely knit group,

where bonds tend to be familial or even sacred" (p. 47).

Our culture tends to underestimate the culturally formative dimension of our

educational institutions. Schools convey knowledge and enable understanding. Schools

shape character. Schools also, however, enculture, shaping the way our students perceive

and respond to reality. Indeed, in many respects, school may be even more "real" than

the reality we perceive ourselves to be preparing the students for. By the time they get

there, students may already have been conditioned in both their perceptions and in their

default actions of response. School is both life and preparation for life. The experiences

students have in school will shape their responses in the rest of their lives as they move

through and beyond school. Indeed, what they learn in this regard will dramatically

direct how they will respond later in life, or how they will react against it when they

encounter a reality they are not prepared for. Our culture tends to underestimate both the

impact of a school culture and our own students' potential for insight and reflective

growth in this capacity. Christian schools cannot make this mistake. God clearly

directed the early Israelites to raise and teach their children to know two primary

identities: who God was, and who they were (as God's holy people).   Christian schools

have a critical responsibility to empower our students to be active Kingdom servants,

both in the present and in the future. We tend to act as though we are simply preparing

them for future service, after they have "finished" their Christian education and are ready

to graduate. Unfortunately, what often tends to happen is that students are not truly

equipped already while they are in school to be active Kingdom transformers, and thus

when they do "finish" with Christian education they have not yet become what we aspire

for them to be, and they are then too easily shaped by a different story from a different

kingdom.

Caine and Caine - "Downshifted" Leaders

Increasingly, the concept of *downshifting* is gaining merit in educational contexts,

both for students and for teachers. Caine & Caine (1997) define *downshifting* as "a

psycho-physiological response to threat associated with helplessness or fatigue.

Downshifting inevitably results in less sophisticated use of the brain and a reversion to

behaviors and patterns that have been previously 'programmed'" (p. 41). Students who

are feeling threatened or helpless will revert to lower, safer levels of functioning that

hinder creativity and vulnerability. Thus the very conditions needed for learning and for

growth are constantly undercut. Caine & Caine focus primarily on the impact of

downshifting on students. But what is the impact of downshifting on teachers? Teachers

who are feeling threatened or helpless will revert to more basic, safer levels of

functioning, and creativity and risk-taking suffer. While more studies need to be done in

this area, teacher downshifting, with its shaping impact on their students and their own

community participation, may be even more frightening than student downshifting, given

its exponential impact. And it is often leadership that plays the defining role.

A commitment to building community is at the heart of the leadership crisis in

Christian education. Community building efforts often do not succeed, not because of the people involved, but because of a flawed vision for leadership. We see a leadership vacuum emerging in Christian education in North America, but it is not simply due to a lack of potential leaders. It is the model and the nature of the expectations for leaders that is the issue—there are not many people who want to jump into the status quo. This is partly because they have seen how thankless and impossible it is. It is also partly because existing leaders have not enabled their leadership growth, and in many ways, have actually squashed it. Good leaders who want the best and could be led to do and be so much more will settle for less because they do not have the words or the opportunity to confront the model. They are so busy doing their regular teaching tasks with all their hearts and souls and mental energy that they will not rock the boat to do otherwise. Indeed, they cannot do so because they are too committed to their students and to their colleagues and to the enterprise in general that they will not "raise a stink." Being an effective Christian educator already takes a great deal of mental energy. There definitely is not enough left to confront the philosophical and vision issues at the root of the leadership challenge. This, unfortunately, could condemn all Christian education to a downshifted mediocrity that fails both educationally and spiritually, and is an injustice for those who our schools communities could be affecting across time and space. And this is where downshifting begins, in a host of small moments, rather than large, obvious issues and confrontations. By treating someone (or their ideas) as an object, or a bit player, as someone who is not as important as the leader (or whose ideas are not as important or well-thought out as the leader's), a false hierarchy is created, one which is far too easy to buy into. This happens too easily. And it happens without anyone even

noticing—it simply has become the reality in many of our schools. This must be seen

and addressed.

Judith Sturnick - The Dark Side of Leadership

Judith Sturnick effectively draws our attention to the dark side of leadership, the

sense of pain and isolation that many (she would suggest most) leaders experience. In

her own experience, Sturnick (1998) notes that many of the leaders she has worked with

> are profoundly depressed. Depression is indeed a sign of these times. Many of
>
> these bright, dedicated leaders believe (or behave as if they believe) that
>
> depression can be willed away. Many of them also believe that they are not
>
> allowed to show fear or uncertainty; they dare not fail in any endeavor; it is
>
> normal to lose control of one's life; the sacrifice of personal life for the efficacy of
>
> work is legitimate; pain is merely temporary (best to ignore it!); relentless fatigue
>
> is inherently unmanageable; self-care is therefore impossible (or irrelevant); and
>
> joyful life lies somewhere in the misty future. (p. 185-186)

Sturnick (1998) continues, "[t]hese are some of the symptoms of deeply wounded

leaders, individuals who are in need of healing at the most profound levels of their being,

whether or not they can risk consciously acknowledging this" (p. 186). Leaders are so

heavily involved with people, and with such a vast variety of interpersonal interactions

and relationships, the potential for rejection and the need to connect with so many others

could very easily lead to all of these problems. This must warrant a closer look at some

point. What are the habits and patterns that contribute to an unhealthy leadership because

they prevent us from addressing reality, or perhaps even recognizing it in the first place?

What habits and patterns exist that may even encourage and enable an unhealthy status

quo? Goleman et al's (2002) work on emotions and leadership becomes even more important in this regard.

In reading Sturnick's essay, I was struck by the depth of pain and hurt she had perceived in the leaders around her. Do her insights and observations transfer beyond her own experiences? How many of our leaders are "in pain"? What can we do to bring about healing? Sturnick (1998) asks a number of powerful questions of her own:

> So many questions lie at the heart of this process. Many individuals are "called" to lead (although they may not use that language). Is it possible to create healing patterns for work without losing the passion of the call? Is it possible to play a highly public leadership role and still live a healthy life? Even if a leader comes to term with self-healing, is organizational healing possible—or worth the enormous effort it requires? Can the healed leader throw herself or himself into the task of healing the organization without once again taking on unhealthy patterns? When must an individual choose to leave the institution to preserve hard-won health? (p. 187)

Discussion

It is clear that a lot of important questions are being asked about leadership, and these questions (and resulting insights) should have significant impact on the practice of leadership in Christian education. The key authors who were the focus of the literature review provide us with a number of essential insights, particularly when it comes to the tangible impact leadership has on various stakeholders within an organization. Because Christian schools are communities composed of administrative leaders, teachers-as-leaders, and potential leaders-in-the-making, we must carefully consider the implications of what these key authors have said.

Leaders set the tone for their organizations, which in turn shapes the culture and impacts all community members and the "work" they do. In a school context, leadership has an even greater impact because it touches so many lives . . . and so much potential leadership. It is essential that school leaders lead their schools wisely and carefully, but also confidently and courageously.

It is striking that leadership is actually quite simple in theory, yet remarkably complex in practice. Leaders simply need to work from a vision that captures the mission of the organization and the dignity and value of each individual community member. They need to create a culture of trust, composed of people working together toward the same vision and purpose. Most of the time, determining the purpose is not that complex, and a default expectation of dignity and respect seems self-evident. And yet we know it is not that easy. In fact, leadership is such a popular topic because there are so many examples of significant struggles—and significant successes. The research also suggests that there are important strategies and approaches that can improve both leadership and

followership. Most significantly, the research clearly demonstrates the importance of a

two-fold approach to leadership: a leader needs to follow a vision and lead people.

In the context of Christian education, the same principles apply, but on a much

larger scale. Educational leaders set the tone for their teacher colleagues, which

simultaneously sets the tone for the students. At the heart of my definition for leadership

is my belief that all Christians are called to influence. Thus an educational leader is

called to equip and enable leadership in both the teachers and the students in their school.

This actually takes the general leadership insights of my thesis to a much higher plane.

An educational leader has the potential to shape future leadership to a greater extent than

a leader in other organizations. When you also consider that a Christian educational

leader is first and foremost a follower, seeking to lead in obedience to our Lord, the onus

of responsibility is clear. A person who leads in Christian education must be

intentionally reflective about the nature and impact of their leadership vision and

practice.

The most powerful model for leadership is that of a servant. As leaders we serve

our community, we serve our students, we serve our teachers, and we serve our mission

and vision as we serve God. We want to model this clearly so that our teachers in turn

are servant leaders with their students and each other. We want to enculture this so that

our students are enabled and equipped to be servant leaders to each other, to their

teachers and, most importantly, in whatever areas they proceed to while learning with us

or after learning with us. In so doing, Christ's model of serving will be carried on, the

Body of Christ will collectively continue His task, and the Kingdom of God will continue

to be developed and revealed.

This is complex. The world is changing. The world will continue to change. The world must keep changing. The Kingdom of God *is* here. The Kingdom of God *will be* established when Christ returns. All of this necessarily implies ongoing change, as the Kingdom of God moves towards a fulfillment that will only come through Christ's return, but which we need to do our best to seek *already* in the *here and now*. We need to continue to seek to be the Body of Christ, trying to bring our current reality closer towards the reality of the consummated Kingdom. This is our task. The world needs to change, both on the basis of "reality" and the Biblical imperative. Our schools have the potential to be massive agents of change. But right now, unfortunately, we are not. How shall we change this? I believe leadership is a key starting point, and the reminder that we are all, therefore, called to be change leaders is an essential aspect of schooling that we must take more seriously. This means a change for students, and for teachers. This must come from the leaders. But this means a change in the dominant paradigm, from various permutations of a business model to a distinctively Biblical model.

As a starting point, we need to focus on "The Story"; on God's plan for His people. The metaphor of the Bible as a drama in six acts (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004) helps us to locate ourselves in the story. Building on the work of N.T. Wright (1991), Bartholomew & Goheen (2004) suggest that the Bible story can be broken down into six distinct acts, and each "act" helps us to better understand God's plan and our role in the story as a whole:

Act 1   *God Establishes His Kingdom: Creation*

Act 2   *Rebelling in the Kingdom: Fall*

Act 3   *The King Chooses Israel: Redemption Initiated*

Act 4   *The Coming of the King: Redemption Accomplished*

Act 5   *Spreading the News of the King: The Mission of the Church*

Act 6   *The Return of the King: Redemption Completed* (p. 27)

Today we are in Act 5, the part of "The Story" where God's people, empowered by the Spirit, continue to spread the news of who Christ is and what He has done. This is the heart of our calling as Christians, and needs to also be the focus of our leadership and of our schools. Looking ahead to Act 6 reminds us that the end is not here, it lies ahead of us. But its coming is certain, so we can move and act with confidence and without fear. Satan is defeated. Sin will be destroyed. Jesus will return. We will live eternally with God.

The Biblical narrative also reminds us that all of us are imperfect sinners. There is no such thing as a perfect school, and seeking perfection is a misguided aim. The vision of developing a culture of learning and a community based on a Kingdom vision is more appropriate, especially if the goal of pursuing excellence in learning accompanies it as part of engendering a culture and community. This is particularly true when we remind ourselves that every school exists in a unique and complex cultural context, every school has its own all-to-human teachers, each of whom is doing their best, but none of whom will be perfect, and every school gets caught up in their own unfolding history. Seeking perfection is not an attainable goal. Seeking excellence and ongoing growth is more appropriate. The best goal, however is to seek obedience and faithfulness as we do what we can to reveal the Kingdom and God's reign.

Focusing on the leadership of Christ is also critical. Christ was fully God and fully human. As a human being, He had to lead His followers. While we can't easily

separate His divinity from His humanity, we can certainly learn about what it means to be

a leader from His modeling. Jesus turns the world's vision for leadership on its head.

First of all, the image of Jesus saying and doing the same thing with the foot washing is

critical: his words of service and sacrifice were backed up by his actions; there was clear

and authentic consistency between the two. In John 13 Jesus clearly tells us to go and

wash others' feet as he did. And he also promises a blessing on us if we do so. The

image of hierarchical clarity is also crucial. Jesus represents the true "top," and he

clearly knows what his followers are to do. But the final line of the John 13 passage is

also significant: the washing of the feet did not take place UNTIL the vision and direction

were clear.

Leaders need to first use their words. And then let their actions follow and flow

from their articulated vision. In his parables Jesus also reminds us that seeing and doing

the will of God is not always obvious. We need to attend to the Spirit and work to

explore God's will. We literally need eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart that truly

seeks to understand.   Seeing the sacramental and holy in our leadership and followership

tasks—and in Christian education—is a matter of perspective and point of view. Do we

see it? Can we even envision what could be possible?

While my thesis is rich with many different insights and conclusions, the task of a

Christian leader can be boiled down to two primary responsibilities: follow a vision and

lead people:

> (1) *A Christian leader is called to lead from vision*, which necessarily implies that
>
>   we follow God as we seek to obediently articulate, cast, and embody a vision
>
>   that resonates with His will.

(2) *A Christian leader is called to lead people*, showing God's love to all and

developing a relational culture of love, respect, and community.

It is also essential for Christian educational leaders to be aware of and participate in the ongoing leadership dialogue, both inside and beyond educational circles. Leadership is in transition. And there is a pattern emerging. Many of those calling for a reform or transformation of leadership rest their messages on solid foundations: moral leadership, invitational leadership, relational leadership, servant leadership, etc. But each of them falls short of the ground level: serving God and bringing Him glory. As Christians, we can merge the insights of all these various theories together and recognize the source of truth in all of them as God's revealed Will. We can see from the collective insights that there is a problem with the dominant Western leadership model. We can also see that we need to take it back to a ground level of serving and glorifying God by remembering who He is and what He has done and by obeying His commands: grow, learn, develop, love, sub-create. What this clearly shows us is that Christian leadership needs to be distinctive. It needs to be different. This is critically important for leadership and followership in Christian organizations and communities. But just as importantly, at a basic foundational level, Christian leadership needs to stand out as a light in the darkness or as a salting salt, casting an alternative vision for leadership and followership that can resonate in all walks of life. We are called to be transformers, not only of our own organizations, but also to be used by God to be part of the redemptive transformation of His world. Christian leadership is not just leadership for Christians, but gets to the heart of God's will for leading and following in His Kingdom.

Christian educational leadership needs to change. There is a Biblical model with

integrity. But it turns the world's vision for leadership on its head. It feels intuitive, but, as O'Toole shows us, it also feels counter-instinctive. It does not "make sense" on a superficial and semi-logical level. Yet Greenleaf and others cast a vision for leadership that is beginning to find authentic and measurable success. In the late 1970s, Robert Greenleaf (1997) prophetically declared that IF only one institution began to embark on a new vision for leadership, society itself would improve (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 49). Instinctively, I would have hoped and assumed that such a change would emerge in Christian leadership circles, and certainly in Christian education, where the focus is on discipleship and following Christ. But this did not occur. Ironically, all these years later, this is only now starting to happen. Leadership initiatives in the business world are beginning to convey this tone. I am disappointed that it was businesses before schools, and am frustrated that Christian educational leadership is so far behind in this respect. Christian leadership should be leading the way—in both words and actions. But we aren't. So what are we going to do about it?

I believe that Christian educational leadership is in a state of crisis, a crisis paralleled by the state of Christian education itself. For various reasons, there is no single, over-arching vision for distinctively Christian educational leadership. Many leaders fall back on a mix of piece-meal training opportunities, contradictory leadership theories, and personal experiences and inclinations. The collective impact of this lack of a normative vision for leadership rooted in Biblical principles is frightening, both in terms of its impact on the people (teachers and students) involved in our schools, as well as in terms of the overall transformative impact of Christian education on our culture at large. It is imperative that Christian educational leaders (administrators, teachers, board

and community members) take the time to reflect on this topic with the goal of ensuring that the leadership models and practices of their schools "fit" with a deeply Biblical vision for both leadership and Christian education. I suggest that a model for leadership based on Robert Greenleaf's *Servant Leadership* is an essential starting point. I suggest that our current practice tends to be more rooted in other foundations. As my title suggests, I believe that we need to challenge each other to grow toward distinctively Christian educational leadership.

What has struck me repeatedly during the years I have been working with (and thinking about) this topic is the number of teachers and leaders who are quite concerned about the nature of Christian educational leadership. Just as striking, however, is their collective silence. I suspect that many of the current leaders in Christian education would be surprised at the level and extent of concern that exists. There seems to be a fairly significant mismatch between perceptions and reality. Part of the problem may be the "aura" of the leaders themselves. They are often not sufficiently in touch with their own leadership culture, and their perception of their leadership impact is based too much on community school board and self-assessments, rather than authentic 360-degree feedback. Just as significantly, teachers often do not voice their concerns, even when they have a theoretical opportunity to do so. Part of the issue is one of vulnerability— teachers don't feel they are safe in sharing criticisms or asking questions, and they mistakenly perceive that "they are the only ones who feel this way." Another essential part, however, is the personality inclinations of many Christian school teachers. They often are loving, self-sacrificial individuals who don't want to rock the boat. They don't want to create or increase tensions. And they definitely don't want to be leaders

themselves, so they don't want to get involved. They don't want to see tensions and

issues impact their own work with their students—and they certainly don't want the

students to be impacted by conflict and disagreements in the school. So the issues can

remain unchallenged. Young leaders who are themselves inclined to leader-first

leadership fill some of the gaps. Occasionally a leader with a different vision takes on a

position of leadership in a school, but they are often non-players in the dialogue, either

because they are so busy with the "stuff" of leadership that they don't raise issues or

concerns or they choose to focus solely on their own staff and school community.

In this context, the insights of my thesis are surprisingly hopeful. There is an

emerging body of leadership research that suggests there is a better way to lead, one that

has value and validity for any leadership context, not just educational. But, given the

vision and relational nature of educational leadership, the insights and values are even

more significant. Given the foundationally vision- and relationship-based nature of

Christian educational leadership, these insights emerge as fundamental to a

transformation and renewal of Christian school leadership.

The challenge rests, however, in the situational nature of Christian educational

leadership. Every school community is unique. Every leader is an individual. Every

leadership context, therefore, is different from all the others. And yet there are many

insights and themes that can shape each individual situation. But, as many of my

resources suggest, good theory shapes actual practice only if individuals commit to

applying the research, which generally demands the vulnerability and openness required

to commit to change. And this is very hard to do. My idealistic hope is that present and

potential future leaders in Christian education in North America will interact with the

insights of my thesis and reflect on their own leadership inclinations and practice, and

might be convicted of the need to transform their own individual leadership, thereby

initiating the transformation of Christian educational leadership across the continent. The

problem, of course, is that change can only happen one person at a time. Simply

knowing and hearing good theory is not enough. Educational leaders who need to change

need to be convicted of the need to change, and this is extremely difficult to do. There is,

I believe, a massive gap between the theory suggested in the research behind my thesis

and the actual practice of Christian school leadership. There is a need for transformation.

For this to happen, individual leaders and Christian educational leadership organizations

will need to individually and collectively commit to probing the depths of leadership and

join in a collective and ongoing conversation about what it means to be a distinctively

Christian educational leader.

The reality for leaders has already been described somewhat. They are too busy,

trying to balance an incredibly diverse collection of tasks, each operating with their own

relational and temporal constraints. Indeed, I have often humourously wondered what an

administrator's job description would really look like. In this context it is frightening to

consider how often small school communities are forced by budget realities to employ

their administrator as a classroom teacher as well (sometimes even full time). The

leadership potential for such an administrator is significantly hindered, if not impeded

completely. Certainly a vision for growth and ongoing transformation in keeping with

the paradigm shifts in both education and leadership is at risk. Additionally, not only are

administrators too busy, they are constantly being pulled in many different directions by a

multitude of competing voices: teachers, parents, students, community members, boards

and committees, government agencies and directives, educational innovations, etc. An educational leader will never be able to please or satisfy everyone. There is always more to do, and not enough time to do it. If leaders do not prioritize somehow, they run the danger of being caught up in *crisis management*: their mental energy and time will be focused on managing and resolving crises as they emerge—and in this context, *everything is a crisis*. This is why it is so essential that leaders establish prioritizing vision and relationships as baselines. This is why leaders need to intentionally and systematically build reflection and pause time into their schedules. This is why Christian leaders need to make time for God. The nature of the job simply does not naturally allow for reflective thinking, and it is too easy to lose sight of this. Leaders need to work from an awareness of the complexity, even impossibility, of their task, and do so in a climate that recognizes weakness and a need for grace and forgiveness. There will be times where leaders will make mistakes, and will need the forgiveness of their supporters and followers. If a culture of trust has been established, they can bank on what they've earned. There will also be times when the rapid pace of the job and the need for quick decision-making will necessarily exclude the other stakeholders that need to be heard. While this needs to be avoided where possible, a culture of trust can provide the grace needed for leaders to simply be human.

What makes leadership an even greater challenge for Christian education today is that there are two significant paradigm shifts taking place that are both at the very heart of the issues of my thesis: in education and in leadership.

Over the course of my own brief teaching career I have already seen clear evidence of an educational paradigm shift, moving from an emphasis on measurability,

behaviourism, and the rational/logical to an emphasis on the results of emerging research on learning, brain structure and function, and the socio-cultural dynamics of learning (Shepard, 2000).

Increasingly, curriculum and instruction is based on current pedagogical theories and educational research, brain research, Multiple Intelligence theory, learning styles theories, constructivist theories, cooperative learning theories, and similar practices and theories exercise formative power on curriculum and instruction. However, much of what is currently being done in curriculum, instruction, assessment and evaluation is still rooted in the "Modern" paradigm, with its emphasis on measurability, rationality, and behaviourist reinforcement. It is interesting to note the impact of the shift from modernity to postmodernity in this paradigm shift. This serves as another reminder of the essential role of discernment for Christian educational leaders.

At the same time, our culture is also experiencing a leadership paradigm shift, from traditional top-down management model to one that is more relational and cultural. Our current leadership climate is more focused on production, profit, and policies than on vision, relationships, and people, but this is clearly changing. Once again, it is crucial for Christian educational leaders to test the worldview spirits that shape this shift.

The time is ripe for a transformation of leadership in Christian education. There is a need for an infusion of new vision-based, Body-of-Christ-rooted leaders. There is a need to create a space for self-reflection and collective leadership dialogue. There is a need for forgiveness, and a need for grace. The time is right for a transformation of leadership in Christian education. As paradigms shift, a cohesive vision for leadership is emerging. Drawing on developments in brain research, cognitive psychology, social

learning theories, constructivist theories, emotional intelligence theories, business leadership developments, and leadership and educational reform movements, a vision for leadership transformation that leads from vision, is task-oriented, and has a people-orientation is coming to the forefront. Such a model resonates with Biblical insights into leadership. Such a model is ideally suited for Christian schools, matching with both the mission of the school and the nature of the people involved.

It is essential to remember that at its simplest, *leadership is influence*. All leaders are called to influence others. Christian leaders are called to influence others to know, serve, and glorify God. Christian educational leaders serving in Christian schools are called to develop a leadership climate that equips and enables all Christians in the school community—staff, students, and beyond—to use and develop their gifts in order to influence others to know, serve, and glorify God. In a very real sense, then, all Christians are leaders, and Christian educational leadership needs to build from this foundation as all involved seek to be obedient to God and to follow His leading, unfolding and revealing the Kingdom of God as members of the Body of Christ.

Schools play a critical empowering role for developing Kingdom servants who are members of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is a single organic community comprised of millions of individually gifted unique people. Because schools can shape both individuals and their perceptions and experiences of community, schools have the potential to have a transformative impact on our students and, through them, on our culture. We don't hear enough about this potential in our vision and mission literature. We certainly are not intentional enough about empowering our students and teachers to be active members of Christ's body, led by its head and empowered by the Spirit to

complete its task.

Christian schools need to develop a vision for ongoing, Kingdom-rooted change and transformation. This is, of course, a very difficult challenge, one which must be grappled with by the entire Christian school community. What is equally clear, however, is the fundamental vision-casting role that must be played by our leaders. A number of the authors from my research provided critical insights into the development of a culture of change. An important distinction, of course, is that change is never for its own sake, something which tends to be misunderstood in our own culture, which is often preoccupied with change and innovation. Change must not be seen as a negative, something which I have seen as a problem in Christian schools. We tend to be very skeptical of change and innovation, and this, too, can be dangerous. Institutions are organisms, and organisms are not static, but are always growing and changing. An institution that is not changing is not an organic entity—in many respects it is already in the process of experiencing biological death. I sometimes wonder how much this is true for our school communities. Any change that we undergo must be rooted in our vision, particularly as we seek to be agents of Kingdom change and transformation in our culture. There is, of course, a great deal of risk in seeking to embark on such a journey. Fortunately, it is not about us and about the change we seek to bring about, but is about God and the Kingdom He has revealed and will one day consummate. In the mean time, we are called to be His hands, feet, and voice in our world.

Critical questions about leadership need to be raised, and the very future of distinctively Christian education in North America may be at stake. Are we distinctively Christian in our leadership? Are our schools distinctively Christian in our mission and

impact? Do we graduate students who are distinctively Christian as they go about their

participation in our culture after leaving our schools?

Principles for Christian Leadership

Drawing on the results of my research, I want to suggest eight primary principles

for Christian leadership in general.   I believe that these components of Christian

leadership are appropriate for any Christian leader in any leadership context. As such,

they have significant implications for Christian educational leadership, because Christian

schools should be the epitome of the Christian organization, enabling and equipping

students and teachers alike for leadership.

1. **Follow God** – A Christian leader needs to seek to follow God in obedience and
   service. A mark of a Biblical leader is a heart fully yielded to God.

2. **Know Yourself** – Christian leaders needs to know themselves as people. A
   leader needs to understand his or her personality tendencies and his or her
   emotional impact on others.

3. **Know Your Culture** – a Christian leader needs to be able to discern the
   "spirits of the age." Leaders need to know their culture and understand it
   nature and direction.

4. **Define Your Leadership** – Christian leaders need to know themselves as
   leaders. A leader needs to know what it means to lead. A leader needs to
   define his or her leadership style(s) and commit to using it to serve others.

5. **Focus on Relationships** – A Christian leader needs to focus first and foremost
   on people, seeking to grow with and learn from the people he or she has been
   gifted with. This includes every single person involved in the organizational

community.

6. Cast a Vision – a Christian leader needs to develop, articulate, cast, and embody a vision. This vision must be developed in obedience and service to God's will.

7. Enable and Develop Community – a Christian leader needs to develop authentic community that draws on the voices and insights of the various community stakeholders.

8. Empower Others – Christian leaders need to empower the people they serve to grow and serve as well. A leader helps other people develop and use all of their gifts, including their leadership gifts. One of the leader's primary tasks is to enable leadership in others.

Limitations

As I conclude my thesis, I have identified a number of significant limitations. Some of them are a result of a lack of research, particularly in the area of Christian educational leadership. Others are a direct result of the direction I chose for my thesis. I will briefly describe the specific limitations I have noted, and leave it to my readers to (A) identity others gaps and limitations that I have not yet seen and (B) to decide on the value of the insights I have raised despite the limitations of my work.

1. I struggled to find resources for the heart of my thesis. This is an obvious limitation, and one that I had to struggle through from the outset. There were many resources on leadership in general, and a fair bit on Christian leadership. But there was very little on educational leadership, and almost nothing on Christian educational leadership. These are significant gaps for the purposes of my thesis. I chose to see this limitation as an

impetus to write my thesis, and I believe this is an issue that Christian educational leaders need to address. For a thesis on distinctively Christian educational leadership to struggle to find resources on Christian educational leadership is a "limitation" that must be clearly stated.

2. *More research needs to be done about leadership in Christian schools.* This is also clearly related to the limitation above. And yet it also must be stated clearly: there is almost nothing published about Christian education in general and Christian educational leadership in particular. Given the scope and significance of our task, this is something that our leaders must address. How are our schools led? What have the results been? Are there other options out there? Are they being attempted? What have the results been? Given the clear discontent that exists with (A) Christian educational leadership and (B) the existing dominant leadership model in the West, someone needs to start asking these questions.

3. *All leadership is situational.* This may be the most significant limitation to my thesis...because every single leadership position is unique. Leadership is simple in theory, but complex in practice because it is so contextual, and this complexity is necessarily further complicated in a relationship-dominated field like education. Every single situation will be unique. Nonetheless, there are critical leadership patterns and strategies and skills that can be identified, many of which go right to the heart of the relational dimension of the leadership-followership relationship.

4. *There is no forum for dialogue about leadership.* Over the course of my career in Christian education so far, I have been struck by the lack of a forum for discussing this very topic. It is one of those "elephants in the room" topics--everybody knows about it,

but nobody really wants to talk about it. Most of my initial discussions took place in one

on one, off-the-record conversations. There is almost "no place to go" with the topic, and

yet it is an essential aspect of all of our callings that impacts every single decision and

interaction, to some degree or another. I challenge the powers that be in Christian

education to ensure that there is some type of forum or "space" for conversations about

the nature and impact of leadership in our Christian school communities, and to create a

discussion context that is able to be truly "safe" and "vulnerable."

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