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## Shared Leadership: Bringing the Local Church Back to Its Biblical Roots of Leadership

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BETHEL UNIVERSITY  
BETHEL SEMINARY ST. PAUL

SHARED LEADERSHIP: BRINGING THE LOCAL CHURCH  
BACK TO ITS BIBLICAL ROOTS OF LEADERSHIP

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE  
IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

BY  
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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

MAY 2017



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## ABSTRACT

The North American culture is experiencing seismic shifts in its leadership structures. One of these shifts is the growing momentum from traditional, hierarchical leadership models to flatter, team-driven, shared leadership structures.

The first section of this project aims to understand the biblical and theological reasons for shared leadership. The relationship within the Triune God and other examples of shared leadership from Scripture are used to build the foundation and rationale for this type of structure in the local church. This section also identifies factors that caused the drift from shared leadership through a plurality of elders in the New Testament to a hierarchical structure of bishop, elder, and deacon in the early church.

The second section reviews the current literature on shared leadership and how postmodernism is bringing the church back to its biblical roots of leadership. Examples from the corporate, sports, and natural worlds are woven in to provide practical illustrations of this model. This section also describes the strengths and weaknesses of shared leadership and presents strategies in resolving some of its challenges.

The third section draws on research from a select group of evangelical churches in North America that use shared leadership. From these case studies, a grounded theory is developed to understand the antecedents of shared leadership, steps of transition, and factors that sustain and make this leadership model a success.

The final section presents a step-by-step process in transitioning to a shared leadership model that is biblical, relevant, and practical for the local church to adopt.

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to those leadership teams that seek to collaborate, empower, and work together by sharing leadership which respects and honors each person as being equally capable and important to the life of the group.



## INTRODUCTION: A NEW REFORMATION

Over the last several years there has been a renewed emphasis on New Testament paradigms of organization. Whereas the Reformation of the 1500s returned the Scripture (*sola scriptura*) to the church as the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice, today the postmodern church is experiencing a new reformation within its leadership.

Soon after the first century AD the New Testament pattern of shared leadership through a plurality of elders was replaced with a hierarchical leadership structure.

Alexander Strauch, in his book *Biblical Eldership*, writes:

The Christian doctrine of eldership was lost for nearly fourteen centuries. The doctrine was ignored until the time of the Reformation when John Calvin (1509–1564), the influential French Reformer, decried the loss of the church eldership and promoted its restoration. The sixteenth-century efforts, however, were only partially successful because the Reformers could not break free from the hardened soil of long-standing, clerical traditions.<sup>1</sup>

Bringing the local church back to its biblical roots of leadership is indeed a difficult challenge. The appeal of John Calvin went largely unnoticed for centuries until late in the twentieth century and early into the twenty-first century when the concept of shared leadership began to emerge once again.

There is growing evidence through the writings of various scholars and authors that the concept of shared leadership is becoming a legitimate form of leadership for the twenty-first century. In the preface of *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*, that has several contributors, editors Craig Pearce and Jay Conger write:

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, 3rd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 11.

Leadership has historically been conceived around an individual and his or her relationship to subordinates or followers. . . . This paradigm has dominated our thinking in the organizational behavior field for decades. In recent years, however, a few scholars have challenged this notion, arguing that leadership is an activity that is shared or distributed among members of a group or organization.<sup>2</sup>

Andrew Le Peau wrote of this coming trend when he asked and answered his question: “If, therefore, it is impossible for one person to fulfill all the leadership roles of a group, what is the solution? Group leadership.”<sup>3</sup> He felt that “leaders who believe they must be on top, alone, only hurt those they lead by not allowing them to grow. . . . Leaders need to realize that the total burden does not rest on them. It is shared, and one of their primary duties is to see that all actually do participate in the leadership of the group.”<sup>4</sup>

Research analyst George Barna, in dispelling the myth of the “superhuman” leader who can do it all and is responsible for everything, argues in his book *The Power of Team Leadership*, “The current system does not work because it has an inherent flaw in its foundation that must be addressed.”<sup>5</sup> In his analysis, the superhuman, solo leader working in a hierarchical setting no longer is functional in this era. He discovered that “leadership works best when it is provided by teams of gifted leaders serving together in pursuit of a clear and compelling vision.”<sup>6</sup> One trend he observed in the church is that “pastors are increasingly open to sharing the leadership of the church’s ministry.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger, eds., *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), xi.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew T. Le Peau, *Paths of Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1983), 120.

<sup>4</sup> Le Peau, 121–122.

<sup>5</sup> George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Achieving Success through Shared Responsibility* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Barna, 7–8.

<sup>7</sup> Barna, 15.

Writing on changes affecting the educational world, Ann Duin and Linda Baer believe that shared leadership is the structure that will best meet the growing demands placed on educational institutions:

We are in the midst of a new era. . . . Higher education institutions indeed must be resilient as we face vastly increased expectations for sustainable environments, global focus, and technological support. Speed of response to these expectations ultimately depends on shared vision, shared agreement, and shared accountability. Scholars emphasize that speed of response comes through shared leadership.<sup>8</sup>

Authors such as George Cladis, Gene Getz, Ryan Hartwig, Charles Manz, Henry Sims, Alexander Strauch, and many others are making significant contributions in raising awareness and giving understanding to the practice of shared leadership in organizations, businesses, and local churches. This influx of research on shared leadership has created a major shift in North American leadership structures that are moving traditional, hierarchical organizations to flatter, team-driven, shared leadership models.

The hierarchical organization, ruled by a dominant leader in which followers have little input and ownership, is no longer the only option. Teams that share leadership are gaining momentum, which has enabled others to give input, make decisions, and take ownership of the organization's vision.

These leadership shifts in the culture have brought a renewed focus, indeed a reformation, which is bringing the local church back to its biblical roots of leadership. According to Mark Dever, in *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, "There is a growing trend to go back to this biblical office—and for good reason. It was needed in New Testament times, and it is needed now."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ann Hill Duin and Linda L. Baer, "Shared Leadership for a Green, Global, and Google World," *Planning for Higher Education* 39, no. 1 (October-December 2010): 30.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 229.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE CRUX OF LEADERSHIP

### **The Problem and Its Context**

#### *Statement of the Problem*

The problem this project addressed was the leadership drift that occurred in the church from New Testament practices of sharing leadership through a plurality of elders to a hierarchical, lead pastoral model. In response to this problem the researcher (1) identified theological reasons and biblical examples for a shared leadership structure; (2) outlined from history how the church had drifted from a shared leadership model; (3) demonstrated through current literature how postmodernism and the corporate world is bringing the church back to its biblical roots of leadership; (4) investigated strategies through field and literary research to transition hierarchical structures toward collaborative leadership practices; and (5) presented a biblically and culturally relevant model of shared leadership for today's local church to engage.

#### *Delimitations of the Problem*

The theological component was limited to theological concepts and biblical examples of shared leadership found in the 66 books of the Christian canon. The historical component was limited to the leadership drift as recorded in early Christian writings from AD 45–500. The theoretical component was limited to literary concepts and organizational examples of shared leadership in the last 100 years. The field component was limited to research from select evangelical churches in North America that use a shared leadership model.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Culture* refers to a set of shared values or basic assumptions<sup>1</sup> that are accepted by the group and result in visible outcomes practiced by the group.

*Evangelical* refers to a set of beliefs that stress the authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice, the oneness of God expressed in Trinity, the sinfulness of humanity, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and salvation through Jesus alone.

*Hierarchical* refers to an organizational structure that centralizes decision making in one individual or group.

*Lead Pastor* refers to the leader in a local church who acts as its spokesperson, provides oversight to staff, and gives direction on matters of mission and ministry.

*Local Church* refers to an organized group of people in a specific geographical region who follow Jesus Christ to carry out God's mission to the world.

*Postmodernism* refers to a cultural paradigm shift in which there are no absolutes, all things are relative, and "old-style institutions" are dismantled.<sup>2</sup>

*Relevant* refers to practices and behaviors that are accepted by the majority of a culture.

*Shared Leadership* refers to two or more leaders working together within an organization who are equally "empowered to share the tasks and responsibilities of leadership"<sup>3</sup> with recognition of role, but not of rank.

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<sup>1</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 18.

<sup>2</sup> George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together Into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 18, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie T. Solansky, "Leadership Style and Team Processes in Self-Managed Teams," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 14, no. 4 (May 2008): 333.

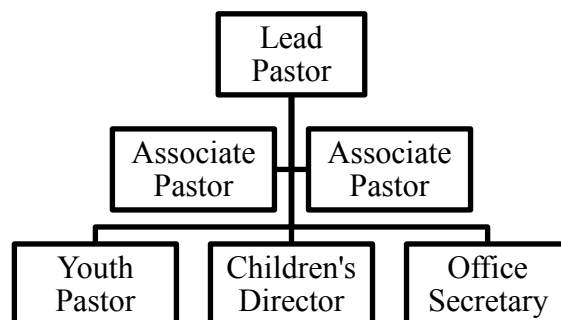
### *Hypotheses*

The first hypothesis was that Scripture reveals a theological bend for shared leadership in the Triune nature of God and through the leadership practices of Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. The second hypothesis was that as Christianity expanded into the Roman Empire the leadership structure of the local church became heavily influenced by the Roman style of government. The third hypothesis was that postmodernism is dismantling hierarchical leadership structures and bringing the local church back to its biblical roots of leadership. The fourth hypothesis was that local churches and other organizations using shared leadership principles will provide relevant data to transition the local church to shared leadership practices. The fifth hypothesis was that the shared leadership model is closest to New Testament leadership in the local church and gives witness to the relational and collaborative nature of the Trinity.

### **Setting of the Project**

The setting for this project resides in the leadership culture of the North American evangelical church. For generations, the leadership structure in the local church has mainly depicted a hierarchy of positions. Typically in multi-staff churches, the basic leadership pattern follows a supervisor-subordinate format (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Typical church leadership structure**



In the last few decades, however, there has been a tremendous shift in the leadership structures of organizations. With the complexity of the world and the advent of postmodernism, the traditional structures of society are being questioned and dismantled as no longer absolute and relevant. Richard Tarnas notes that “only a committed openness to the interplay of many perspectives can meet the extra-ordinary challenges of the postmodern era.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, the hierarchal structure is no longer the only option. A cursory review of the current literature<sup>5</sup> on leadership reveals that organizations today face a wide spectrum of leadership styles and structures in which to choose (Table 1). Many of these leadership styles and structures overlap with each other.

**Table 1. Sample list of descriptive leadership terms**

Administrative Leadership	E-Leadership	Rotational Leadership
Authentic Leadership	Ethical Leadership	Self-Leadership
Autocratic Leadership	Global Leadership	Servant Leadership
Charismatic Leadership	Hierarchical Leadership	Shared Leadership
Collaborative Leadership	Invisible Leadership	Situational Leadership
Collective Leadership	Laissez-Fair Leadership	Team Leadership
Complexity Leadership	Managerial Leadership	Transactional Leadership
Distributed Leadership	Participative Leadership	Transformational Leadership

The plethora of leadership styles and structures is giving the North American church new ways to structure its leadership. The church is facing increased pressure to become relevant while remaining biblical. As organizations in the culture change to various modes of leadership, this has impacted the local church. Individuals from these secular organizations enter the church and newer perspectives of leadership are brought in that challenge the older, more traditional patterns of leadership in the church.

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York, NY: Random House, 1991), 404.

<sup>5</sup> Gill R. Hickman, ed., *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for a New Era*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2016).

One of these leadership structures being challenged and falling out of favor with the younger generation is the hierarchical model with its “command and control” systems. In her research on the millennial generation, people age 18–34, Valorie Nordbye found, “Millennials value teamwork, community and collaboration. The only leadership style to include these three values as core to the style is servant leadership.”<sup>6</sup>

Servant leadership is the style that works best in the structure of shared leadership. Leaders who serve their own interests and fail to seek the input of the younger generation may negatively impact their organizations. It is imperative that churches in North America adapt to the shared leadership structure as “Millennials have surpassed Baby Boomers as the nation’s largest living generation ... [and] now number 75.4 million, surpassing the 74.9 million Baby Boomers (ages 51–69).”<sup>7</sup>

### **Importance of the Project**

#### *Importance to the Researcher*

This project is important in that the researcher has both experienced and seen the struggles that subordinate staff face to be heard and the pressures they encounter to “climb the ladder” of success. Often in multi-staff churches subordinate staff strive to move up and, if that does not occur within a certain time frame, usually move on to another ministry or out of ministry altogether. It is important to design a leadership structure that equally values and includes subordinate staff. Over the years four key experiences have shaped this researcher’s philosophy on shared leadership.

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<sup>6</sup> Valerie C. Nordbye, “Providing Relevant and Effective Leadership for Millennials” (D. Min., thesis project report, Bethel Seminary, 2015), 58, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://cdm16120.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16120coll4/id/0>.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Fry, “Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America’s Largest Generation,” PewResearchCenter, April 25, 2016, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>.



The researcher's philosophy of shared leadership was shaped by his experience as a youth leader. When he and two friends began a youth ministry no one claimed "lead" of the group. The three complemented each other as they worked in three distinct roles—evangelist, educator, and entertainer. Sharing ministry worked so well that the group went from five to 40 youth in one year in a church that averaged 50 people.

The second experience that altered the researcher's view of the hierarchical system was when he served part-time as a youth pastor in a multi-staff church. When the associate pastor retired, this researcher hoped the position would be offered to him. It was disheartening when the position was hired out to another person. This researcher chose to resign and move on to further his education rather than work part-time while raising the other half of his salary. A shared leadership structure that could give this researcher greater responsibility and better pay would have helped retain his services. Instead, he felt devalued in the hierarchical structure that kept his wage as a youth pastor at a substandard level.

The third experience that increased this researcher's desire for team ministry was while he served as a solo lead pastor in a city church. In this hierarchical setting, this researcher felt responsible for everything and after several years of filling multiple roles as "lead" the ministry became draining and tiring. This researcher almost "moved out" of ministry, but eventually "moved on" to another multi-staff church that he hoped would fulfill the longing of working with a leadership team. Although this church was unable to hire another staff member, building a non-paid leadership team could have saved this researcher from near burnout. Sharing leadership would have eliminated the pressure on this researcher to be solely responsible for the results of ministry.

The fourth experience that negatively affected this researcher's view of hierarchy was while serving as an associate pastor in a larger, multi-staff church. When the founding senior pastor was nearing retirement he told this researcher to "not aspire to be the senior pastor" and that he "must become less" like John the Baptist. The pastor did not agree with this researcher's view of shared leadership and felt it was not a biblical paradigm. This researcher felt stymied in being able to use his leadership gifts and unable to implement a structure that would increase the value and input of all staff.

When the founding pastor retired this researcher, together with the youth pastor, proposed a shared leadership structure to the board. Both pastors worked well together and saw the advantage of sharing leadership with their complementary gifts. It was argued that the church recorded its highest average summer attendance when these two pastors served while the senior pastor was on a four-month sabbatical. The proposal, however, was rejected in favor of the traditional, hierarchical structure.

A lesson this researcher learned in this failed attempt at shared leadership was that "culture trumps strategy."<sup>8</sup> The culture of the church formed around the senior pastor's concept that biblical leadership was hierarchical and in need of a lead pastor.

#### *Importance to the Immediate Ministry Context*

Although the immediate context in which this researcher operates rejected the shared leadership model, the idea of collaboration moved the church board to find a lead pastor who was more collaborative in working with the staff. This project is useful in providing future boards another leadership structure to consider in the government of this local church.

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<sup>8</sup> Nilofer Merchant, "Culture Trumps Strategy, Every time," *Harvard Business Review*, March 22, 2011, accessed August 8, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2011/03/culture-trumps-strategy-every>.

This project can help the church take further steps in developing a collaborative leadership structure. As the community grows and other organizations move toward team-based structures the insights from this dissertation will lead to further discussion, interaction, and implementation of shared leadership principles.

### *Importance to the Church at Large*

This project is important in that it aims to bring the local church back to its biblical roots of leadership. It is a leadership structure that gives witness to the relational unity of the Triune God and places Christ as the head of the church. Leadership that places primary emphasis on one individual may take away from the preeminence of Christ and the contributions of each member of the local church. The church does not rise or fall on one leader, but through shared responsibility as the whole body “grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:16).<sup>9</sup> It is in the diversified unity of shared leadership that the church grows and is a witness to the Triune God.

This project is important in helping the local church make the best use of its culture for kingdom purposes. Too many times the local church fails to adapt to the present culture and hangs on to vestiges of a former era. The result is often an aging demographic and declining church. As Jesus noted, “Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it” (Matt. 16:25). Organizational leadership structures in North America are increasingly becoming team-oriented and the church needs to prepare for this cultural influence. This project intends to prepare the church for structural change in leadership so that it will remain viable in a culture that is in need of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

This project is important in helping churches reduce the turnover of quality staff and strengthen the church for long-term effective ministry. Steven Johnson in his article on the long-term pastorate indicates that “researchers hold that rising pastoral tenures bode well for the overall health of churches.”<sup>10</sup> If this is true in the hierarchical setting with a lead pastor, what might the results be in a shared leadership setting that retains a majority of its staff? In hierarchical models, there is a tendency to “move up” the ladder to feel successful, and often those in lower positions will “move on” to meet this need. In shared leadership there is no pressure to “move up,” but simply to “move around” within the team. The effects of a long-term staff in a shared leadership system can have an immense impact on both the congregation and community in which they serve.

This project is important in helping the church better connect and attract the younger generation through a shared leadership structure. In preparing the church to respond to the coming leadership shifts in the Canadian culture, Dwayne Buhler notes in the magazine *Faith Today*, “The younger generation tends to be hands-on and relational, and responds to a co-operative leadership style.”<sup>11</sup> Through shared leadership practices the church can retain, involve, and equip the younger generation for continued ministry.

### **Research Methodology**

This project is qualitative in nature, using both case study and grounded theory as the primary methods of research. The tools used in this research were interviews, surveys, and questionnaires with local churches and pastors. This was done by email, phone, and accessing organizational documents and flow charts to determine leadership structures.

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<sup>10</sup> Steven M. Johnson, “Running with Patience: Encouraging the Long-Term PASTORATE,” *Review and Expositor* 113, no. 3 (August 2016): 360.

<sup>11</sup> Dwayne Buhler, “Leadership 2020: How Organizations Can Prepare Now for Upcoming Leadership Shifts in Canada,” *Faith Today*, March/April 2011, 27.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR SHARED LEADERSHIP

Over the years the church has used various leadership structures to govern itself. Traditionally these governance models have ranged from a hierarchical framework in which the “clergy is organized into orders or ranks, each of which is subordinate to the one above it,”<sup>1</sup> to a more collaborative framework in which “ultimate authority for governing the church rests in the members”<sup>2</sup> (congregationalism), or in which the members empower a select group of leaders to act on their behalf (federalism<sup>3</sup>).

These leadership structures are often dependent on a person’s image of the church. For example, if the church is viewed as an army “marching as to war” it may take on a hierarchical approach with a dominant and autocratic leader who has clear lines of command and control. If the church is seen as a family it may take on a team approach with a primary and loving leader. If the church is presented as a priesthood of believers it may take on a collaborative approach with many leaders who equally share the ministry.

This project focuses on the collaborative framework of governance for the local church. According to Ryrie in *Basic Theology*, “The hierarchical church was a postbiblical development. . . . The New Testament picture seems to include a blend of congregational and federal government, limited to the local level.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), 407.

<sup>2</sup> Ryrie, 408.

<sup>3</sup> Ryrie, 409.

<sup>4</sup> Ryrie, 411.

## Responsibility Structure of Shared Leadership

### *The Nature of the Triune God*

The relationship within the Triune God is the foundation for shared leadership. All members of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—coexist simultaneously in unity, are equally important, and carry out diverse roles. Christians throughout the world believe in “one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices.”<sup>5</sup> In the last few decades, there has been renewed emphasis on the Trinity as a valid, conceptual, and biblical model for shared leadership.

In the last fifty years, the relational theology of the Trinity has opened a new perspective on structuring leadership in today’s church. Using Moltmann’s seminal work on Trinitarian theology, Dwight J. Zscheile in his article “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power” argues that ecclesial leadership is better framed around the Eastern Orthodox view of “the social, perichoretic view of the Trinity. . . . This means the Trinity is a non-hierarchical, egalitarian community rather than a monarchical one.”<sup>6</sup> This Trinitarian theology “impacts our patterns of organization, communal practices, and norms of behavior.”<sup>7</sup> Zscheile argues that “rather than construing the leader as operating alone, wielding authority in isolation from others, the Trinity points toward a collaborative, shared, team-based approach.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Affirmation of Faith,” *Converge*, accessed August 11, 2016, <https://www.converge.org/about/affirmation-faith>.

<sup>6</sup> Dwight J. Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 49.

<sup>7</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 44.

<sup>8</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 55.

Julie Gorman argues in her book *Community That Is Christian* that “such a view of a Triune God operating in interdependence to exalt the work of each other and to present a solidarity of personhood affects our concept of authority and leadership. ... What does it say for our hierarchical systems and domination/subjugation paradigms within the church?”<sup>9</sup> Although much of the church in North America still operates with a hierarchical leadership structure, shared leadership is beginning to gain momentum in the church and especially in the wider culture as organizations increasingly move toward team-based structures.

The first reference to shared leadership within the Godhead is found in the creation account where “God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness’” (Gen. 1:26a). Ken Cochrum in his paper “Team Leadership @ Distance” finds, “From the very first chapter of Genesis we see partnership and plurality in leadership. Three times the plural pronoun is used in reference to God.”<sup>10</sup> This plurality of leadership within the Godhead is also seen when God calls out to Isaiah, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” (Isa. 6:8).

As the Triune God collaborates and makes decisions together this is an aspect in which people display the image of God, for “God created mankind in his own image ... male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). According to Millard J. Erickson in *Christian Theology*, “This means that the image of God must consist in a unity in plurality; a characteristic of both the ectype and the archetype.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Julie Gorman, *Community That Is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 29.

<sup>10</sup> Ken Cochrum, “Team Leadership @ Distance: Live Case Study in Building an Effective Distributed Global Team” (June 2011), 28.

<sup>11</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 329.

Some scholars believe that “the plural form of the noun for the God of Israel, אֱלֹהִים (*'elohim*), is sometimes regarded as an intimation of a Trinitarian view. This is a generic name used to refer to other gods as well. When used with reference to Israel’s God, it is generally, but not always, found in the plural.”<sup>12</sup> Instead of pointing to God’s majesty, some scholars believe this term refers to God’s Triune nature. What sets God apart from all other “gods” of the surrounding nations is the unity of relationship, the oneness of God expressed in three persons. Ryan Hartwig and Warren Bird in their book *Teams That Thrive* note, “Christianity is unique among major religions in presenting one God who eternally exists and functions as a divine team. This fact certainly undergirds the idea of God’s people likewise working in unity through teams.”<sup>13</sup>

This revelation of the Triune God in the Old Testament is fully revealed in the New Testament through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some argue, however, that a hierarchy exists within the Trinity as Jesus submitted himself to the will of his Father. Within shared leadership, a primary leader may exist in any given moment to carry out a certain function within the team, but this does not equate to permanent status. Erickson refers to this as “functional subordination,” but in no way does this imply a lesser status or inequality. According to Erickson:

The function of one member of the Trinity may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean he is in any way inferior in essence. Each of the three persons of the Trinity has had, for a period of time, a particular function unique to himself. This is to be understood as a temporary role for the purpose of accomplishing a given end, not a change in his status or essence.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Erickson, 328.

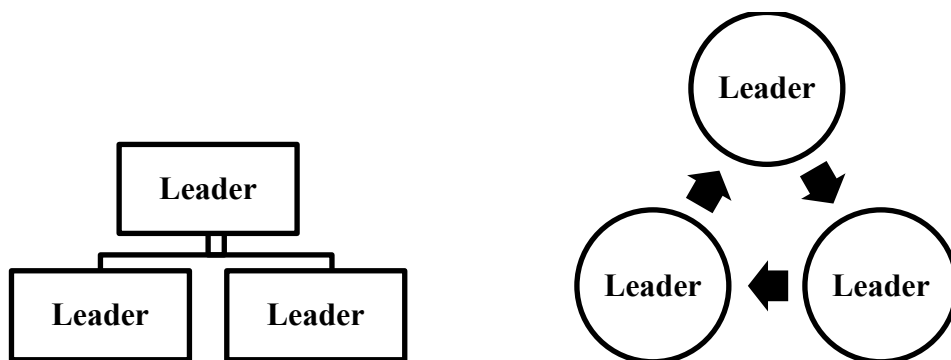
<sup>13</sup> Ryan T. Hartwig and Warren Bird, *Teams That Thrive: Five Disciplines of Collaborative Church Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 44.

<sup>14</sup> Erickson, 338.



In a hierarchy, leadership is fixed: Each person operates in his or her role through a chain of command. Yet in shared leadership the structure is flexible: Leadership rotates fluidly in a given situation and decisions become collaborative (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Hierarchical leadership versus shared leadership**



On earth, Jesus fully submitted to the leadership of the Father. Jesus let go of his rights as God to become human “who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Phil. 2:6-7). Erickson notes, “The Son did not become less than the Father during his earthly incarnation, but he did subordinate himself functionally to the Father’s will. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is now subordinated to the ministry of the Son ... as well as to the will of the Father, but this does not imply that he is less than they are.”<sup>15</sup>

When Jesus ascended to heaven he reclaimed full authority over creation and now “is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Col. 1:18). Within the Triune God, there is fluidity of leadership as each honors the other. The Father “exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name” (Phil. 4:9).

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<sup>15</sup> Erickson, 338.

The early church assumed the doctrine of the Trinity, but “it wasn’t developed until the fourth century.”<sup>16</sup> Dealing with persecution and other matters in “the first two centuries A.D. there was little conscious attempt to wrestle with the theological and philosophical issues of what we now term the doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>17</sup> The first debate and resolution on the Trinity revolved around the deity of each member.

In reaction to Arius’s teaching that Jesus is a created being and not of the same essence as God or equal with God, a church council was held in Constantinople to resolve this issue. Zscheile claims that “at the Council of Constantinople it affirmed, in what we now call the Nicene Creed, the full deity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, [but] it did not specify how the three persons comprise one God.”<sup>18</sup> The relationship of the three members to each other was not clearly delineated.

It was not until the seventh century that John of Damascus, one of the greatest theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Church, “applied the term perichoresis (‘circulating around’) to the Trinity as a way to describe the interdependent, dynamic, mutual indwelling of the three persons”<sup>19</sup> of the Godhead. George Cladis describes this as a “circle dance” and explains that “a perichoretic image of the Trinity is that of the three persons of God in constant movement in a circle that implies intimacy, equality, unity yet distinction, and love.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 44.

<sup>17</sup> Erickson, 332.

<sup>18</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 45.

<sup>19</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 45.

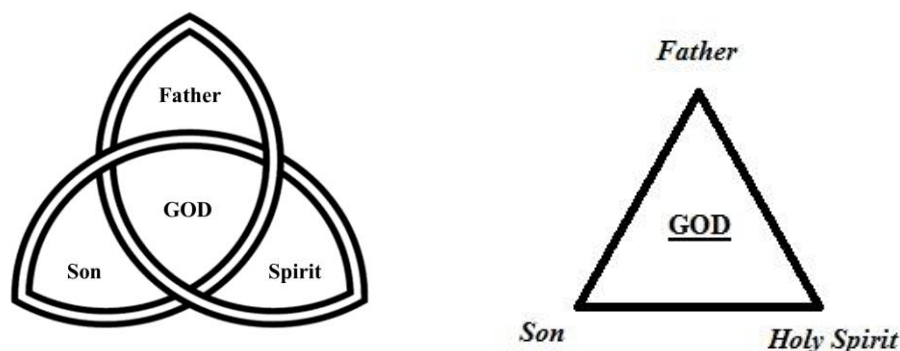
<sup>20</sup> Cladis, 4.

The image that John of Damascus presented was one God existing in three persons who collaborated and led together. Cladis uses the analogy of dancing to describe the relationship of God. He notes, “Perichoresis means literally circle dance. Dancing requires harmony, shifting together, a kind of give and take in dynamic flow. This movement is a kind of collaboration, a sharing and giving, in purposeful rhythm.”<sup>21</sup>

According to Zscheile “this social understanding of the Trinity came to dominate the eastern theological tradition,”<sup>22</sup> but the Western Roman Catholic Church took a different route which would have far-reaching implications for leadership in the Western world. Zscheile notes, “The tendency of theologians in the Latin tradition [was] to emphasize the single divine essence rather than the relationality of persons.”<sup>23</sup>

These two different emphases on the Trinity impacted the way a person understood the nature of God and also affected the leadership structures in the church. Whereas the image of God in the Eastern Church was fluid and dynamic like that of intersecting circles, in the Western Church it became rigid and static like that of a triangle (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Eastern image of God versus Western image of God**



<sup>21</sup> Cladis, 93.

<sup>22</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 45.

<sup>23</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 45.

In time this Western image of God became fixed and the Triune nature of God became hierarchical. Western theology lost the relationship within the Godhead and as Zscheile notes, “Monistic conceptions of God tend to foster monistic leadership—solitary, autocratic, aloof, and isolated.”<sup>24</sup> Addressing the historical origins of these symbolic frames, in understanding the nature of God, Cladis point out:

Originally, the three sides of the triangle were meant to represent the three persons of God in a pure geometric symbol. Over time, however, the points of the triangle came to be commonly thought of as the persons of God, with the Father “on top.” This view reinforced a hierarchical view of God and reality, represented in the hierarchies of both church and empire. . . . The perichoretic model of God calls into question the traditional hierarchies of power, control, and domination that have formed the basis for church leadership in the past.<sup>25</sup>

The theology of the Trinity affects the practice of leadership. The perichoretic image of God points to a relationship in the Trinity where each role is different but equally important. Cladis believes this “theological model of God as Trinity contains a useful and meaningful model for leading effective churches in today’s world.”<sup>26</sup>

Shared leadership incorporates the humility of servant leadership—the attitude of letting go of being first in order to become inclusive rather than exclusive. There is perfect unity within the Godhead, and yet God’s ultimate aim is to bring his followers into a full relationship with him. Jesus prayed “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity” (John 17:22-23). God, who experiences shared leadership within the Trinity, desires to expand this experience with his people.

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<sup>24</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 47.

<sup>25</sup> Cladis, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Cladis, x.

### *Scriptural Examples of Shared Responsibility*

#### **Moses, Aaron, and the Elders**

In Scripture, Moses is given more prominence, but this did not make him the sole leader of the nation. According to Psalm 77:20 God led his “people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” Moses served as the nation’s prophet while Aaron served as its priest. Together they led Israel. God worked through this leadership team to accomplish his purposes. Later in Israel’s leadership development, a third leader called a king was added alongside the prophet and priest, a reflection of the Triune God.

Moses realized the importance of joint leadership and the need to include others. When overwhelmed with the task of hearing all the issues people had, his father-in-law Jethro gave him solid advice and said, “What you are doing is not good. . . . The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. . . . Select capable men from all the people . . . and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. . . . That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you” (Exod. 18:17-18, 21-22).

Moses’ life was characterized by humility (Num. 12:3) which gave him the ability to be a great team player. He was not protective of his status but allowed others to join him in leadership. Another time when he was overwhelmed with ministry (Num. 11:14), God’s answer was in Moses sharing leadership with seventy elders: “I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them” (Num. 11:17). Moses did not become jealous and fight for his own role but humbly made room for these elders to be empowered with God’s Spirit. Interestingly, Joshua reacted to Moses’ apparently reduced power, but Moses responded, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” (Num. 11:29).

Jealousy is self-serving in that it seeks one's own interests and fails to empower others to reach their potential. Moses did not allow jealousy to control his position, but he empowered others with authority to share in the ministry (burden) of leading the Israelites. George Barna claims, "A major advantage of being led by a team is that the results almost always transcend what any individual from the team could have produced without the assistance of the other leaders involved in that team."<sup>27</sup>

Moses realized the benefits of sharing the ministry, and he carried out the Lord's instructions to ensure the next generation of leaders followed suit:

The LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the LORD (Num. 27:18-21).

God replaced Moses with Joshua who jointly shared leadership with Eleazar.

### **Shepherding Teams**

Shepherding was a way of life in the agricultural setting of Israel. In Israel, flocks of sheep were usually cared for by two or three shepherds working together. William Barclay notes in his commentary that "many of the flocks were communal flocks, belonging, not to individuals, but to villages. There would be two or three shepherds in charge."<sup>28</sup> The prophet Ezekiel alludes to a plurality of shepherds looking after one flock when he warns, "Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?" (Ezek. 34:2).

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<sup>27</sup> Barna, 12.

<sup>28</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland: Saint Andrew, 1956), 207–208.

Shepherding was a vocation that reflected the joint leadership within the Trinity and figuratively revealed the compassion of God toward his people. When Jesus shared his parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7) it was given in response to the lack of compassion the Pharisees had toward the despised and rejected of society. When a sheep went missing the shepherd did not abandon the flock to the threat of thief or predator but left the flock with his companion shepherds as he went in search of that lost sheep. Mark Strauss notes in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, “Shepherds generally worked in teams, so this man likely left the flock with one of his companions.”<sup>29</sup> The other shepherds continued to feed, guide, and protect the remaining sheep.

Another indication of shepherding teams is found in the nativity narrative. When the angels came to announce the birth of Christ it was to multiple shepherds who were giving oversight to one flock. In the Gospel of Luke, the author Luke records that “shepherds were in the fields near Bethlehem. They were taking turns watching their flock during the night” (Luke 2:8).<sup>30</sup> Strauss argues, “The NIV’s ‘keeping watch’ is literally ‘keeping watches’; they take turns sleeping and guarding the flock against thieves and animals.”<sup>31</sup>

This shepherding motif of Old Testament Israel became the backdrop for the leadership of elders in the New Testament church. Both the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:28) and the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 5:1-2) refer to the plurality of elders as being shepherds of God’s flock. In both passages, there is one flock with multiple shepherds (pastors/elders).

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<sup>29</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. 1, *Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 446.

<sup>30</sup> *God’s Word Translation* (Holiday, FL: Green Key, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Arnold, 343.

## The Apostles

Hartwig and Bird point out in their book *Teams That Thrive* that “Jesus set the first precedent for church leadership when he ‘called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles’ (Lk 6:13)”<sup>32</sup> Alexander Strauch comments that “it is a highly significant and often overlooked fact that our Lord did not appoint one man to lead His Church. He personally appointed and trained twelve men. Jesus Christ gave the Church plurality of leadership. . . . The Twelve provide a marvelous example of unity, humble brotherly love, and shared leadership structure.”<sup>33</sup> These twelve apostles operated as one team in a shared leadership setting.

Some scholars claim that Peter was the lead apostle among the twelve apostles. Gene Getz argues in his book *Elders and Leaders*, “It’s clear from the total biblical story in the New Testament that God did not intend for a group of men to function without a primary leader. Neither did He plan for a church to have coleaders.”<sup>34</sup> Jesus explained, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18); Peter is the first name recorded in each list of apostles (Matt. 10:2; John 21:2; Acts 1:13); he was asked by Jesus to “feed my sheep” (John 21:17); and he is seen as the leader of the post-resurrection group—in choosing another apostle (Acts 1:20), addressing the crowd at Pentecost (Acts 2:14), and in giving direction at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:7). Yet Jesus never intended for Peter to become the primary leader who gave oversight to the other apostles. And Peter never saw himself in that role either.

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<sup>32</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 48.

<sup>33</sup> Strauch, 36.

<sup>34</sup> Gene Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2003), 252.



It was Peter's faith, not his position, which became the foundation for the nascent church. God used Peter's belief in Jesus as the Son of God and Peter's impetuous, but courageous nature to get the church started. But his role was not a permanent position and "the text says nothing about Peter's successors, infallibility, or exclusive authority."<sup>35</sup> Peter was one of the Twelve who served in a shared leadership setting, rather than as one who held a positional title in a hierarchical leadership structure. Michael J. Wilkins in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew claims that "the wordplay [petros and petra in Matthew 16:18] points to Peter as a leader among the apostles, who will play a foundational role in the early church. Once he has fulfilled that role, he will pass off the scene. He does not hold a permanent position that is passed on to others."<sup>36</sup> Jesus built his church through a plurality of apostles who were unified in their belief in Jesus as the Son of God. The church was not built through one individual but "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

Peter did not view himself as someone to whom every other apostle was accountable to and on which every decision for the group rested. When Judas Iscariot abandoned his post as an apostle, through his betrayal of Jesus and subsequent death, the eleven other apostles prayed about who could share in this ministry (Acts 1:17). Matthias was chosen to replace Judas, not in a subordinate role, and "so he was added to the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26). Later in life Peter still refers to himself, not as "lead" apostle or elder, but simply "as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed" (1 Pet. 5:1). *The New Bible Dictionary* states:

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<sup>35</sup> Frank E. Gaebelien, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 368.

<sup>36</sup> Arnold, 103.

These [twelve apostles] acted as a body in the early days of the church, and despite Peter's continued eminence ... the idea that Peter exercised any constant primacy among them is refuted, partly by the leading position occupied by James in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13, 19), and partly by the fact that Paul withstood Peter to the face (Gal. 2:11). It was in a corporate capacity that the apostles provided leadership for the primitive church.<sup>37</sup>

Although Peter is listed first in the order of apostles and seen as the spokesman for the group it does not necessarily mean he was the primary leader. Strauch argues that “in spite of his outstanding leadership and speaking ability, Peter possessed no legal or official rank or title above the other eleven. They were not his subordinates. They were not his staff or team of assistants. He wasn't the apostles' ‘senior pastor.’”<sup>38</sup> The order of names in Scripture may simply indicate the leader most noticeable in that moment. Many times name combinations in Scripture are reversed such as Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:30; 13:46), and Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:18; 1 Cor. 16:19). The reversal of names may indicate a rotation of leadership that is shared rather than to a permanent leadership position in a hierarchy.

The frequency in which a name is mentioned in Scripture does not necessarily equate to a primary leader. Gene Getz, however, believes Peter is first among equals since the references to his name “far exceed the number of events involving any other apostle.”<sup>39</sup> But if this were true, then Judas Iscariot would be ranked third on the list of apostles. The New Testament authors wrote of events and Peter with his impulsive personality was the most outspoken and noticeable, but it did not officially make him first among equals. The whole group was considered equal.

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<sup>37</sup> J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1982), 208.

<sup>38</sup> Strauch, 47.

<sup>39</sup> Getz, 218.

## The Elders

George Barna in *The Power of Team Leadership* shows how “the story of the church, as depicted in the book of Acts, is one of a community of faith directed by a team of leaders working together toward a common vision. Had the church relied upon a single, incredibly gifted, magnetic individual to replace Jesus, the church would surely have collapsed.”<sup>40</sup> The church established leadership circles rather than leadership pyramids. Justin Irving, in his paper on decentralization and shared leadership, notes:

The overwhelming testimony of the New Testament Scriptures is that leadership within the church was always plural and shared among a collective group. Even in the cases of individual leaders such as Timothy and Titus, their roles in Ephesus and Crete accordingly were in collaboration with Paul and sending churches, and were meant as transitional roles in which plural forms of leadership would be established.<sup>41</sup>

When Paul and Barnabas planted churches they “appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord” (Acts 14:23). The New Testament church was shepherded and managed by multiple leaders, rather than through a single leader. Getz indicates, “Every mention of multiple leaders in the New Testament is made in reference to a single church in a single city or town.”<sup>42</sup> Mark Dever observes, “Though a specific number of elders for a particular congregation is never mentioned, the New Testament regularly refers to ‘elders’ in the plural.”<sup>43</sup> These leadership teams worked together under Jesus as head of the church.

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<sup>40</sup> Barna, 22.

<sup>41</sup> Justin Irving, “Decentralization and the Shared Leadership of the New Testament” (Bethel Seminary, April 8, 2004), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Getz, 211.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Dever, *A Display of God’s Glory: Basics of Church Structure*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: 9 Marks, 2001), 19.

The New Testament church was not structured around a lead pastor who oversaw a group of elders. There was no concept of a permanent “first among equals.” To always be “first” would no longer imply being “equal.” The call to be an elder was a call to share the load of leadership among other qualified elders; it was not a call to climb the ranks in becoming a “lead” elder. According to Strauch:

To call one elder “pastor” and the rest “elders” or one elder “the clergyman” and the rest “lay elders” is to act without biblical precedence. To do so will not result in a biblical eldership. It will, at least in practice, create a separate, superior office over the eldership, just as was done in the early second century when the division between “the overseer” and “elders” occurred.<sup>44</sup>

In the description of elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 the list does not refer to any special requirements for a “lead” elder. These lists focus primarily on character rather than charisma of an elder. Unlike the contemporary “lead pastor” model that can focus on charisma more than character, the biblical emphasis is on selecting a group of leaders who model godly character. As the prophet Samuel noted when choosing David after King Saul was rejected, “People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

Some people try to make a distinction between the offices of bishop/overseer (episkopos), elder (presbuteros), and pastor/shepherd (poimen), but in Scripture, these terms are interchangeable and used for the same office (e.g., Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). The terms indicate function and not the rank of that office. The use of different titles “demonstrates the freedom New Testament leaders felt to vary ‘language forms’ to adapt to cultural situations and enhance their ministry.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Strauch, 47–48.

<sup>45</sup> Getz, 186.

## The Deacons

The deacons, which may stem from the group known as the Seven<sup>46</sup> (Acts 6:1-6), provide another example of shared leadership from the New Testament. Although deacon (diakonos) means servant or minister, in Scripture it also indicates a specific group of leaders in the church that were administrative. Like the apostles and elders, this leadership team was a collective unit. Strauch notes, “The Seven were a prototype of the later deacons. There is no indication that one of the Seven was chief and the others were his assistants. ... Based on all the evidence we have, the deacons, like the elders, formed a collective leadership council.”<sup>47</sup> He argues his point:

Protestants don’t challenge the plurality of deacons in an effort to create a singular deacon, yet many challenge the plurality of elders. It is strange that Christians have no problem accepting a plurality of deacons, but are almost irrationally frightened by a plurality of elders that is far more evident in the New Testament. Despite our fears, a plurality of leadership through a council of elders needs to be preserved just as much as a plurality of deacons.<sup>48</sup>

## Decentralized Leadership

The pattern of shared leadership in the local church led to the pattern of decentralized leadership through a network of churches. Justin Irving in his paper “Decentralization and the Shared Leadership of the New Testament” claims:

The worldview of the New Testament Christians led to a theologically informed practice of leadership that was distinctly decentralized or shared. This decentralization was seen on at least two levels. First, decentralization was seen in the general network-style form of loose affiliation among the churches of the first century. Second, decentralization was seen in the practice of shared leadership among congregational members.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, rev. ed. (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1993), 48.

<sup>47</sup> Strauch, 36.

<sup>48</sup> Strauch, 38.

<sup>49</sup> Irving, “Decentralization and the Shared Leadership of the New Testament,” 1.

As the church expanded into Gentile regions the Jerusalem church was faced with the issue of command and control. Would the Jerusalem church maintain tight control over other churches, or could it resolve matters of expansion and keep the momentum of the early church expanding outward? One of the earliest examples of this issue being worked out is through the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 where Gentile believers in Antioch were pressured to conform to the Jewish practice of circumcision. This issue had potential to stop the momentum of the early church into Gentile regions.

To solve this dilemma the believers in Antioch appointed a leadership team of Paul and Barnabas to represent their cause before the leadership in Jerusalem—the apostles and elders. The entire community of believers—Jews and Gentiles—became stakeholders in this issue since it impacted everyone. No single person made a unilateral decision on this matter of circumcision for the Gentiles, but it became a decision that included the input of everyone. The decision from this council resulted in the church moving forward. This paradigm of church governance, that was shared and collaborative, became the basis for future church councils.

### **The Antioch Group**

The church at Antioch where believers were first referred to as Christian “was led by a diverse team composed of a Jewish rabbi (Saul of Tarsus), a Jewish marketplace leader (Barnabas), a North African (Niger), a Jewish aristocrat (Manaen), and a cosmopolitan Roman (Lucius).”<sup>50</sup> This leadership group was diverse in both background and ability (Acts 13:1-3). It was a leadership team that shared ministry and looked to the Spirit of God to make the final decision for the group.

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<sup>50</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 38.

## The Apostle Paul

Michael Atherton in his thesis “Shared Leadership as Exemplified by the Apostle Paul” notes that “the concept and notion of shared and team leadership is a common theme throughout Scripture, including the life and work of Paul.”<sup>51</sup> Paul was a team player and worked in partnership with many individuals. He widened the leadership circle for others to take ownership of God’s work and feel significant.

One has just to browse the epistles of Paul to notice the frequent mention of the names of those who worked alongside him. He worked with both men and women and called them co-laborers and partners in ministry (e.g., Timothy, Rom. 16:21; Titus, 1 Cor. 8:23; Priscilla and Aquila, Rom. 16:3; Urbanas, Rom. 16:9; Apollos, 1 Cor. 3:9; Epaphroditus, Phil. 2:25; Clement, Phil. 2:25; and Philemon, Philem. 1:1). He traveled with Barnabas, John Mark, Luke, and Silas. Paul was the quintessential team player who wanted to include and make everyone feel important. As Derek Tidball observes in *Ministry by the Book*, “It would be wrong to give the impression that Paul was a solitary figure as a leader in the churches he founded.”<sup>52</sup> In Paul’s letters and leadership style, there is “little interest in developing hierarchies of leadership.”<sup>53</sup>

Paul’s philosophy of leadership can be summed up in 1 Corinthians 3:8-9 where he wrote, “The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service.”

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<sup>51</sup> Michael K. Atherton, “Shared Leadership as Exemplified by the Apostle Paul.” (Ed. D., diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 31, accessed August 24, 2016, [http://72.32.3.66/bitstream/handle/10392/4866/Atherton\\_sbts\\_0207D\\_10229.pdf?sequence=1](http://72.32.3.66/bitstream/handle/10392/4866/Atherton_sbts_0207D_10229.pdf?sequence=1).

<sup>52</sup> Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 124.

<sup>53</sup> Tidball, 125.

## **Compensation Structure of Shared Leadership**

### *Unhealthy Practices of Compensation*

The “desire for justice and fairness is a universal human trait. No society can function efficiently where injustice and fraud prevail. Indeed, people the world over have long believed that justice is not merely a human institution but the will of heaven.”<sup>54</sup> In the Old Testament, the prophets condemned practices of unfairness, inequity, and deceit that were done to each other and even to God (Ezra 45:9-12; Amos 8:5-6; Mic. 6:10-11; Mal. 3:8-10). Shared leadership will not function effectively if the area of compensation is not dealt with fairly for those members of the team.

### **Manipulating Wages**

It can be tempting for an organization to consider its needs first, rather than the needs of its employees. The Apostle Paul teaches, “In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Phil. 2:3-4). When organizational needs come first it is easy for employers to manipulate employees. Jacob experienced this when Laban, his employer, promised his daughter Rachel in marriage to him if Jacob worked seven years for him. After seven years of work Jacob was deceived and the oldest daughter Leah was given to him. Rachel was only given to Jacob after he promised to work another seven years (Gen. 29:14-30).

Another way that companies manipulate workers is by constantly changing the rules of compensation, making it difficult for a person to know if the employer is cheating the employee out of wages. Jacob also experienced this type of manipulation in his work for his father-in-law Laban as revealed in his words to Leah and Rachel:

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<sup>54</sup> *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*. “Justice and Fraud in the Hymn to Shamash” (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 977.



You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me. If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked young. So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me (Gen. 31:6-9).

According to *Bensons Commentary* "Laban, through envy and covetousness, often broke his agreement made with Jacob, and altered it as he thought fit."<sup>55</sup> Greed can affect an employer's generosity, and inconsistent practices of pay can frustrate employees. When wages are frequently changed organizations give the impression they seek their own advantage rather than that of the employee.

### **Withholding Wages**

According to Leviticus 19:13 the employer was not to withhold "the wages of a hired worker overnight." The law protected the laborer from being taken advantage of by the employer. God was concerned that the worker is paid promptly "as he is dependent upon his wages for the support of himself and his family."<sup>56</sup>

Although methods of payment have changed throughout history, the principle of paying in a timely manner and not putting an employee and his or her family in financial jeopardy still holds true. The Law warned against employers taking "advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin" (Deut. 24:14-15).

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<sup>55</sup> *Benson Commentary*, Bible Hub, accessed August 26, 2016, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/31-7.htm>.

<sup>56</sup> *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, Bible Hub, accessed August 26, 2016, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/31-7.htm>.

Organizations need to develop a plan that considers the situation of the worker, and then pay accordingly whether it is daily, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. A worker who cannot count on his or her wages being delivered in a timely manner may become unmotivated in giving his or her best, quit the job, or even sue the organization.

### **Inequitable Wages**

Every organization should ensure that it does not oppress the workforce through disparate wages. There should be a reasonable ratio of return. God despises inequitable practices and deals with owners who amass a fortune on the skills of underpaid workers. The Scripture warns employers of coming judgment if the worker is not being given adequate pay:

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ... You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence (James 5:1, 3-5).

#### *Healthy Practices of Compensation*

Scripture challenges employers to be fair, honest, and supportive of their employees: “Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven” (Col. 4:1). Scripture also challenges the employee to work with integrity and give their best to the owner:

Obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving (Col. 3:22-24).

Healthy organizational practices of compensation begin with how the employer treats and distributes pay to the employee.

## Fair Pay

The exchange of goods in the ancient world was often measured by scales and weights to keep things fair. Measuring scales were first addressed in the Mosaic Law to govern the nation of Israel and ensure a stable society. In Leviticus 19:35-36 the Law stipulated against using “dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights.” Dishonest merchants, however, found ways to conduct an unfair exchange of goods and “in ancient times cheating in business transactions by falsification of standards was common practice.”<sup>57</sup> God abhorred this practice for it did not reflect his nature of justice, fairness, honesty, and integrity for “honest scales and balances belong to the LORD” (Prov. 16:11).

As employees exchange their skills and time to benefit the organization, God expects these workers to be fairly compensated by the employer. Unequal and dishonest standards in paying workers are practices strongly condemned as “the LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight” (Prov. 11:1). This verse uses strong language to show how dishonest scales affect the emotions of God—he abhors people who do this (Prov. 20:10, 23), but he delights in those who use accurate measurements that are honest and fair. One benefit for organizations that practice fair compensation toward employees in exchange for work is that the organization will have an edge in productivity and longevity:

Do not have two differing weights in your bag—one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house—one large, one small. You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. For the LORD your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly (Deut. 25:13-16).

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<sup>57</sup> *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, 181.

An organization that becomes stingy and lacks generosity toward its employees runs the risk of increased turmoil and unproductivity. The writer of Proverbs noted, “The stingy are eager to get rich and are unaware that poverty awaits them” (Prov. 22:28). The more an employer withholds, the more the employer loses; the more an employer gives, the more the employer gains. These paradoxical principles of Scripture are not always easy to adopt, but as the Psalmist claims, “Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice” (Ps. 112:5).

This principle is reiterated in the New Testament when Jesus teaches to “give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38). Mark Strauss in his commentary on Luke notes that in an agricultural economy, “grain contracts sometime stipulated that the same instrument—that of the purchaser—must be used to measure both the grain and the payment.”<sup>58</sup>

Organizations that give fair and generous compensation to their employees can expect increased productivity from the workforce. In his commentary on Luke, Walter Liefeld notes those “who are generous (both materially [vv. 27-36] and in their estimation of others [v. 37]) will be abundantly repaid.”<sup>59</sup> The Apostle Paul observed, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2 Cor. 9:6).

### **Incentive Pay**

Although rewards can motivate people in accomplishing a task, the same rewards

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<sup>58</sup> Arnold, 381.

<sup>59</sup> Gaebelien, 895.

also have the potential to move people to do things for selfish reasons. In his exposition on giving, praying, and fasting (Matt. 6:1-18), three hallmarks of the Jewish faith, Jesus recognized that people can be wrongly motivated to do things for selfish rewards, with little consideration for God and others.

Yet incentives can motivate employees to persevere in the tasks they do and be enthusiastic about the organization they serve. Both faithfulness and fruitfulness are rewarded by God. The author of Hebrews wrote, “Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised” (Heb. 10:35-36). Jesus indicated that those who use their talents to gain more will be given greater responsibility (Matt. 25:14-30).

### *Scriptural Examples of Shared Compensation*

#### **The Priests and Levites**

*Regular support.* One of the first systems of compensation was established by God to regularly support the work of the priests and Levites who provided spiritual care and direction to the nation of Israel. In this system the priests and Levites were sustained through the tithes of the people they served:

I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting. ... When you receive from the Israelites the tithes I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithes as the LORD’s offering. ... You must present as the LORD’s portion the best and holiest part of everything given to you. ... You and your households may eat the rest of it anywhere, for it is your wages for your work at the tent of meeting (Num. 18:21, 26, 29, 31).

In this cyclical system of blessing, the Israelites gave their best tithes (produce and livestock) to the Levites who gave their best portions to God who would open the “floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing” (Mal. 3:10). These provisions were not “leftovers” but the best portions given that reflected God’s nature of generosity.

*Performance pay.* God rewarded the priests and Levites through the spoils of warfare. If the soldiers and community profited from these spoils, then it was fair to give a portion of this surplus to the priests and Levites as well. God encouraged a system of unified teamwork, rather than stirring up competition within the workforce. Financial compensation was to be team-based and not singled out to certain individuals on the team. After the defeat of Midian, God tells Moses:

Divide the spoils equally between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community. From the soldiers who fought in the battle, set apart as tribute for the LORD one out of every five hundred, whether people, cattle, donkeys or sheep. Take this tribute from their half share and give it to Eleazar the priest as the LORD's part. From the Israelites' half, select one out of every fifty, whether people, cattle, donkeys, sheep or other animals. Give them to the Levites, who are responsible for the care of the LORD's tabernacle (Num. 31:27-30).

This “performance pay” was to be divided equally between the soldiers and the community “but the warriors, who were but twelve thousand, were to have a far greater share than their brethren, because they underwent greater pains and dangers.”<sup>60</sup> The division of spoils was a one-time reward to recognize the efforts of all as they worked together as a team. For the Levites, this pay amounted to two percent of the community's portion.

Although an organization may not receive physical spoils, financially it may end the year with a surplus through the skilled efforts of the team. These efforts that produce a surplus to the organization could be acknowledged with a financial “thank-you” to the staff. Although performance pay does not have to be large it can have a huge impact as employees feel valued, part of the community, and motivated to continue performing for the organization.

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<sup>60</sup> *Bensons Commentary*

*Property allowance.* The priests and Levites were descendants of Levi, one of Jacob's twelve sons. They were a unique group of people who lived among the Israelites in order to serve their spiritual needs. When Israel entered the Promised Land, God gave portions of land to the other tribes of Israel, but not to Levi. God was to be their portion. It was, therefore, necessary to give this group a "property allowance" to compensate for their lack of inheritance. God tells Moses, "Command the Israelites to give the Levites towns to live in from the inheritance the Israelites will possess. And give them pasturelands around the towns. Then they will have towns to live in and pasturelands for the cattle they own and all their other animals" (Num. 35:2-3).

God evenly spaced the Levites throughout the land of Israel, giving 48 towns and pastures in which to live and take care of their livestock. In the *NIV Archaeological Study Bible's* article on "Levitical Towns" it is noted:

God commanded the remaining tribes to donate forty-eight walled "Levitical towns" from their various tribal allotments, six of which were to serve as cities of refuge. Each Levitical town was surrounded by an area of land in which the Levites might pasture their flocks and herds (Nu 35:2-5). Together with the people's tithes and offerings (Nu 18:21), these provisions sustained the Levites economically.<sup>61</sup>

This provision of property enabled the Levites to focus on the tasks God assigned them without the worry or need to find a second income to purchase land and build homes.

*Experience pay.* God made provision for his servants if they should move from one location to another:

If a Levite moves from one of your towns anywhere in Israel where he is living, and comes in all earnestness to the place the LORD will choose, he may minister in the name of the LORD his God like all his fellow Levites who serve there in the presence of the LORD. He is to share equally in their benefits, even though he has received money from the sale of family possessions (Deut. 18:6-8).

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<sup>61</sup> *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, "Levitical Towns," 335.

Previous income and the sale of personal property should not be a factor in determining the amount of pay to give an employee. Nor should benefits be scaled back for employees who move from one organization to another in the same line of work. The past experience of new employees should be recognized and brought into alignment with the rest of the group. The new employee should not be dealt with differently but should be treated fairly and equally. Robert Jamieson in *A Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments* notes that in the relocation of Levites they “were admitted to a share of the work, so also to a share of the remuneration. Though he might have a private property, that was to form no ground for withholding or even diminishing his claim to maintenance like the other ministering priests.”<sup>62</sup>

*Bonus pay.* God showed value to his servants by giving “bonus pay” for the work they did. Every third year, called the year of the tithe, there was an extra fund collected from the Israelites to help look after the poor which also included the Levites. It was commanded of the Israelites that “when you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow” (Deut. 26:12).

God asks people to take care of those who do not have much, so that all may be satisfied and live contentedly with the work they do. In some respects, this bonus pay was to ensure that no one got left behind financially. It was similar to the New Testament practice where not one among them was needy because people gave freely of their resources (Acts 4:32-35). These bonuses reflected an appreciation for the Levites and ensured that they were not being taken for granted in the work they performed.

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<sup>62</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments*, 2nd ed., vol. I and II (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 133.



## The Apostles and Elders

*Compensating work.* When training the twelve disciples, Jesus set up a system of compensation so the apostles would not be taken advantage of by the people to whom they ministered. From the apostles' perspective, they were to give freely for "freely you have received" (Matt. 10:8). They were not to come across as "greedy for money, but eager to serve" (1 Pet. 5:2). But in the same strand Jesus did not expect his disciples to go without pay and instructed them to not take "any gold or silver or copper with you in your belts—no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep" (Matt. 10:9-10). David Turner in the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* claims, "This saying probably distills OT principles regarding day laborers and priests. . . . In this culture, hospitality to God's messengers was viewed as a sacred duty."<sup>63</sup>

Although Paul did not avail himself of this right, he indicated that receiving adequate compensation was a right of the apostles. To the Corinthian church he wrote, "Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:13-14).

The Apostle Paul affords the same rights to the work of elders. Based on the Old Testament Law (Deut. 25:4) and Jesus' commissioning of the seventy (Luke 10:7) Paul argues, "'Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages'" (1 Tim. 5:18). Just as an ox will tire out if it is not given food while treading grain, an elder will burn out if he receives no remuneration for the work done.

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<sup>63</sup> Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 11 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2005), 149.

Strauch argues, “To refuse to support hard-working teachers of the Word is as unjust, heartless, and selfish as muzzling an animal while it is working, which was a common practice among greedy, ancient farmers. The passage thus implies the provision of adequate living support, not merely token gifts, for the worker.”<sup>64</sup> Compensating the worker was established by God, carried out by Jesus, and set as a pattern by the Apostle Paul. Getz claims, “When elders/overseers—like the Levites, the priests, and the apostles—devote their time and energy to ministry, they should be cared for financially.”<sup>65</sup>

It is important that organizations reward the volunteer but compensate part-time and full-time staff with decent wages so that these employees will not have the need to find other sources of income and burn out from the extra load. As with feeding oxen, providing adequate wages to employees will motivate them to greater levels of output and productivity.

*Compensating responsibility.* Paul taught that “elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17). Paul recognized varying levels of responsibility in team leadership. All elders that give oversight to the church are to be well supported, but especially those who add to their responsibility the preaching and teaching ministry. For these elders maintaining another job for income would be difficult. The local church is to ensure that those who give their time to preaching and teaching be compensated adequately so that they will not have to concern themselves with other jobs.

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<sup>64</sup> Strauch, 214.

<sup>65</sup> Getz, 135.

This concern to compensate the preaching pastor adequately above all other positions, however, “can lead to a dichotomy in the leadership team—something New Testament writers never intended.”<sup>66</sup> Paul never envisioned the preaching pastor to become the lead elder or senior pastor who held the greatest pay. According to Getz:

What Paul was saying to Timothy is that there will be those elders/overseers who will spend more time than others managing and shepherding the church and particularly in carrying out major “teaching functions” ... [but] he in no way is setting up a “double standard” within the leadership team, rewarding only those who fit the modern-day approach which focuses on Bible expositors.<sup>67</sup>

The crux of ministry comes down to the proclamation of the gospel through the preaching and teaching ministry of the elders. Although Paul advocates that all elders are to be treated equally and receive double support, the church must consider which positions of the leadership team are core to the mission of the church.

In his final words to his disciples before he ascended to heaven Jesus stated some core fundamentals to the mission—“teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20) and to “preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Neglecting to adequately compensate core levels of responsibility may cause the organization to drift in its stated mission. These are the positions to hire first and eliminate last.

Compensating those who preach and teach, however, does not mean these individuals take on greater authority within a shared leadership system. All elders are equally important and directly responsible for the outcomes of the church. In smaller settings, however, where the church can employ only one person, the main responsibility will rest with this individual to provide a bulk of the preaching and teaching.

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<sup>66</sup> Getz, 134.

<sup>67</sup> Getz, 133.

## **Accountability Structure of Shared Leadership**

### *Principles of Group Cohesiveness*

Deep humility, clear communication, and mutual accountability are important factors to ensure success for shared leadership teams. One outcome of a Trinitarian theology that focuses on the perichoresis of God is the mutual accountability and respect each member has toward the other. Dwight Zscheile claims, “Leadership communities in the image of the Trinity embrace a level of mutuality, reciprocal acknowledgement of each other’s gifts, vulnerability to one another, and genuine shared life that transcends simply getting the job done.”<sup>68</sup>

### **Deep Humility**

Shared leadership in which team members rotate leadership works best in an atmosphere of humility and respect. This was an attitude that Aaron and Miriam lacked with their brother Moses when sibling rivalry threatened the team’s unity. Through jealousy, Aaron and Miriam tried to usurp Moses’ authority (Num. 12) and suffered the consequences. Unlike Moses who empowered others, Aaron and Miriam sought power.

Jesus reveals the deep humility and respect that a servant leader within a leadership team must possess. Although equal with God, Jesus subordinated his leadership to the Father’s will when he came to earth. The Apostle Paul explains in Philippians 2:6-7 that Jesus “who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.” Throughout his ministry, Jesus made it clear that he was working to accomplish the will of his Father (John 4:34; 5:30, 36; 17:4).

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<sup>68</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 57.

Joseph Hellerman argues in *Embracing Shared Ministry*, “What we have in Philippians 2:6-11 is Christology in the service of an overarching ecclesiological agenda.”<sup>69</sup> The intent of the passage is not so much to point out the deity of Christ, but that in his incarnation he became a model of servant leadership, submitting to the will of the Father and to the needs of the people. Jesus was a team player who shared leadership within the Godhead. He willingly put aside ego and status to accomplish the mission.

Near the end of his ministry, Jesus used his personal style of servant leadership to correct the tendency of his disciples to clamber toward higher status and power. James and John, known as the “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17), created tension in the apostolic group when they asked Jesus to grant them top positions in his kingdom (Mark 10:35-41). It was a natural request to Jesus for “humility was not a virtue in the Roman world. . . . James and John were doing what their culture had taught them to do from infancy, namely, to do everything in their power to enhance their honor.”<sup>70</sup> Jesus used this event to teach the Twelve the countercultural values of the kingdom:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).

Jesus’ words which were spoken in the context of the team of twelve infer that the structure of shared leadership works best through the style of servant leadership. No individual should manipulate situations and seek primary status but should be willing to stoop to the lowest of positions and serve other members of the team.

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<sup>69</sup> Joseph H. Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why it Matters Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013), 11.

<sup>70</sup> Hellerman, 42.

## Clear Communication

*Base of prayer.* Prayer was vital for maintaining accountability within the Triune God as Jesus in his incarnation subordinated himself to the Father. Jesus always puts the will of God first in his prayers. Even in his toughest moments, he chose to do his Father's will and not his own.<sup>71</sup> Walter Wessel in his commentary on the gospel of Mark observes that through prayer "Jesus seeks the strength that only communion and fellowship with the Father can provide."<sup>72</sup> Jesus did not allow distractions to keep him from his main commitment of constant communication with his Father. He got up early in the morning and went off to a solitary place to pray (Mark 1:35). He overcame fears of the mission as he wrestled in prayer with his Father when going to the cross (Matt. 26:39). He knew his Father's will because he stayed in communication with his Father (John 8:28; 17:25-26).

Prayer was a pattern that Jesus envisioned the twelve apostles and other disciples continuing with from his example as they formed the nucleus of the early church. Without constant prayer, the unity and mission of the group were in jeopardy. Through corporate prayer the church was birthed (Acts 1:14; 2:1), amazing results occurred (Acts 4:31), and the church grew under the joint leadership of the apostles (Acts 2:37, 41).

*Clearly defined roles.* Shared leadership does not mean everyone on the team does the same thing. The oneness of the Triune God is expressed in the distinct roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Clearly defined roles of members on a team are necessary and each person is accountable for their unique position and contribution without trying to overrule someone else's role.

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<sup>71</sup> John Harrison, *Lifestyle of Prayer: Gaining God's Favour* (Winnipeg, MB: Art Bookbindery, 2008), 61.

<sup>72</sup> Gaebelien, 629.

When Peter became overly concerned with what his colleague John was to be doing (John 21:21) Jesus points out to Peter, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me” (John 21:22). Within the structure of shared leadership, each person is accountable to Jesus as head of the church and responsible for carrying out what Jesus calls that individual to do.

Paul used the analogy of a human body: “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. . . . God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body” (1 Cor. 12:12, 18-20). Although the body is a unified whole, it consists of many parts functioning in its particular role and expertise. Trouble begins when people on a team begin to think that other members are not needed or want to take over what these members do.

Paul observes, “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:16). Paul views the interconnectedness of each team member in their unique role as being the factor causing growth, rather than reliance on a single “superstar” lead pastor.

*Unified vision.* The writer of Proverbs 29:18 notes, “Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint.” Paul understood the joy it brings when a group has a unified vision: “Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Phil. 2:1). When groups do not share the same vision, frustration and disunity can set in. Barna claims, “Leadership works best when it is provided by teams of gifted leaders serving together in pursuit of a clear and compelling vision.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Barna, 7–8.

The apostles modeled unity through a common vision and message. On the day of Pentecost, “Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd” (Acts 2:11). Peter was a gifted speaker and the other apostles gave him this platform, yet this did not diminish these apostles to a lesser role. At the end of Peter’s message the people “were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37). The apostles supported each other and presented themselves as a unified team. The result was that the crowd responded to the brothers and not just to Peter.

### **Mutual Accountability**

*Accountability for results.* Results matter. Rick Warren writes in the *Purpose Driven Church*, “God expects both faithfulness and fruitfulness. Fruitfulness is a major theme of the New Testament.”<sup>74</sup> Jesus understood the importance of fruitfulness and lived in accountability to the objectives his Father gave him. Jesus said his food (or mission) “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34) and he prayed to the Father “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). The Apostle Paul echoed this theme at the end of his life, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7).

Every leader on a team is responsible for achieving the mission of the organization through his or her giftedness. Barna notes, “Leaders are responsible for facilitating ministry outcomes, so there must also be a degree of accountability for the results produced under their leadership.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 62.

<sup>75</sup> Barna, 167–168.



Through a structure of mutual accountability, each member of a team is able to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) and keep each person on track. No person on a team is free to slack off and expect other members to cover his or her role. George Cladis observes that “instead of having a one on one accountability relationship with the team leader, ... each team member ... is accountable to the whole team for his or her work.”<sup>76</sup>

*Accountability for character.* Results do not matter if the character of the person is corrupt or the methods to achieve it are wrong. The list of traits for an elder (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9) mainly addressed behavior where “the primary focus for accountability among leaders is in the realm of character.”<sup>77</sup> These behaviors could be challenged by anyone on the team. When Paul and Barnabas were brought into the circle of apostles (Gal. 2:9) they listened to advice, but also gave advice. When Paul challenged Peter on his hypocritical behavior (Gal. 2:11-13), Gerald Borchert in his commentary on Galatians notes, “This meeting between Paul and Peter was a very critical moment in Christian history because it was a crucial point in defining Christianity.”<sup>78</sup>

Barna notes a leadership team is “committed to one another’s growth and success and hold each other mutually accountable.”<sup>79</sup> Each member is “to keep one another honest, focused, productive, humble, and inspired.”<sup>80</sup> The success of shared leadership revolves around the relational dynamics of each member giving and receiving advice, for “plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Prov. 15:22).

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<sup>76</sup> Cladis, 103.

<sup>77</sup> Barna, 167.

<sup>78</sup> Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007), 279.

<sup>79</sup> Barna, 24.

<sup>80</sup> Barna, 27.

### *Scriptural Examples of Shared Accountability*

English historian Lord Acton (1834–1902) noted, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”<sup>81</sup> God’s design in shared leadership is to protect both the leader and people from power abuse by one individual. This is not to say that a team cannot abuse power, but it limits the likelihood of this happening through mutual accountability for both character and results. Two examples of mutual accountability are given in Scripture—one from the Old Testament, and the other from the New Testament.

#### **Prophet, Priest, and King**

One example of mutual accountability in the Old Testament that reflected the reciprocity of the Triune God is the model of the prophet, priest, and king. Robert Sherman in his book *King, Priest, and Prophet* finds “it is biblically appropriate, theologically evocative, and pastorally helpful to associate these three models and offices with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”<sup>82</sup> The prophet, priest, and king each had diverse roles, but they functioned as one under the theocracy of God. Each leader could challenge the other, but together they served God.

In the development of Israelite leadership, Samuel the prophet anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. Ahimelech was the high priest at the time. This leadership team, however, went awry when Saul cast himself as the prime leader and failed to heed the words of God through the prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 15). As a result, Saul was rejected as king, and David anointed as future king. When Ahimelech came to the aid of David, Saul heard about it and in his rage killed 85 priests, including Ahimelech (1 Sam. 22:9-19).

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<sup>81</sup> “Lord Acton Quote Archive,” *Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty*, accessed December 7, 2016, <http://www.acton.org/research/lord-acton-quote-archive>.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2004), 16.

The shared leadership structure is not without difficulties if the motive of one individual tries to overpower another team member for leadership supremacy. The hunger for power and status produced deep jealousy in Saul's life that moved him to guard his position at any cost.

Despite some difficulties of sharing leadership, this biblical structure does provide better checks and balances to the use of power that a solitary leader can abuse. Unlike the kings of the Ancient Near East "Yahweh, however, placed numerous constraints and moral requirements upon the king."<sup>83</sup> Ken Cochrum in his paper on team leadership notes, "Israel's kings were not to usurp the checks and balances that the priest provided, and they were also expected to be spiritually accountable to God's prophets."<sup>84</sup>

It takes a willingness to be accountable and humility to heed advice to make shared leadership work. These checks and balances can bring wayward leaders back into right standing with God and the team. Without accountability and humility, Israel may never have entered its most productive time in history with David as king, Nathan as prophet, and Zadok as high priest. When Nathan confronted David about his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband Uriah, David, unlike Saul, heeded the advice of Nathan and repented (2 Sam. 12:1-14).

### **The Elders**

In the list of qualifications for elders, it is seen that this leadership team was to keep each other accountable to both competency and character. Mutual accountability was the pattern of communication in the leadership of the New Testament Church.

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<sup>83</sup> *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, "The Ancient Near Eastern King," 839.

<sup>84</sup> Cochrum, "Team Leadership @ Distance," 29.

Within this list, there are no qualifications for a lead elder. Nor is there any indication in the New Testament of a lead elder in which every other elder was solely responsible to for his ministry. Instead, the elders ministered together as a team and were under the headship of Christ. This mutual accountability to each other and submission to God can be seen in Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Commenting on the phrase "keep watch over yourselves" Getz notes, "This was Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28), which can be interpreted in only one way—mutual accountability."<sup>85</sup>

The Apostle Peter had the same mindset of mutual submission and accountability. He was able to challenge and be challenged. He does not use a title of dominance but one of mutuality and equality, "fellow elder," or appeal to primacy over the elders:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Peter remembered the words of Jesus (Matt. 20:25-28) that leadership in the Kingdom of God is countercultural to the leadership style of the world. A leader is not one who lords or subjects others to his authority, but one who cares for the flock by being an example of servanthood through a structure of shared leadership under the headship of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd.

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<sup>85</sup> Getz, 273.

### **The Drift from Shared Leadership in the Early Church**

The pattern of official leadership in the New Testament church centered around two leadership groups known as the elders/overseers and the deacons. Both groups were comprised of multiple leaders. The elders gave oversight to the entire church, while the deacons served the church in certain ministry capacities. Over time this pattern of shared leadership drifted into a formal, hierarchical structure with a single bishop giving oversight to the elders, and the elders to the deacons. This section examines the factors for the historical drift from shared leadership in the early church.

#### *The New Testament Church (AD 33–95)*

In calling disciples to follow him, and later in selecting twelve apostles from these disciples, Jesus prepared to establish the church as his witness to the world. Although Jesus spent time with the crowds, the majority of his time was given to his leadership team—the apostles—teaching and training them to make disciples and to establish the church. Jesus used a relational model in developing his disciples. According to Dann Spader, in his book *4 Chair Discipling*, “Jesus knew that life change comes through relationships. And relationships cannot be rushed. . . . Jesus challenges them to go deeper. They move from simply following him to becoming his ministry team. . . . Jesus is going to make an even greater investment of time in these men.”<sup>86</sup>

Jesus promised he would be with his disciples to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were reminded of Jesus’ teaching and empowered to carry on his ministry of reconciliation to the world (John 16:13; 20:21; Acts 1:8). What they learned from Jesus would not be lost or forgotten.

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<sup>86</sup> Dann Spader, *4 Chair Discipling: Growing a Movement of Disciple-Makers* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2014), 47–48.

Jesus established a leadership team to move the church forward and “the development of the church as an organization was left to the apostles to work out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>87</sup> As the apostles went about empowered by the Spirit to preach the good news of Jesus Christ and heal in his name, people responded and the church grew. With growth, however, came a demanding schedule upon the apostles’ time. Earl E. Cairns in his book *Christianity through the Centuries* claims, “Any large corporate body must of necessity have leadership; and, as it grows, the division of functions and consequent specializations of leadership must come if it is to function effectively.”<sup>88</sup> Rather than neglecting the ministry of the word and prayer, the apostles set apart a new leadership team to take care of the physical needs of the people (Acts 6:1-6). Some scholars believe this leadership group known as “The Seven” to be the earliest formation of deacons.

Philippians 1:1 is the first time deacons are used in an official leadership capacity as Paul and Timothy greet “the overseers and deacons.” Some argue this group was “to assist elders/overseers in carrying out their shepherding responsibilities,”<sup>89</sup> but the biblical record does not necessarily indicate subservient levels of leadership, but possibly lateral levels of leadership, working alongside the elders in accomplishing the ministry. Both had similar character requirements for leadership (1 Tim. 3:1-13), but the gifts needed for each role appear to be different. Elders needed the ability to teach, whereas this was not a requirement for the deacons.

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<sup>87</sup> Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 80.

<sup>88</sup> Cairns, 80.

<sup>89</sup> Getz, 102.

The first mention of elders is not “until approximately twelve years after Pentecost”<sup>90</sup> and is in connection with the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). As the apostles began to scatter to other areas, a leadership team (the elders) became necessary and were appointed to guide and oversee the local church. The practice of appointing a plurality of elders to each local church was a pattern used by the Apostles Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:23). Eventually, the church was administered through a plurality of elders that replaced the apostles as the primary leadership group of the local congregation.

The concept of multiple elders in a local congregation was not foreign to the Jewish believers. Dever observes, “Before Jesus established the church, the Jewish towns of Palestine were accustomed to being governed by multiple elders.”<sup>91</sup> This communal leadership was reflected in the Jewish synagogue and in the council of the Sanhedrin.

In the New Testament teachings on leadership in the local church “government is collegiate rather than hierarchical.”<sup>92</sup> The local church developed multiple leaders on multiple teams in multiple roles. There were the apostles, the Seven, the deacons, the elders, the Jerusalem council, and the Antioch group. According to *The New Bible Dictionary*, “The general pattern of church government in the apostolic age would seem to be a board of elders or pastors, possibly augmented by prophets and teachers, ruling each of the local congregations, with deacons to help, and with a general superintendence of the entire church provided by apostles and evangelists.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Getz, 53.

<sup>91</sup> Dever, *The Church*, 57.

<sup>92</sup> Douglas, 208.

<sup>93</sup> Douglas, 208.

In *Basic Theology* Charles Ryrie asks, “Does the New Testament teach principles of church government which can be adapted in a variety of ways, or does it also prescribe the particular pattern which must be followed?”<sup>94</sup> In adopting other cultural leadership structures, however, the church may lose sight of the theological implications behind the biblical pattern of shared leadership. For example, Moses could have designed the tabernacle in a number of ways but God prescribed a detailed pattern that pointed to Him (Exod. 25:9; Heb. 8:5). Moses used the pattern God gave him and it resulted in God’s presence being revealed as the “glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40:35).

In dropping scriptural patterns and forms the church might inadvertently drop the revelation of God through these structures. According to Ryrie, too “much flexibility seems to ignore the detailed patterns that are revealed in the New Testament. It is one thing to acknowledge a difference of interpretation about some detail, but it is quite another to say it is unimportant.”<sup>95</sup> The changes of leadership that were to engulf the church in the next few centuries would have profound implications on the revelation of God. The witness of a collaborative God through a shared leadership structure became one of hierarchy and power. Alexander Strauch in his book *Biblical Eldership* claims, “The conceptual and structural changes that occurred during the early centuries of Christianity proved disastrous. Christianity, the humblest of all faiths, degenerated into the most power-hungry and hierarchical religion on the face of the earth.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ryrie, 403.

<sup>95</sup> Ryrie, 404.

<sup>96</sup> Strauch, 86.



*The Early Church (AD 96–500)*

One of the earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament, The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, written around AD 95, sheds “interesting light on church life soon after the age of the apostles. There is no trace of a single ruling bishop; instead the leaders of the church are called either bishops and deacons or elders (presbyters).”<sup>97</sup> Similar to the letter from the Jerusalem council to Gentile believers (Acts 15:23), this letter comes from multiple leaders, not from Clement as the ruling bishop. Traditionally this letter has “been ascribed to Clement, thought to have been the third bishop of Rome, [but] the letter never names its actual author or mentions Clement.”<sup>98</sup>

The writer of First Clement notes, “You will make us exceedingly happy if you prove obedient to what we, prompted by the Holy Spirit, have written, and if, following the plea of our letter for peace and harmony, you rid yourselves of your wicked and passionate rivalry”<sup>99</sup> (1 Clem. 63:2). This verse reveals that the church continued to follow the pattern of New Testament leadership to “obey your leaders and submit to their authority” (Heb. 13:17). The pattern of leadership that the apostles established in the local church was still intact by the end of the first century:

They [the apostles] preached in country and city, and appointed their first converts, after testing them by the Spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers. Nor was this any novelty, for Scripture had mentioned bishops and deacons long before. For this is what Scripture says somewhere: “I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith” (1 Clem. 42:4-5).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Tim Dowley, ed., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 125.

<sup>98</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 296.

<sup>99</sup> Ehrman, 312.

<sup>100</sup> Ehrman, 306–307.

Another early church manual outside the New Testament that reflects “the social life and ritual practices of the early church” was discovered in 1873 in a monastery in Constantinople. This manual, known as the *Didache*, which means *The Teaching* of the twelve apostles, was written around AD 100. It reflects the organizational leadership structure of bishops and deacons but “does not evidence the rigid form of church hierarchy that had developed later in the second century.”<sup>101</sup> The manual explains “you must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well tried” (Did. 15:1).<sup>102</sup> The church was organized around leadership teams.

It was in the early second century, not long after the *Didache*, that the drift toward a hierarchical leadership structure becomes evident through the seven letters of Ignatius written around AD 110. Charles Ryrie notes that “Ignatius (ca. A. D. 50-ca. 115) was the first to distinguish bishops from elders and deacons as three separate classes of officials.”<sup>103</sup> Ignatius writes in one of his letters, “Let the laity be subject to the deacons; the deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop; the bishop to Christ, even as He is to the Father.”<sup>104</sup> Ignatius had tremendous influence in moving the church toward a three-tiered, hierarchical leadership structure (Figures 4 and 5). Rather than the New Testament model of mutual accountability, accountability became one directional as elders were now under the direct authority of the bishop of that congregation.

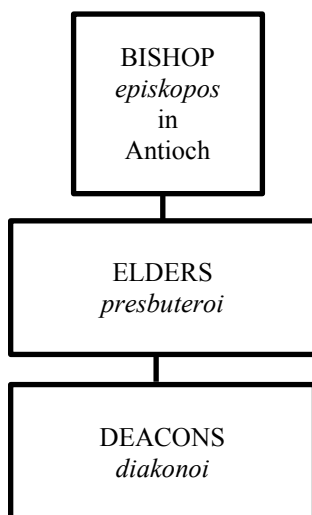
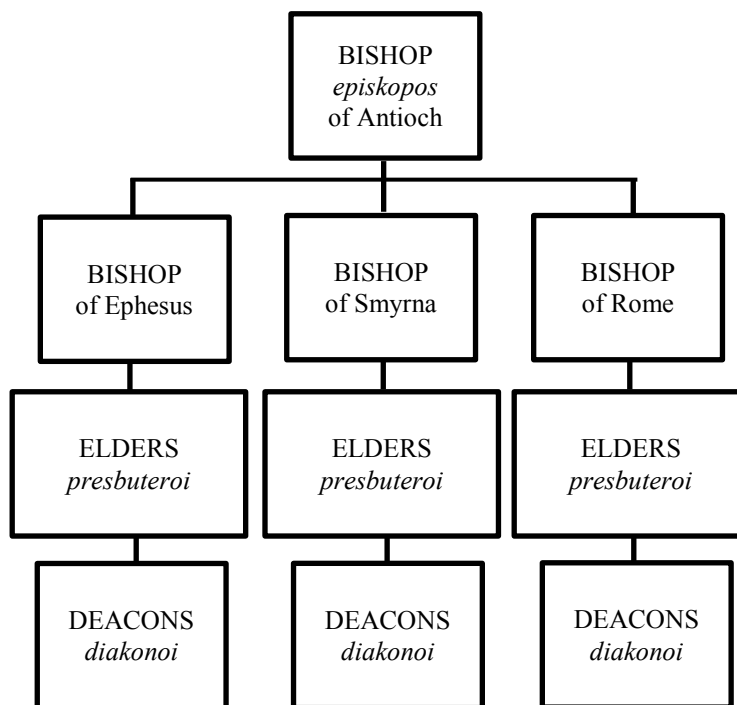
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<sup>101</sup> Ehrman, 313.

<sup>102</sup> Ehrman, 317.

<sup>103</sup> Ryrie, 413.

<sup>104</sup> “Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans: Chapter IX – Honour the Bishop,” *Early Christian Writings*, accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-smyrnaeans-longer.html>.

**Figure 4. Initial model of authority**<sup>105</sup>**Figure 5. Expanded model of authority**<sup>106</sup>

Although it appears that the hierarchy of a single bishop was established through Ignatius' writings, the leadership structure was still primarily collegial. Whereas the elders of the New Testament church had equal authority and responsibility, the early church slowly moved toward a team-based leadership structure in which the bishop became the primary figure in the group and was considered "first among equals." The Apostle John who wrote Revelation in AD 95 may indicate the rise of a ruling bishop as he writes to seven local churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3). According to Erickson "these letters were addressed to the 'angel' or 'messenger' of the respective congregations, presumably the ruling elder in each case."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Getz, 225, fig. 13.

<sup>106</sup> Getz, 226, fig. 14.

<sup>107</sup> Erickson, 1082.

Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John and bishop of Smyrna—one of the churches John wrote—writes to the Philippian congregation some time from AD 110–135.<sup>108</sup> In his salutation, he separates himself out, but not as being above the other elders. He addressed the church at Philippi: “Polycarp and the presbyters with him, to the church of God that sojourns at Philippi.”<sup>109</sup> Throughout the letter, the main emphasis is not on the bishop, but on the elders and deacons as the leadership team. In chapter 5:3 he notes, “Be obedient to the presbyters and deacons as unto God and Christ.”<sup>110</sup>

Ignatius also closely connected the bishop with the elders. In his letter to the Ephesians he wrote “United in your submission, and subject to the bishop and the presbytery, you will be real saints” (Ign. Eph. 2:2)<sup>111</sup> and to the Trallians he urged the congregation to “submit to the bishop ... and to the presbytery too” (Ign. Tral. 13:2).<sup>112</sup>

Like the Apostle John, Ignatius addresses the bishop of each local church in his seven letters with some of the centers being identical in John’s writings—Ephesus, Smyrna, and Philadelphia. Although “there is no trace in the NT of government by a single bishop”<sup>113</sup> the role of a single bishop becomes more distant and distinct from the group of elders in the letters of Ignatius. By the end of the second century, most major centers and churches operated with a three-tiered leadership structure with a single, monarchical bishop ruling the elders and the elders overseeing the deacons.

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<sup>108</sup> Ehrman, 340.

<sup>109</sup> Ehrman, 340.

<sup>110</sup> Ehrman, 341–342.

<sup>111</sup> Ehrman, 319.

<sup>112</sup> Ehrman, 327.

<sup>113</sup> Douglas, 143.

As Ignatius placed the bishop in a more prominent and distinct role from the elders for the congregation, the bishop in the provincial capital of the region took on an even greater distinction. In *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*, “All bishops were in theory equal. But those in the larger cities easily came to exercise more influence than the bishops from smaller places in the province. As a result, the synod of bishops in the province recognized the bishop of the capital city, the ‘metropolitan bishop’, as their presiding officer.”<sup>114</sup>

By the middle of the third-century tensions began to mount among these metropolitan bishops around who held the overall leadership of the church. In Rome, there were claims of being “first among equals” in this group of metropolitan bishops. Dever claims, “While pope (papas) was a common way to address certain bishops in the early church, it was increasingly restricted to the bishop of Rome.”<sup>115</sup> Pope Stephen, in his dispute with Cyprian bishop of Carthage, was “the first bishop to claim a special authority derived from Peter by appealing to Matthew 16:18-19.”<sup>116</sup>

Although Cyprian recognized Rome as holding special significance, he “regarded every bishop’s seat as ‘the see of Peter.’”<sup>117</sup> He believed that “by calling regular councils of bishops he put into practice his conviction that the church depended for its unity on their harmony and equality. Cyprian believed that all bishops were in theory equal—just as the apostles had been.”<sup>118</sup> In his treatise “On the Unity of the Church” Cyprian noted:

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<sup>114</sup> Dowley, 239.

<sup>115</sup> Dever, 118.

<sup>116</sup> Dowley, 120.

<sup>117</sup> Dowley, 120.

<sup>118</sup> Dowley, 83.

That He [Jesus] might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one [Peter]. Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity. . . . And this unity we ought firmly to hold and assert, especially those of us that are bishops who preside in the Church, that we may also prove the episcopate itself to be one and undivided.”<sup>119</sup>

With the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity in AD 312, the church was suddenly engulfed in major changes.<sup>120</sup> Christianity became the official religion of the empire and Constantine made himself head of the church as the vice-regent of God who oversaw the bishops and the government of the empire (Figure 6). By the end of the next century the Western Roman Empire was overrun by Vandals and “in 476 Odoacer deposed the last Roman Emperor in the West.”<sup>121</sup>

This collapse of the Roman Empire resulted in the Western Church and its pope in Rome trying to assert ultimate authority over church and state. Under Pope Gelasius (492–496) the “emperor [was to] guard the church but submit himself to the guidance of the pope, who was himself guided by God and St Peter.”<sup>122</sup> In his words Gelasius argued, “Nobody at any time and for whatever human pretext may haughtily set himself above the office of the pope who by Christ’s order was set above all and everyone and whom the universal church has always recognize as its head.”<sup>123</sup> The leadership organization of the Western Church resembled the former Roman Empire’s structure that Constantine had established (Figure 6).

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<sup>119</sup> “Treatise 1: On the Unity of the Church,” New Advent, accessed April 7, 2016, [www.newadvent.org/fathers/050701.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050701.htm).

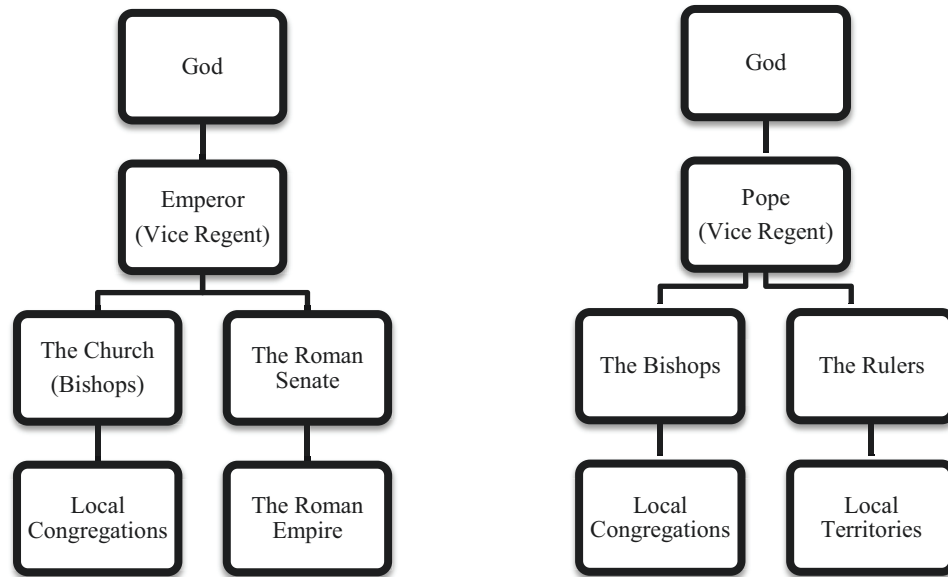
<sup>120</sup> Hugo Gurdon, ed., “Constantine,” National Post - AD: 2000 Years of Christianity, 22.

<sup>121</sup> Dowley, 182.

<sup>122</sup> Dowley, 193-194.

<sup>123</sup> Dowley, 194.

**Figure 6. Rome's leadership structure versus the church's leadership structure**



The Western Church's insistence on Rome's bishop having papal primacy above all other metropolitan bishops produced tension that eventually resulted in a major schism and split of the Eastern and Western Church on July 16, 1054.

#### *Factors Creating the Drift from Shared Leadership*

For the first and second-generation Christians, the church reflected a shared leadership structure through a plurality of elders and deacons. This pattern of leadership gave witness on earth to the leadership of the Triune God—"as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). This mode of governance, however, began to change as conflict, competition, culture, and complexity impacted the church. Over the next few centuries, the leadership of the church began to adapt to these pressures and became increasingly hierarchical.

#### **The Impact of Conflict**

Pressure mounted in the church to keep unity in its beliefs as it faced conflict with false teachers who created doctrinal instability. One of these beliefs—Gnosticism which denied the deity of Christ—threatened the collapse of the emerging church.

Although this form of teaching appeared in the first century, in which Apostles John and Paul warned the Christian community about, “there is nothing in the New Testament of the developed kind of Gnostic doctrines that the teachers of the church would face a century or so later.”<sup>124</sup> Jerome (347–420), presbyter and historian, refers to Titus 1:5 stating that the supremacy of a single bishop arose “‘by custom rather than by the Lord’s actual appointment’ as a means of preventing schisms in the church.”<sup>125</sup>

In the writings of Ignatius, the move toward a single bishop of a congregation became a structural means of controlling schism in the congregation. Getz claims:

Ignatius faced deep concerns about false teachers and their impact on the doctrine and unity in the churches. . . . Facing the results of what he considered a deteriorating situation, Ignatius moved the church toward a three-tier system of leadership. The primary leader of the elders/overseers in various churches in the early years of Christianity became the “bishop.” . . . The “bishop” in a believing community began to take on more and more authority. . . . Under Ignatius’ influence, this hierarchical structure impacted churches throughout the New Testament world. . . . Unfortunately, this system set the stage for some of the serious leadership abuses that have haunted Christianity for centuries.<sup>126</sup>

According to *The New Bible Dictionary*, “When the office of bishop becomes separated from that of elder in the 2nd century, the tasks of teaching, pastoral oversight and supervision of the sacraments are shared between the two offices; the task of acting as judge, in matters of excommunication and reconciliation, adheres primarily to the bishop.”<sup>127</sup> The ruling bishop of the congregation began to take on more control that moved the church toward a very formal, hierarchical leadership structure.

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<sup>124</sup> *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, 1937.

<sup>125</sup> Douglas, 143.

<sup>126</sup> Getz, 224.

<sup>127</sup> Douglas, 965.



The bishop combatted doctrinal error and schism within the church, but also maintained unity within the congregation. Throughout six of his seven letters, excluding his letter to the Romans, Ignatius enlarges the authority of a single bishop over the elders and congregation. Rather than being one of the presbyters, the bishop was set apart and given authority over this group (Table 2).

**Table 2. Expanded authority of the bishop in Ignatius' letters**

Letter Written by Ignatius	Reference
Letter to the Ephesians	“It is clear, then, that we should regard the bishop as the Lord himself” (6:1).
Letter to the Magnesians	“Let the bishop preside in God’s place, and the presbyters take the place of the apostolic council, and let the deacons ... be entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ” (6:1).
Letter to the Philadelphians	“It was the Spirit that kept on preaching in these words: ‘Do nothing apart from the bishop ... value unity; flee schism’” (7:2).
Letter to Polycarp	“Heartiest greetings from Ignatius, the ‘God-inspired,’ to Polycarp, who is bishop of the church at Smyrna—or rather who has God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as his bishop” (salutation).
Letter to the Smyrneans	“Flee from schism as the source of mischief. You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father. Follow, too, the presbytery as you would the apostles; and respect the deacons as you would God’s law. Nobody must do anything that has to do with the Church without the bishop’s approval” (8:1).
Letter to the Trallians	“Correspondingly, everyone must show the deacons respect. They represent Jesus Christ, just as the bishop has the role of the Father, and the presbyters are like God’s council and an apostolic band. You cannot have a church without these” (3:1).

As numerous gospels circulated among the Christian community, along with gnostic teachings, there arose a need to control Christian doctrine. Elaine Pagels in *The Gnostic Gospels* notes that “by A.D. 200, the situation had changed. Christianity had become an institution headed by a three-rank hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons, who understood themselves to be the guardians of the only ‘true faith.’”<sup>128</sup>

In the third century, the church encountered the dilemma of what to do with believers who lapsed in their faith but wanted to be readmitted. According to Edwin Hatch, this was a key factor in moving to a single bishop in a church:

The supremacy of a single officer which was thus forced upon the Churches by the necessity for unity of doctrine, was consolidated by the necessity for unity in discipline. ... The bishops came to claim the right of readmitting penitents ... as an inherent function of the episcopate. ... As there was one God, and one Christ, and one Holy Spirit, so there could be but one bishop.<sup>129</sup>

To avoid schism and maintain harmony the church lost the creative input and witness of a unified, but diversified leadership team.

### **The Impact of Competition**

One danger of shared leadership is that it can produce division where one group likes and adheres to a certain leader more than the other leaders. This was something the Apostle Paul had to correct in the church at Corinth:

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

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<sup>128</sup> Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospel* (1979; repr., New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989), xxiii.

<sup>129</sup> Edwin Hatch, “The Organization of the Early Christian Churches,” accessed July 30, 2016, <http://www.searchingtogether.org/articles/hatch/organization.htm>.

Paul aimed to keep the church from forming a hierarchy, where one person was catapulted to the top, creating competition among the team and forming camps in the congregation. There was only one head of the church and that was Jesus Christ. Service together rather than status above was Paul's framework for leadership. In writing to the Corinthians he observed:

For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. . . . For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building (1 Cor. 3:4-6, 9).

Favoritism was a problem that corrupted the church and created competition. It was an issue in the New Testament church (James 2:9) that continued into the early church. The Didache explains that the bishops (elders) and deacons ministry "is identical with that of the prophets and teachers. You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honor among you"<sup>130</sup> (Did. 15:1-2). The more charismatic and prominent positions of leadership were being given special treatment. This was a matter that the Apostle Paul tried to correct in order to make all members in the body of Christ of equal worth (1 Cor. 12:22-25).

Positions of prominence can create a preferential treatment which can lead to hierarchy. This hierarchy can lead to superiority and superiority to the dominance and abuse of power. The writer of the Didache wanted positions within the church to be "identical," unified, respected, and of equal importance. The church, however, slowly let favoritism for certain positions take over, and a hierarchical structure developed as a result.

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<sup>130</sup> Ehrman, 317.

The author of 1 Clement identifies the problem associated with titles and that some individuals sought the office of bishop out of rivalry and jealousy. To safeguard this tendency toward competition through the hierarchy, rather than cooperation through shared leadership, the writer of 1 Clement noted:

Now our apostles, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, knew that there was going to be strife over the title of bishop. It was for this reason and because they had been given an accurate knowledge of the future, that they appointed the officers we have mentioned. Furthermore, they later added a codicil to the effect that, should these die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry. In the light of this, we view it as a breach of justice to remove from their ministry those who were appointed either by them [i.e., the apostles] or later on and with the whole church's consent (1 Clem. 44:1-3).

Status and prominence drive ego. The leadership structure of the early church lost the wisdom of a godly group of leaders who governed the church collectively. Instead, the church settled on a single ruler who was often driven more by pride than by God's call to that position. By AD 375 the plurality of elders had vanished and the church was governed by a single ruling bishop. A Roman author, Ambrosiaster, noted the loss of elders in the local church:

Gradually this institution degenerated from its original condition, so that already in the time of Ambrose the clergy alone sat in ecclesiastical judgment. He complained about this in the following words: "The old synagogue, and afterward the church, had elders, without whose counsel nothing was done. It has fallen out of use, by what negligence I do not know, unless perhaps through the sloth, or rather, pride of the learned, wishing to be important by themselves alone."<sup>131</sup>

### **The Impact of Culture**

As the church expanded into regions outside its Jewish setting, the church faced new cultural realities. These new realities impacted the way in which the leadership structure of the church was organized, taking on an increasingly Roman flavor.

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<sup>131</sup> As quoted in Strauch, 297.

Initially, the Jewish population of Christians was accustomed to the term elder, as for centuries it was part of their vocabulary for leaders in the community, synagogue, and Sanhedrin.<sup>132</sup> As ministry expanded into Gentile areas the term elder became interchangeable and known by the Roman terms of bishop or overseer:

The Romans often used the title episkopos to refer to a superintendent or leader of a colony. Consequently, Gentile converts would be well aware of this leadership terminology. ... But when there was a strong mixture of both Jew and Gentile in particular communities, he [Paul] identified spiritual leaders as both “elders” and “overseers.”<sup>133</sup>

After the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman Emperor Tiberius in AD 70 “Christianity would have to grow in new ground. The political centrality of Rome, reinforced by the founding energies of Peter and Paul, who had died there, ensured that city replaced Jerusalem as the focus of Christianity.”<sup>134</sup> The church eventually reflected the structure of the Roman government and its hierarchy, and the terms elder and bishop were no longer interchangeable. According to Mark Dever in his book *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* “from the second through the fourth centuries, the diocese (taken from the Latin word for a district in Roman civil administration) developed as an ecclesiastical area with a single bishop as its head.”<sup>135</sup>

Authority to make decisions was taken away from a plurality of elders and the local congregation and placed on a top-down leader—the monarchical bishop who acted more like the Roman Emperor than the servant leader of Jesus Christ. Strauch, reflecting on the pagan influences on the church, finds:

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<sup>132</sup> Getz, 184.

<sup>133</sup> Getz, 186.

<sup>134</sup> Gurdon, “Jerusalem and Rome,” 12.

<sup>135</sup> Dever, 117.

The Roman concepts of power and rule corrupted the organization and life of the early churches. . . . The Church was being interpenetrated by ideals which were quite contrary to the Gospel, especially the conception and use of power which were in stark contrast to the kind exhibited in the life and teaching of Jesus and in the cross and the resurrection.<sup>136</sup>

The Roman culture pursued self-honor above anything else and this influenced the drive toward status in the church. Joseph Hellerman claims, “By the time Christianity had become the state-sponsored religion in the fourth century A.D., the ascending list of honorific offices in the Christian church pretty much mirrored in principle the *cursus honorum* of the post-Constantinian Roman imperial court.”<sup>137</sup> Known as “value replication” the church was “under great pressure to conform to Roman social patterns, where rank, status, and honor-seeking were concerned.”<sup>138</sup>

Another cultural factor that moved the church toward a hierarchal structure was the Roman aristocratic system. It could take years for a person to climb the ladder of hierarchy before becoming a bishop. In *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity* Richard Todd notes in his article “Clergy, Bishops and Pope:”

In the fourth century these clerical offices became a formal hierarchy, similar to the succession of posts held by the ambitious Roman aristocrat. The aspiring churchman began as a reader, often in childhood, proceeding to acolyte (assistant) and subdeacon, up to the age of thirty. Then followed five years as deacon and ten as priest, so that the minimum age for a bishop was set at forty-five.<sup>139</sup>

The drift to the hierarchical system motivated individuals to seek higher positions for the sake of status, power, and wealth. Todd points out:

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<sup>136</sup> Strauch, 86.

<sup>137</sup> Hellerman, 75–76.

<sup>138</sup> Hellerman, 88.

<sup>139</sup> Dowley, 187.

By the end of the fifth century the church at Rome had devised a system by which all income from rents and offerings was divided into four parts—for bishop, clergy, the poor, and for repair and lighting of the churches. ... Under this system the bishop received an income much greater than that of the priests and deacons. ... The wealth of the Roman bishop was enough to make the great pagan senator Praetextatus say, “Make me bishop of Rome and I will become a Christian tomorrow.”<sup>140</sup>

The Eastern side of the church remained more collaborative through its council of bishops, but the Western Church took on the hierarchical patterns of the Roman Empire.

### **The Impact of Complexity**

As the church moved outside Jerusalem and established itself in other major centers of the Roman Empire, the church found itself facing new organizational problems to maintain unity, control, and communication. As it expanded into new territories, new philosophies infringed upon the orthodox beliefs of the church. To maintain doctrinal unity within the church, councils of representative bishops were called. The rise of the metropolitan bishop became necessary not only in overseeing the churches of that area but also in becoming the representative of the regional churches at these councils. The first major gathering of regional bishops occurred in 325 to combat of Arianism where Arius (250–336) taught that Jesus was not “co-equal and co-essential with the Father but merely the chief of his creation.”<sup>141</sup> As a result:

Constantine in 325 called and presided over the first of the great Church councils at Nicaea. ... The judgement of the 300 or so assembled bishops survives in the words of the Nicene Creed. ... Nicaea formed a blueprint for the way the Church was to formulate doctrine. It established the practice whereby articles of faith and aspects of moral behaviour could be worked out by reasoned debate that went far beyond simply interpreting Scripture.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Dowley, 190.

<sup>141</sup> Gurdon, “Constantine,” 22.

<sup>142</sup> Gurdon, 22.

By the mid-third century, the church grew significantly and with this new growth came complexity. According to *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*:

The bishop gradually emerged as undisputed leader of the Christian community; this was brought about by a number of factors. Congregations often needed one from the group of presbyters or bishops to take the initiative, or represent them—for example, by presiding at the Lord's Supper, contacting other churches, teaching, or guarding church property and offerings.<sup>143</sup>

The role of bishop became a static and permanent position above the elders, rather than a dynamic and fluid role that was shared among other presbyters. Richard Todd claims in his article "Clergy, Bishops and Pope:"

The growth of the church in the third century had so increased the responsibilities of the bishop ... but the idea of dividing the church by having more than one bishop in a city seems to never have been considered in the West. Instead, the number of presbyters (priests) assisting the bishop was increased and more minor clergy appointed. By the mid-third century in Rome exorcists had joined readers on the bishop's liturgical staff and sub-deacons and acolytes had become his personal and secretarial assistants. The bishop closely controlled this developing organization.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Dowley, 118.

<sup>144</sup> Dowley, 187.



### CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

With the advent of postmodernism, leadership structures in organizations have been placed under greater scrutiny. No longer is the hierarchical structure viewed as the only option available to groups today. The emphasis of postmodernism on deconstruction has opened new possibilities for other leadership structures to be developed within organizations. Dwight Zscheile observes, “Today’s emerging postmodern cultural context provides a provocative opening for reclaiming one of the church’s ancient doctrines for renewed Christian leadership.”<sup>1</sup>

Shared leadership is a subject that is gaining momentum within academic circles, a structure that is growing in corporate paradigms, and a style that is emerging with the younger generation. Jim Kitchens, in his book *The Postmodern Parish*, finds the postmodern generation “leery of hierarchical organizational charts in which those at the top of the pyramid are the predominant wielders of power. Instead, they value human communities with ‘flat’ organizational structures in which many get to speak and in which many voices are considered for their wisdom.”<sup>2</sup>

The effect of postmodernism is shifting the way leadership is organized within the North American culture. Through these changes, postmodernism is bringing the local church back to its biblical roots of leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 43.

<sup>2</sup> Jim Kitchens, *The Postmodern Parish: New Ministry for a New Era* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2003), 92.

## Modern Trends in Culture toward Shared Leadership

### *Factors Creating an Emphasis on Shared Leadership*

It has not been until recently that the model of shared leadership has gained momentum. In “A Model of Shared Entrepreneurial Leadership” JoAnn Carland and James Carland track the progression from hierarchical leadership to shared leadership:

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, leadership was thought to be all about command and control, a hierarchical concept. ... [But then Mary Parker Follett] expressed a different view in 1924 when she talked about the law of situation. Her perception was that rather than simply following the lead of a person who was in a position of formal authority, one should follow the lead of the person who was most knowledgeable about the situation at hand. ... In the 1950s, work on co-leadership, a situation in which two people share a single position of authority, began to appear in the literature. ... Participative decision making emerged in the 1970s, and that literature began to have an effect on management practice, and more research began to demonstrate the value of teams and teamwork in improving performance. ... It was only at the turn of century, the late 1990s and early 2000s, that shared leadership began to receive the recognition in the literature that it deserved.<sup>3</sup>

The literature on shared leadership continues to grow as a worthy and effective contribution to leadership systems. In his research on shared leadership, Michael Kocolowski found “an initial search of the phrase shared leadership in the Academic OneFile database yielded 75 articles in academic journals. The search results of similar phrases are as follows: distributed leadership (24), collective leadership (22), horizontal leadership (0), team leadership (97), and leadership team (182).”<sup>4</sup> The increase of literature on shared leadership has more organizations becoming aware of a different approach to leadership. Kocolowski in referring to the research of others comments:

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<sup>3</sup> JoAnn Carland and James Carland, “A Model of Shared Entrepreneurial Leadership,” *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal* 18, no. 2 (2012): 75–76, accessed through the Saskatoon Public Library September 18, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Kocolowski, “Shared Leadership: Is it Time for a Change?” *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 3, no. 1 (2010): 23, accessed November 19, 2014, [http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/vol3iss1/Kocolowski\\_ELJV311\\_pp22-32.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/vol3iss1/Kocolowski_ELJV311_pp22-32.pdf).

Times may be changing. ... Shared leadership is gaining prominence in organizations as team-based structures replace hierarchical structures. ... The trend over the last half-century has been away from concentration of power in one person and toward expanding the capacity for leadership at the top levels of corporations.<sup>5</sup>

There are several factors in the postmodern culture that are moving organizations toward team-based leadership structures.

### **Organizational Awareness**

With a steady increase of information no longer is one manager able to keep abreast of every detail that might potentially help or harm the organization. Known as the knowledge worker<sup>6</sup> these employees are more aware of certain things than the CEO. George Barna finds that “the severity of the cultural shifts we have witnessed in recent years emphasizes that one person is not likely to provide the breadth and acuity of leadership demanded by such an environment.”<sup>7</sup>

The explosive network of information has moved organizations to consider expanding their top executive teams to include two or more CEOs. Abigail Veliquette in her dissertation on “Shared Leadership and Member Engagement in Western Protestant House Churches” claims, “The information age has compelled the emergence of shared leadership as it provides increased access of information, limits the CEO’s ability to stay on top of rapidly changing information, and impacts cultural collectivism.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kocolowski, “Shared Leadership: Is it Time for a Change?” 23–24.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Hesselbein and Marshall Goldsmith, eds., *The Organization of the Future 2* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 160–161.

<sup>7</sup> Barna, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Abigail J. Veliquette, “Shared Leadership and Member Engagement in Western Protestant House Churches: A Naturalistic Inquiry” (PhD diss., Colorado State University, 2013), 85, accessed November 11, 2015. [https://dspace.library.colostate.edu/bitstream/handle/10217/80186/Veliquette\\_colostate\\_0053A\\_11838.pdf?sequence=1](https://dspace.library.colostate.edu/bitstream/handle/10217/80186/Veliquette_colostate_0053A_11838.pdf?sequence=1).

## **Organizational Complexity**

Connected with the increase of information, another trend moving organizations toward shared leadership practices is the complexity of the fast-paced, changing world, and work setting. Craig Pearce and Jay Conger in *Shared Leadership* state one factor “driving the need for shared leadership has to do with the complexity of the job held by the seniormost leader in an organization—the chief executive officer. Increasingly, this individual is hard-pressed to possess all the leadership skills and knowledge necessary to guide complex organizations in a dynamic and global marketplace.”<sup>9</sup> Complex issues will be resolved more effectively when organizations bring the skills and talents of others into the top leadership circle.

The emergence of complexity theory allows organizations to better adapt to changes through a distributed leadership structure. Rather than having a rigid structure Darlyne Bailey notes in her chapter “Pioneering the College of the Future” that “in complexity, management would not be about command-and-control but sharing information and catalyzing ‘local’ connections to generate emergence and adaptability.”<sup>10</sup>

## **Organizational Productivity**

As companies compete in a global marketplace, the need for better performance and greater productivity has put pressure on organizations to be in front of or at least keep on pace with other companies that perform well. Decision-making needs to be quick and well-informed. Organizations which are unable to stay relevant and opt instead for more traditional modes of leadership may face a decrease of customer involvement.

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<sup>9</sup> Pearce and Conger, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Hickman, 229.

In speaking of future trends, Lynda Gratton in her chapter “Workplace 2025—What Will It Look Like?” forecasts, “There are forces at work that over the coming decades will fundamentally shift much of what we take for granted about employees, work and organizations. ... And the same is happening for companies—the idea that hierarchy is the best way to manage information flows.”<sup>11</sup> Hierarchical structures tend to bottleneck the flow of decision-making and information, whereas shared leadership structures increase the chance for quicker decisions that are broadly informed. Veliquette in her research has found that “a flatter, more lateral organization reduces the financial costs associated with hierarchy ... and allows the organization to respond quickly to performance demands.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Organizational Context**

In *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for a New Era*, Craig Pearce and Christina Wassenaar found in their chapter “The Nature of Shared Leadership” that “organizational culture or context is a contributing factor in the development of shared leadership.”<sup>13</sup> As businesses increasingly use teams and see positive results, this drives other organizations to use this type of leadership structure. Veliquette claims, “The sheer increase in the use of teams in organizations compels a need for leadership models that increase their performance and productivity. ... Shared leadership provides one option for empowering and managing teams.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hickman, 34.

<sup>12</sup> Veliquette, “Shared Leadership and Member Engagement in Western Protestant House Churches,” 85–86.

<sup>13</sup> Hickman, 182.

<sup>14</sup> Veliquette, “Shared Leadership and Member Engagement in Western Protestant House Churches,” 86.

## Organizational Culture

The surrounding culture in which an organization finds itself can have a huge influence on how it is structured. One of the major shifts in culture has been the move from modernism which “represented an ethos of competition and hierarchy that tended to force people into roles” to postmodernism where “individuals and their unique gifts are valued equally, and collaboration ... emphasized, as opposed to large, colorless, hierarchical bureaucracies.”<sup>15</sup>

The younger generation tends to resist top-down hierarchal organizations and gravitate toward team-based structures where each person is considered equal and allowed to give input. In forecasting the shift of the Canadian culture to more collaborative leadership structures, Dwayne Buhler in the magazine *Faith Today* argues that “the younger generation today tends to be hands-on and relational, and responds to a co-operative leadership style.”<sup>16</sup> This emphasis on cooperative leadership has given rise to the use of teams in companies and “by their very nature teams will be more palatable to a postmodern culture.”<sup>17</sup> The shared leadership structure fits well with trends in a postmodern society that deconstructs hierarchy. According to Cladis:

Effective work groups in the postmodern world do not emphasize hierarchy. It is a structure that does not motivate people to give their best. Instead, the interchange of ideas among everyone involved in an enterprise is valued and considered important. A premium is put on including people in decision making rather than excluding them.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Cladis, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Dwayne Buhler, “Leadership 2020: How Organizations Can Prepare Now for Upcoming Leadership Shifts in Canada,” *Faith Today*, March/April 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Nordbye, “Providing Relevant and Effective Leadership for Millennials,” 53.

<sup>18</sup> Cladis, 20.

### *Examples of Shared Leadership*

As new information, changing demographics, and work structures impact the way companies operate “development and performance management may struggle to meet these multi-faceted challenges, unless they are prepared and able to work closely together.”<sup>19</sup> It is imperative that organizations learn how to adapt to more collaborative work structures in order to increase their longevity and stay productive in this new world of leadership. Gratton in speaking of these implications notes, “One of the overwhelming aspects of the future of work is the need to work collaboratively across boundaries—be these boundaries generational, national, functional, or business boundaries.”<sup>20</sup>

Shared leadership is one of these collaborative structures that businesses and other organizations are experimenting with and moving toward. It is a structure that can be seen in the natural world, is gaining momentum in the corporate world, and has found success in the sports world.

#### **Shared Leadership in the Natural World**

*Flock of geese.* One example from nature that models shared leadership is a flock of geese as they fly in “V” formation. Through this formation and rotation of the lead bird, “the flock adds 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew alone. ... When the lead bird tires, it rotates back into the formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.”<sup>21</sup> Today organizations are recapturing this structure by rotating its primary leadership to keep the mission effective and productive.

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<sup>19</sup> Hickman, 44.

<sup>20</sup> Hickman, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Getz, 23–24.

*Ant colony.* Another example of shared leadership in the natural world is through the non-hierarchical structure of an ant colony. Thomas Seeley in his article “When Is Self-Organization Used in Biological Systems?” observes:

Self-organization is widespread in biological systems. That is to say, it is common to find biological systems that function without guidance from an external controller, or even from an internal control center. Instead, we often find that biological systems function with mechanisms of decentralized control in which the numerous subunits of the system ... adjust their activities by themselves on the basis of limited, local information. ... An ant colony “intelligently” distributes its work force among such needs as brood rearing, colony defense, and nest construction without an omniscient overseer of its workers.<sup>22</sup>

The writer of Proverbs notes, “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest” (Prov. 6:6-8). The success of an ant colony does not lie in the ability and leadership of one ant, but in the communication and unity of the colony as each ant gathers food supplies. As in any system, however, problems can arise. When unclear communication and random actions occur it can create organizational chaos:

The absence of a central authority leaves a system ... prone to opposing actions among its subunits, for they will respond to their different, local conditions rather than to the shared, global situation of the system as a whole. Colonies of social insects frequently experience this problem, such as when an ant colony changes nest sites and some workers carry brood items out of the old site while others carry them back in again.<sup>23</sup>

But the benefits of shared leadership outweigh the problems associated with it. Many individual abilities combined together are stronger and more successful than a single, gifted leader. As in an ant colony, those organizations that coordinate the efforts of the group and build a system of shared leadership will be wise and find success.

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas D. Seeley, “When Is Self-Organization Used in Biological Systems?” *The Biological Bulletin* 202, no. 3 (June 1, 2002): 314, accessed September 12, 2016, <http://www.biolbull.org/content/202/3/314.full.pdf+html>.

<sup>23</sup> Seeley, “When Is Self-Organization Used in Biological Systems?” 315.



*Locust swarm.* The book of Proverbs refers to locusts as small creatures that have no hierarchy but are “extremely wise” and unstoppable. These “locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks” (Prov. 30:27). Locusts live in solitary settings until changes in atmospheric conditions bring the locusts together and they move across the land in swarms eating the vegetation. In his article on “The Lesson of the Locusts,” Howard Butt observes that these “swarming strains [locusts] live in very inhospitable terrains like the deserts of the Middle East. . . . When they swarm, they are in their gregarious phase, and they remind us of their wisdom. . . . It’s the lesson of teamwork.”<sup>24</sup>

The locust swarm shows the wisdom of teamwork in accomplishing the mission. Leadership does not take place at the pinnacle but is distributed and shared by all. This type of unity makes an organization unstoppable in the advancement of its vision.

### **Shared Leadership in the Corporate World**

The complexity of business in today’s world has compelled many corporations to move toward varying degrees of shared leadership. Some companies completely eliminate hierarchy; others maintain a mild form of supervisory control but distribute leadership more freely. Many companies have an executive team, but the top position is shared by two or more CEOs. Many of these companies have had astounding success, while others have drifted back to traditional ways of organization. In Barna’s research, “Leadership works best when it is provided by teams of gifted leaders serving together in pursuit of a clear and compelling vision.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Howard E. Butt, “The Lesson of the Locusts,” *The High Calling: Everyday Conversations About Work, Life & God*, March 22, 2006, accessed September 14, 2016, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/blog/lesson-locusts>.

<sup>25</sup> Barna, 7–8.

*W. L. Gore and Associates*. Founded in 1958 by Bill and Vieve Gore this company that specializes in material sciences focuses on discovery, productive innovation, and rewarding careers for associates.<sup>26</sup> This “enterprise is privately owned. . . . More than 10,000 employees (called associates) worldwide are also part owners of the enterprise.”<sup>27</sup> With 3 billion in annual sales this company has been on the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For since 1984 and was number 12 in 2016.<sup>28</sup> The company has gained amazing success by giving a real sense of shared ownership to its employees. In the article “Everyone a Team Leader” by Manz, Shipper, and Stewart they note that “a unique approach to shared leadership is used at Gore. Formal authority is not vested in any one person. . . . Associates step forward to lead when they have the expertise to do so. . . . In Gore’s highly egalitarian culture, the emphasis is not on title or authority, but on making valuable contributions to the business.”<sup>29</sup>

*Whole Foods Market*. Writing on self-managing teams, Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal argue in *Reframing Organizations* that “self-directed teams typically produce better results and higher morale than groups operating under more traditional top-down control.”<sup>30</sup> Whole Foods is one of the companies these authors mention that operate with self-managing teams and who share leadership.

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<sup>26</sup> Gore: Creative Technologies Worldwide, accessed September 14, 2016, <https://www.gore.com/>.

<sup>27</sup> “The Gore Story,” Gore: Creative Technologies Worldwide, accessed September 14, 2016, <https://www.gore.com/about/the-gore-story#section30031>.

<sup>28</sup> “Awards & Distinctions,” Gore: Creative Technologies Worldwide, accessed September 14, 2016, <https://www.gore.com/about/the-gore-story#section30051>.

<sup>29</sup> Charles C. Manz, Frank Shipper, and Greg L. Stewart, “Everyone a Team Leader: Shared Influence at W. L. Gore & Associates,” *Organizational Dynamics* 38, no. 3 (2009): 239–240.

<sup>30</sup> Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 5th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 109.

Whole Foods Market, a successful grocery chain founded in Austin, Texas in 1980 and now with 455 stores across North America and the United Kingdom, is “an example of a company with a loose hierarchy that utilizes shared leadership principles in teams throughout the organization. Their flatter style of leadership balances freedom with accountability, democracy with discipline, and community with competition.”<sup>31</sup> One of the core values of Whole Foods is to “support team member happiness and excellence” and state: “Our success is dependent on the collective energy and intelligence of all our team members. ... The fundamental work unit of the company is the self-directed team. ... There are no entitlements; we share together in our collective fate.”<sup>32</sup>

*Google.* Google began its roots in January 1996 as a PhD research project for students Larry Page and Sergey Brin who officially founded the company on September 4, 1998.<sup>33</sup> As an internet based company, it quickly rose to prominence where it now has over 40, 000 employees<sup>34</sup> and a stock price of \$767 US per share.<sup>35</sup> In 2016 Google was named for the seventh time in ten years as the number one company to work for.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Veliquette, “Shared Leadership and Member Engagement in Western Protestant House Churches,” 93.

<sup>32</sup> “We Support Team Member Happiness and Excellence,” Whole Foods Market, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/mission-values/core-values/we-support-team-member-excellence-and-happiness>.

<sup>33</sup> “Our History in Depth,” Google, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.google.ca/about/company/history/>.

<sup>34</sup> “The People Behind Google,” Google, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.google.ca/about/company/facts/>.

<sup>35</sup> “Alphabet Inc. Class C Capital Stock Quote & Summary Data,” Nasdaq, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.nasdaq.com/symbol/goog>.

<sup>36</sup> “100 Best Companies to Work For 2016,” Fortune, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://fortune.com/best-companies/>.

One of the practices that Google does well is flattening its hierarchy by being collaborative and seeking the input from all employees. According to Google's Culture Officer Stacy Sullivan, "Google's core values from the beginning were to have 'a flat organization, a lack of hierarchy, a collaborative environment.'"<sup>37</sup> Although Sundar Pichai presently serves as CEO, over the years Larry Page, Sergey Brin, and Eric Schmidt have served either as co-CEO or as primary CEO of the company.

*Samsung.* Samsung which was founded in 1938 in Daegu, South Korea had been under the direction of one CEO. In March 2013, however, Samsung announced a big change to their leadership structure when the company named two new CEOs to join with the former CEO. Catherine Shu in her article on this leadership development notes:

While having three chief operating officers might seem a little unwieldy, it makes sense for a company that is responsible for one-fifth of South Korea's \$1.1 trillion economy. It's also worthwhile to note that five years ago, Samsung Electronics underwent a leadership crisis ... [that left the company] "without a captain or rudder." ... Making the heads of Samsung's different departments work closely together might be a move to prevent potential fractures in leadership.<sup>38</sup>

Sharing leadership among three CEOs has not hindered Samsung's profits. At the end of the third quarter of that year, Samsung announced record growth:

Samsung ... released its audited earnings report for the third quarter, confirming performance that has once again climbed to new records. ... Samsung's record \$9.6 billion operating profit was up 26% from the year-ago quarter, and the company also topped its earlier record for quarterly net profit as Q3 net climbed to \$7.76 billion on \$55.6 billion in revenue.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "How Fortune 100 Companies are Flattening Hierarchies through Enterprise Social," TIBCO blog, March 8, 2012, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.tibco.com/blog/2012/03/08/why-are-leading-organizations-turning-to-a-flatter-organizational-hierarchy/>.

<sup>38</sup> Catherine Shu, "Samsung Now Has 3 CEOs With The Addition Of J.K. Shin And Boo-keun Yoon," March 14, 2013, accessed September 15, 2016, <https://techcrunch.com/2013/03/14/samsung-now-has-3-ceos-with-the-addition-of-j-k-shin-and-boo-keun-yoon/>.

<sup>39</sup> Zach Epstein, "Samsung Posts Record Q3 Profit as Smartphone Sales Near 90 Million," October 25, 2013, accessed November 22, 2014, <http://bgr.com/2013/10/25/samsung-earnings-q3-2013-audited/>.

## Shared Leadership in the Sports World

Sports clubs have used a mixture of leadership approaches and practices. For example, a baseball team is a model of team organization. Each player is under the direction of the coach, and each player plays his position. For most teams, no player is named as a captain and placed above another player on the team. In hockey, however, a hierarchical structure is often used. Yet this structure has been experimented with.

*Montreal Canadiens.* In the 2014–2015 season the Montreal Canadiens, who play in the National Hockey League, moved toward a shared leadership structure with the appointment of more than one captain. Typically hockey teams have one captain and two assistants. In order to develop leadership skills and recognize the experience and expertise of certain players on their roster, the Canadiens moved to a four captain team.

In the summer of 2014 speculation mounted as to who the next captain of the team would be. When a decision was announced it surprised many when the answer came back as nobody. When asked about this decision “general manager Marc Bergevin said the team will go with four alternate captains rather than have one player wear the C. ‘It’s not the end of the world,’ he said. ‘The way we’re going will be good for our team.’”<sup>40</sup>

One reason in moving toward this model was to develop the younger players on the team. Bill Beacon in *The Winnipeg Free press* noted that “Bergevin and Coach Michel Therrien want to ease Subban and Pacioretty, the team’s top younger stars, into leadership roles. ... ‘It’s a chance for them to show their leadership.’”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Bill Beacon, “Habs Get Straight A’s for Not Naming Captain,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 16, 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Beacon, “Habs Get Straight A’s for Not Naming Captain.”

Another reason for alternating four captains was to bring out the best from each player into the role of leadership. One player was flamboyant, but young; another player quieter, but older and experienced. Another player was content to split duties with the other three. The feeling was “it’s a good decision for everybody.” Subban one of the co-captains explained, “We’re confident that we have many leaders, not just one. I think it’s a step forward for the team.”<sup>42</sup>

The shared leadership structure proved so effective that the team finished first in their division and second in a league of 30 teams.<sup>43</sup> It was clear that moving to a system of shared leadership did not hurt the team’s effectiveness on the ice.

Unfortunately, in the subsequent season the team reverted back to the traditional, hierarchy of hockey, and “at the beginning of 2015–16, Pacioretty was awarded the C, not Subban, in a decision determined by player vote. Whispers of a rift in the Subban-Pacioretty relationship made the rounds as the Canadiens tumbled down the standings.”<sup>44</sup> In reverting back to this structure, and in losing their star goalie, the team had a disastrous season finishing third last in their division, 22nd in the league, and missing the playoffs.<sup>45</sup> Losses mounted to tensions on the team and the season ended with P. K. Subban being traded. Pacioretty commented, “That’s what happens after you have a rough year: changes are made.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bill Beacon, “Habs Get Straight A’s for Not Naming Captain.”

<sup>43</sup> “Standings,” NHL, accessed September 15, 2016, <https://www.nhl.com/standings/2014>.

<sup>44</sup> Luke Fox, “Max Pacioretty Talks P. K. Subban Trade: ‘We Lost a Friend,’” accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.sportsnet.ca/hockey/nhl/max-pacioretty-p-k-subban-trade-shea-weber-montreal-canadiens-nashville-predators-captain/>.

<sup>45</sup> “Standings,” NHL, accessed September 15, 2016, <https://www.nhl.com/standings/2015>.

<sup>46</sup> Fox, “Max Pacioretty Talks P. K. Subban Trade.”

*Stonewall Jets*. Another example of successfully shared leadership is the Stonewall Jets of Stonewall, Manitoba who won their first-ever Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League title on April 20, 2016. It was an impressive championship as the Jets won eleven straight playoff games while sweeping the last two rounds.

Although there were certainly many variables that caused the team to succeed, one of those reasons was the switch in going from a single coach of the team to a co-coaching model with Brock Couch and Matt Figur who “shared coaching duties after head coach Rob Reimer left the team before the playoffs.”<sup>47</sup>

It was a very special championship as Jets co-coach Matt Figur noted, “There are teams that have been in this league 35 years that haven’t won a championship. When you think about it, we’ve been in the league 15 years and we finally got a championship—it’s special.”<sup>48</sup> Figur reflects that “to go 11 straight with two sweeps back-to-back, it still hasn’t kicked in yet. ... I still haven’t figured it out yet how we pretty much rolled over those two teams.”<sup>49</sup>

Part of this figuring out might have to do with the increased wisdom and sense of ownership that a team realizes when moving to a shared leadership model. Having the right leadership structure coupled with the right players and attitudes can bring success to a team. Couch found “it was a pleasure to coach these guys. ... You got to have the right guys and they got to have the right attitude.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Adam Peleshaty, “Champions!” *Stonewall Argus & Teulon Times* 123, no. 17, April 28, 2016, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Brian Bowman, “Jets Soar to MMJHL Championship,” *Stonewall Teulon Tribune* 7, ed. 17, April 28, 2016, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Bowman, “Jets Soar to MMJHL Championship,” 16.

<sup>50</sup> Peleshaty, “Champions!” 1.

*Golden State Warriors.* Basketball is a game played without any designated “captain” of the team. The Golden State Warriors are a team that had an incredible record 73 wins in the 2015–2016 season. In reflecting on this team, Scott Mehl, who serves on a shared leadership team at Cornerstone Church of West Los Angeles, writes in his blog:

I have so greatly enjoyed watching the 2015–2016 Golden State Warriors. Each player is important and each player has a role. However, overlapping skills and similar playing styles have not caused rivalry among the Warriors’ players. Instead it gives them the opportunity to thrive in ways the league has never seen. . . . God designed the church to function far more like a basketball team. Basketball is played by five people on the same court at the same time. . . . Even though our super-star, celebrity-driven culture has the tendency to search for a single player to pin a basketball team’s success on, that’s just not consistent with reality. Basketball doesn’t work that way. And neither does the church.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Structure of Shared Leadership**

Although many organizations fear the move toward a shared leadership structure, it is evident from the corporate, sports, and natural worlds that positive results occur when organizations use this model.

#### *The Strengths of Shared Responsibility*

##### **Reduces Stress**

Many CEOs in hierarchical organizations feel a responsibility that can be overwhelming and hazardous to both their career and health. A shared leadership structure distributes the weight of responsibility more evenly. Kocolowski comments that “reduced stress levels for key leaders also make this model attractive, as a more robust, shared leadership system does not unduly burden any single leader.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Scott Mehl, “The Golden State Warriors and Church,” Cornerstone West Los Angeles Church, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://cornerstonewla.org/pulse/the-golden-state-warriors-and-church-leadership/>.

<sup>52</sup> Kocolowski, “Shared Leadership: Is it Time for a Change?” 27.



The shared leadership structure is flexible and like a flock of geese in flight it allows different leaders to take the helm when one gets fatigued or is outside his or her skill-set. Alexander Strauch in *Biblical Eldership* explains:

Shared pastoral leadership also helps to lighten a very heavy work load. If the long hours, weighty responsibilities, and problems of shepherding a congregation of people are not enough to overwhelm a person, then dealing with people's sins and listening to seemingly endless complaints and bitter conflicts can crush a person. . . . In a multiple-elder system of leadership, however, the heavy burdens of pastoral life are shared by a number of qualified, functioning, shepherd elders.<sup>53</sup>

A team-based structure reduces stress and burnout by allowing other staff members to lead the team depending on the situation and the skills needed for it.

The concept "first among equals" is fitting to the shared leadership structure only when it is rotated and does not become a permanent position. God never designed the weight of responsibility to be shouldered by one individual as team leader, but through multiple leaders who comprise a team. George Barna in *The Power of Team Leadership* notes, "Team-oriented leadership does not eliminate stress, but it does reduce it by sparing the individual from having to be the expert in everything. The work load is shared, the decision making is carried out in cooperation with other skilled and insightful partners, and the gifts required to do an excellent job are resident within the team."<sup>54</sup>

### **Increases Productivity**

King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 4:9 that "two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor." Leaders who collaborate and work together will achieve far more for an organization than what one person can do alone.

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<sup>53</sup> Strauch, 42.

<sup>54</sup> Barna, 77.

Carl George and Robert Logan in their book *Leading and Managing Your Church* observe that “over time, a team always outperforms an individual, no matter how talented he or she may be.”<sup>55</sup> It is the synergy and expertise of a team that Kocolowski believes as one of the most common benefits of shared leadership:

Perhaps the most commonly cited benefit concerns the synergy and expertise derived from a shared leadership model. Here, the old adage two heads are better than one seems appropriate. Leaders can utilize their individual strengths ... and organizations can benefit from diversity of thought in decision making. ... Two or more leaders are better than one when “the challenges a corporation faces are so complex that they require a set of skills too broad to be possessed by any one individual.”<sup>56</sup>

In the church, shared leadership can enhance the preaching and teaching ministry. The role of an elder was to teach and communicate God’s Word (1 Tim. 3:2). Rather than one person doing all the preaching, the congregation can benefit from a preaching team: it ensures freshness as people are prone to tune out one preacher over time; it ensures wider impact as people connect with different styles; it ensures better results as it allows more time for concentration and preparation for messages; it brings out the expertise of preaching in certain areas through the passion of each preacher. Clay Sterrett observes in his book *Church Life: Building on the Foundation of Jesus Christ* that “any pastor/elder will have deficiencies, and if other men are involved in leadership, weaknesses will be balanced out. ... Through this varied ministry, the body is fed a well-balanced diet. ... If only one of these men, though quite gifted, were to do most of the public ministry, the body would suffer.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Carl F. George and Robert E. Logan, *Leading and Managing Your Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 113.

<sup>56</sup> Kocolowski, “Shared Leadership: Is it Time for a Change?” 27.

<sup>57</sup> Clay Sterrett, *Church Life: Building on the Foundation of Jesus Christ* (Staunton, VA: CFC Literature, 2005), 53.

## Reduces Turnover

An organization that recognizes and invites others into leadership will have a better chance at retaining those who are experienced, skilled, and mature. As employees mature in character and gain more experience, the leadership structure needs to be able to allow these individuals into greater levels of responsibility and authority. When positions of greater influence and responsibility do not open within a certain time frame, frustration can mount and the mature, skilled employee will generally move on.

Hierarchical leadership tends to safeguard top positions while subordinates are kept at levels far below their maturity and skills for years. This structure can frustrate people and cause them to move up the hierarchy, move on from the organization, or move out from that career entirely. In a survey (Table 3) conducted with youth and associate pastors in hierarchical churches, the vocational and then financial reasons topped the list for them resigning their positions to move up, on, or out of ministry.<sup>58</sup>

**Table 3. Staff resignation survey**

Category	Youth Pastor 1	Youth Pastor 2	Associate Pastor 1	Associate Pastor 2	Associate Pastor 3
Emotional Reasons	3		2		
Financial Reasons	2		3		3
Personal Reasons					2
Relational Reasons		1			
Theological Reasons					
Vocational Reasons	1		1	1	1

The hierarchical system tends to drive people to the top because of the benefits it brings—usually better financial compensation, personal significance, and a broader use of abilities.

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<sup>58</sup> This survey was conducted with former youth and associate pastors in the Baptist General Conference of Central Canada in the fall of 2014 on the top three reasons they resigned their position.

When mature employees continue to be treated as children, conflict and turnover are inevitable. Bolman and Deal observe, “Bosses direct and control subordinates, thus encouraging passivity and dependence. The conflict worsens at lower levels of the hierarchy—narrower, more mechanized jobs, more directives, and tighter controls. As people mature, conflict intensifies.”<sup>59</sup> Organizations may get away with a hierarchical structure if there are a sizeable age and skill gap between employees and management. Conflict happens, however, when employees, who have similar years of experience and skill, are still treated as children rather than as peers by upper management. Mike Myatt notes, “Employees who are challenged, engaged, valued, and rewarded (emotionally, intellectually & financially) rarely leave, and more importantly, they perform at very high levels.”<sup>60</sup> Organizations that move experienced and mature employees into full-fledged leadership roles will reduce turnover and have a greater impact on the culture.

Those in executive positions must be willing to let go of playing on the field, to coaching others to play on the field and carry on the mission of the organization. Jesus’ ministry became the disciple’s ministry—“as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:21-22). The Spirit of God that indwelt Jesus would now indwell those who believed. The same type of power, understanding, and guidance that was available to Jesus was now given to the disciples. As Jesus noted, “All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you” (John 16:15). Jesus opened up the playing field for others to be involved.

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<sup>59</sup> Bolman and Deal, 125.

<sup>60</sup> Mike Myatt, “10 Reasons Your Top Talent Will Leave You,” accessed August 23, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2012/12/13/10-reasons-your-top-talent-will-leave-you/>.

## **Increases Ownership**

An advantage of shared leadership is that employees have greater ownership and buy-in of the organization. In training his disciples, Jesus moved from a system of initial hierarchy to a system of shared leadership and empowerment. Jesus explained to his disciples, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). Jesus gave full disclosure and empowerment to his disciples. His goal was to enable them and give them ownership. A team of leaders developed and extraordinary things happened. James Kouzes and Barry Posner in their book *The Leadership Challenge* describe “the effect of enabling others to act is to make them feel strong, capable, and committed. Those in the organization who must produce the results feel a sense of ownership. They feel empowered, and when people feel empowered, they are more likely to use their energies to produce extraordinary results.”<sup>61</sup>

One analogy Jesus used to show the difference between someone hired to do a job and someone who had ownership of the group is recorded in John. Jesus taught “the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep” (John 10:11-14). Those employees who are brought into full ownership of the group will be less likely to quit when trouble develops in the organization. They are more willing to make sacrifices for the organization because they have been shown value and given a sense of significant responsibility.

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<sup>61</sup> James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 11.

When people are treated as secondary, they act as secondary. There is less commitment to the organization which makes it easier to resign either for a better opportunity or because of a downturn in the organization. Bill Hybels in his speech at the *2014 Global Leadership Summit* noted, “Hirelings have a short-term view; owners have a long-term view. Owners are leaders with a legacy mindset.”

The hierarchical system tends to view lower levels of management and employees as hired support which creates distance and possible abandonment when the organization goes through tough times. When organizations move secondary employees into positions of ownership it increases an employee’s commitment to the organization. George Cladis in *Leading the Team-Based Church* claims:

Hierarchical structures tend to stifle innovation. Only the creativity of the few on top was felt throughout an organization. Flatter structures draw out the innovation of all work group members not just of a few. Furthermore, those working in flatter settings feel more a part of a team accomplishing an objective that has meaning and not simply like people doing a job.<sup>62</sup>

### **Reduces Competition**

When the playing field is leveled and made fair there is no need to climb the ladder. A shared leadership model eliminates the need to compete and “move up” in position and allows individuals to “move sideways” in the organization with their skills and passions. In a hierarchy, there is a tendency to “move up” the ladder to feel successful and often those on lower rungs eventually “move on” to meet this “success” need. It often produces competition and concealment among staff rather than cooperation and collaboration. Jim Putman who wrote *Church is a Team Sport* states the importance of teamwork for an organization and especially the church:

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<sup>62</sup> Cladis, 20.

God wants His team to work together for His glory. Teamwork is essential to winning, and I believe that church really is a team sport. Each believer has a function that is essential to the success of the mission. We must be unified to win, just as a team of talented individuals cannot win without teamwork. ... It sounds simple, but there's a problem. ... We want to chase our own dreams even if it means running over the top of someone else.<sup>63</sup>

Shared leadership seeks to eliminate competition and replace it with cooperation where each member is considered indispensable, compensated fairly, and treated equally.

### **Increases Self-Worth**

Another benefit that shared leadership brings is the value it places on people and what they can bring to the team. There is flexibility in being able to move people into roles with their strengths and passions. A traditional hierarchical structure values the position and keeps people in roles that no longer suit their passion or increased skill level.

*In The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask about Your Organization*

Frances Hesselbein, one of the contributors notes:

Transformation requires moving people out of their organizational boxes into flexible, fluid management systems. We cannot continue to put people into little squares on a structure chart. Psychologically it boxes them in. ... People move in circular ways—learning new skills, expanding positions. We need to ban a hierarchy not suited to today's knowledge workers.<sup>64</sup>

Shared leadership allows employees to work together through an atmosphere of respect. No one has the attitude of being above another. Brad Szollose notes in *Liquid Leadership* that “respecting each member of the team requires that egos be put on hold ... these are team environments where every person is involved and engaged.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Jim Putman, *Church is a Team Sport: A Championship Strategy for Doing Ministry Together* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 177.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Drucker et.al, *The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 79–80.

<sup>65</sup> Brad Szollose, *Liquid Leadership: From Woodstock to Wikipedia—Multigenerational Management Ideas That Are Changing the Way We Run Things* (Austin, TX: Greenleaf, 2011), 153.

The value of shared leadership is the acknowledgment and care shown to every leader. Myatt observes that “if leaders spent less time trying to retain people, and more time trying to understand them, care for them, invest in them, and lead them well, the retention thing would take care of itself.”<sup>66</sup> The Apostle Paul using an analogy of the human body argued that all parts are equally needed “so that there should be no division in the body” (1 Cor. 12:25). There should be “no division”—no hierarchy in the body.

Daniel Goleman in his research on emotional intelligence states that “empathy plays a key role in the retention of talent.”<sup>67</sup> It is shown, however, that in hierarchical structures the higher the leader is in position the less empathy they display toward subordinate staff. In their book, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, authors Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves find:

In our *Harvard Business Review* article, “Heartless Bosses,” our research ... measured EQ in half a million senior executives (including 1,000 CEOs), managers, and line employees across industries on six continents. ... Middle managers stand out, with the highest EQ scores in the workforce. ... For the titles of director and above, scores descend faster than a snowboarder on a black diamond. CEOs, on average, have the lowest EQ scores in the workplace.<sup>68</sup>

The shared leadership structure is able to provide stronger emotional attachment and care because each individual is treated as a co-worker and friend. Cladis argues, “If a church is to succeed in carrying out a healthy ministry ... there must be stable and high-quality relationships among the members of the principal leadership team.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Myatt, “10 Reasons Your Top Talent Will Leave You.”

<sup>67</sup> Daniel Goleman, “What Makes a Leader?” *Harvard Business Review*, January 2004, accessed November 12, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader/ar/1>.

<sup>68</sup> Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* (San Diego, CA: Talent Smart, 2009), 234–235.

<sup>69</sup> Cladis, ix.



## *The Strengths of Team-Based Compensation*

### **Team Performance**

One issue surrounding hierarchical structures is that subordinate staff members are often viewed as less important and critical to the organization. Recognition and rewards are frequently given to top leaders, while the input and work of secondary staff go unnoticed. Salary packages and benefits are often considerably less than the CEO and those in executive positions can create a “tournament” mindset among staff. This “tournament hypothesis argues that a large pay gap between the CEO and other senior executives may represent a huge incentive for those competing for the CEO position.”<sup>70</sup> When desired positions, with increased salary and benefits, are not attained it can affect team performance and some employees may quit. Chen, Huang, and Wei argue that “incentives must be provided for subordinate managers to stay and develop.”<sup>71</sup>

### **Team Motivation**

The disparity in wages can demotivate employees where they struggle to put out their best work for an organization. It takes good strategy and compensation practices to build high quality, productive teams. Justin Irving in his paper on “Decentralization and the Shared Leadership of the New Testament” claims that “in the model of shared leadership the four key associated concepts are accountability, partnership, equity, and ownership.”<sup>72</sup> The quality of being equitable or impartial to all employees is one of the key factors in building a strong leadership team that stays motivated and performs well.

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<sup>70</sup> Zihong Chen, Yuan Huang, and K. C. John Wei, “Executive Pay Disparity and the Cost of Equity Capital,” *Journal of Financial & Qualitative Analysis* 48, no. 3 (June 2013): 854.

<sup>71</sup> Chen, Huang, and Wei, “Executive Pay Disparity and the Cost of Equity Capital,” 854.

<sup>72</sup> Justin Irving, “Decentralization and the Shared Leadership of the New Testament,” 5.

Richard Daft in *The Leadership Experience* notes that “motivation refers to the forces either internal or external to a person that arouse enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action. Employee motivation affects productivity, and so part of [an employer’s] job is to channel [employee] motivation toward the accomplishment of the organization’s vision and goals.”<sup>73</sup> Every organization must identify the reward system that it will use to motivate employees to accomplish their tasks.

In a team-based structure, extrinsic rewards that are system-wide can increase productivity among staff. Rewards that are extrinsic, however, are often a temporary means to motivate employees. It is the intrinsic rewards which truly motivate and bring satisfaction to a team or individual member. Daft writes that “in an extensive survey conducted by the Gallup Organization, researchers found that the way leaders create engaged employees and high performance has very little to do with extrinsic rewards such as pay and benefits, and much more to do with creating an environment in which people flourish.”<sup>74</sup> To motivate employees it is important that they feel valued, are given ownership, placed in positions that match their gifts, and provided roles they are passionate about.

### **Team Unity**

Team-based compensation fosters cooperation rather than competition. There should be clear guidelines, however, on how compensation and rewards are dispersed. Team members need a sense of fairness where certain individuals are not being unduly rewarded for efforts that others on the team have contributed toward success of the task.

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<sup>73</sup> Richard L. Daft, *The Leadership Experience*, 2nd ed. (Orlando, FL: Harcourt College, 2002), 275.

<sup>74</sup> Daft, 277.

Leadership teams tend to put more united effort into their work when rewards are given to the team and not to individual members of that team. J. Richard Hackman and Ruth Wageman claim in their article “A Theory of Team Coaching:”

The effort a team expends on its work is influenced ... by the reward system of the organization in which the team operates. ... Team effort is enhanced by organizational reward systems that recognize and reinforce team excellence—and that avoid the common, if usually unintended, problem of providing disincentives for collaboration among team members by placing them in competition with one another for individual rewards.<sup>75</sup>

An organization can derail efforts for productivity by encouraging people to work as a team but use a compensation system that is not team-oriented. Structures that place one individual as holding more power than the rest of team, or offer disparate wages to individuals in the same work-team can destroy the unity of that group.

Although members of teams may have different levels of compensation, the decision-making process in arriving at these figures must be equitable. If the process for arriving at compensation is through negotiation and a “choose-at-will” process then it may create unnecessary conflict and resentment among employees. For teams to remain cohesive and effective compensation packages must be fair and not create an imbalance of power. In *HBR’s 10 Must Reads on Teams*, Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, and Bourgeois in their chapter “How Management Teams Can Have a Good Fight” note:

Managers who believe that their team’s decision-making process is fair are more likely to accept decisions without resentment, even when they do not agree with them. But when they believe the process is unfair, ill will easily grows into interpersonal conflict. ... Taming interpersonal conflict, then, is to create a sense of fairness by balancing power within the management team.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> J. Richard Hackman and Ruth Wageman, “A Theory of Team Coaching,” *Academy of Management Review* 30, no. 2 (2005): 281.

<sup>76</sup> Harvard Business Review, *HBR’s 10 Must Reads on Teams* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2013), 175.

*The Strengths of Mutual Accountability*

**Keeps Everyone Focused on Outcomes**

In larger staff settings the CEO will likely be unable to keep abreast of every detail in an employee's job description and keep the person on track with agreed upon goals of the organization. Those managers who attempt to know every detail may come across as micromanaging which affects the health of the team.

One value of shared leadership is that it allows everyone to keep everyone accountable to the outcomes of the mission. Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson in their book *When Teams Work Best* state that “lack of accountability—for some or for all—causes slippage in performance and impedes teamwork and collaboration. No one likes to work with individuals, teams, departments, or businesses that cannot be counted on to meet commitments, and for whom there are no consequences.”<sup>77</sup>

**Safeguards against Abusive Dominance**

Mutual accountability safeguards subordinate staff from the controlling dominance of a primary leader. The politics of power corrupt too many leaders where they manipulate subordinate staff to achieve their own ends. Alexander Strauch speaking on the abuse and corruption that has affected church leadership over the centuries claims:

The collective leadership of a biblical eldership provides a formal structure for genuine accountability. Only when there is genuine accountability between equals in leadership is there any hope for breaking down the horrible abuse of pastoral authority that plagues many churches. . . . Multiple leaders, therefore, will serve as a ‘check and balance’ on each other and serve as a safeguard against the very human tendency to play God over other people.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson, *When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What it Takes to Succeed* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 169–170.

<sup>78</sup> Strauch, 43.

## Keeps Colleagues on Track

A leader at the helm of a hierarchical organization may not be accountable or be able to confront the actions of others because of politics, personality, and potential risk to their own position. Robert Greenleaf in his book *Servant Leadership* observes:

To be a lone chief atop a pyramid is abnormal and corrupting. None of us are perfect by ourselves, and all of us need the help and correcting influence of close colleagues. When someone is moved atop a pyramid, that person no longer has colleagues, only subordinates. Even the frankest and bravest of subordinates do not talk with their boss in the same way that they talk with colleagues who are equals, and normal communication patterns become warped.<sup>79</sup>

Mutual accountability relies on the eyes and ears of everyone on the team to keep each other from slipping in both their character and competency. According to Patrick Lencioni in his book *The Advantage*, “At its core, accountability is about having the courage to confront someone about their deficiencies. ... To hold someone accountable is to care about them enough to risk having them blame you for pointing out their deficiencies.”<sup>80</sup>

Unfortunately, as *The Table Group* has discovered, a major trend affecting teams today is that “team members readily avoid holding their peers accountable for both their performance and behaviors that might hurt the team.”<sup>81</sup> In research with 12, 000 teams on five key areas of team cohesion *The Table Group* found that peer accountability was the weakest area among teams<sup>82</sup> (Figure 7).

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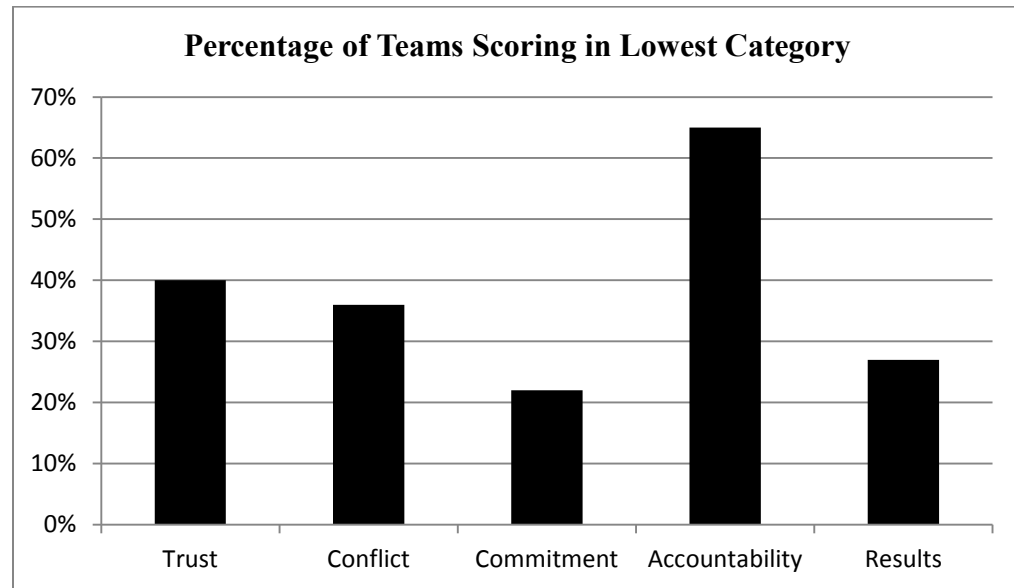
<sup>79</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 63.

<sup>80</sup> Patrick Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 57.

<sup>81</sup> Lencioni, 58.

<sup>82</sup> Lencioni, 58.

**Figure 7. The universal challenge of peer accountability**



### **Achieves Better Results**

Groups will achieve better results when members are mutually accountable to each other rather than to one individual. Strauch notes, “Coaches know that athletes who train together push one another to greater achievement. When someone else is running alongside, a runner will push a little harder and go a little faster.”<sup>83</sup>

A team’s productivity and performance are hurt more by lack of accountability than by poorly designed policies, processes, or structures. Patterson and colleagues in *Crucial Conversations* argue that “the real problem never was in the process, system, or structure—it was in employee behavior. The key to real change lies not in implementing a new process, but in getting people to hold one another accountable to the process.”<sup>84</sup> Mutual accountability that targets behavior ensures more cohesive teamwork and better results.

<sup>83</sup> Strauch, 44.

<sup>84</sup> Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 13.

## **The Challenges of Shared Leadership**

In spite of the many benefits derived from a multiple leadership model, every organization must not overlook the inherent limitations found in the research. Shared leadership is not without its detractors and critics. As in any leadership structure, there are potential pitfalls that can occur. Some of these issues are addressed with possible solutions to make shared leadership a sustainable model for organizations to implement.

### *Issues Surrounding Shared Leadership*

#### **Groupthink**

Many studies have been done on how decisions are made in group settings. Frequently groups are more creative and can catch missing details of a vision and situation better than one person could hope to do. Yet there is a psychological phenomenon known as “groupthink” that can occur in teams, which was first identified by Irving Janis. Janis noted, “The symptoms of groupthink arise when members of decision-making groups become motivated to avoid being too harsh in their judgments of their leaders’ or their colleagues’ ideas. . . . The more cohesive the group, the greater the inner compulsion on the part of each member to avoid creating disunity.”<sup>85</sup> The desire for harmony, while avoiding other criticisms, leads to irrational decisions. Often those that disagree with the group are seen as stirring up trouble and misguided in their knowledge.

When a leadership team is together over a long period of time decisions can become routine and comfortable. The danger is that the team may begin to aspire to its own wants, forget the needs of the people, and ignore the vision to serve the greater good of the organization.

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<sup>85</sup> Jay M. Shafritz, J. Steven Ott, and Yong Suk Jang, *Classics of Organization Theory*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2016), 162.

Although groupthink can happen in shared leadership structures the same is true for a solo leader in a hierarchical system. A CEO, lead pastor, or executive may fail to consider other options because of a sense of rightness or expediency. Such a leader will affect the quality of effectiveness for the organization. The issue is not structure, but the tendency of leaders to close their minds to the input and ideas of other people.

### **Inadequate Accountability**

Another criticism of shared leadership is the perceived lack of accountability. Some people fear an organization will collapse if there is no top leader where the “buck stops here”—one person to be ultimately accountable to. Subordinate-to-supervisor accountability, however, is not as effective as peer-to-peer accountability. Lencioni in *The Advantage* argues, “Peer-to-peer accountability is the primary and most effective source of accountability on the leadership team of a healthy organization. Most people assume that the leader of an executive team should be the primary source of accountability—and that’s the norm in most unhealthy organizations.”<sup>86</sup> Final decisions should either rest with the leader at the moment, or through consensus as a group.

### **Ambiguity of Leadership**

Gene Getz, who originally was a proponent of elder-led churches, modified his view a few years later after some observations in his own ministry. He believed that the church needed to be led by a team of elders, but that this team of elders needed to be led by a primary elder. One of the problems he faced in co-leading was that of leadership ambiguity. It created efficiency problems and confusion for other staff members. In speaking of his own church leadership setting he found:

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<sup>86</sup> Lencioni, 54.



In terms of our own roles, the other leader and I found ourselves tentative in leading for fear we were being inconsiderate of each other. The two of us also found ourselves attending meetings “together” when it was unnecessary—obviously not being good stewards of our time. And in some instances, it became confusing as to who should actually take the lead in these meetings. In terms of our leadership team, it also became unclear at times as to whom they should report. Wanting to be sensitive to their coleaders, both staff and nonstaff at times didn’t know who to go to for advice and counsel.<sup>87</sup>

It was not necessarily the structure that created this problem, but a matter of not clearly delineating the roles of each pastoral staff member. Shared leadership requires much higher degrees of communication among staff members. This was one reason that Jesus was constantly in communication with his Father through prayer. He needed to know the will of the Father.

### **Resistance to the Structure**

For some people, resistance to the shared leadership structure is not worth the energy in trying to make it a reality for the organization. Kocolowski found that “resistance to the model can make implementation extremely difficult. O’Toole et al. (2002) believed that resistance stems ‘from thousands of years of cultural conditioning ... we are dealing with a near-universal myth: in the popular mind, leadership is always singular.’”<sup>88</sup>

This may be one of the biggest challenges in moving toward a shared leadership structure—changing the preconceived belief that shared leadership is not as productive as or better than the hierarchical structure. Yet research on corporate structures and sports teams has shown this to be quite the opposite. Not only can it increase productivity and profit, it also brings a wider sense of ownership and creativity to the group.

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<sup>87</sup> Getz, 253.

<sup>88</sup> Kocolowski, “Shared Leadership: Is it Time for a Change?” 27.

### **Bogged Down Decision-Making**

Too many heads can muddle decision-making and bog it down. Timely decisions are often missed because the team either could not schedule a time to meet or were unable to resolve differences of opinion. Kocolowski in addressing this issue observes, “Since it is sometimes difficult for a group of leaders to reach consensus, decisions can take longer to make. ... Jackson (2000) pointed out, ‘Team attitudes, turf battles, and individual career goals’ are potential obstacles to efficient decision making. ... Irreconcilable differences impede decision making and forward progress.”<sup>89</sup>

Effective shared leadership structures are built through smaller leadership circles that are able to stay in communication and benefit from the input of each member of the team. According to Lencioni teams “struggle simply because they’re too large. ... A leadership team should be made up of somewhere between three and twelve people.”<sup>90</sup> As team size increases so will communication complexity. This is the reason the authors of *Teams That Thrive* recommend, “A good rule of thumb to consider is to figure that every person on a team doubles the team’s communication and collaborative complexity.”<sup>91</sup>

The benefits of smaller teams and slower decision-making which pay attention to detail and relationships can prove more stable in the long run. The hierarchical structure might enable quicker decisions, but these may not always be the right decisions. As the African proverb states, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to far, go together.”

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<sup>89</sup> Kocolowski, “Shared Leadership: Is it Time for a Change?” 28.

<sup>90</sup> Lencioni, 21.

<sup>91</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 125.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

### **Rationale for the Research**

Although articles, dissertations, and books continue to increasingly focus on the topic of shared leadership, not many have addressed this form of leadership within the church. None have specifically focused on the topic of transitioning hierarchical leadership structures in the church to shared leadership structures. This project seeks to add this specific focus to the varied literature base on shared leadership. In *Leading Organizations*, Craig Pearce and Christina Wassenaar note in their chapter, “The Nature of Shared Leadership,” that “there is still a tremendous amount of interesting and valuable work that must be done on shared leadership.”<sup>1</sup>

One of these gaps that Pearce and Wassenaar identify is that “so far, very little research has been done in the area of implementing shared leadership, especially at the organizational level of analysis.”<sup>2</sup> In determining the factors that will make shared leadership a possibility in organizations they ask, “Is it possible for a group to move from a vertical leadership model to one of shared leadership? Or can a group develop shared leadership from its inception? ... What types of rewards, performance measurement, or other processes are important to encourage shared leadership?”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hickman, 186.

<sup>2</sup> Hickman, 189.

<sup>3</sup> Hickman, 188–189.

The intent of the field research was to answer some of these questions and discover the factors that helped transition and sustain a shared leadership structure in the local church. This research project adds great value to the work already done on shared leadership. As Craig Pearce and Jay Conger state in the beginning chapter of *Shared Leadership*, “The purpose of this book is to articulate a model of a particular form of leadership—shared leadership—and to stimulate future research on this poorly understood form of leadership.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Philosophical Framework for the Research**

The philosophical framework in which this research was conducted used the methodological approach. In this qualitative, inductive approach “sometimes the research questions were changed in the middle of the study to reflect better the types of questions needed to understand the research problem.”<sup>5</sup> Some of these “adjustments” included new questions on both the compensation and accountability structures in the selected churches investigated using a shared leadership system.

The field work focused on a mixed methods approach to qualitative research that primarily used grounded theory and also involved case study techniques. The goal was to discover practices that enabled these sample churches to transition and sustain a shared leadership structure. The primary tools used to collect the data included interviews, surveys, and questionnaires done by phone, email, and the Internet. Leadership flow charts and organizational documents were accessed through each church’s website and through documents sent by mail to the researcher.

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<sup>4</sup> Pearce and Conger, 1.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 22.

From the data and feedback gained from these churches, the goal was to provide a rationale, strategy, and process to help other churches in hierarchical settings pursue and transition into a biblical paradigm of shared leadership.

Using grounded theory, originally developed by Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser, the goal of collecting these data was to generate a theory for transitioning and sustaining a shared leadership structure in the local church while situated in a hierarchical setting. In their ground-breaking book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Strauss and Glaser state that “generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. Generating a theory involves a process of research.”<sup>6</sup>

This process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data from selected churches used coding procedures that “consisted of three phases of coding—open, axial, and selective—as advanced by Strauss and Corbin.”<sup>7</sup> To understand the meaning behind the collected data “during open coding, data [were] broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences.”<sup>8</sup> The data were grouped under common classifications from which patterns, concepts, and theories could emerge. According to Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, in their book *Basics of Qualitative Research*, coding into categories becomes the “foundation and beginning structure for theory building.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies of Qualitative Research* (1967; repr., New Brunswick, NJ: AldineTransaction, 2006), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Creswell, 195.

<sup>8</sup> Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 102.

<sup>9</sup> Strauss and Corbin, 121.

The next step was to identify subcategories and link these to the main categories through axial coding. As Strauss and Corbin explain, “The purpose of axial coding is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding. In axial coding, categories are related to their subcategories to form more precise and complete explanations about phenomena.”<sup>10</sup>

The final step in analyzing the data was to determine an overall theme. Strauss and Corbin refer to this as “selective coding: the process of integrating and refining the theory”<sup>11</sup> and that “the first step in integration is deciding on a central category.”<sup>12</sup> A process was then presented to help hierarchical churches transition to shared leadership.

Data were collected through multiple case studies of several evangelical churches across North America who used shared leadership. The data came from “current, real-life cases that are in progress” so that the researcher could “gather accurate information not lost by time ... [and with] multiple cases identified so that they can be compared.”<sup>13</sup> These churches were investigated and explored “through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports).”<sup>14</sup> According to Robert Yin “the case study investigator’s main task” is to ascertain “a similar set of facts” from the sources.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Strauss and Corbin, 124.

<sup>11</sup> Strauss and Corbin, 143.

<sup>12</sup> Strauss and Corbin, 146.

<sup>13</sup> Creswell, 98.

<sup>14</sup> Creswell, 97.

<sup>15</sup> Robert K. Yin, “The Case Study as a Serious Research Strategy,” *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization* 3, No. 1 (September 1981): 105, accessed January 5, 2017, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/107554708100300106>.

### **Interpretive Framework for the Research**

The primary framework in which these data were interpreted was one that gave witness to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5) and could be used to serve other churches (1 Pet. 4:10). Only God has the ultimate grasp on reality, but through research, a person can come to a greater understanding of how this world works and to a closer approximation of the truth. As Strauss and Corbin recognized “only God can tell infallible humans the ‘real’ nature of reality. ... And as the natural scientists demonstrate daily, human grasp of reality never can be that of God’s, but hopefully research moves us increasingly toward a greater understanding of how the world works.”<sup>16</sup>

Justin Irving, in his paper on “Research as Worship: A Doxological Model for Researchers,” comments that “the centrality of God and commitment to honoring him ... is to be a defining feature of ... life as a researcher in particular.”<sup>17</sup> This commitment to God means the research will take on a transformative quality and that “along the pathway of doxological research, individuals engaged in research initiatives also become agents of kingdom impact in our world through the process of inquiry and investigation.”<sup>18</sup> This doxological focus is what keeps the researcher motivated. According to Irving, “because all of life is centered on God and his glory, it is logical to see the place of God not only in the person and process of the doxological researcher, but also as the ultimate motivation and ultimate end of the research journey.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Strauss and Corbin, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Justin Irving, “Research as Worship: A Doxological Model for Researchers,” (Working draft), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Irving, “Research as Worship,” 18.

<sup>19</sup> Irving, “Research as Worship,” 21.

The secondary interpretive framework in which these data were analyzed was grounded in postmodernism, pragmatism, and feminism. In postmodernism, the emphasis was on finding churches that went outside the norm of traditional hierarchical structures and were able to “focus their critiques on changing ways of thinking.”<sup>20</sup> In pragmatism the research aimed at finding solutions to the research problem. According to Creswell:

Individuals holding an interpretive framework based on pragmatism focus on the outcomes of the research—the actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry. . . . In practice, the individual using this worldview will use multiple methods of data collection to best answer the research question, will employ multiple sources of data collection, [and] will focus on the practical implications of the research.<sup>21</sup>

In feminism, research centered on the “domination” of subordinate staff and how these individuals often face “injustices of current society.” The goal in this framework was to build “collaborative and nonexploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Criteria for the Research**

In keeping with the title of this project, “Shared Leadership: Bringing the Local Church Back to Its Biblical Roots of Leadership,” the intent was to identify a sample group of multi-staff, evangelical churches in North America that had either transitioned to a shared leadership structure or were founded on this type of leadership. In selecting these churches, specific criteria were used since “not all data that come to the researcher’s attention are acceptable for use in a research project.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Creswell, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Creswell, 28.

<sup>22</sup> Creswell, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2010), 90.



One main criterion for selecting churches to research was the absence of the title lead or senior pastor as a staff position. Many churches were team-based and had shared leadership practices, but these were excluded because the position of a fixed lead pastor was still central to the church's structure. In addressing how churches established or transitioned to a shared leadership model only those churches that were founded on this structure or formally had a hierarchical organization with a lead or senior pastor were selected. These churches were studied for factors that helped sustain this leadership structure.

Criteria for feedback on a staff resignation survey came from former youth and associate pastors who served in a subordinate role within a hierarchical or team-based church setting. The goal was to determine the reasons for these pastors in subordinate roles moving up, moving on, or moving out of ministry altogether. Lead pastors were excluded from this survey unless in their previous position they had served as a youth or associate pastor.

The internal validity of this research was measured through triangulation where “multiple sources of data [were] collected ... to support a particular hypothesis or theory.”<sup>24</sup> The various sizes and locations of each church that was researched allowed for greater diversity, but also convergence on the research questions and interpretation of the data. To maintain reliability in this research the researcher used a consistent set of three surveys developed through *Qualtrics* to keep each church consistent “with which a measuring instrument yields a certain result.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Leedy and Ormrod, 99.

<sup>25</sup> Leedy and Ormrod, 29.

### **Process for the Research**

The process in which this research was conducted began with identifying those evangelical churches in North America that operated with a shared leadership structure. A list was compiled by searching the Internet and in reading books that gave examples of churches using this type of leadership. Once these churches were identified the researcher documented any information from the church's website or from books that would be helpful to the project. The next step was to identify "a gatekeeper or key informants"<sup>26</sup> of that church who would allow surveys to be sent and interviews to be conducted. The data were then collected, analyzed, interpreted, and a model developed to help other churches restructure to a shared leadership system.

The process in which youth, associate, and lead pastors were identified came through the researcher's network of colleagues, and through denominational leaders. A survey was developed through *Qualtrics* and then sent to the email addresses of these individuals. Follow up to clarify answers was done through email or personal phone calls. The data were then collected, analyzed, interpreted, and presented as a secondary resource to help hierarchical churches in the transition to a shared leadership model.

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<sup>26</sup> Creswell, 94.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The field research component of this project focused on a select sample of seven evangelical churches in North America that used a shared leadership structure. Through a case study approach these churches were investigated to determine how they either began or transitioned into this type of leadership. Data from web site documents, surveys (Appendix A), and interviews were collected on factors that moved these churches toward a shared leadership structure and helped sustain this type of governance in these local churches. This information was analyzed from a grounded theory approach to generate categories, cross-examine the data for similar patterns, and define primary categories that enabled these churches to develop and sustain a shared leadership structure.

### **Churches that Transitioned to Shared Leadership**

#### *Cole Community Church – Boise, Idaho*

Cole Community Church is located in Boise, Idaho and is a non-denominational evangelical church with eleven to fifteen full-time staff in a congregation of 1000–2499 people. The church was established in 1948 in Boise, Idaho, but it was not until the early 1980s that the church voted to become an elder-led church.<sup>1</sup> For many years after this vote, however, the leadership continued to operate with a senior pastor who primarily made the decisions and took on most of the key responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Cole Community Church, “Leadership Model: History,” accessed September 29, 2016, <http://www.colecommunity.org/about/our-elders/leadership-model/>.

## Factors in Transitioning to a Shared Leadership Structure

*Consistent with Scripture.* Although on paper Cole Community Church was an elder-led church, it still operated as a traditional church with the senior pastor making most of the decisions and taking on most of the responsibility for ministry. It was not until further reflection on Scripture that the church realized that the elders needed a more active role in leadership. As noted on the church's website:

We came unanimously to the conclusion that God was calling Cole Community Church to the multiple leadership model. This new model is really just a variation of the elder-led model we had been using. Cole Community Church continues to be an elder-led church, but with the change that we do not have a Senior Pastor. We believe that this model is consistent with Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

At Cole Community Church, Jesus, as head of the church, is not just a theological affirmation, but a practical implementation: "Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:22 describe Jesus as the head of the church. Acts 20:28 tells us that He purchased the church with His own blood. So at the top of the leadership model for Cole Community Church we have Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Steve Evans who has attended Cole Community Church with his wife since 1982 and since 2010 has been on the pastoral staff argues that "a shared leadership structure with Christ as our hierarchical head is more biblical."<sup>4</sup>

*Better use of gifts.* Another reason Cole Community Church transitioned to a shared leadership structure was that it made better use of the staff members' gifts, especially when the church was in a time of change. There was an honest introspective and reflective look at both personality and gifting. As Evans explains:

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<sup>2</sup> Cole Community Church, "Leadership Model: History."

<sup>3</sup> Cole Community Church, "Leadership Model: The Multiple Leadership Model," accessed September 29, 2016, <http://www.colecommunity.org/about/our-elders/leadership-model/>.

<sup>4</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a "Church Leadership Survey" administered July 2016.

The [shared] model engages the various gifts that are given to different individuals in a way that reflects God’s design for His body. The shared model diminishes the power of individuals in a way that elevates and frees up all to enter into ministry together; this increases the pool of shared wisdom and strengthens the whole. At the time of the change, there was no one individual who was clearly gifted and motivated to be the singular leader; yet, there were many gifted people on the pastoral staff. The burden of leading in all areas was, in fact, detrimental to the ability of a gifted teacher to exercise that gift. So, the elders determined to move to a model that allowed for the various staff to truly use their gifts.<sup>5</sup>

*Regular communication.* For shared leadership to take root in an organization it will need regular communication in the form of prayer, vision casting, and congregational input. In transitioning to this structure “prayer and more prayer” was offered “throughout the process.”<sup>6</sup> This regular communication with God and each other was a significant factor in establishing shared leadership in the church. As Pastor Evans notes:

The elders started to communicate regularly with the body about the process of seeking out a new model for church and pastoral staff leadership. This communication came in written and verbal forms, and the body was invited to enter into prayer for the process and to share its thoughts, concerns, and ideas. ... Small groups were formed to discuss and to work through these issues. Their input and buy-in was very valuable.<sup>7</sup>

The next step in their communication was for these “ideas and concepts [to be] formed into a document that described the new structure and the intent behind its formation, implementation, and operation. ... Concerns and questions were solicited and engaged with. ... After this, the elders communicated the new structure to the body. After all of this, it was implemented.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>6</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>7</sup> From an email by Steve Evans to the researcher on December 2, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

*Organizational research.* The momentum toward shared leadership, with Jesus as the head, found traction in the Scripture but was also confirmed through the church's research on this type of structure in other organizations. In the input and evaluation from various sources, the leadership at Cole Community discovered that "corporate governance research shows us that organizations need a board or council composed of multiple people who are commissioned to understand the owner and to make sure that the organization follows the owner's will."<sup>9</sup> At Cole Community Church the owner is God.

*Effort and time.* Transitioning to a shared leadership structure is not easy in a culture that predominantly uses a hierarchical system. Not every organization will transition at the same rate or with the same success. Yet through much effort, time, and patience, a church can be steered toward this biblical structure. The transition to a multiple leadership model at Cole Community Church has taken years of effort. In an interview Pastor Evans reflects:

Although we are now about ten years into living under this model, people, even some who have been here for a very long time, still seek out the senior pastor or assume that the older of the two teaching pastors is the senior pastor. It is also hard for the teaching pastors, both men who were involved as pastoral staff, ... to completely relinquish the senior pastor mind-set. It is how we were all raised, trained, and practiced our church life. Senior Pastor leadership is the polity that is the basis for all of our experience. That said, they work hard at not subverting the process.<sup>10</sup>

Although transitioning is difficult, Cole Community Church shows that it can be done. Every organization can take incremental steps that help move the group toward a shared leadership structure.

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<sup>9</sup> Cole Community Church, "Leadership Model: The Multiple Leadership Model."

<sup>10</sup> From an email by Steve Evans to the researcher on December 2, 2014.

## Factors in Sustaining a Shared Leadership Structure

*Commitment to the model.* One of the struggles Cole Community Church has faced with this new model is the prevalent hierarchical culture that most people have been immersed in. At times there is a strong pull toward a senior pastor model, but it is in the commitment to the agreed upon multiple leadership model that has helped sustain this structure in the church for the past ten years or more. According to Evans:

It is not always so easy for people to fully set aside our past training and experience of the way that a church operates in order to stay focused to this newer model. Individuals do attempt to assert a senior pastor like authority in certain situations. This needs to always be brought back to our agreed upon model through honest and loving conversation.

The people within our body do not always relate well to this model. They want a senior pastor to go to as an ultimate authority. This is typically problematic when someone disagrees with a decision or a direction that the elders have taken us. We have to remain true to our model and direct people to the appropriate individual or internal organization that has authority in each of these circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

*Extra attention.* Unless extra attention and resources are given at the beginning of new initiatives they can quickly lose momentum and the focus is diverted back to old ways of doing things or on to new things. This was an area of struggle that Cole Community Church faced as they began to implement this multiple leadership model:

In the early days of the model, a few of the pastors became somewhat lost. They were people who were already struggling ... in their roles or in the performance of their ministries. The take away in this seems to be to realize that staff who are struggling at the beginning of a change as profound as this will probably need extra attention during the implementation phase of such a change. This needs to [be] planned for and accounted for in the allocation of resources.<sup>12</sup>

*Reworking the structure.* Over the years the church has reworked the structure in how staff, with their unique gifts, fit into the multiple leadership model. Evans notes:

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<sup>11</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>12</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

Some revisions and reworking of details of the structure have been made over time. We remain committed to the model but also remain open and flexible to refining it. The original concept of matching God’s provision of giftedness in individuals to the needs of the body continues to drive modification in aspects of the way that the model is enacted such as specific job descriptions and assignment of shepherding assignments to elders and to more senior staff members.<sup>13</sup>

*Focus on character.* An organization might have the right structure, but the wrong people serving in leadership. Or it can have the right people, but the wrong structure. The goal is to develop a right structure with the right people in leadership. Skill is necessary for leadership, but without good character whatever is achieved can quickly unravel because of bad judgment and impropriety.

In Scripture, the requirements of an elder are based primarily on character rather than on skill. In the qualifications for elders listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 only two areas are related to skill—the ability to teach and the ability to manage. At Cole Community Church leadership is chosen on a character that is consistent with the biblical requirements for an elder. They comment that “from our study we have concluded that Scripture indicates the need for multiple elders, as in Acts 14:23, whose character is consistent with 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and who work together trying to discern the Lord’s will for the church.”<sup>14</sup>

*Unanimity of decisions.* Shared leadership is sustained through unanimity of decisions rather than unilateral decisions. A “superhero” mentality in which a sole leader does it all and fails to partner with others will limit the advancement of the organization. At Cole Community Church the leadership team seeks the mind of God through prayer, communication, and unanimity of decisions. The church website states:

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<sup>13</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>14</sup> Cole Community Church, “Leadership Model: The Multiple Leadership Model.”



Each elder individually is called to seek the mind of the Lord. Then in our meetings we pray and discuss matters, with the intention of seeking the mind of the Lord together. We pursue each other to understand what each one is thinking and why. We seek unanimity in our decisions. Although it is a time-consuming process, we believe that it is a better way to discern God's leading than depending on one man to discern the Lord's will.<sup>15</sup>

The church has often placed too high a value on the lead pastor as the one creating the vision, leaving the direction of the church to the whims of one person. The Apostle Paul stated, "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16) and not "I have the mind of Christ." Vision is best understood through a group rather than through a single leader.

*Mutual accountability.* At Cole, mutual accountability and communication are important since "Scripture forcefully points out that all people are sinful and inclined to wander. We learn that power without accountability is bad. It is not good to have a single person at the top with too much power and too little accountability."<sup>16</sup> Pastor Evans claims mutual relationships and accountability are what make shared leadership work:

We hold each other up in good and in hard times. The staff is closer relationally and more connected to each other from the perspective of understanding and participating in each other's ministries. ... We are more open and better at communicating with each other, and everyone on staff ... are engaged with each other on both a professional and a personal level.<sup>17</sup>

*Elimination of titles.* The church's website lists staff in alphabetical order which has helped keep the church free from an assumed hierarchy as some people equate first in order as first in command. Another observation from the website that keeps their shared leadership from becoming hierarchical is that staff members are identified by their respective areas of ministry and not by any hierarchy of position or rank of title.

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<sup>15</sup> Cole Community Church, "Leadership Model: The Multiple Leadership Model."

<sup>16</sup> Cole Community Church, "Leadership Model: The Multiple Leadership Model."

<sup>17</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a "Church Leadership Survey."

*Reality LA Church – Los Angeles, California*

Reality LA Church is located in Los Angeles, California and is part of the Reality family of churches. The church was planted by Reality Santa Barbara and launched in January 2006 with Tim Chaddick as the founding pastor. Today the church uses a shared leadership model and has 23 full-time staff in a congregation of 1000–2499 people.

**Factors in Transitioning to a Shared Leadership Structure**

*Complexity of ministry.* The transition toward a shared leadership model began a few years into the church plant when the church exploded with growth. Ministry became increasingly chaotic and complex and the founding lead pastor Tim Chaddick was encouraged to take a short sabbatical to keep from burning out.

It was during this sabbatical that the church realized it was not dependent on the founding pastor but on God working. In a church video clip called “The First Ten Years,”<sup>18</sup> one lady commented that “our church needed to see that it wasn’t dependent on Tim to function.” Another man explained, “We wanted the emphasis not to be on the preacher of the Word but on the preaching of the Word. . . . It was so encouraging . . . not only in just seeing other preachers step up and preaching the Word but in how the whole church responded.”

*Better use of gifts.* In letting others preach and lead helped transition the church to doing ministry as a team. Tim Chaddick “realized that as the congregation’s solo leader he wasn’t adequately using the gifts and strengths of his staff. ‘I knew some of the other pastors were more gifted in some areas than I was; I needed to let them lead.’”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Reality LA, “Reality LA: The First Ten Years,” May 24, 2016, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://realityla.com/teachings/the-first-ten-years/>.

<sup>19</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 55.

## Factors in Sustaining a Shared Leadership Structure

*Rotating primary leadership.* The leadership structure of Reality LA Church has each pastor/elder rotating primary leadership based on his expertise in a given situation. From the research of Hartwig and Bird on Reality LA, in *Teams That Thrive* “the four members of their executive team—the pastor of preaching and vision, executive pastor, pastor for community groups and pastor for equipping theology—truly share leadership responsibilities, even rotating the designation of ‘first among equals’ among the team, based on who holds the most expertise in a given area.”<sup>20</sup> Being able to rotate leadership takes humility. Former Executive Pastor Lorenzo Smith notes, “Plurality doesn’t always mean democracy; it means deference.”<sup>21</sup>

*Mutual accountability.* A core belief of Reality LA is that Jesus is the head of the church. The church’s website states that “under Jesus, we practice a shared leadership model of church government in which all of our pastors lead together, mutually submit to one another, and hold one another accountable.”<sup>22</sup>

*Staff identified by area of ministry.* In this shared leadership model, the pastors are identified by the role they function in and all share the same title of “pastor/elder.” No pastor is identified as the “lead” pastor. In this pastoral team model, the roles they function in differ: one is known as the “pastor for preaching and vision;” another as the “music ministry pastor;” and still another as “pastor for equipping and ministry training.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 55.

<sup>21</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 160.

<sup>22</sup> Reality LA, “FAQ: About RLA,” accessed June 8, 2016, <http://realityla.com/about/faq/>.

<sup>23</sup> Reality LA, “About: Staff,” accessed June 8, 2016, <http://realityla.com/about/staff/>.

*Tulsa Christian Fellowship – Tulsa, Oklahoma*

Tulsa Christian Fellowship in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is an independent evangelical church with two to three full-time staff in a congregation of 100–199 people. The church began in the fall of 1969 under the pastoral direction of Bill Sanders. As the church grew, Chuck Farah joined the pastoral staff to help. Today “Tulsa Christian Fellowship seeks to emulate the pattern of local church leadership found in the New Testament. The seven men in leadership at TCF are leaders among the flock (Acts 20:28), and function as a collegial team.”<sup>24</sup>

**Factors in Transitioning to a Shared Leadership Structure**

*The conviction of Scripture.* It was after some itinerant speakers came to the church and through the pastor’s own studies on New Testament leadership that moved Tulsa to a shared leadership model. In describing their history the church’s website notes that “early in the 1970s, itinerant teachers ... came to TCF and taught about the leadership style in the New Testament. They pointed out that the First Century churches were led by councils of elders, rather than a pastor. This, along with their personal studies, convinced Bill and Chuck of the principle of plural leadership.”<sup>25</sup>

*Giving the transition time.* Moving to a shared leadership model was not easy and took time as “it was difficult for these founding pastors, as well as the congregation, to shift gears from a pastor-led church to an elder-led church. Even after the selection of elders, Bill still was the Pastor.”<sup>26</sup> Bill Sullivan a current elder reflects on this journey:

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<sup>24</sup> Tulsa Christian Fellowship, “TCF’s New Testament Church Leadership,” accessed October 3, 2016, <http://www.tulsachristianfellowship.com/about-us.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Tulsa Christian Fellowship, “The TFC Story,” accessed October 3, 2016, <http://www.tulsachristianfellowship.com/the-tcf-story1.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Tulsa Christian Fellowship, “The TFC Story.”

It occurred over a 15 year transition, moving from a hierarchical leadership structure to a true elder-led, plural leadership structure. The original “pastors” were part of the leadership team when this transition began, but by the time the evolution was complete, these men were aging and ailing physically and unable to function in the role of elders in the new setting. There was also a conscious effort to teach the congregation about the NT church model.<sup>27</sup>

### **Factors in Sustaining a Shared Leadership Structure**

*Common understanding.* One factor that has sustained this type of leadership at Tulsa Christian Fellowship is “a common understanding of the NT church, where leadership was always plural.”<sup>28</sup> This understanding of Scripture is what helped transition and now sustains the shared leadership structure within the church.

*Shared responsibility.* The eldership of Tulsa Christian Fellowship is a group of seven men who share the ministry where “there is no senior pastor at TCF—decisions are made by consensus—and the elders share authority and responsibility.”<sup>29</sup> Sullivan mentions the sharing of authority and responsibility was difficult at the beginning:

Having the congregation see the elders are sharing leadership responsibility and not looking to the first pastors of the church alone for leadership. This is one reason the transition to true elder-led church took about 15 years. Also, though the first pastors of the church, who led the church from the beginning, including the one who grew the church in its earliest years, supported and encouraged this transition, it proved to be more difficult for them than they anticipated to lay down primary leadership roles and become more a part of a team.<sup>30</sup>

Today the elders take turns preaching and often no more than two weeks in a row. This has given the congregation a picture of joint leadership in which they can look to.

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<sup>27</sup> Response by Bill Sullivan on a “Church Leadership Survey” administered July 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Response by Bill Sullivan on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>29</sup> Tulsa Christian Fellowship, “TCF’s New Testament Church Leadership,” accessed October 3, 2016, <http://www.tulsachristianfellowship.com/about-us.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Response by Bill Sullivan on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

*Mutual accountability.* It takes humility to make shared leadership work and Sullivan notes these seven men form “a unique group of guys who are willing to submit to one another, not push a personal agenda, and work together to sense God’s direction in everything.”<sup>31</sup>

*Congregational support.* Two key areas of support have helped sustain shared leadership at Tulsa. There is agreement on the biblical foundation and effectiveness of this structure by the elders, and there is good support for this structure by the congregation. At Tulsa Christian Fellowship, Sullivan realizes it takes “a supportive congregation, which now really ‘gets’ shared leadership, and has come to appreciate the variety in the pulpit as well other benefits of our leadership structure.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Churches that Began with Shared Leadership**

#### *Community Fellowship Church – Staunton, Virginia*

Community Fellowship Church in Staunton, Virginia, is an independent evangelical church with two to three full-time staff in a congregation of 200–499 people. In 1971 the church began meeting in the home of Paul and Christine Knopp. The group consisted of the Knopp family, Professor Frank and Wendy Wilbur, and several students. Although in the initial days of the church’s formation there were suggestions to make Paul Knopp the senior pastor, he resisted this title and position in favor of an elder-led church. Community Fellowship Church which is now over forty years old “has always operated under a shared leadership.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Response by Bill Sullivan on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>32</sup> Response by Bill Sullivan on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>33</sup> Community Fellowship Church, “History,” accessed October 3, 2016, <http://www.communityfellowshipchurch.net/about/history.cfm>.

## Reasons for Starting with a Shared Leadership Structure

*Expanded use of gifts.* One reason the church started with a shared leadership structure was to expand the gift-mix through multiple leaders. Clay Sterrett, a pastor with the church for over forty years, comments on the church's historical beginnings:

Our church had its beginnings in the home of Paul Knopp, a former Church of God pastor, who decided to invite family and some friends for informal meetings. Before long, more than fifty people were gathering and it seemed God was raising up a church. In those days Paul refused suggestions that he become “the pastor.” He was emphatic, “This will not be my church; it will be the Lord’s. I will help out in oversight, but I will not be the sole leader.” One reason Paul felt this way was that he knew his gifts were limited and a growing body would need other leaders. Within a few months, a local college professor and a college student, who were both leading Bible studies on their respective campuses, began to attend. Over some time, it became apparent they possessed needed qualities of leadership, and we had our first three elders. It seemed obvious to all that the Holy Spirit had set these men as overseers in the body (Acts 20:28).<sup>34</sup>

*A biblical model.* The church organized its leadership structure around the New Testament practice of a plurality of elders. Sterrett notes, “The modern day concept of a senior pastor who stands in authority above other church leaders has little biblical basis.”<sup>35</sup> The elders “operate with unique gifts and are co-equal in authority.”<sup>36</sup>

## Factors in Sustaining a Shared Leadership Structure

In his book, *Church Life: Building on the Foundation of Jesus Christ*, Clay Sterrett lists four advantages of shared leadership that have contributed to the success of this leadership structure at Community Fellowship Church.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Clay Sterrett, *Church Life: Building on the Foundation of Jesus Christ* (Staunton, VA: CFC Literature, 2005), 52.

<sup>35</sup> Sterrett, 56.

<sup>36</sup> Community Fellowship Church, “History.”

<sup>37</sup> The next four points are taken from Clay Sterrett’s observations of the benefits of shared leadership in his book *Church Life*, 52–54.

*Sharing the ministry load.* Shared leadership distributes the burden of oversight. As Sterrett observes, “In our current church of about 300 members, we have five elders plus other gifted men who help to share the load. All of us are active, but none of us is burning out.” This sharing the ministry load has been a key factor in helping Sterrett continue as one of the pastors of the church for over 40 years.

*Broader use of ministry gifts.* Shared leadership provides variety in ministry. Sterrett notes, “In our eldership we have a variety of men who can minister—one who is gifted more in systematic teaching, one in exhortation, one in encouragement, and one prophetically. Any pastor/elder will have deficiencies, and if other men are involved in leadership, weaknesses will be balanced out.”

*Mutual accountability.* Shared leadership provides accountability and support for those on the leadership team. Sterrett comments, “In our eldership we are friends first and co-workers second. We have a close relationship and can therefore be very honest with each other. . . . Open and accountable relationships are essential, and are the norm in the New Testament.”

*Focus on Jesus as head of the church.* Shared leadership keeps the focus on Jesus Christ as head of the church. Sterrett shares an example of how easy it is for a solo or lead pastor to become the focal point instead of Christ:

In many a conversation I have asked believers how things are going in their churches. The answer invariably comes back, “Oh, just great! Pastor John [fictitious name] is such a fine man!” How many churches are known as “Pastor John’s church?” When one man has full responsibility, he will inadvertently be given some of the glory as well as the blame for what happens. Shared leadership can help keep the focus of the church where it ought to be—on the Lord Himself.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sterrett, 54.



*Humble attitudes.* From the inception of Community Fellowship Church, “three men were recognized as already functioning as shepherds. They were humble men who could defer to one another.”<sup>39</sup> According to Sterrett “staying humble, recognizing one man doesn’t have it all, [and] following the New Testament pattern”<sup>40</sup> has helped sustain this shared leadership structure in the church over the years.

*Cornerstone Church of West Los Angeles – Los Angeles, California*

Cornerstone Church of West Los Angeles is a Baptist church with seven to ten full-time staff in a congregation of 200–499 people. The church is a result of a merger between a young church plant and an established but struggling church. One clear goal of the merger was that “leadership by plurality of elders was nonnegotiable. They would make plurality leadership work by creating a culture of continuous collaboration.”<sup>41</sup> As Scott Mehl, one of the pastors since 2005, states, “We planted the church with this structure.”<sup>42</sup>

**Reasons for Starting with a Shared Leadership Structure**

*Biblical conviction.* According to Mehl, it was the “biblical conviction (we see it in Scripture)”<sup>43</sup> that became the foundation for a shared leadership structure under Jesus as the senior pastor. In his sermon, “What Is a Pastor?” Mehl points out that “in all of Scripture senior pastor comes up once and it’s in reference to Jesus Christ.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Response by Clay Sterrett on a “Church Leadership Survey,” administered July 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Response by Clay Sterrett on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>41</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 211–212.

<sup>42</sup> Response by Scott Mehl on a “Church Leadership Survey” administered July 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Response by Scott Mehl on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>44</sup> Scott Mehl, “What Is a Pastor?” accessed July 1, 2016, <http://cornerstonewla.org/pulse/what-is-a-pastor/>.

*Practical benefits.* The other reason for beginning with a shared leadership structure was the “practical benefit (it functions far better).”<sup>45</sup> Mehl explains, “Shared responsibility protects against burn out; shared preaching allows room for study and preparation for other areas on needed development and equipping.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Factors in Sustaining a Shared Leadership Structure**

*Accountable to Jesus as Chief Shepherd.* The headship of Jesus Christ is very important to the practical outworking of the leadership structure at Cornerstone Church. Scott Mehl in his sermon “What Is a Pastor?” tells his congregation:

A pastor is a servant under the headship of Christ. ... A pastor is not simply in charge ... he is not the one whom the church belongs to. ... He is a servant under the headship, the lordship of the owner of the church—Jesus Christ. ... The headship of Christ in the church is an incredibly important truth. ... This is one of the most fundamental reasons that none of us here at Cornerstone, none of your pastors has carried with us the title senior pastor.<sup>47</sup>

On the church’s statement of faith, “The leadership of the church is responsible and accountable first to Jesus Christ as the Chief Shepherd, then to the congregation, as servants, overseeing in love and humility.”<sup>48</sup>

*Elimination of hierarchical titles.* With Jesus being the senior pastor of Cornerstone, each person on the leadership team is simply known as a pastor without any title or rank. Each pastor is identified on the website by his area of oversight and by the role in which he functions.

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<sup>45</sup> Response by Scott Mehl on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>46</sup> An email from Scott Mehl to the researcher, October 25, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Scott Mehl, “What Is a Pastor?”

<sup>48</sup> Cornerstone West Los Angeles, “Statement of Faith: The Church,” accessed July 1, 2016, [http://cornerstonewla.org/uploads/assets/documents/cwla\\_statement\\_of\\_faith.pdf](http://cornerstonewla.org/uploads/assets/documents/cwla_statement_of_faith.pdf).

*Focus on the leader's gifts.* There are common areas that each pastor at Cornerstone shares, but also unique areas of responsibility that fit each pastor's specific gift-mix. In the description about the staff the church's website states, "All of our pastors serve the church by teaching, preaching, counseling, and discipling. Each pastor also has specific areas in which their gifts are used to serve the body."<sup>49</sup>

*Focus on a leader's character.* The Christ-like character of those who serve on the leadership team is critical to sustaining this type of leadership structure. The church's statement of faith declares, "We believe only biblically qualified men are to serve in the position of Pastor or Elder (Romans 15:25-27, 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-7)."<sup>50</sup> Scott Mehl indicates that "biblically qualified leadership, character and humility"<sup>51</sup> are needed to sustain shared leadership.

*Rotating leadership.* Although no member of the pastoral staff takes on permanent leadership over the group, the team does rotate leadership depending on the person who has the most skill or in whose area it involves. Ryan Hartwig and Warren Bird in their research on Cornerstone Church write in their book *Teams That Thrive*: "At Cornerstone LA, Pastor Brian Colmery is first among equals when discussing and strategizing weekend service content and flow, but Pastor Scott Mehl is first among equals when determining overall ministry strategy and administration."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cornerstone West Los Angeles, "Our Staff," accessed July 1, 2016, <http://cornerstonewla.org/about/our-staff>.

<sup>50</sup> Cornerstone West Los Angeles, "Statement of Faith: The Church."

<sup>51</sup> Response by Scott Mehl on a "Church Leadership Survey."

<sup>52</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 160.

*Open collaboration.* The pastors practice open collaboration in which members of the congregation are able to see how they work side-by-side. One way in which this is accomplished is by flipping the concept of having individual offices to sharing a common office with individual work rooms. Working together in a common office provides a tangible expression of collaboration and unity on the team. Hartwig and Bird note, “As part of their commitment to continuous collaboration, the vocational pastors share one office. . . . When they need to work alone, the pastors retreat to one of two study rooms.”<sup>53</sup>

*Littleton Bible Chapel – Littleton, Colorado*

Littleton Bible Chapel in Littleton, Colorado started in 1962 and has had a second site since 2014. It is an independent church associated with the Plymouth Brethren and currently has four to six full-time staff in a congregation of 500–999 people. This shared leadership structure is characteristic of the Plymouth Brethren movement in which “the Brethren do not have a formal hierarchical structure.”<sup>54</sup>

**Reasons for Starting with a Shared Leadership Structure**

*Commitment to Scripture.* According to Pastor David Anderson, who has been on staff for eleven years, one of the key factors that motivated the church toward the structure of shared leadership was their “commitment to Scripture.”<sup>55</sup> There is a strong commitment to the priesthood of believers and in viewing every member as a minister which are core values of the church and also of the Plymouth Brethren movement.

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<sup>53</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 212.

<sup>54</sup> “Faith and Beliefs,” Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, accessed October 22, 2016, <http://www.plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org/faqs/faith-and-beliefswhy-dont-the-pbcc-have-clergy/>.

<sup>55</sup> Response by David Anderson on a “Church Leadership Survey” administered July 2016.

## Factors in Sustaining a Shared Leadership Structure

*Commitment to biblical principles.* What has sustained the shared leadership structure has not been a commitment to the structure itself, but “a commitment to Biblical principles among the people and among the elders.”<sup>56</sup>

*Preaching on relevant passages.* The shared leadership structure has been firmly established through regular “preaching on relevant passages”<sup>57</sup> to the congregation. This has helped transform the congregation’s mind in viewing this leadership structure through a biblical lens, rather than through the lens of the North American culture.

*Elimination of hierarchical titles.* The website gives no indication of titles or ranks among the pastors and states, “Littleton Bible Chapel is led by a team of pastor elders, who are responsible for the pastoral care of the church.”<sup>58</sup> All pastors are identified as a pastor-elder with the description of the area of ministry they oversee.

*Selecting qualified leaders.* Another factor that has sustained this team structure is the selection of spiritually mature individuals who serve in the role of elder. In its statement of beliefs Littleton Bible Chapel declares, “We believe that church leadership should be non-clerical, and comprised of a plurality of spiritually qualified males.”<sup>59</sup>

*Rotating the moderator.* The council of elders meets once a week for two hours to pray and discuss items on their agenda. This council is led by a moderator, but that role can switch between elders to keep the meeting on task, moving forward, and efficient.

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<sup>56</sup> Response by David Anderson on a “Church Leadership Survey” administered July 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Response by David Anderson on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>58</sup> Littleton Bible Chapel, “Leadership: Pastor/Elders,” accessed October 5, 2016, <http://www.littletonbiblechapel.org/about/leadership/>.

<sup>59</sup> Littleton Bible Chapel, “Beliefs: Church,” accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.littletonbiblechapel.org/about/beliefs/>.

According to David Anderson, the goal is “to rotate the moderator so everyone gets the feel for the importance of moving through an agenda.”<sup>60</sup> This position is brought up annually, but it has fallen on Pastor Anderson for the last five years because it fits his gifts and he enjoys this role.

*Involving the congregation.* The church is comprised of three groups—the elders, deacons, and congregation. The elders oversee the church and the deacons are the official ministers of mercy who take care of the practical needs of the congregation. Both the deacons and congregation are accountable to the council of elders.

According to Anderson the elders “don’t unilaterally make decisions. We will get the congregation’s input especially on anything major. We want to listen to the people and hear people out, but at the end of the day, the elders will be the one’s leading and making the decisions.”<sup>61</sup>

#### *The Parks Church – McKinney, Texas*

The Parks Church in McKinney, Texas began in 2011 when three friends founded the church with the intent of sharing leadership. The church is an independent evangelical church with four to six full-time staff in a congregation of 500–999 people. In 2014 another church was started in Melissa, Texas. According to the website, “Each Parks Church maintains the vision to be gospel-centered, community focused churches with the heart to start new churches. . . . Our goal is that every person plays a role in the work of the church.”<sup>62</sup> Both leadership teams work closely together.

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<sup>60</sup> From an interview with David Anderson, Littleton Bible Chapel, October 12, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with David Anderson.

<sup>62</sup> The Parks Church, “The Parks Church Model,” accessed December 19, 2016, <http://theparkschurchmckinney.com/the-parks-church-model/>.

## **Reasons for Starting with a Shared Leadership Structure**

*Unhealthy hierarchical experience.* When these three men started The Parks Church they all had in common a negative experience in working within a traditional, hierarchical structure. Aaron Snell, one of these three friends, explains the church began with shared leadership because of “our upbringing and prior church staff experience. We came out of a heavy hierarchical leadership structure and saw/experienced the challenges that came from this form of leading.”<sup>63</sup>

*Convinced through Scripture.* A careful review of Scripture convinced these friends of the validity of shared leadership. Authors Hartwig and Bird explain “when three friends joined together to plant The Parks Church in McKinney, Texas, they looked to the Scriptures to determine how to provide leadership to their new congregation. As they read their Bibles, they saw plurality of leadership through and through.”<sup>64</sup>

## **Factors in Sustaining a Shared Leadership Structure**

*Close relationships.* It was the prior relationship of these three friends to each other and in continuing to stay close that has sustained the effectiveness of this leadership team. According to Snell shared leadership works because of “our brotherhood amongst our leaders.” Snell notes:

Our three founding pastors (myself/Kyle/Sam) have been best friends for 15 plus years and dreamed of doing ministry together. Our families, wives, kids are in deep relationship with each other. Our three pastors that we brought on to lead our church in Melissa, TX are also very close. All six of us office together in an open room. This cultivates an environment of close relationship and brotherhood.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Response by Aaron Snell on a “Church Leadership Survey” administered July 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Hartwig and Bird, 42.

<sup>65</sup> Response by Aaron Snell on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

Known as “The Parks Church model” each church plant shares common traits, vision, and relationships with the overall group. This is the DNA of the church. In the area of shared relationships, “Each leadership team is in relationship with each other. This provides healthy accountability and encouragement as each team leads the local church. We believe the healthiest leaders are those who are part of a strong team.”<sup>66</sup>

*Elimination of hierarchical titles.* At The Parks Church in McKinney, the pastoral leadership is comprised of three men who are paid and serve as elder-pastors, along with other non-paid elders. Rather than being listed by rank and title these men are distinguished by the function of their ministry—teaching pastor, worship pastor, and executive pastor.<sup>67</sup> Although the term executive pastor can be a hierarchical title, in this situation it is one of administrative function. The church also has support team members who are identified by their ministry roles.

### **Analysis of the Case Studies**

#### *Open Coding*

The data collected from each case study were analyzed according to grounded theory. The aim was to generate “data from participants who have experienced the process.”<sup>68</sup> In the open coding phase of this research, several categories were generated on transitioning to shared leadership. The first area examined the antecedents for shared leadership. The second area identified steps that churches took in moving toward shared leadership. The third area established strategies in sustaining this structure.

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<sup>66</sup> The Parks Church, “The Parks Church Model.”

<sup>67</sup> The Parks Church, “Leadership Team,” accessed October 8, 2016, <http://theparkschurchmckinney.com/leadership/>.

<sup>68</sup> Creswell, 83.



## The Antecedents

Craig Pearce and Christina Wassenaar in their research on the antecedents of shared leadership observe that “there are many precursors, or causes that enable shared leadership to occur in groups. We, as researchers, are merely at the beginning of the exploration of these antecedents, and there is enormous opportunity for further research in this area.”<sup>69</sup> This research project aimed to add to this database of antecedents by focusing on the causes for traditional, hierarchical churches in transitioning to a shared leadership structure.

Three hierarchical churches that transitioned to shared leadership and four churches that began with this model were studied to understand the antecedents that moved them to adopt this structure. It was found that in each of the hierarchical settings a unique set of circumstances moved them toward considering the shared leadership structure (Table 4a). The churches that began with this structure, however, had similar antecedents that moved them to start with this structure (Table 4b). The antecedents in the church plants were similar to the steps of transition for the hierarchical churches.

**Table 4a. Antecedents for shared leadership in hierarchical churches**

Cole Community Church	Reality LA Church	Tulsa Christian Fellowship
<b>The Antecedents</b>	<b>The Antecedents</b>	<b>The Antecedents</b>
Pastoral change	Growth creating complexity	Itinerant preachers
Lack of a singular leader	Burnout of the senior pastor	Pastor’s study of Scripture

**Table 4b. Antecedents for shared leadership in church plants**

Community Fellowship Church	Cornerstone Church West Los Angeles	Littleton Bible Chapel	The Parks Church
<b>The Antecedents</b>	<b>The Antecedents</b>	<b>The Antecedents</b>	<b>The Antecedents</b>
Biblical conviction	Biblical conviction	Biblical conviction	Biblical conviction
Better use of gifts	Practical benefits	The denomination	Past hierarchy

<sup>69</sup> Hickman, 182.

## Steps of Transition

In his research on transitioning to team-based leadership, George Barna notes, “If churches are going to move toward lay-leadership teams, they will be making a dramatic transition from solo-based leadership to team-based leadership. . . . If the process is properly carried out, the results will justify the effort.”<sup>70</sup> This research project generated several categories on the process each hierarchical church took in transitioning to shared leadership (Table 5). Some churches had similar steps while others had unique factors.

**Table 5. Steps in transitioning to a shared leadership structure**

Cole Community Church	Reality LA Church	Tulsa Christian Fellowship
Steps of Transition	Steps of Transition	Steps of Transition
Reflection on Scripture	Staff preaching involvement	Reflection on Scripture
Assessment of staff gifts	Witness of God working	Teaching on the NT model
Prayer throughout process	Congregational support	Effort and time
Communication of model		
Congregational input		
Draft proposal		
Congregational decision		
Implementing the model		
Effort and time		

## Factors of Success

George Barna comments that “few ministry philosophies I have studied come as highly recommended as lay-leadership teams,” but observes that “most Protestant churches will not incorporate team leadership into their ministry practices.”<sup>71</sup> To offset this phenomenon the third area of open coding was to generate ways in which each church incorporated shared leadership into their practice of ministry and made it successful (Table 6a and 6b).

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<sup>70</sup> Barna, 153–154.

<sup>71</sup> Barna, 63.

**Table 6a. Success factors in churches that transitioned to shared leadership**

Cole Community Church	Reality LA Church	Tulsa Christian Fellowship
Factors of Success	Factors of Success	Factors of Success
Elimination of titles	Elimination of titles	Elimination of titles
Mutual accountability	Mutual accountability	Mutual accountability
Commitment to the model	Jesus is made Head	Holding common vision
Reworking the structure	Rotating leadership	Sharing authority
Focus on leader's character		Sharing responsibility
Seeking God through prayer		Congregational support
Staff communication		Decisions by consensus
Unanimity of decisions		Preaching team
Not rushing decisions		
Extra attention on staff		
Close relationships		
Allocation of resources		

**Table 6b. Success factors in churches founded on shared leadership**

Community Fellowship Church	Cornerstone Church West Los Angeles	Littleton Bible Chapel	The Parks Church
Factors of Success	Factors of Success	Factors of Success	Factors of Success
Eliminating titles	Eliminating titles	Eliminating titles	Eliminating titles
Joint accountability	Jesus made Head	Joint decisions	Joint accountability
Humble attitudes	Focus on character	Focus on character	Close relationships
Close relationships	Joint office	Commitment	Joint office
Jesus made Head	Rotating leadership	Rotating moderator	
Diversified gifts	Focus on gifts	Involving people	
Sharing the load		Preaching on model	

### *Axial Coding*

In the second phase of analysis, each case study was examined and compared to find “interconnections ... among categories and subcategories”<sup>72</sup> as data were refined. The goal was to develop broader categories in which various sub-points from each case study could be grouped under. Strauss and Corbin note, “The purpose of axial coding is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding.”<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Leedy and Ormrod, 143.

<sup>73</sup> Strauss and Corbin, 124.

### **The Antecedents**

On cross-examination of the antecedents in those churches that transitioned to shared leadership the commonality among all three churches was a crisis that impacted leadership practices and philosophy. In those churches that began with shared leadership, the biblical conviction in the plurality of leadership was the common factor. The practical benefits of shared leadership and the negative experiences in the hierarchical system also were motivating factors in launching these churches with a shared leadership structure.

### **Steps of Transition**

In those churches that transitioned to shared leadership some themes that were similar included becoming convinced this was a biblical pattern of leadership still relevant for today; communicating this structure to the congregation; expanding the giftedness and prominence of other pastors (e.g. preaching); getting congregational support and feedback; and giving time and effort for the process to take effect.

### **Factors of Success**

Churches that started with shared leadership and those that transitioned to it both had similar factors that sustained this model. The commitment to biblical principles and the NT model of leadership kept these churches from drifting into the hierarchal structure when people wanted a “senior” pastor. The leadership of these churches spent time in prayer seeking the mind of God in decisions and helped their congregations understand this model through preaching on relevant passages. The teams were unified through close relationships and mutually accountability. There was no need for competition in rank as each leader was identified by the common title of pastor/elder. These main themes along with their subcategories are identified in Table 7.

**Table 7. Key factors of success in shared leadership**

Main Category	Subcategory
Commitment to biblical principles	Church makes Jesus head of the church Church follows the NT leadership model Church holds common view of NT church Church selects leaders on biblical character
Communication of the model	Leadership seeks God's mind in prayer Leadership waits for consensus in decisions Leadership preaches on relevant passages Leadership gives extra attention on concept Leadership seeks congregational "buy-in"
Elimination of rank	Pastors listed alphabetically on website Pastors identified by areas of ministry Pastors share the same title
Focus on relationships	Pastors have close relationships Pastors have a joint office Pastors are humble and accountable
Sharing the ministry load	Pastors share the preaching load Pastors share authority and responsibility Pastors rotate leadership Pastors operate through gifts, not rank

*Selective Coding*

The third step of the analysis is what Strauss and Corbin refer to as "selective coding: the process of integrating and refining the theory."<sup>74</sup> In this phase, a central theme was identified to explain the process in transitioning hierarchical settings to shared leadership. The process combined the categories "to form a story line that describes 'what happens' in the phenomenon being studied."<sup>75</sup>

Transitioning to shared leadership required a crisis of leadership that compelled each church to seek the mind of God through prayer and biblical input. Through Scripture, these churches became convinced that the New Testament practice of a plurality of leaders was a model still practical and relevant for the church today.

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<sup>74</sup> Strauss and Corbin, 143.

<sup>75</sup> Leedy and Ormrod, 143.

A number of factors helped sustain shared leadership in these churches, but the overriding concern was to make Jesus the “senior pastor” of the church and to maintain unity among the leadership group through cooperation rather than competition. This was accomplished through eliminating hierarchical titles, building close relationships, having open communication, choosing godly leaders, and sharing accountability, authority, and responsibility.

### **Secondary Research on Staff Turnover**

Secondary data from local church pastors were collected to determine the predominant reasons (emotional, financial, personal, relational, spiritual, theological, or vocational) why subordinate staff members resign in multi-staff churches. A further survey was given to determine the type of leadership structure (hierarchical, team-based, or shared) that staff members, including lead pastors, preferred to work in.

### **Staff Resignation**

The staff resignation survey (Appendix B) was conducted through *Qualtrics* that targeted subordinate staff. Responses came back from former associate and youth pastors who had resigned to take other positions within their churches or to move to another type of ministry or setting. The predominant reason for resigning was vocational and often included the statement it was the “wrong fit” (Table 8).

Some individuals able to move up in the hierarchical structure increased their responsibility and provided them a better fit. The hierarchical system did not allow others to fully use their gifts and they moved to another ministry for a better fit.

**Table 8. Staff resignation survey<sup>76</sup>**

Category	Choice #1	Choice #2	Choice #3
Emotional reasons		1	1
Financial reasons	2		
Personal reasons	1	3	
Relational reasons	1		
Spiritual reasons	2	1	2
Theological reasons	1		3
Vocational reasons	2	4	1

In response to the question of whether those in subordinate positions felt pressure to “move up” the ladder to a more senior role, six responded no, two somewhat, and one said yes. These responses included:

“For an increase in pay, increase in responsibility, and to feel significant in my contributions.”

“Not necessarily ‘up the ladder’ but certainly encouraged to accept more and more leadership responsibility/opportunity.”

“You can get paid more was the reason given to me by a pastor who has now left.”

“I have not felt pressure but I have been provided the opportunity due to leadership transition.”

“I haven’t felt pressure from outside myself to move up the ladder. I have, however, found that I function best in a leadership role where I have a great deal of autonomy.”

### **Leadership Structure Preference**

The second aspect of this research was to determine the type of leadership structure (Appendix C) that staff in churches preferred to work in (Table 9) and how their current setting affected the response (Table 10). Those in lead positions tended to prefer the hierarchical structure and those in subordinate roles preferred a team-based structure.

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<sup>76</sup> From a “Staff Resignation Survey” conducted with youth and associate pastors through *Qualtrics* in the summer and fall of 2016.

The setting also made a difference. Those who worked in a hierarchical setting chose that setting and those in team-based settings preferred the team structure. This research was limited to those in hierarchical or team-based settings.

**Table 9. Leadership structure preference based on position<sup>77</sup>**

Category	Lead Pastor	Executive Pastor	Associate Pastor	Youth Pastor
Hierarchical Structure	2	1		1
Team Structure	1		3	
Shared Structure			1	

**Table 10. Leadership structure preference based on setting<sup>78</sup>**

Category	Hierarchical Setting	Team Setting	Shared Setting
Hierarchical Structure	4		
Team Structure	1	2	1
Shared Structure	1		

The responses from pastors regarding the hardest aspects of working in a hierarchical structure included:

“Overcoming the internal (and sometimes EXTERNAL) dialogue that includes the sentiment ‘you’re JUST A \_\_\_\_\_ pastor.”

“There’s a feeling of appreciation for the work that is done, but there’s also a desire for the ‘real pastor’ to show up in key moments.”

“At times defined roles and responsibilities can be too restrictive. They don’t allow pastors to move into different roles or responsibilities based on their gifting, passions, or leading.”

“Lack of freedom to think for myself; the more hierarchical, the more likely it is to be unfair to certain people; innovation is unwelcome and often perceived as rebellion.”

“Being overlooked, lower pay grade, restricted in using my full range of gifts, not having a sense of full ownership, feeling manipulated to serve the senior pastor’s wishes.”

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<sup>77</sup> From a “Staff Structure Survey” conducted with Youth, Associate, and Lead Pastors through Qualtrics in the summer and fall of 2016.

<sup>78</sup> From a “Staff Structure Survey” conducted in the summer and fall of 2016.



“It can feel ‘lonely up top.’ Higher stress level for the leader.”

“If the lead pastor doesn’t understand leadership and micro manages the staff it is frustrating.”

These same pastors were asked what they felt would be some of the hardest aspects of working in a shared leadership setting. The responses included:

“Leadership matters, if no one is appointed leader, one will rise up.”

“Roles/duties are sometimes too nebulous, there can be temptation to over extend oneself if there is permission and authority to minister in all areas of the church.”

“Difficulty in framing a clear set of goals and outcomes; mutual accountability is difficult [if] one person is unwilling to engage fully; constant renegotiation of roles and responsibilities.”

“Staying in communication and keeping the same vision for the group.”

## CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

### **Strengths of the Project**

#### *Saturation of the Concept*

This project will add another voice to the literature base on shared leadership. The more shared leadership can extensively saturate the “market” the more hopeful it is that organizations will become aware of and transition to the model. At Tulsa Christian Fellowship, the transition to shared leadership was a result of being informed through some itinerant preachers and the pastor’s own study of leadership in the New Testament. Preaching on relevant passages was a method in which Littleton Bible Chapel helped its congregation understand and accept this model. This project might help build momentum as more organizations move toward this type of leadership structure.

#### *Theologically Grounded*

This project provides churches with the theological basis for transitioning to a shared leadership system. It was the “biblical conviction” that became the motivating factor for churches to either start or transition to a shared leadership structure. As Pastor Evans at Cole Community Church stated, “A shared leadership structure with Christ as our hierarchical head is more biblical.” Using the Trinitarian foundation for leadership, the local church is able to give witness to the perichoresis of God through practices of shared leadership. This project provides many examples of shared leadership from both Old and New Testaments to help congregations become “biblically convinced” that this is a valid and effective structure for the twenty- first century church.

### *Historical Overview*

This project provides a historical overview of the leadership drift that occurred in the early church during its first five centuries, from a relational ministry through a plurality of elders in the New Testament to an authoritarian ministry through a ruling bishop over the elders and deacons in the second century onward. Leadership shifted from a family-oriented, relational community to an increasingly detached structure.

Church historian Henry Chadwick views this leadership drift as a natural progression, but he points out that some scholars see the move toward hierarchy as a “transition from vitality to formalism, from freedom to rigidity, or even from lay democracy to a clerical authoritarianism.”<sup>1</sup> In his interpretation, “The whole development is a story of transition from unregulated church organization to a more close-knit arrangement.”<sup>2</sup> This view may be contested for what appeared to be “unregulated” was more relational and what was “close-knit” became more political.

The historical background of this project provides factors that give understanding to why there is a hierarchy in the church today, but it also provides impetus in bringing the local church back to its biblical roots of leadership. Joseph Hellerman observes that there is a relational “disconnect” in our church structures today and “what we have in the corporate model of ministry is a pastor who relates intimately to no one in the church, but who nevertheless exhorts his people to engage relationally with each other.”<sup>3</sup> Too often the corporate model of leadership has focused on results at the expense of creating healthy relationships with colleagues.

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<sup>1</sup> Chadwick, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Chadwick, 51–52.

<sup>3</sup> Hellerman, 284.

### *Cultural Application*

A strength this project provides is the leadership shift in the North American culture as a result of postmodernism. Through dismantling of organizational structures, this project reveals the role of postmodernism in breaking down hierarchical leadership structures. In speaking of a “cultural gap” Richard Daft notes, “An important step toward shifting the culture toward more adaptive values is to recognize when people are adhering to wrong values.”<sup>4</sup> Examples from the corporate, sports, and natural worlds reveal how organizations and churches can benefit from shared leadership values and practices.

### *Case Study Research*

The case study research on churches that began with or transitioned to shared leadership provides insights to help hierarchical churches move to this type of structure. Church leadership teams should be alert to these antecedents and the steps of transition to make a structural change happen. These case studies also provide practical ways to help churches sustain the momentum of shared leadership.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

#### *Conflicting Survey Responses*

Staff responses to the survey were not always “accurate.” The percentage of this happening was small, but one individual who worked within a team-based setting marked the structure as shared leadership. Although the two structures are similar, the team setting usually has someone designated as the “lead” pastor, whereas shared leadership rotates leadership. This did not adversely affect the data, but the data did not comprise a “pure” sample.

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<sup>4</sup> Richard L. Daft, *The Leadership Experience*, 3rd ed. (Mason, OH: South-Western, 2005), 562.

*Feedback on Compensation*

There was no feedback from the initial surveys on how staff personnel was compensated in a shared leadership structure. It was assumed that this would be a factor that sustained shared leadership, but it was not a significant issue. Further research will need to be undertaken on how compensation packages are handled in shared leadership structures. The researcher did email some churches about their compensation practices but deduced nothing substantial. It was more subjective than objective.

One pastor indicated that “our ‘philosophy’ for compensation for elders has been to pay brothers enough to free them for service to the church so that they don’t have to spend those hours earning income.”<sup>5</sup> Education and experience were not major factors in compensation, but a person’s ability became a factor. Another pastor commented on salaries for staff and noted, “The elders take things into account [such as] the various needs [of the family]. ... There hasn’t really been a formula for that. ... They try to be fair taking in the cost of living in the area. ... I don’t know how much a degree would factor into that if any. ... We are more interested in their giftedness than if they have a degree.”<sup>6</sup> One other pastor noted that “a group of deacons and non-salaried elders determine salaries for three of us who are salaried.”<sup>7</sup>

Some feedback from pastors in hierarchical settings revealed that compensation was a reason for resigning their positions and moving on. Greater research on compensation practices is necessary to propose a theory of compensation in shared leadership structures.

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<sup>5</sup> An email to the author from Bill Sullivan, Tulsa Christian Fellowship, October 5, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> A phone interview with David Anderson of Littleton Bible Chapel, October 12, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> An email to the author from Clay Sterrett, Community Fellowship Church, October 5, 2016.

### *Identifying Churches with Shared Leadership*

Another weakness of the project was the difficulty in finding churches in North America that have transitioned to a shared leadership structure. This is something that Joseph Hellerman observes in *Embracing Shared Ministry*: “The concept of a team of pastors, whose leadership arises naturally out of mutually edifying peer relationships, will not even be on the radar screen of most churches.”<sup>8</sup> More work will need to be done in locating multi-staff churches that have transitioned into leadership teams of equals who share authority, responsibility, and rank.

This researcher, however, was able to find more churches that began with this type of structure. Although these churches could not provide any input on how to transition a hierarchical church to this structure, they did provide good strategies and ideas on how to begin and sustain this structure. Continued identification and research on churches that use a shared leadership structure will strengthen the goal of this project (Appendix D).

### **Interpretations of the Data Streams**

#### *The Theological Component*

The concept of shared leadership has its roots in the Triune God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together as one yet within particular roles. This is the foundational DNA structure of leadership for the church that represents God most fully. According to Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, “The leadership of the church is to follow the Trinitarian pattern of shared leadership that God himself models.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hellerman, 294.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 70.

The local church can have confidence in using this biblical precept of shared leadership. Various examples of this structure can be found in both Old and New Testament: it was the dominant leadership structure of the New Testament church that Jesus Christ established.

### *The Literary Component*

The trend toward team-based leadership in North America should give the church confidence that it will better connect with the postmodern generation, which does not easily relate to hierarchical, authoritarian structures. The shared leadership model will help the church adapt better to the culture of this younger generation.

Local congregations do not need to fear that a shared leadership structure in which the “buck” stops with a team rather than a lead pastor will hinder the church’s effectiveness and cause its demise. Examples from the corporate, sports, and natural worlds have shown that groups who implement this model were successful.

This model will not be without problems, but they can be overcome. Some of the issues that affect shared leadership also plague hierarchical structures. Through resources, churches can understand this structure and overcome its challenges.

### *The Field Component*

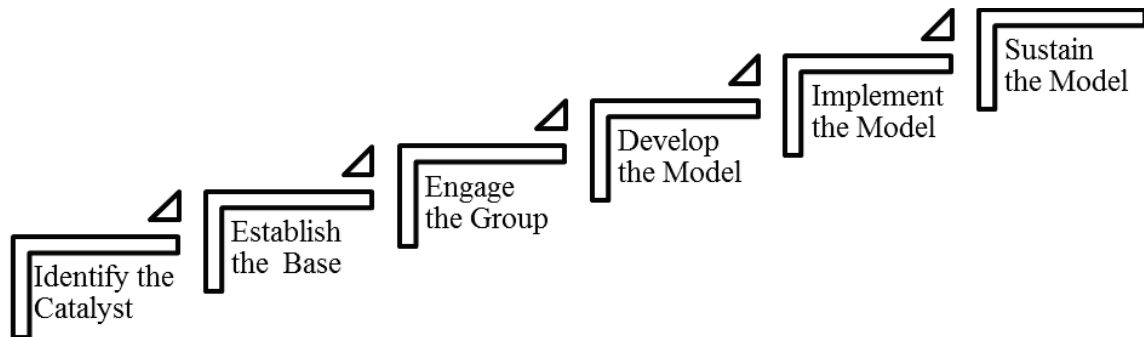
Churches considering starting or transitioning to a shared leadership structure will find it possible, beneficial, and sustainable through the case studies presented. These studies can provide these local churches with current feedback on and further research in implementing shared leadership. Although not many churches had transitioned to a shared leadership structure, those that did provide good strategies that other churches can follow.

The secondary research from pastors also provides churches with feedback on the issues that affect subordinate staff and perhaps prevent them from resigning. These issues can be resolved through a shared system that includes and rewards all staff.

### **Transitional Process to the Shared Leadership Model**

In transitioning to a shared leadership structure, certain factors are critical in helping churches with hierarchical leadership structures to succeed with and sustain this new paradigm. From the research on these churches, a transitional process is presented to enable other churches to do the same. In figure 8, six steps are identified in transitioning hierarchical leadership settings to shared leadership structures.

**Figure 8. Six steps to transitioning to a shared leadership structure**



#### *Identify the Catalyst*

The first step in changing hierarchical settings is to identify either a crisis or an opportunity that becomes the catalyst to propel the organization to a shared leadership structure. Something must create a sense of urgency to adopt another leadership system. Change often fails because organizations do not establish “a great enough sense of urgency. ... Without motivation, people won’t help and the effort goes nowhere.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> John Kotter, “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail,” *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1995, 60, accessed November 14, 2016, [http://www.gsbcolorado.org/uploads/general/PreSessionReadingLeadingChange-John\\_Kotter.pdf](http://www.gsbcolorado.org/uploads/general/PreSessionReadingLeadingChange-John_Kotter.pdf).



The motivation to change is often initiated through a crisis or an opportunity that creates “fresh or revitalized momentum in an organization, especially when these crises or opportunities are acknowledged as authentic by members of the organization.”<sup>11</sup> Those groups that attempt to transition to the shared leadership structure when there is a strong “satisfaction with the status quo and no clear evidence of serious problems with the current way of things”<sup>12</sup> will fail. Dann Spader notes in his seminar manual *Balance* that change only begins to happen when people become dissatisfied with the status quo:

The hardest of all environments in which to bring about change is one in which there is excessive comfort with the status quo. ... The most common characteristic of declining churches is not to change but to work harder at the status quo or to do what we used to do. ... Healthy discontent is the first step to change.<sup>13</sup>

Creating “healthy discontent” and a sense of urgency to change can be triggered through natural or planned opportunities and either positive or negative crises.

### **Identifying the Opportunities**

*Biblical paradigm.* In many of the churches, the biblical paradigm of leadership convinced them to either start or transition to a shared leadership structure. Tulsa Christian Fellowship moved toward a plurality of elders after the senior pastor’s study of New Testament leadership practices and after itinerant preachers presented the concept of shared leadership to the church. The Parks Church began with a shared leadership structure after a careful review of Scripture that convinced three friends that it was the biblical paradigm of leadership.

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<sup>11</sup> Hickman, 561.

<sup>12</sup> Hickman, 561.

<sup>13</sup> Dann Spader, *Balance: Growing a Healthy Church 2: An Implementation Workshop*, 4th ed. (Elburn, IL: SonLife, 1998), 20.

*Expanded gifts.* For some churches, the catalyst was the opportunity to strengthen the ministry as a whole through using everyone’s giftedness. At Cole Community Church the chance to increase the pool of wisdom and make better use of gifts among the staff were factors in moving toward shared leadership. At Community Fellowship Church, the founding pastor resisted being called the lead pastor because he recognized his limits and realized that “a growing body would need other leaders.”

### **Identifying the Crises**

*Leadership transition.* The retirement or resignation of the lead pastor of a church creates both a crisis and an opportunity for the church to rethink its leadership paradigm. When Cole Community Church was in a time of change and no “singular leader” could be found the leadership saw the benefits of going to a multiple pastoral model. Research indicates that the crisis of a leadership transition can be an opportune time for organizations to switch to a different leadership structure. Russ Banham—in his article “Co-CEOs: Are Two Better than One?”—found that in 111 co-leadership teams “leadership transition” accounted for 9 percent of organizations making this switch.<sup>14</sup>

*Ministry complexity.* At Reality LA Church, the complexity of its ministry combined with the near burnout of the lead pastor moved the other pastors into sharing leadership and preaching duties. The congregation realized the benefits of this shared arrangement and how God was still at work even without a lead pastor.

Opportunities and crises come in numerous forms and at various times. Those churches that can identify these catalysts will be able to take the initial step toward shared leadership.

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<sup>14</sup> Russ Banham, “Co-CEOs: Are Two Better than One?” Chief Executive, April 2, 2012, accessed November 9, 2016, <http://chiefexecutive.net/co-ceos-are-two-better-than-one-2>.

### *Establish the Base*

The second step in transitioning from a hierarchical leadership structure to a shared leadership setting is establishing the biblical foundation and practical benefits of making this change. The churches that transitioned successfully to a shared leadership structure established the base through biblical insights and practical applications.

#### **Establishing the Biblical Foundation**

In nearly all the churches that started with or transitioned to this model, the leadership became convinced through Scripture that this was the New Testament pattern of leadership still relevant for the local church. According to George Barna this “biblical endorsement”<sup>15</sup> is what makes sharing leadership such a natural fit with the church. Without conviction, that this is a biblical and relevant structure for the North American church, the transition will not succeed. Forcing this type of structure on a church without a strong conviction from God can create unnecessary tension within the leadership group and congregation.

For those churches that did transition, Scripture supported the move to shared leadership. Cole Community Church found “this model consistent with Scripture.” Tulsa Christian Fellowship sought “to emulate the pattern of local church leadership found in the New Testament.” Community Fellowship Church viewed the hierarchical model as having very “little biblical basis.” For Cornerstone Church, “biblical conviction” became the foundation of shared leadership. At Littleton Bible Chapel, it was their “commitment to Scripture,” and at The Parks Church three friends “looked to the Scripture on how to provide leadership.”

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<sup>15</sup> Barna, 74.

### **Establishing the Practical Benefits**

The concept of shared leadership also brought practical benefits to the churches. At Cole Community Church, the shared model “engages various gifts ... limits the power of individuals ... elevates and frees up all to enter into ministry together ... increases the pool of shared wisdom ... strengthens the whole ... [and lightens] the burden of leading in all areas.” The congregation at Reality LA Church realized the benefits of a preaching team and of utilizing the gifts and strengths of all the staff. At Community Fellowship Church, sharing the ministry load, a broader use of ministry gifts, mutual accountability, and keeping Jesus at the head of the church were major benefits of this structure.

Craig Pearce, Charles Manz, and Henry Sims note “that the truly high performing companies were the ones who organized in teams and practiced effective shared leadership.”<sup>16</sup> For Cornerstone Church, the “practical benefit” of this structure was that “shared responsibility protects against burn out; shared preaching allows room for study and preparation for other areas on needed development and equipping.”

To establish the base is to build a biblical foundation and achieve practical outcomes about which a group can become excited. One failure in trying to effect change is that the group does not have a clear vision of where it needs to go and the practical benefits this change can bring. According to John Kotter, “A vision says something that helps clarify the direction in which an organization needs to move.”<sup>17</sup> A congregation will move forward in its vision when it is convinced it is biblical and that it will bring success to the organization.

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<sup>16</sup> Craig Pearce, Charles Manz and Henry Sims, “Is Shared Leadership the Key to Team Success?” *Organizational Dynamics* 38, no. 3 (2009): 234.

<sup>17</sup> Kotter, 63.

### *Engage the Group*

When church leadership senses that change to the existing system needs to be made and has solid reasons for making the change, this “guiding coalition” needs to engage the larger group. According to Kotter, “Major renewal programs often start with just one or two people. In cases of successful transformation efforts, the leadership coalition grows and grows over time. But whenever some minimum mass is not achieved early in the effort, nothing much worthwhile happens.”<sup>18</sup> The leadership must engage others in the process to effectively transition to shared leadership.

#### **Engaging through Communication**

The first step in engaging the congregation is to communicate the initial vision of shared leadership with the group. This process must allow time for the group to absorb and understand the concept. At Cole Community Church “the elders started to communicate regularly with the body about the process of seeking out a new model for church and pastoral staff leadership. This communication came in written and verbal forms.”

Without regular communication, the initial thrust toward shared leadership can stall. According to Kotter, one reason that organizations fail in their attempts at change is that leadership “undercommunicates the vision by a factor of ten” and that “without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured.”<sup>19</sup> At Tulsa Christian Fellowship there was a “conscious effort to teach the congregation about the NT church model.”

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<sup>18</sup> Kotter, 62.

<sup>19</sup> Kotter, 63.

According to Rick Warren, one of the best techniques to change the culture of a church is through preaching from the pulpit.<sup>20</sup> Verbal communication fosters cerebral change as people begin thinking in new directions. Non-verbal actions of leaders can also motivate people to enact change. As Kotter notes, “Communication comes in both words and deeds, and the latter are often the most powerful form. Nothing undermines change more than behavior by important individuals that is inconsistent with their words.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Engaging through Prayer**

In those churches that transitioned to shared leadership, a guiding coalition, such as the elders, sought God’s direction through prayer and the study of Scripture. Through prayer, these churches determined God’s direction for them. Prayer was not a passive ritual, but an active response in working alongside God to determine the direction for their congregation.<sup>22</sup>

At Cole Community Church “prayer and more prayer” was held “throughout the process.” This level of engagement expanded to include the entire congregation as “the body was invited to enter into prayer for the process and to share its thoughts, concerns, and ideas.” As the congregation and leadership prayed and studied Scripture, the church agreed that a multiple leadership model was the most “consistent with Scripture.” Prayer kept the church in tune with God’s leading, while Scripture kept the group grounded in this biblical paradigm of leadership.

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<sup>20</sup> Rick Warren, 2008 PD Network Summit: A Purpose Driven Community Gathering, Session 1 of 13 (Saddleback Church, CA: May 20–22, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Kotter, 64.

<sup>22</sup> John Harrison, *Strategy of Prayer: Finding God’s Blessings* (Winnipeg, MB: Art Bookbindery, 2010), 82.

## Engaging through Input

The culture of a church will begin to change only as the group can provide input and take ownership of new ideas. Kotter states that “successful transformations begin to involve large numbers of people as the process progresses. ... The more people involved, the better the outcome.”<sup>23</sup> Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee indicate in *Resonant Leadership* how shared values inspire hope and move groups toward action and success. They note that “to most people the ideas [which leaders] push are meaningless because they are not shared through the organization. ... A shared vision truly inspires an organization to hopefulness and success.”<sup>24</sup>

Leadership needs to engage the congregation to gain input through small and large group forums. These forums can invite members to address the obstacles of shared leadership and to find solutions to them. Giving members the opportunity to examine the benefits of shared leadership over their current structure can inspire the group and create momentum.

At Cole Community Church “small groups were formed to discuss and to work through these issues. Their input and buy-in was very valuable.” The leadership at Cole wants “to understand what each one is thinking and why.” At Reality LA Church, the ground-swell of support for shared leadership came as the congregation voiced their support when they realized that God continued to work through the pastoral staff while the senior pastor was on sabbatical.

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<sup>23</sup> Kotter, 64.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *Resonant Leadership* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), 162–163.

### *Develop the Model*

The next step in transitioning a congregation to a shared leadership model is for the leadership group or “guiding coalition” to reassemble feedback from multiple sources and develop a model or document easily understood and inspiring to the congregation. This model needs to make sense and capture the emotions of the group to want to make a switch. Chip and Dan Heath observe in their book *Switch* that most initiatives for change fail because only rational arguments are presented. The brothers note that “when people fail to change, it’s not usually because of an understanding problem”<sup>25</sup> but connected to an emotional problem, for it is “emotion that motivates. . . . In fighting for change, we’ve got to find the feeling.”<sup>26</sup>

Careful planning and well-thought out presentations that inspire are necessary to help the group understand and catch the vision. This can be communicated through sermons, seminars, video presentations, and digital graphics. It can be displayed through brochures, flow charts, diagrams, and banners. It can be done by captivating people visually through symbols, working models, and dramatic effects.

At Cole Community Church “ideas and concepts [were] formed into a document that described the new structure and the intent behind its formation, implementation, and operation. . . . Concerns and questions were solicited and engaged with.” The goal was to refine the model so that it could be implemented in the congregation with minimal disruption. At Reality LA Church it was a working model of a preaching team that captured the imagination of the congregation to move forward.

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<sup>25</sup> Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* (Toronto, ON: Random House, 2010), 112.

<sup>26</sup> Heath and Heath, 118.



### *Implement the Model*

The next step that these churches took was to implement the shared leadership model. The length of time to implement this model was a major factor in those churches that transitioned from a hierarchical structure. Cole Community Church arrived at this model over several years, and it continues to make adjustments. In 1948 the church was founded on a senior pastor model; then in the early 1980s it transitioned to an elder-led model but still had a senior pastor; then several years later the church adopted the multiple leadership model, reserving the title of senior pastor for Jesus Christ. At Tulsa Christian Fellowship it took over 15 years to implement the model since it was difficult for the founding pastors and congregation to adjust to a shared leadership structure.

To keep the big picture before the congregation while making the transition in incremental steps is the key to implementing shared leadership in an existing hierarchical structure. A strategy to keep people moving toward shared leadership is to provide small victories along the way. Kotter notes, “Real transformation takes time, and a renewal effort risks losing momentum if there are no short-term goals to meet and celebrate. Most people won’t go on the long march unless they see compelling evidence within 12 to 24 months that the journey is producing expected results.”<sup>27</sup> The authors of *Switch* note that “if you’re leading a change effort ... make an effort to remind people what’s already been conquered.”<sup>28</sup> With every victory comes renewed motivation. It was the success of a preaching team that motivated the congregation at Reality LA Church to pursue a shared leadership model.

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<sup>27</sup> Kotter, 65.

<sup>28</sup> Heath and Heath, 129.

### *Sustain the Model*

The final step in the process of transitioning to the shared leadership structure was for these churches to continuously adjust and employ certain practices to sustain the model. Some churches had similar strategies, while others had unique factors to bring strength to the shared leadership model.

#### **Attention to Potential Roadblocks**

Once the model of shared leadership has been implemented, the church needs to give ongoing attention in the initial months or even years to maintaining it. Changing complete systems in an organization needs the support of its leadership and key stakeholders. In their chapter on “Managing the Whole Mandate for the Twenty-First Century,” Paul Borawski and Maryann Brennan note that “change efforts require buy-in to ensure success. Winning the support of leaders, managers, employees, and key people is essential in any change effort.”<sup>29</sup> Implementing a structure with partial agreement will invite failure, and the group might return to old habits and former patterns of leadership.

Cole Community Church discovered that staff from the existing hierarchical setting had difficulty adjusting to the new model. The church overcame this potential setback by giving extra attention to these staff members and by allocating resources to make the transition to shared leadership work. At Tulsa Christian Fellowship, it was difficult at times for both pastors and congregation to adjust. The church overcame this potential roadblock by teaching the congregation about this New Testament pattern of leadership. At Reality LA Church, the senior pastor Tim Chaddick came to realize that other staff had abilities that he did not and that he needed to step back and let them lead.

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<sup>29</sup> Hesselbein and Goldsmith, 72.

## Commitment to the Model

According to Peter Senge and colleagues in *The Dance of Change*, “Profound change requires investment—of time, energy, and resources. It requires at least an initial core pilot group, genuinely committed to new organizational purposes, methods, and working environments.”<sup>30</sup> Differences of opinion and other factors can sidetrack a group and stall momentum. It takes a strong commitment to the shared model to keep the organization on track with its vision for leadership.

Those churches that transitioned to the shared leadership structure had to be patient and committed to the process. The transition did not happen quickly, for the culture of hierarchy was ingrained in the patterns of the people. Giving the transition time, putting effort into developing it, evaluating and tweaking it when necessary, and having a strong commitment to this biblical model were factors that helped these churches experience success.

At Cole Community Church, commitment to the model helped sustain momentum. As Pastor Steve Evans noted:

It is not always so easy for people to fully set aside our past training and experience of the way that a church operates in order to stay focused to this newer model. Individuals do attempt to assert a senior pastor like authority in certain situations. This needs to always be brought back to our agreed upon model through honest and loving conversation.

The people within our body do not always relate well to this model. They want a senior pastor to go to as an ultimate authority. . . . We have to remain true to our model and direct people to the appropriate individual or internal organization that has authority in each of these circumstances.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Senge et al., *The Dance of Change: The Challenges of Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 43.

<sup>31</sup> Response by Steve Evans on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

Tulsa Christian Fellowship also experienced the same cultural dynamics as it moved toward a shared leadership structure in a hierarchical setting. Pastor Bill Sullivan notes the challenges in their transition:

Having the congregation see the elders are sharing leadership responsibility and not looking to the first pastors of the church alone for leadership [was] one reason the transition to [a] true elder-led church took about 15 years. Also, though the first pastors of the church, who led the church from the beginning, including the one who grew the church in its earliest years, supported and encouraged this transition, it proved to be more difficult for them than they anticipated to lay down primary leadership roles and become more a part of a team.<sup>32</sup>

Change that affects the core culture of a group takes time and patience. Rushing the process can result in disappointing failure. Kotter notes that “the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time. Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result.”<sup>33</sup> At Littleton Bible Chapel, “commitment to Biblical principles” and “preaching on relevant passages” has shaped the cultural mindset of the people.

### **Elimination of Hierarchical Titles**

Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears write in *Vintage Church* that “Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the apostle who plants a church, the leader who builds the church, and the senior pastor and Chief Shepherd who rules the church.”<sup>34</sup> Those churches that succeeded in the model of shared leadership had a strong conviction of and commitment to making Jesus the head of the church. On the leadership flow chart of Community Fellowship Church, Jesus is placed on top as “Head of the Church, Chief Shepherd.” Underneath Jesus are the “Elders (Co-Pastors).”

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<sup>32</sup> Response by Bill Sullivan on a “Church Leadership Survey.”

<sup>33</sup> Kotter, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Driscoll and Breshears, 64.

One of the most common strategies for sustaining shared leadership was the elimination of the title “senior” or “lead pastor.” This title was reserved for Jesus, viewed as the “senior pastor” or “Chief Shepherd” of the church. The pastors at each church were considered equal and identified by role rather than rank. In these churches, the pastoral team was simply known as pastors, pastor-elders, or co-pastors who served together within the larger group of elders that included paid and unpaid staff. This elimination of rank has minimized competition and maximized cooperation as the leadership group shares equally in authority and responsibility under the headship of Jesus Christ.

Alexander Strauch argues that “Jesus prohibited his disciples from using honorific titles, calling one another Rabbi, exalting themselves in any way that would diminish their brotherly relationship, or usurping the unique place that Christ and the Father have over each believer.”<sup>35</sup> Jesus clearly taught that “you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers” (Matt. 23:8).

### **Mutual Accountability**

These churches ultimately place their leaders under the authority of Jesus Christ and his Word. Within the leadership group, members practice mutual accountability, meaning that each leader can encourage and challenge the others in areas of character and competency. These leadership teams model Acts 20:28, in which the Ephesian elders “kept watch over themselves.” No command and control structure with a supervisor-subordinate system is present in these pastoral teams, but each local church leadership team makes an effort to share responsibility, authority, and accountability.

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<sup>35</sup> Strauch, 89.

**Rotational Leadership**

These are not leaderless groups, but groups of leaders who recognize the abilities of each other and God's call on their lives. Those in the leadership group defer to each other by letting those pastors who have the most experience or greater skills in a certain area take the lead. No pastor needs to feel overwhelmed and burdened in trying to keep on top of everything.

**Strong Relationships**

Selecting godly and humble individuals has helped sustain a harmonious leadership group in these churches. The interviews with these local churches revealed the strong relationships of the pastors and their families with each other. The founding pastors at The Parks Church are "best friends," and their families have a "deep relationship with each other." This has aided communication and enabled these pastors to work together as "brothers" in Christ rather than simply as "colleagues" who have a task to accomplish.

Those churches which desire to transition to a shared leadership structure need to build habits to ensure that the leadership group spends time together as brothers and sisters rather than as colleagues. Jesus built an effective team of apostles by taking them along with him in ministry and by meeting with them in extended times of retreat (Mark 6:31). These get-togethers need to be more than a "working retreat;" they need to be times away in which they truly "fellowship" with each other from home to home (Acts 2:46) and do things enjoyable to the group (e.g., the disciples who went fishing).

## CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTIONS

### **Personal Insights**

For many years this researcher was familiar with only the hierarchical structure of leadership in the church. The traditional path of ministry was to start out as a youth pastor, move on to an associate position, and then eventually take on a lead pastor role with the hope of overseeing staff in a larger church. This was seen as the pinnacle of “success” in ministry.

Over the years this researcher experienced a variety of ministry roles and gained new insights into the organization of the church. One of these insights came a few years ago through studies at Bethel Seminary in the value of the biblical paradigm of shared leadership. It was a structure of leadership that could offset the prevailing hierarchical system that often puts stress on subordinate staff to climb the ladder to greater responsibility and benefits. Yet most times these openings are not available and many youth and associate pastors are forced to settle or to move on or out of ministry.

The hierarchical system often puts the primary emphasis on the traditional preaching pastor as key to the church’s success and rewards this person with the highest salary. Other staff members are important, but usually with an underlying tone that they are not quite as “valuable” as the lead. This type of philosophy has often led to negative experiences in the hierarchical setting among subordinate staff. As a result of these negative experiences, this researcher believes shared leadership should be considered as both a biblical and relevant model for the North American church to adopt.

### *Biblical Insights*

From a biblical perspective, this researcher gained a new awareness of another image of God through the perichoresis of the Triune God that was first developed by John of Damascus. This Eastern Orthodox image of the “circle dance” of God helped the researcher understand that leadership is relational, fluid, dynamic, and shared. The relationship of the Triune God is the foundational DNA for shared leadership within the church today. Starting with this premise, this researcher discovered how God revealed himself through a number of shared leadership examples in Scripture. It is a leadership model that gives witness to the shared leadership of the Triune God.

### *Historical Insights*

From a historical perspective, this researcher gained new insights into the factors that caused a drift from shared leadership through a plurality of elders to a hierarchical structure of a ruling bishop. In order to safeguard the church against schism, the early church moved toward a command and control structure that was similar to the Roman Empire. Shared leadership, which was counter-cultural, eventually succumbed to the Roman culture in which one individual was given ultimate power in the local church.

### *Literary Insights*

From literature about the topic, this researcher realized how shared leadership is gaining momentum and finding success in today’s postmodern culture that is influencing the structure of the church. It was found that corporate organizations and sports clubs that moved to having two or more CEOs or captains became productive and successful. The examples from nature also gave witness to the shared leadership of the Triune God, and how God has designed these systems to be a working model for organizations.



### *Field Research*

Although there were few churches that transitioned from a hierarchical setting to shared leadership, the ones that did provide helpful strategies on how to successfully implement this model. One of the key things that this researcher noted was the extended time and patience an existing church must allow for this transition to take place. Changing the leadership culture of a church can be a lengthy process as the hierarchical structure is the dominant model in the North American church.

The strong conviction in the New Testament pattern of a plurality of elders as being biblical, relevant, and effective helped these churches push forward. Making Jesus the “senior pastor” of each local church and eliminating the hierarchical titles within the group was an important strategy to sustain the shared leadership model. Each pastor-elder operated in various roles, but each pastor was treated as an equal who shared authority, responsibility, accountability.

### **Research Recommendations**

Overall the project’s design was accomplished as proposed but due to time constraints some areas needed an extensive investigation to be developed fully.

### *Impact of Compensation Factors*

The Scripture provided good insights and principles into compensation issues and how it related to teams. The field research on factors of success for transitioning to a shared leadership system did not provide a strong link to compensation. This may have been because people were more hesitant to talk about these issues. Developing a specific set of compensation questions might increase feedback from these churches and reveal patterns to use within a shared leadership setting.

More research could be done on how compensation packages are developed in hierarchical systems and how this might be reapplied to a shared leadership structure. Examining denominational salary guidelines for local church pastors and a review of the literature on team-based rewards and compensation would be necessary. Some questions to be asked: How might an organization design a compensation package for members in a shared leadership structure where hierarchical titles are eliminated? Should all members be equally compensated on a team? Or should some members receive greater pay based on years of experience, educational levels, and areas of responsibility?

#### *Impact of Denominational Structures*

Another area for further research could address the larger context in which the local church operates. How do a denomination's structure and polity affect the local church's ability to adopt a shared leadership structure? Is there freedom to adapt to different leadership structures or is it tightly controlled? What effect does a centralized or decentralized denominational system have on the shared leadership structure?

The denomination's theological stance could be another aspect of research. Those churches that emphasized the priesthood of all believers and had elder-led structures were more apt to incorporate shared leadership practices.

#### *Impact of Personality Types*

Another area for research could be in assessing the type of personality that would be most compatible within a shared leadership structure. Do the leaders need to be more phlegmatic than choleric? Or is there a mix of personality types that make this structure successful? How will a type "A" personality that is more driven or a type "B" personality that is more relaxed affect the cohesiveness of the group?

### *Impact of Gender Differences*

Questions relating to gender differences could be further explored as factors in shared leadership. Are females more relational and cooperative? Is the male more task-driven and competitive? Is a shared leadership team more likely to be successful with a mix of genders or with all the same gender? How do differences in gender impact the approach to leadership? Bolman and Deal comment on Helgeson's research and what has been coined as the web of inclusion:

Helgeson argues that the idea of hierarchy is primarily a male-driven depiction, quite different from structures created by female executives. ... Women tended to put themselves at the center of their organization rather than at the top, thus emphasizing both accessibility and equality, and that they labored constantly to include people in their decision-making. ... Helgeson coined the expression "web of inclusion" to depict an organic social architectural form more circular than hierarchical.<sup>1</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

Too often the church in North America is influenced by the celebrity culture it finds itself in. Many congregations seek outspoken, charismatic, celebrity-style lead pastors who can do it all, attract people to their group, and build enviable organizations. Are the biblical qualifications of character key questions asked in the interview? Do charisma and competency outweigh character? Are individuals who are the brightest, most vocal, assertive and aggressive chosen as leaders? Sometimes the tendency is to look at the outside "resume" of a person's life, but fail to see their internal "resume." The tendency is to choose a Saul and overlook a David for "people look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Jesus indicated that a leader is not one who is brash and overbearing, but one who is a servant to all (Matt. 20:28).

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<sup>1</sup> Bolman and Deal, 83.

The North American church may find it increasingly difficult to discover leaders because it operates with a flawed structure, looks in the wrong places, and targets unsound traits for a leader. The local church may overlook potential leaders because it looks for cultural ideals, rather than for biblical behaviors of leadership. The church can miss the wise leadership of the introvert, the collaborative style of the humble, and the controlled leadership of the meek. The local church can end up seeking leadership elsewhere when God may have provided capable leadership within the group. Michael Youssef in his book, *The Leadership Style of Jesus*, notes the implications of selecting a team of leaders beyond the cultural ideals of a leader:

When we seek out only the obvious born leaders, we assemble a leadership team of strong-minded, strong willed, forceful personalities who are pretty much alike in most respects. But if we will seek out the less obvious leaders-in-the-rough, we will assemble a diverse mix of abilities, gifts, and strengths—and we will have a much stronger leadership team as a result.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of this project has been to provide a biblical and relevant structure of leadership that can counter-balance the negative tendencies of the hierarchical system. Although shared leadership is not without difficulties, the model has proven successful, relevant, and biblical. It is a structure that includes people rather than excludes them. It provides employees with a sense of ownership and significance. It has the potential to reduce turnover of staff. The field research indicated vocational reasons were a top reason subordinate staff resigned. One youth pastor in an email to the researcher stated, “I resigned [because] I was not given any plausible option. The leadership felt my time had ended and I had two options, resign or take it to a membership meeting.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Youssef, *The Leadership Style of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 181.

<sup>3</sup> From an email by a Youth Pastor to the researcher December 5, 2014.

The hierarchical structure puts pressure on leaders to climb the ladder to top positions that give increased pay and responsibility. But many times leaders in these organizations have nowhere to “climb” and must resign their positions to find another “ladder” to start climbing. This project has aimed to provide a solution to this problem that multi-staff churches with hierarchical structures face.

From a biblical perspective, the local church should have confidence in this structure as being in agreement with the theology and examples of Scripture. The foundation for shared leadership resides in the relational nature of the Triune God and can be seen through various examples of shared leadership in the Scripture. These include the prophet, priest, and king model; shepherding teams; the twelve apostles; the Antioch group; and the plurality of elders appointed in each local church.

From a contemporary perspective, the local church should have confidence that this is a structure that will best connect with the younger, postmodern generation. The increasing number of contemporary organizations going to this type of structure and finding success is something every church should consider. The growing base of research and literature on shared leadership can help the local church understand the benefits and overcome the challenges of this model.

Some legitimate fears do exist with this type of leadership system. An equal group of leaders may become elitist and be harder to rein in than a single individual. There is the possibility of confusion and lack of accountability when there is no perceived leader. Although there are apprehensions that surround this type of leadership, there are also good solutions to negate these concerns. Every church will need to address these fears and find strategies to overcome any hesitations or barriers.

The field research conducted in this study should give the local church confidence that it is possible to transition a hierarchical leadership structure to shared leadership. Various case studies of churches using a shared leadership structure can help existing hierarchical churches be able to recognize the antecedents for change, develop a strategy of transition, and implement measures to sustain the new structure.

Those churches that step out with courage to restructure their leadership to reflect biblical patterns of leadership and stay relevant with the changing culture can be made stronger and have greater influence, appeal, and productivity. JoAnn Carland and James Carland conclude from their research that “teams are stronger than individuals; teams are wiser than individuals; teams are more resilient than individuals; teams are more adventurous than individuals; teams are more creative than individuals; and teams are more capable than individuals.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Carland and Carland, 78.

## APPENDIX A: CHURCH LEADERSHIP SURVEY

The following questions will help this research project understand the factors and processes that can help hierarchical structured churches transition into shared leadership structures. It is hoped that in discovering the steps and factors that other churches and organizations have taken that this will help develop a model to guide other churches that want to make this transition in their leadership structure. Thank you for taking time to respond to this survey. All information will remain confidential and anonymous, unless prior permission is obtained.

1. What is the denomination that this church associates with or belongs to?

- Alliance
- Anglican
- Baptist
- Catholic
- Congregational
- Evangelical
- Independent
- Mennonite
- Methodist
- Pentecostal
- Reformed
- United
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the size of your church (average weekly service)?

- 0–49
- 50–99
- 100–199
- 200–499

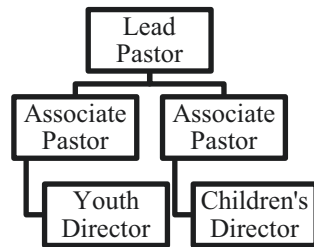
- 500–999
- 1000–2499
- 2500–4999
- 5000 plus

3. How many in the church are full-time paid staff?

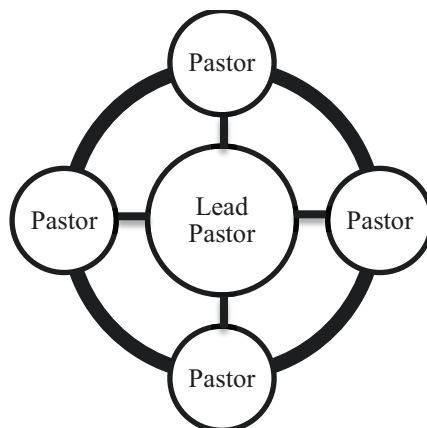
- 1
- 2–3
- 4–6
- 7–10
- 11–15
- 16 plus

4. How would you describe the leadership structure of this church?

- Hierarchical Structure (e.g. lead/senior pastor, associate, youth, children)

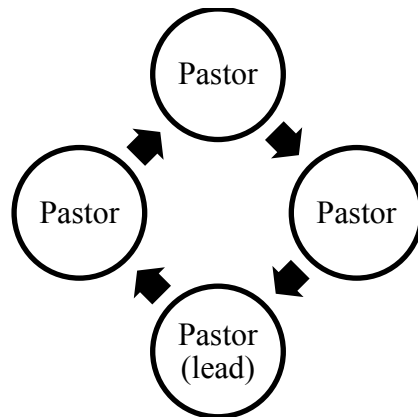


- Team Structure (e.g. team with static primary leader)





Shared Structure (e.g. team with rotating primary leader)



5. What factors caused the church to move from a hierarchical leadership structure to a shared leadership structure?
6. What steps were taken to make this leadership transition successful?
7. What struggles did the church encounter in transitioning to a shared leadership model?
8. What has helped sustain the shared leadership structure in your church?
9. What fears or hesitations would the church have in moving toward a shared leadership structure?

#### General Information

- Name of Church (optional)
- Is your church open to further questions if needed (yes or no)
- If yes please provide a contact name and email
- Does your church give permission to use your story in a published research report (yes or no)

## APPENDIX B: STAFF RESIGNATION SURVEY

The following questions will help this research project determine the factors that cause staff to resign positions in churches and other organizations. It is hoped that in determining the causes for someone to move up, move on, or move out of ministry that these responses will help develop better ways for churches and organizations to retain valuable employees.

If you have had more than one ministry change please use a separate survey for each position. Thank you for taking time to respond to this survey. All information will remain confidential and anonymous in the final report.

1. Have you ever resigned (or moved on or up) a position in church ministry?

Yes

No

2. What ministry position did you resign or move on from?

Lead/Senior Pastor

Executive Pastor

Associate Pastor

Youth Pastor/Director

Children's Pastor/Director

Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. From the list of choices rank in order the top reasons that apply to you for moving on from your former position? Beside your answer list any reasons for your resignation.

Emotional (e.g. abuse, failure, hurt, rejection, stress)

Financial (e.g. personal/family needs, inadequate pay/benefits)

Personal (e.g. changes in family, health, location)

Relational (e.g. conflict with supervisor, church politics)

Spiritual (e.g. burden, call of God, restless spirit)

Theological (e.g. incongruent beliefs, values, morals)

Vocational (e.g. career advancement, new challenge, wrong fit)

4. What type of ministry position or work did you take on? Beside your answer list any reasons for taking on this new position.

- Lead/Senior Pastor
- Executive Pastor
- Associate Pastor
- Youth Pastor/Director
- Children's Pastor/Director
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Secular or para-church employment

5. If you could have stayed in your former position what things needed to happen so that you did not have to resign?

General Information (optional questions)

Are you open to being contacted further for follow up questions if needed (yes or no)

If yes please provide your name and email

### APPENDIX C: STAFF STRUCTURE SURVEY

The following questions will help this research project determine the type of staffing structure that connects best with staff in multi-staff churches. It is hoped that in determining the type of structure that staff prefer that this will help churches develop better structures for their employees to work in.

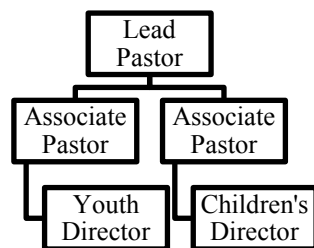
Thank you for taking time to respond to this survey. All answers will remain confidential and anonymous in the final report.

1. What is your current ministry position?

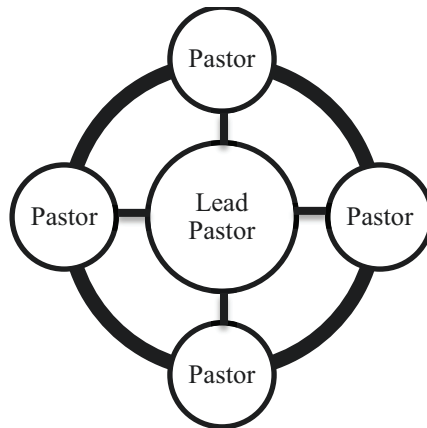
- Lead/Senior Pastor
- Executive Pastor
- Associate Pastor
- Youth Pastor/Director
- Children's Pastor/Director
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. How would you describe the leadership structure of this church?

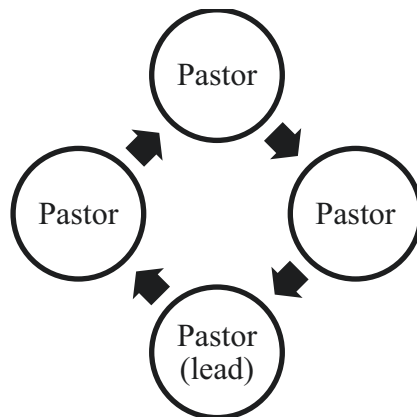
Hierarchical Structure (flow chart is a pyramid, the primary leader has title of lead/senior pastor, and pay is structured according to position—lead, associate, youth, children)



Team Structure (flow chart is circular, someone serves as the primary leader and is usually still called lead pastor, and pay is based on position, but with team rewards)



Shared Structure (flow chart is circular, members rotate primary leadership with no title of lead/senior pastor, and pay is based on experience with team rewards)



3. Have you ever felt pressure to “move up” the ladder to a more senior role of leadership? If so list the reasons beside your answer.

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

4. If you have worked in a hierarchical leadership structure (e.g. lead, associate, youth) what were the best aspects of working in this structure?

5. What was or is the hardest aspects about working in a hierarchical structure?

6. If you have worked in a shared leadership structure (e.g. accountable to each other, and each one considered equal, but with different roles) what were the best aspects of working in this structure?

7. What was or is the hardest aspects about working in a shared leadership structure?

8. If you had a choice between a hierarchical, team, or shared leadership structure to work in which would you choose?

Hierarchical Leadership (supervisor-subordinate roles; position level pay; non-equal responsibility and authority).

Team Leadership (supervisor-subordinate roles; position level pay with team rewards; equal responsibility).

Shared Leadership (rotating lead roles; experience level pay and team rewards; equal authority and responsibility).

General Information (optional questions)

Are you open to being contacted further for follow up questions if needed (yes or no)

If yes please provide your name and email

## APPENDIX D: CHURCHES USING SHARED LEADERSHIP

<b>Church</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Website</b>
Bethel Bible Chapel	Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario	<a href="http://bethelbiblechapel.com">bethelbiblechapel.com</a>
City Church	Winnipeg, Manitoba	<a href="http://citychurchwinnipeg.ca">citychurchwinnipeg.ca</a>
Cole Community Church	Boise, Idaho	<a href="http://colemcommunity.org">colemcommunity.org</a>
Community Fellowship Church	Staunton, Virginia	<a href="http://communityfellowshipchurch.net">communityfellowshipchurch.net</a>
Cornerstone Church of West Los Angeles	Los Angeles, California	<a href="http://cornerstonewla.org">cornerstonewla.org</a>
Fountain of Life Church	Lake Katrine, New York	<a href="http://thefountain.org">thefountain.org</a>
Littleton Bible Chapel	Littleton, Colorado	<a href="http://littletonbiblechapel.org">littletonbiblechapel.org</a>
Mill City Church	Minneapolis, Minnesota	<a href="http://millcitychurch.com">millcitychurch.com</a>
Ocean Christian Fellowship	El Segundo, California	<a href="http://ocfchurch.com">ocfchurch.com</a>
Reality LA Church	Los Angeles, California	<a href="http://realityla.com">realityla.com</a>
Red Door Church	Bloomington, Illinois	<a href="http://reddoorbloomington.org">reddoorbloomington.org</a>
The Parks Church	McKinney, Texas	<a href="http://theparkschurch.com">theparkschurch.com</a>
Tulsa Christian Fellowship	Tulsa, Oklahoma	<a href="http://tulsachristianfellowship.com">tulsachristianfellowship.com</a>
Walnut Hill Community Church	Bethel, Connecticut	<a href="http://walnuthillcc.org">walnuthillcc.org</a>
Water's Edge Community Church	Clarksville, Virginia	<a href="http://watersedgecommunitychurch.org">watersedgecommunitychurch.org</a>

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