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ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A THESIS PROJECT
SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE
IN CONGREGATION AND FAMILY CARE

BY
SARAH CRIPPEN
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
MAY 27, 2023

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GLOSSARY

Adaptive Leadership: A leadership approach designed to solve problems or issues by incorporating a flexible mindset that allows for creative and practical decision-making within ever-changing environments. Adaptive leaders are open to change and experimentation.

Best Practices: Identified behaviors that through research tend to deliver the most effective and efficient outcomes.

COVID-19: A disease caused by the coronavirus that emerged in 2019 and quickly became a pandemic causing extreme illness and high rates of death.

Crisis: This is a time of difficulty in which important and turning point decisions must be made. These situations often occur quickly and pose consequential challenges.

Crises Leadership: This term embodies the process and behaviors that a leader uses to respond to a crisis.

Leadership Theories: This term refers to the constructs that help to explain how leadership works and what makes an effective leader.

Pandemic: An infectious disease that sickens populations within an entire country or globally.

Servant Leadership: This approach to leadership focuses on a leader who serves. This leader is known for the ability to listen, empathize, and build community.

Transformational Theory: A theory often attributed to MacGregor Burns in which the leader aspires to bring change in both the employees/members and the organization. This leadership approach is known for its passion, innovation, creativity, relationships, and vision.

ABSTRACT

March 2020 introduced the world to a crisis unlike any seen in modern times. This crisis was the COVID-19 pandemic with its increased morbidity and high rates of death. It disrupted all aspects of society including global economies and health care systems. COVID-19 directly impacted schools, governments, commerce, and churches.

This study addressed the need for research-based best practices that would provide the most successful outcomes for pastors during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. To identify these practices, the researcher used a qualitative research approach which incorporated a multi-case study and an online survey. To build the interview and survey questions, the researcher reviewed the biblical leadership narratives of Joseph and Moses as well as analyzed relevant academic research on leadership. Both Joseph and Moses incorporated adaptive leadership characteristics by leading individuals through difficult challenges that culminated in successful outcomes.

The data was gathered from interviews with 5 Texas pastors who served in a church setting from March 2020 through December 2021 when the COVID-19 virus was peaking. The data was then analyzed seeking patterns and themes that would help identify the best practices that pastors need to rely on during times of crisis. These findings, aligned with an adaptive leadership style, appeared to produce the most successful outcomes.

The best practices that emerged in this study as most useful during a crisis included: having personal character and integrity; having a clear vision, mission, and purpose; and, working to create and maintain relationships based on authenticity.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to our Lord Jesus Christ, who certainly sustained me throughout the process. My family has been a pillar of encouragement, and my friends, including those within and outside the church, believed in me to complete the journey.

My pastor, Dr. Eric Bryant, supported and encouraged me throughout the journey. A special thank you to the pastors who participated in the study. These pastors are truly to be applauded for their dedication, authenticity, and passion for Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

The Problem and Its Context

The problem this project addressed was the scarcity of best practices regarding adaptive leadership available to pastors when facing crises. In response to this problem, the researcher a) explored the leadership characteristics of both Moses (Exo. 16–18), and Joseph (Gen. 41); b) reviewed current literature on the role of the shepherd leader/pastor during crisis by concentrating on adaptive leadership with a focus on transformational and servant leadership; c) conducted a qualitative study on strategies local churches used to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States during the twenty-first century; and d) identified best practices that shepherd leaders/pastors can use when facing crises.

Subproblems

The first subproblem was to identify the leadership characteristics of biblical leaders. The characteristics included exploration of their spiritual, relational, and personal lives. The focus was on two leaders: Moses, who led the Israelites while in the wilderness; and, Joseph, who endured many hardships, resulting in his government position that was second to Pharaoh.

The second subproblem was an exploration of current literature on adaptive leadership, giving attention to the identification of best practices and leadership characteristics exhibited during crises.

The third subproblem was to explore strategies used by local churches to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected through interviews and a survey.

The fourth subproblem was to use this data to identify best practices for pastors and church leaders to provide for effective maneuvering through a crisis such as a worldwide pandemic.

Adaptive Leadership

Scholars who have studied adaptive leadership, especially when leaders were faced with a crisis, described it as a leadership approach designed to solve problems or issues by incorporating a flexible mindset. Incorporation of this flexibility allows for creative and practical decision-making within ever-changing environments. Adaptive leaders are those who embrace change and are willing to take risks. Navigating this changing environment requires that leaders are “capable of tackling and solving complex contemporary problems and issues, with collective, collaborative, timely, effective, and innovative solutions.”¹ Researchers Yukl and Mahsud succinctly express adaptive leadership as involving “changing behavior in appropriate ways as the situation changes.”²

Delimitations of the Problem

The first delimitation was that the research would be limited to the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was limited to the time frame from March 2020 through December 2021 of the pandemic.

¹ Bill Cojocar, “Adaptive Leadership: Leadership Theory or Theoretical Derivative?” *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal* 7, No. 1 (Winter 2009): 9, <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol7/iss1/5>.

² Gary Yukl and Rubina Mahsud, “Why Flexible and Adaptive Leadership Is Essential,” *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 62 no. 2 (2010): 81, DOI: 10.1037/a0019835.

The second delimitation was that the leadership of Moses would be limited to the years in the wilderness as recorded in Exodus 16-18.

The third delimitation was that the leadership of Joseph would be limited to the time beginning with Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream and concluding with Joseph's leadership through the years of plenty and the years of famine as described in Gen. 41.

The fourth delimitation was that the participants would be senior pastors who had a minimum of five years of experience. The pastors would have served in their role as the senior pastor between March 2020 through December 2021 and would represent both denominational and nondenominational churches in Texas.

Assumptions

Several assumptions were considered for this study. The first assumption was that pastors responded to God's call to the ministry and had intentions of following His guidance. Second, it was assumed that pastors had some leadership competencies and resultant skills. The third assumption was that these pastors continually desire to grow, not only in their faith and theology but also in the skills required for leadership. Fourth, it was assumed that churches and their leaders could sustain the challenge of COVID-19 and would emerge as healthy, vibrant organizations. The fifth assumption was that the attributes for effective leadership would be biblically sound. The sixth assumption was the acknowledgment that the global health crisis of COVID-19 would not be the last crisis encountered by humankind. Regardless of whether health-related issues, natural causes, or technological malevolence precipitate the future crisis, the church will feel the impact.

Setting of the Project

The researcher concentrated on the crisis of the global pandemic resulting from the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Viruses have shown versatility in adapting to their host and the SARS-CoV-2 followed the pattern. The original emergence in the United States was titled COVID-19 and appeared in the United States in the early spring of 2020. It morphed to a variant, Delta, in the summer of 2021, before morphing again in late December 2021, into a variant known as Omicron. The global pandemic created economic upheaval, political unrest, human rights violations, religious conflicts, and various other challenges.

COVID-19, a highly transmittable respiratory virus that originated in Wuhan, China,³ spread rapidly infecting over 404,910,528 people worldwide and killing over 5,783,776.⁴ The World Health Organization (WHO) declared on January 30, 2020 that COVID-19 was “a public health emergency of international concern.”⁵ On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a global pandemic. To control the pandemic, governments issued mandates, people were forced to quarantine and, as a result, the global economy drastically slowed down. Not since the Spanish Flu had such a

³ Muhammad Adnan Shereen et al, “COVID-19 Infection: Origin, Transmission, and Characteristics of Human Coronaviruses,” *Journal of Advanced Research* 24 (March 16, 2020): 91, DOI:10.1016/j.jare.2020.03.005.

⁴ “WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard,” World Health Organization (WHO), accessed February 11, 2022, <https://covid19.who.int/>.

⁵ Adebola Adegboyega, Stephanie Boddie, Hope Dorvie, Bolanle Bolaji, Criston Adedoyin, and Sharon Moore, “Social Distance Impact on Church Gatherings: Socio-behavioral Implication,” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 31, no. 1-4 (2021) 222, DOI: 10.1080/10911359.2020.1793869.

health crisis spread globally so quickly; therefore, history provided little guidance for navigating this 21st-century health pandemic.

All facets of society in Texas were touched by COVID-19, including churches. Health regulations, laws, and protocols from government agencies often exacerbated the emotions experienced by people around the world. The medical communities were developing vaccines and advising strategies and protocols to halt the spread of the deadly virus. According to Forsyth, "civil authorities urged people to reduce the spread of the disease through nonpharmaceutical interventions, including disinfecting surfaces, quarantining, and social distancing."⁶ The church was identified "as providing a congenial environment where the contagion had spread or [was] spreading quickly because of the size of the congregation, duration of services, and proximity of congregants."⁷ Forsyth reminded readers that not every group responded in ways that would be considered "reasonable, supportive, or efficacious."⁸ Pastors found themselves at the forefront of making and communicating crucial and often controversial decisions.

To further compound the issue, COVID-19 continued to mutate. New variants emerged such as Delta in August 2021 and Omicron in December 2021 often requiring different protocols from health organizations. Because messaging from the government was often in flux due to new scientific discoveries, pastors found it difficult to articulate

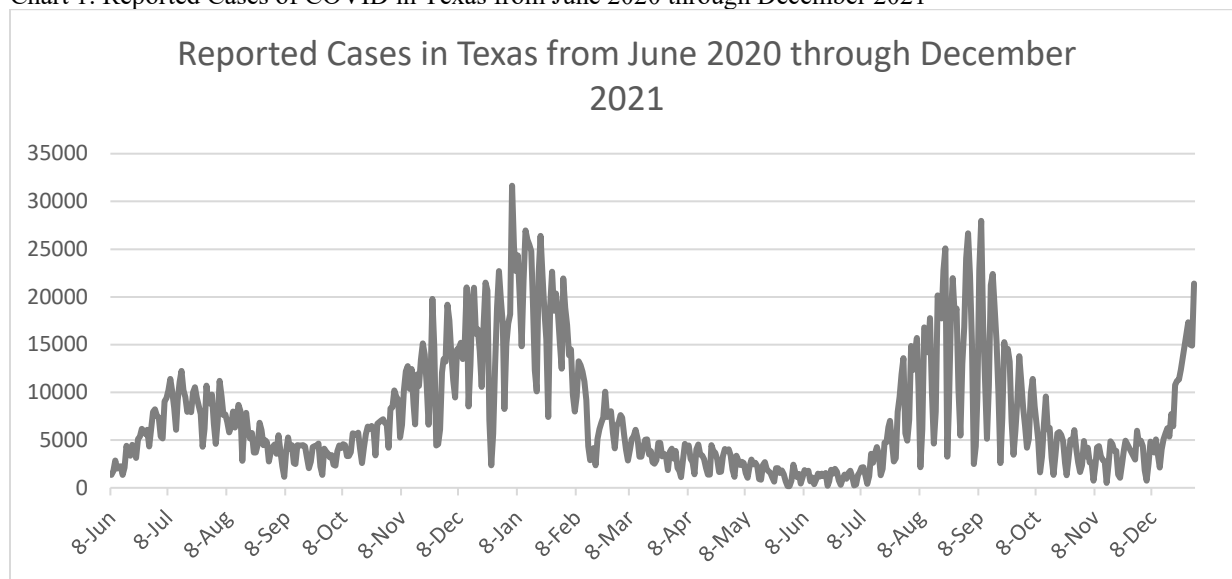
⁶ Donelson R. Forsyth, "Group-Level Resistance to Health Mandates During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Groupthink Approach," *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 24, no. 3 (September 2020): 140, DOI:10.1037/gdn0000132.

⁷ Adebola Adegboyega, et al, "Social Distance Impact on Church Gatherings: Socio-behavioral Implications," 223.

⁸ Forsyth, "Group-Level Resistance to Health Mandates During the COVID-19 Pandemic," 140.

clear messaging during the crisis. The researcher collected data daily from Worldometer between June 2020 and December 2021 of reported cases in Texas. The data displayed in the graph below indicates the dynamics of the pandemic in Texas that pastors and congregations faced.

Chart 1. Reported Cases of COVID in Texas from June 2020 through December 2021



Graph created by researcher from June 2020 through December 2021 of reported cases in Texas using data collected from Worldometer. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>.

The setting of this research included participants that had served as senior pastors with 5 or more years of experience from various denominational and non-denominational environments. The pastors were those who served in leadership and helped the church maneuver through the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020. Pastors and congregations were enlisted to represent various ethnicities and included both genders. The researcher was aware that the organizational structure of the church may directly impact the flow of communication. For example, a hierarchal structure has the communication moving from the pastor or elders to the congregants. On the other hand, a

more democratic structure may begin at the congregational level. In addition, the style of leadership the pastor prefers (authoritarian, laissez-faire, or democratic) affects the communication flow. A denominational church may be less independent than a non-denominational church and have less freedom to make autonomous decisions regarding the handling of a crisis.

The geographic setting will be limited to pastors in Texas. Texas is a large state with diverse cultures, demographic variances, varied political views, and three urban centers that have populations that rank them in the top 10 cities in the United States. Ethnically, the White and Hispanic populations represented respectively 41.2% and 39.7%.⁹ The historical timeline was from March 2020 through December 2021.

The Importance of the Project

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

This problem was important because as a lay leader, the researcher looked to the pastor as the shepherd of the church. Watching the pastors at the church the researcher attended and those who have made media headlines, there were indications that the pandemic had brought a sense of added “busyness” wrought with increased levels of stress.

The researcher relied on the pastors at her church to make sound decisions during the Pandemic. These decisions needed to adhere to science as well as to biblical

⁹ “Quick Facts Texas,” United States Census, accessed February 6, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/TX>.

principles. For the most part, the pastors at the researcher's local church seemed to have made practical and reasonable decisions. This stood in stark contrast to many of the anecdotal accounts from colleagues and/or those seen through the lens of the media. Courtney, Lovallo, and Clark provided insight when they stated that leaders "had a reasonably good idea of the critical success factors that matter, but not a complete picture."¹⁰ COVID guidelines, often ambiguous and at times contradictory, placed pastors in the situation of making decisions without all the information. Responding to the interview questions, pastors were able to identify those decisions that were practical or useful as well as those that were reasonable or sensible. The researcher was concerned by the struggling leadership of churches visible on news feeds and anecdotally shared. This concern sparked the desire to provide a model to better equip pastors for leadership during crises.

The Importance of the Project to the Immediate Ministry Context

The importance of the project to the immediate ministry context rests on the understanding that a church is an organization and, as such, functions as a system. The strength of pastoral leadership enables the building of trust and loyalty in lay ministers. The researcher's goal is to add to the body of the research by assisting pastors to lead well through crises.

As a system, when one component was compromised, it invariably caused repercussions in other areas. The challenge associated with a pandemic impacted the

¹⁰ Hugh Courtney, Dan Lovallo, and Carmina Clark, "Deciding How to Decide," *Harvard Business Review*, (November 2013), <https://hbr.org/2013/11/deciding-how-to-decide>.

entire church body, making the role of the pastor even more crucial in encouraging and shepherding the congregants. The pastors shared their vision with the lay leaders who were commissioned to carry forward the mission of the church to those they served. Lay leaders relied on good decision-making by pastors to better support the people they led.

With the challenges of lost jobs, closing businesses, work becoming more remote and less onsite, loss of housing for many, and general trauma impacting communities, it became imperative that churches exerted strong leadership to provide hope, encouragement, and means of general welfare. The lay leaders became integral conduits of messaging to those they served during such a crisis.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

Unfortunately, this global health crisis will likely not be the last crisis encountered by humans. Pastors navigating the crisis have found themselves confronted with the surge of technology and the wielding of the power of social media. Both carry risks of conveying distorted communication. The media often exposes the shortcomings in the management of the pandemic by leaders. Through the repetitive cycle of news stories, these stories become focal points for a consuming audience. Unharnessed social media platforms in the last decade serves as tools for misinformation, creating a sense of distrust. A focus on preparing pastors to meet these potential crises by providing them with an arsenal of proven leadership characteristics will not only help the pastor but will encourage the congregants.

Another facet of concern for churches is the decline in membership which has been perpetuated for several decades. The pandemic expedited this decline, and, according to the *Pew Report* of March 2021, “Three-quarters of U.S. adults who normally

attend religious services now say they are “very” or “somewhat” confident they can do so safely.”¹¹ The underlying concern worthy of consideration continues to be the 25% who were attending and who now do not feel it is safe to return.

Because the pandemic was so recent, this study provides fresh research and perspectives on a “real time” crisis. Through the findings, the researcher hopes to be able to: 1) identify those best practices that increase the efficacy of pastors’ leadership when facing crises, and 2) provide insight into future dealings with crisis.

¹¹ “Life in U.S. Religious Congregations Slowly Edges Back Toward Normal,” Pew Forum, accessed February 6, 2022, <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/03/22/life-in-u-s-religious-congregations-slowly-edges-back-toward-normal/>.

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Biblical and Theological Basis

The theological review for this dissertation incorporated a close examination of the leadership characteristics of two pivotal heroes of the Old Testament—Moses and Joseph. Both men were faced with a multitude of crises in which they each displayed characteristics of adaptive leadership. This style of leadership incorporated transformational and servant leadership characteristics that brought about an effective and efficient outcome. Both were chosen by God for the particular time in history in which they lived and both accepted their calling with the attitude of a servant leader—seeking to serve God and serve the people they were leading. Both leaders embraced flexibility and creative problem-solving when faced with critical decisions. Joseph and Moses exhibited characteristics of integrity, courage, and humility. They accepted their commissions from God seriously and did not waver even during crises. They had an appreciation of and a desire to build relationships with their followers.

Because Moses and Joseph both indicated an understanding of adaptive leadership with a focus on transformational and servant leadership, they exhibited a mindset of flexibility, an understanding of the nature of change, attention to the environment including the needs and desires of the people being led, and the ability to categorize events/activities/tasks based on their relative importance at the time. Leaders, like Moses and Joseph, acknowledged the ability of environments/situations to change and evolve. They were able to resist the lure of status quo responses and by doing so, found success handling the crises they faced. . This was significant to the research problem because a crisis by its nature seldom allowed leaders the luxury of time when determining a course

of action. Moses and Joseph also incorporated aspects of transformational and servant leadership in that both leaders attempted to serve those they led. Furthermore, both patriarchs embodied the ideology of a transformational leader as described by the renowned scholar on leadership, MacGregor Burns. Burns identifies a transformational leader as one who “looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower.”¹² Both Moses and Joseph concentrated their leadership efforts to motivate and inspire individuals through positive change as each leader sought to complete their mission. Though the people under Moses’s leadership required forty years of teaching and reteaching, their growth and reliance on God did result in the in the ultimate goal of reaching the promised land.

In this chapter, the researcher examined Moses and five significant crises in which Moses exemplified adaptive leadership characteristics. As a result of the theological exploration of five significant events recorded in scripture, the researcher identified several relevant characteristics that attributed to Moses’s success. After a review of Moses and his leadership characteristics, the researcher focused on Joseph with a concentrated exegesis of Gen. 41. Using theological analysis, the researcher sought to identify themes relating to the lives of Joseph and Moses as they encounter and navigate multiple crises.

Moses and the Significant Events of His Narrative

Moses developed as a leader with each crisis he encountered. Persistence and dedication to the call from God allowed Moses to grow as a leader, leaving behind a

¹² James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 4.

legacy of honor and humility. Barton suggests that Moses's lack of maturity as a leader was evidenced by Moses sending his family back to live with his father-in-law, Jethro. Barton continues that "evidently his lifestyle was not sane enough to include a wife and children."¹³ As Moses matured, so did his leadership. Prentice identifies a great leader as one "who can do so day after day, and year after year, in a wide variety of circumstances."¹⁴ In each of the following scenarios, Moses remained true to his commitment, relentlessly following God and exhibiting certain characteristics of leadership identified in the theological exploration.

Moses, a patriarch of the faith, was revered as a great leader in the religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.¹⁵ He received his commission from God when he was 80 years of age, serving forty years in the wilderness (Josh. 5:6) and dying at the age of 120 years (Deut. 34:7). The wilderness episode was expansive and Childs states that it "covers the period from the exodus out of Egypt until the entrance into the promised land."¹⁶ The researcher narrowed the focus to a snapshot of his leadership style as viewed in Exodus 15:22–18:27 spotlighting the episodes of the bitter waters at Marah, the daily sustenance from God of the manna and the quail, the lack of water at Massah-Meribah,

¹³ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 102.

¹⁴ W.C.H. Prentice, "Understanding Leadership," *Harvard Business Review* 82, no. 1 (January 2004): 2.

¹⁵ Georges Tamer, Regina Grundmann, Assaad Elias Kattan and Karl Pinggera, *Exegetical Crossroads: Understanding Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Pre-Modern Orient*, (Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 1.

¹⁶ Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Louisville, Kentucky: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2004), 254.

the war with the Amalekites, and the crucial visit of Jethro, his father-in-law. Scholars have argued about the chronology of these events and though this may be intriguing albeit confusing, the researcher maintained a focus on the narrative and how the narrative gave prominence to identifiable leadership characteristics of Moses.¹⁷ The narratives showcased Moses's leadership characteristics that began with an acceptance of his commission from God and an unwavering commitment to the mission. His allegiance to God placed him as an active agent between God and the people. His ability to listen and act upon that information further indicated his strong relationship with the people. Moses had a servant's heart and led the people as a motivator, teacher and judge.

Water at Marah in Exodus 15:22-27

The setting of the narrative began at the Red Sea. With Moses as the leader, the Israelites moved into the wilderness of Shur. After three days of travel without water, they came to Marah; however, the water at Marah was bitter. Since drinking water was a necessity for survival, the people began to complain to Moses, and Moses consulted the Lord. God's solution to the crisis was to throw a tree into the water. Upon completion of that task, the water became sweet and drinkable. Moses built a monument to mark the spot and also to remind the people of the Abrahamic promise that if the people obeyed, then God would heal all diseases.

The people's action—to murmur—actually came from a verb that indicated the meaning was stronger than a contemporary understanding of the word. The verb used in

¹⁷ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 264.

Hebrew can be translated “protest, rail against.”¹⁸ Childs posits that the Israelites’ unhappiness was not with God, but rather with their leader Moses.¹⁹ A significant understanding according to Childs was that “Yahweh did not effect a miracle through his word; rather, he instructed Moses in the use of a special tree by which to work the transformation.”²⁰ An important leadership characteristic of Moses in this drama was his “faith in being willing to do what God commanded him, without understanding why or how it would work.”²¹ Though Stuart believed that Moses likely did not completely understand the science behind throwing a tree into the bitter water, Sweeney states that “YHWH instructs Moses on how to purify the water of the Sinai using filtering techniques that has been employed by the Bedouin for centuries.”²² Regardless of whether Moses knew the technique or not, Moses was obedient, the water was purified, the people’s thirst was quenched, and God was honored.

This crisis is significant as it highlights the leadership characteristics Moses relied on to secure a successful outcome. Moses indicated his ability to lead during this moment of crisis involving a lack of drinking water for the people. Because of the heightened anger of the people at this juncture in the narrative, Moses’s life was threatened and a

¹⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011), 239.

¹⁹ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 269.

²⁰ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 268.

²¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, *An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 321.

²² Marvin A. Sweeney, “Moses’s Encounter with G-D and G-Ds Encounter with Moses: A Reading of the Moses Narratives in Conversation with Emmanuel Levinas,” *Hebrew Studies*, 59 (2018): 103.

possibility of an overthrow of the leadership was potentially close. However, Moses relied on both God's commission and God's clear mission which was to lead the people. Pastor leaders must remember, that like Moses, their own personal call to service originated with God, and through obedience, they can find that God provides solutions. After consulting with God and receiving explicit instructions for the provisions of the people, Moses obeyed and executed the plan, bringing immediate relief to the people. Moses heard the people and through God met their needs. As pastor leaders, it is imperative to listen to the people so that a godly match can be made between the plan and the solution. Moses provided leadership that was adaptive and creatively relied on a God-initiated solutions

Manna and Quails in Exodus 16:1-36

The Israelites were traveling in the wilderness when their complaints began to erupt once again. This time the issue was the lack of food. When Moses consulted the Lord, he was told that he (the Lord) would feed the people but with a stipulation. On the 6th day, the people would receive a double portion because on the Sabbath, the people were instructed to rest and there would be no food provided. Moses and Aaron relayed the message to the people, and this became the pattern of food supply until they approached the border of Canaan.

Hamilton noted that the "murmuring against Moses and Aaron [was] not isolated but massive."²³ Instead of a handful of people, it was the "entire congregation."²⁴ Stuart

²³ Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, 250.

²⁴ Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, 250.

adds that the use of the phrase “entire community” suggested “that the problem of not enough food to eat had been building steadily rather than having come about suddenly.”²⁵ Upon consultation with God, God gave Moses clear instructions about the new “food provisions plan.” God “inform[ed] Moses of a message which he was to pass on to the people.”²⁶ Stuart reminds the reader that “as prophets, Moses and Aaron were representing God, speaking for him and not serving in their own authority.”²⁷ Though the people often railed against Moses, Moses’s relationship with God and his role as a mediator between God and the people did not waver.

Moses remained steadfast and continued to refocus the people on the overall mission of reaching the Promise Land. Again, in verses 10 and 26, Moses received direction from Yahweh, and Moses obeyed. Moses listened to the people and went directly to God. Childs reiterates that “the people are in need; Moses intercedes and God supplies their want.”²⁸ Moses demonstrated adaptive leadership by recognizing the critical nature of the problem that required an immediate solution for the long-term, God-given mission of establishing a nation. Moses listened deliberately focused on meeting the obvious need with a creative solution revealed to him by God.

²⁵ Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 324.

²⁶ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 276.

²⁷ Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 325.

²⁸ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 281.

Water at Massah-Meribah in Exodus 17:1-7

The people continued their trek through the wilderness as the Lord commanded, and once they reached the encampment of Rephidim, the Israelites were once again faced with the lack of drinkable water. The people now escalated from “murmur” to quarreling with Moses, once again threatening his leadership. Moses petitioned God, and God gave Moses explicit instructions to take some of the elders and set out ahead of the people. Moses was instructed to strike a rock, which he obediently did, and water poured out of it thereby quenching the thirst of all the people.

Moses in his response to the people clearly articulated that the complaining of the people was directed towards God when he said, “Why do you put the LORD to the test?” Stuart, in his commentary, posits that “Moses showed that he knew that the protest represented an attempt to manipulate God.”²⁹ Moses, as an adaptive leader, discerned the somewhat devious motivation of the people to control God. Successful adaptive leaders, such as Moses, found success when refraining from addressing the symptoms—the people’s dissatisfaction—instead of the cause—a lack of faith on the part of the people in God. Even though Moses knew the underlying motive of the people, he still demanded that God do something quickly.

Without water and potentially facing their own deaths, the people possibly saw Moses as a threat to their well-being, thus setting him up to be the scapegoat. According to Stuart, Moses was quite concerned about his own safety because there was a custom in

²⁹ Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 337.

that part of the world to stone those that were seen as a threat.³⁰ The gravity of the situation before Moses was paramount, but even in the throes of his own potential death, he focused on God and the mission. He was also aware that it was much easier to complete the mission God had given him when the needs of the followers were met. With this knowledge, Moses sought leadership from God.

Moses exhibited courage in the face of the rage of the people. As was Moses's custom, he immediately consulted God for relief. In addition, Moses showed boldness by querying the people, "Why do you put the LORD to the test?" Again, Moses used deliberative listening and discernment to determine the need of the people. Moses might have been tempted to find a tree, as he previously had done, and tossed it into the water. As an adaptive leader, Moses was aware that the remedies/strategies used once may not be the same ones needed in a different but similar situation. He refused to look back to a status quo solution, but instead, sought God for a creative one. The revelation of a different solution to the current situation was made known through communication. Communication with God must be intentional. It must rely upon an accurate analysis of the needs and dreams of the followers, upon adherence to the God-given mission, and upon the leader's willingness to embrace flexibility in the face of change.

War with the Amalekites in Exodus 17:8-16

While on their journey, the people came upon the Amalekites, and Amalek chose to fight with Israel at Rephidim. Moses delegated to Joshua the task of gathering men to fight the battle. Moses, Aaron, and Hur ascended to the top of the hill. When Moses lifted

³⁰ Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 338.

his hand with the staff that God had used many times before to bring about miracles, the Israelites saw victory, but when Moses tired and his arm fell, the advantage was lost. Because Aaron and Hur supported the weary arms of Moses, the battle ended with a victory for the Israelites. Moses built an altar and gave the Lord the glory.

The Amalekites “were a nomadic tribe which biblical tradition derived from the genealogy of Esau,”³¹ whose brother, Jacob, the deceiver, eventually became one of the patriarchs of the Israelites. An interesting insight in this narrative focused on Moses and his use of the staff. It appeared that the Exodus account did not mention that Moses was directly instructed by God to hold the staff in his hands during the battle, but “by this time, Moses expected his readers to realize that he would never use the staff unless commissioned by God to do so.”³² Moses’s use of the staff and the resultant victory indicated that the “outcome of the battle depended on what Moses [did].”³³ Some scholars believed that “Moses’s role was essentially psychological”³⁴ in that with hands raised, the Israelites were encouraged and inspired to fight. Stuart reminds the reader that “the staff had to be above Moses’s head—symbolizing God’s superiority to all his people.”³⁵ The use of symbols in a religious setting helped to convey those ideas of human relationship to a godly or sacred concept. The staff, which had been used in

³¹ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 314.

³² Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 342.

³³ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 314.

³⁴ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 315.

³⁵ Stuart, *Exodus*, 344.

conversations with Pharaoh to free the Israelites, was also used to provide drinkable water. This staff indicated the powerful connection between God and his people. As Moses lifted the staff during battle, the supernatural power of God was once again demonstrated.

Moses chose to use the staff that God had provided as a symbol during the battle with the Amalekites. Symbols influenced people then and today, both psychologically and spiritually. Moses indicated that he was willing to use all of the tools at his disposal to motivate and encourage the people; the staff served as the motivation for the warriors.

Not only have scholars debated the significance of the staff, but they have engaged in discussions about what Moses was doing while he was holding the staff. Theologians seem to lean towards an understanding that Moses was praying-interceding on behalf of the Israelites. Trimm concludes that Moses was raising his hands in prayer, signaling “continuity with the past along with change for the future.”³⁶ If Trimm is correct that Moses prayed during the battle, then, again, Moses indicated his desire to be in communication with God, the designer of the plan.

In addition to the symbol of the staff, Hamilton addresses the altar that Moses built after the victory and notes that “Moses does not build this altar in anticipation of what God might do, but in response to what God had done.”³⁷ By acknowledging the past, a transformational leader such as Moses, was able to promote an environment of

³⁶ Charlie Trimm, “God’s Staff and Moses’s Hand(s): The Battle Against the Amalekites As a Turning Point in the Role of the Divine Warrior,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44, no. 1 (2019): 213.

³⁷ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 273.

collaboration through inspiration and motivation that increased the chances of success of the mission. As the Israelite's adventure continued and when they aligned with Moses's leadership, God blessed them. Connecting the past with the present was motivational to the people Moses was leading.

Moses's building of the altar as a celebratory moment after the victory over the Amalekites and his symbolic use of the staff during the battle both indicated Moses's understanding of adaptive and transformational leadership. Great leaders have always understood the importance of remembering past victories and using those remembrances as motivational tools. The adaptive leader recognizes the importance of building and maintaining the relationship between the leader and the followers. This event indicated Moses's understanding of the significance of the mutual nature of credible relationships resulting from a shared history. This is a characteristic of an adaptive leader.

Visit with Jethro in Exodus 18:1-27

The visit from Jethro was a critical turning point in Moses's developing leadership. Jethro, a priest and the father-in-law of Moses, decided to bring Moses's wife and two sons to visit Moses in the wilderness. During this unexpected visit, Moses shared the adventures from Pharaoh's release of the people to the wilderness experience, and Jethro reacted enthusiastically. By giving this account of God's protection of his people, Jethro converted to the true God. The next day, Moses began his daily work, and as Jethro watched the arduous day Moses endured hearing disputes from sunrise to sunset, he became concerned regarding the immense pressure of this taxing responsibility. Moses's days included hearing cases, instructing people in the laws and the teachings, and helping them to make decisions. Jethro suggested some reorganization wherein the

people were placed into smaller groups with judges to help with the minor cases. Moses listened and acted upon Jethro's idea.

Childs notes that chapter 18 was a chapter of remembrance where "the writer pauses in the story to look backward and to rejoice."³⁸ The writer of Exodus also in chapter 18 presented Moses, not as the prophet or the beleaguered leader, but as a man. The family joined him, the leaders feasted, and the writer established a pastoral mood.

When the story resumed with Moses's daily tasks, Jethro watched Moses as he engaged in his "job of judging civil and criminal disputes" as was considered part of the leadership role in the ancient Near East.³⁹ Hamilton states that "Jethro not only discerns the problem...but he also proposes a solution that would eliminate the problem."⁴⁰ Hess strengthens the importance of this reorganization of the people echoing that "the organization of the system of judicial administration represented the ongoing means to exist."⁴¹ Though this change was a basic form of reorganization, a deeper look revealed more of the character of Moses. Moses was a man who was willing to listen to sage advice and then, was equally willing to act on it. He was a leader willing to change his paradigm of thinking to embrace a more creative way of reaching the desired outcome of executing the judicial function of the Israelites' society.

³⁸ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 327.

³⁹ Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 354.

⁴⁰ Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, 288.

⁴¹ Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 59.

Barton analyzes the situation by stating that “it was a very chaotic and exhausting process for all involved.”⁴² Jethro, not only considered the situation he was observing, but he discerned a thorn or blind spot that was motivating Moses. It seemed that Moses may have been feeling somewhat indispensable.⁴³ Examination of Gen. 18:15-16 revealed the multiple usage of the first-person pronouns that seemed to substantiate Barton’s claim. Though this appeared as a blind spot for Moses, once it was made clear to Moses, he heeded the wise counsel, a characteristic of a strong leader. Moses was given an overwhelming task of serving as the judge for all the people, and Jethro was able as an objective observer to see the problem and offer a solution.

Strong leaders, whether embracing the adaptive, transformational, or servant leadership approach, have found that delegation of tasks to be most effective and efficient. Groysberg and Abrahams posit that transformational leaders needed strong family partners who helped them to “keep their eyes on what matters, budget their time and energy, live healthfully, and make deliberate choices.”⁴⁴ Moses faced several crises in his leadership of the people to the promised land, and his leadership skills listening, heeding wise counsel, and resting on a familiar partner for guidance. Adaptive leaders must be open to new ideas, especially those that bring about a sense of fairness. Because of the burdensome process of the traditional justice system, Moses was hearing all the

⁴² Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 102.

⁴³ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 102.

⁴⁴ Boris Groysberg and Robin Abrahams, “Manage Your Work, Manage Your Life,” *Harvard Business Review* (March 2014): 58.

cases and meting out justice. It was a long and tedious endeavor for the people and for Moses. By streamlining the process, Moses was able to more effectively see that justice was determined in an expedient manner. In addition, as an adaptive leader, this event showcased the characteristic of emotional intelligence or honoring the feelings of others.

Characteristics of Adaptive Leadership Exhibited by Moses

Moses, even with his shortcomings, was viewed as a pillar of leadership, courage, and integrity in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rapoport says “Moses was the Hebrew Bible’s most important and intriguing personality.”⁴⁵ Nilson, however, identifies Moses as a “failing hero” because his first attempts to persuade Pharaoh were not successful and secondly, because he encountered numerable incidents of rebellion in the wilderness, all which seemed to “imply that Moses did not manage to convince the people to obey and worship properly.”⁴⁶ Tunyogi agrees in part that Moses “had much trouble with those whose leader he was.”⁴⁷ This harsh criticism seemed to overlook the fact that Moses was a man, not a divine being, and as such would not be expected to execute all his tasks perfectly. Barton states that “Moses was a great leader, but he had to learn.”⁴⁸ Great leaders have spent a lifetime developing skills often through trial and error, and Moses

⁴⁵ David C. Rapoport, “Moses, Charisma, and Covenant,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (June, 1979): 123.

⁴⁶ Tina Dykesteen Nilson, “Memories of Moses: A Survey Through Genres,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 41, no. 3 (2017): 292, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089216661666>, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089216661666>.

⁴⁷ Andrew C. Tunyogi, “The Rebellion of Israel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no.4 (1962), 386.

⁴⁸ Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 102.

was no exception. Numbers 20:8-11 recounted an incident in which Moses failed to follow explicit instructions and was punished by God.

To place Moses's leadership in perspective, he must be remembered as a reluctant leader. He received his commission at the burning bush; he expressed hesitation to move forward with the leadership role offered him by God, but he finally did acquiesce and accept the mission. His mission, to rescue the Israelites and deliver them from bondage (Exod. 3-4) was clearly articulated by God. Moses never deterred from that. His source of reliance was on God, and he sought his guidance both when standing before the Pharaoh and when leading the people in the wilderness. Moses was an active agent for God. According to Kürle, "the entire plot of Exodus makes it clear that following Moses meant following Yhwh."⁴⁹ Nilson states "Moses is also an instrument used by Yahweh to act, whether to perform signs against Egypt (Exod. 7-13) or lead the people through waters or wilderness (Exod.14-Deut. 34)."⁵⁰ Moses exemplified strong leadership by committing wholeheartedly to the mission God had called him to undertake and though crises arose on the path to the final outcome, Moses did not veer from the course.

Moses's communication, recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy, with God was straightforward and certainly two-way. He served as the conduit of God's message to the people as he taught the people and served in a judiciary capacity. Kürle explains that "nevertheless, time and time again, Yhwh confirms Moses's position by using only him

⁴⁹ Stefan Kürle, "The Characters of God, Moses and Israel in the Rhetoric of the Book of Exodus," (PhD diss., The University of Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire, England, 2005), 164, https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/3145/1/509293_Redacted.pdf.

⁵⁰ Nilson, "Memories of Moses," 290.

as the mediator of his help.”⁵¹ Kürle continues by examining the triad relationship of Yhwh, Moses, and Israel, stating that the conflicts revealed in Exodus 15-17 disclosed that “they were ultimately conflicts between the people and Yhwh” even though Moses “[was] accused from both sides.”⁵² Moses was the quintessential intercessor going before God on behalf of the people—people who were so easily disgruntled and susceptible to sinful actions. Nilson concludes that Moses’s communication with God “along the axis, from the divine to the human, he brings] the divine message (legal and prophetic) to the people (e.g. Lev. 1.1–2 and passim); and moving along the same axis but in the opposite direction, he intercedes on behalf of the people (e.g. Exod. 32.11–14).”⁵³ Moses’s task was to serve as the active agent of God and to accomplish that task, he needed to be in constant communication with God. His ability to hear the people, intercede on their behalf, and bring them relief whether it be food or water, indicated a mutually respected relationship between the people and Moses. Again, as an adaptive leader, Moses demonstrated his feelings for others, his high regard for honesty, and his willingness to try new things.

The communication flow was discussed by Sweeney as “Moses’s encounter with YHWH and YHWH’s encounter with Moses in the Pentateuchal narrative.”⁵⁴ Sweeney continues building his claim by reviewing times when Moses made demands on God,

⁵¹ Kürle, “The Characters of God, Moses and Israel in the Rhetoric of the Book of Exodus,” 161.

⁵² Kürle, “The Characters of God, Moses and Israel in the Rhetoric of the Book of Exodus,” 163.

⁵³ Nilson, “Memories of Moses,” 290.

⁵⁴ Sweeney, “Moses’s Encounter with G-D and G-Ds Encounter with Moses,” 108.

such as when he asked God to consider “the viewpoint of Egypt and other nations of the world,” or when he demanded that “YHWH [had] the integrity to show fidelity to the covenant.”⁵⁵ This perspective substantiated Sweeney’s understanding of a two-way relationship between Moses and his God. Moses’s encounters with the people and God in the narratives of the bitter waters and lack of food support the concept that communication with God has a mutual component to it. Jesus confirmed this communication pattern when he taught the people to “ask and you shall receive” (Matt. 7:7).

Through the biblical accounts in Exodus 18, Moses was portrayed as one who listened, considered, and acted upon advice from wise counsel. This new system of hierarchal organization proposed by Jethro allowed for efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the people. Moses exhibited adaptive leadership as he, through wise counsel of Jethro, saw the wisdom of a new hierarchal organizational chart for the changing times.

Wahlin, a researcher from Regents University, conducted a study on Moses using the reference of Numbers 11. Because Numbers 11 correlated with Exodus 16, her insights were relevant to this body of research. As she studied Moses and the theory of adaptive leadership, she concluded that leaders who wanted to respond well to unexpected trials must “adapt to challenges just like Moses did, see the future in weak signals, practice courage, instill a positive opportunistic demeanor, and use conscious

⁵⁵ Sweeney, “Moses’s Encounter with G-D and G-Ds Encounter with Moses,” 108.

coordination to motivate followers.”⁵⁶ Moses did not allow the bitter waters, the lack of food, or the stubbornness of the people to deter the mission. The crises that the people encountered were real and brought about significant fear. Though this fear was often displayed through anger, Moses continued to be a positive agent, interceding on behalf of the people, and motivating the people to embrace higher standards.

These narratives provided examples of leadership qualities that Moses exhibited which he was faced with challenges. In the table below, the leadership characteristics of Moses have been delineated with biblical reference and research support. Each of the characteristics emerged from Moses’s behaviors as described in scripture and confirmed by researchers in the field of leadership.

Table 2. Characteristics of Moses Aligned to Biblical Reference and Researcher

Characteristics of Moses	Biblical Reference	Researcher
Accepts commission from God	Exodus 3	Prior to focus scripture
Understands and commits to the mission	Exodus 3; Exodus 15-18	Childs (2004); Stuart (2006)
Serves as an active agent of God	Exodus 7-13; Exodus 14; Exodus 15-18	Kürle (2005); Nilson (2017); Childs (2004); Hamilton (2011); Sweeney (2018)
Communicates with God and with Israelites	Exodus 15-18	Kürle (2005); Nilson (2017); Childs (2004); Hamilton (2011); Sweeney (2018)

⁵⁶ Lauren Wahlin, “Moses As An Agent of Adaptability: An Inner Texture Analysis of Numbers 11,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 9, no. 1 (Fall 2019): 264.

Acts as intercessor on behalf of the Israelites	Exodus 15-18	Kürle (2005); Nilson (2017); Sweeney (2018); Childs (2004)
Listens and is open to advice from a peer	Exodus 18	Childs (2004; Stuart (2006); Hamilton (2011); Hess (2016)
Shows courage	Exodus 17	Wahlin (2019); Childs (2004); Stuart (2006)
Acts as a motivator	Exodus 17	Wahlin (2019); Childs (2004); Stuart (2006); Trimm (2019); Hamilton (2011)
Serves as teacher and judge	Exodus 18	Wahlin (2019); Childs (2004); Stuart (2006); Trimm (2019); Hamilton (2011)

Moses exhibited mature and refined leadership characteristics exemplified through the biblical account describing multiple crises in the wilderness. Like Moses, pastors must be called by God and be able to stand firm on that knowledge. With the calling comes the mission. This mission is nonnegotiable in that it moved forward regardless of good times or times of challenges. Moses, as a model for 21st century pastors, demonstrated adaptive leadership in times of change. The crises presented themselves in the forms of a lack of drinking water, a lack of food, or an encroaching enemy. Adaptive leaders listened deliberatively, discerned with clarity the actual need, interceded on behalf of the people, and motivated them to stay focused on the mission.

Unquestionably, Moses was a patriarch of the Old Testament commissioned by God to serve through many crises. Moses, according to Nilson, “ensures the unity of

‘Israel’ through good days and bad, providing an identity through exile and settlement in foreign lands, and preserving hopes for a glorious future.”⁵⁷ Moses’s leadership characteristics included a life built on a personal character of integrity and courage, an unwavering commitment to God’s call and mission, and a mutually positive relationship between him and the people.

Joseph and the Significant Events of His Narrative

Joseph, an early leader, began to be challenged even as a young boy. The significance of including his life prior to Genesis 41 underlies how Joseph used adversity to his benefit. In spite of his challenges during his youth, Joseph demonstrated honorable values and behavior, a remarkable amount of self-discipline, a heart of compassion rather than bitterness, and a passionate sense of purpose. Understanding his past supports the position that he was able to adapt to situations and events—a skill that becomes essential during the global crisis that catapults Joseph to his final leadership position as second in command to Pharaoh.

Joseph, another patriarch of the Hebrew nation through the lineage of Abraham, was the firstborn son of Jacob’s favored wife, Rachel. Joseph’s life was a landscape of peaks and valleys representative of the human condition wrought with events of growth, aspiration, and conflict. The early recorded life of Joseph began when he was only seventeen, tending the flock along with his brothers. It appeared, according to Greenberger, that Joseph is “the master tender from whom the brothers learned the skill

⁵⁷ Nilson, “Memories of Moses,” 307.

of the trade.”⁵⁸ Joseph was precocious and at least once in the narrative reported the “misconduct of his brothers to his father’s attention”⁵⁹ without first informing his brothers. This set up an impediment to communication between Joseph and his brothers.

Jacob, however, seemed unaware of this and continued to commit acts that increased the simmering antagonism between the siblings such as bestowing a beautifully colored coat to Joseph. Favoritism, compounded by the lack of communication between siblings, set the stage for a potentially toxic situation. He was the favored son of his father but was disliked by his brothers to the point they plotted his death. Greenberger describes the relationship as one in which “his father’s preferential love and its display, the special coat, mirrored by his brothers’ hatred (ironically generated by this love), and its display’ led to jealousy.”⁶⁰ The dysfunctional family environment precipitated by Jacob’s doting on his son, Joseph, laid the groundwork for resentment and disrespect on the part of the brothers towards Joseph. This eventually led to the acts of malice on the part of Joseph’s brother.

Joseph, in his arrogance or perhaps naivete, was oblivious to his brothers’ potential reaction as he boldly shared a dream he had had in which he was the ruler over them. This only incited the brewing hostility, and the plot to kill Joseph was maliciously concocted. Throwing Joseph into a well, the brothers began the execution of their sinful

⁵⁸ Chaya Greenberger, “A Matter of Words and Assumptions in the Household of Jacob,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (Jul - Sep 2020): 145.

⁵⁹ Greenberger, “A Matter of Words and Assumptions in the Household of Jacob,” 146.

⁶⁰ Greenberger, “A Matter of Words and Assumptions in the Household of Jacob,” 143.

plan. Thanks to a traveling band of slave traders, Joseph was pulled from the well and sold, thus, beginning his journey to Egypt.

The journey from his homeland to Egypt has been categorized as a Diaspora. According to Kim, “in the story of the Diaspora communities, Joseph portrays a model of life amid the sociopolitical, ethnic, and economic struggles and tensions between the ‘insiders’ and the ‘outsiders,’ and between the powerful and the marginalized.”⁶¹ This immersive experience helped to build his communication skills and his cultural adaptation, preparing Joseph for leadership as narrated in Gen. 41. Marzouk further elaborates by stating, “Joseph’s integration into the Egyptian society, which was accompanied by a change of his status from a prisoner to a ruler, and which also affected the fortunes of both the host and the migrant communities, took place as a result of Joseph’s agentic capacities.”⁶² Marzouk alludes to agentic capacities explaining that “according to social cognitive theory, [it] allowed people to proactively influence their functional and external context.”⁶³ Joseph’s ability to immerse successfully in the culture and language of his “adopted” country indicated an adaptive and flexible nature. This integration into the society provided him skills to persevere through such obstacles as a false accusation and several years of imprisonment.

⁶¹ Hyun Chul Paul Kim, “Reading the Joseph Story (Genesis 37-50) as a Diaspora Narrative,” *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 75 (2013): 220.

⁶² Safwat Marzouk, “Migration in the Joseph Narrative,” *Hebrew Studies* 60 (2019): 75.

⁶³ Roberto Cenciotti, Laura Borgogni, Chiara Consiglio, Emiliano Fedeli, and Guido Alessandri, “The Work Agentic Capabilities (AC) Questionnaire: Validation of a New Measure,” *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 36, no. 3 (December 2020):195.

Examining the narrative and the Diaspora from a literary angle, King explains the writer's likely intent in embedding this journey to Egypt was not only to provide a conduit for the placement of the people of Israel into Egypt—a critical part of Jewish history—but to place “them there with honor.”⁶⁴ The family of Joseph according to later chapters in Genesis arrived “as honored guests of Pharaoh.”⁶⁵ The writer provided the setting as context to enable readers studying Joseph's life to identify and sympathize with the challenges of language and cultural acquisition in a new environment. Joseph modeled how to embrace both through adaptive behaviors. These very behaviors became instrumental to his ability to lead Egypt during the catastrophic global famine.

Once in Egypt, Joseph worked as the chief administrator, though a slave, at Potiphar's home. Potiphar's wife became enthralled with Joseph, seeking a sexual encounter. Bakon asserted that based on the phrasing in Gen. 39:10 in which she spoke to Joseph day after day, there may be an indication “that Joseph was slowly being worn down by Potiphar's wife.”⁶⁶ However, Joseph refused the enticements and endured false testimony by the wife, resulting in his imprisonment.

During his prison stint, Joseph befriended a cupbearer and a baker. Both had dreams requiring interpretation. According to Smith, “Joseph compassionately took notice of his fellow prisoners' sadness, and rather than ignoring it, he acted. Connection

⁶⁴ J. Robin King, “The Joseph Story and Divine Politics: A Comparative Study of a Biographic Formula from the Ancient Near East,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (Dec. 1987): 593.

⁶⁵ King, “The Joseph Story and Divine Politics,” 593.

⁶⁶ Shimon Bakon, “Subtleties in the Story of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 41, no. 3 (2013): 172.

was made.”⁶⁷ The baker was told of his upcoming death and the cupbearer of his promotion to serve Pharaoh. Both events occurred according to Joseph’s interpretation. It wasn’t until later when Pharaoh had a dream that the cupbearer, remorseful for forgetting his promise to Joseph, remembered how Joseph had interpreted his own dream.

These early events of Joseph’s life provided the context for Gen. 41 in which he was catapulted into a leadership role in Pharaoh’s cabinet. During his childhood and youth Joseph developed character and reliance on a sovereign God. God’s control of the details was striking in this narrative. Longman and Dillard states, “It appears that Joseph fell prey to ill luck as he moves from Palestine to Egypt and from Potiphar’s house to prison. Indeed, his life seems determined by those who sought to harm him, his brothers and Potiphar’s wife.”⁶⁸ But Joseph held tightly to a belief that there was purpose in all of his challenges and that what was meant for harm would be reversed to fulfill God’s plan (Gen. 50:19-20).

The researcher analyzed Gen. 41 using three scenarios: Pharaoh’s dream and Joseph’s interpretation, Pharaoh’s favor towards Joseph and his promotion to leadership, and Joseph as the prime minister. Throughout Gen. 41, Joseph was portrayed as a man true to his commitment, relentlessly following God, willing to adapt to situations, and exhibiting characteristics of leadership as a member of Pharaoh’s leadership team. As an

⁶⁷ Smith, “Joseph Authentic Leadership,” 298.

⁶⁸ Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 60.

adaptive leader, Joseph's tenacity, perseverance, and steadfastness were significant not only in his environment but as a role model for leaders in the 21st century.

Pharaoh's Dream and Joseph's Interpretation in Gen. 41:1-32

The setting of this portion of the narrative found Joseph in prison. Just as Potiphar had recognized Joseph's leadership characteristics, so the warden observed these attributes and placed him in charge of those held in prison. The cupbearer, a released fellow prisoner, had promised to remember Joseph after Joseph interpreted his dream, but once employed again in the palace, he forgot Joseph. Steinmann reminds the reader that Joseph had remained in prison for two years evoking "the reader's sympathy for Joseph who languished in custody."⁶⁹ Steinmann also points out that "had the cupbearer effected Joseph's release from prison earlier, Joseph may well not have been available to interpret Pharaoh's dream and, in turn, he may not have saved his family."⁷⁰ Joseph's narrative relies on divine timing for events. If Joseph had not been sold to slave traders, he would not have been in Egypt. If Joseph had not been falsely accused of a sex crime, he would not have been in jail to interpret the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker. If the cupbearer had not remembered Joseph, Joseph would not have been brought before Pharaoh. God had a divine plan for Joseph and each event in the narrative helped hone the skills he would need later when he faced the greatest crisis in the known world—a global famine.

⁶⁹Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. David G. Firth, and Tremper Longman III (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 379.

⁷⁰ Steinman, *Genesis*, 379.

Prior to the famine, Pharaoh had a troubling dream which defied interpretation by Pharaoh's wise counsel. The dreams were thematically the same but varied in the details: seven strong cows were contrasted with seven weak cows, resulting in the scrawny ones devouring the strong (Gen. 41:3-4) and seven heads of healthy and robust grain were juxtaposed to seven heads that had been scorched by the dry winds with the scrawny heads of grain swallowing the healthy (Gen. 41:4-7). The dreams were highly troubling to Pharaoh, so he sought counsel from his wise men but with no success (Gen. 41:8). Steinman notes the significance of the word *all* used twice "emphasizing the seriousness of Pharaoh's concern."⁷¹ McArthur states this counsel was "the combined expertise of a full council of Pharaoh's advisers and dream experts."⁷² Pett, further elaborates that these specialists were "the lector priests, learned men who had studied the sacred writing, rituals and spells taught" in the temple school⁷³. This context emphasized the significance the culture placed on dream interpretation and served to highlight Joseph's gift. Finally, the chief cupbearer remembered his forgotten promise to Joseph and shared the story of his imprisonment and how Joseph, a Hebrew, was able to interpret the dream accurately (Gen. 9-13).

Pharaoh, without hesitation, trusted the cupbearer's story and summoned Joseph from the dungeon. Joseph was cleaned and groomed for the appearance before Pharaoh

⁷¹ Steinman, *Genesis*, 381.

⁷² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2005), 157.

⁷³ Peter Pett, "Commentary on Genesis 41," in Peter Pett's *Commentary on the Bible, Book I* (East Renfrewshire, UK: Bluebox Publishing, 2011), Verse 8.

(Gen. 41:14). Pharaoh asserted that Joseph had the power to interpret dreams, but Joseph courageously corrected Pharaoh stating that it was God who would give the interpretation (Gen. 41:16). Pharaoh retold his dreams to Joseph in great detail (Gen. 41:17-24) while Joseph listened critically, deliberatively, and empathically. Both dreams were thematically intertwined and the revelation of the dreams concentrated on one event – a looming famine in which there would be seven years of abundance and seven years of famine (Gen. 41:25-31). Steinman analyzes the number of times the years of abundance were mentioned (1) as contrasted with the number of times the famine was mentioned (5). Steinmann concludes the purpose of the variance to be to magnify the severity and devastation of the famine.⁷⁴ Perhaps the most impactful and revealing verse was Gen. 41:32 in which Joseph declared, “The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms was that the matter had been firmly decided by God, and God would do it soon.” MacArthur notes that Joseph continued to keep “the focus fixed on what God had determined for Egypt.”⁷⁵ Another consideration that Pett introduces was a complementary interpretation that action on man’s part was an important ingredient in God’s plan. It should not lead “to inaction, it should lead to action. Because his ways were certain, men can prepare for them.”⁷⁶ God’s plan to save the world from global famine required that Joseph clearly articulate the interpretation of the dream. Joseph went further than the interpretation of the dream, and he recommended a detailed plan of

⁷⁴ Steinman, *Genesis*, 383.

⁷⁵ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 157.

⁷⁶ Pett, “Commentary on Genesis 41,” Verses 25-32.

action. He realized that an interpretation of a dream without the implementation of a plan of action would be idle and useless words. Interestingly, when Joseph was a teenager and shared his dream with his brothers about his ruling over them, he had no plan of action—just words. However, after years of acquiring the characteristics that equip adaptive leaders for successful outcomes, he stands ready to rely on God for both an interpretation of the dream and a course of action.

Steinman continues his commentary on the leadership characteristics that Joseph exhibited. Joseph was not asked by Pharaoh for an action plan, but he gave one anyway. According to Steinman “this advice shows Joseph’s administrative and planning skills that he had developed as an administrator of Potiphar’s household and as chief trustee in the royal prison.”⁷⁷ God allowed Joseph to learn from every challenge he faced in his life. Joseph’s leadership skills of giving his best efforts, acting as an agent of God, using his gifts and talents, listening carefully to fully understand each situation, and showing courage in the face of crises resulted from his life experiences.

In this dramatic encounter with Pharaoh, Joseph, as a potential leader, had established a reputation for having a gift and using it for the benefit of others. Joseph demonstrated a significant characteristic of an adaptive leader—the recognition of the talent and gifts at his disposal to seek creative solutions to a changing environment. His accuracy with the gift of interpretation resulted from his reliance on and dedication to God. Joseph also remembered from where the gift came as he stated “God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires” (Gen. 41:16). Commentators, Radmacher, Allen and

⁷⁷ Steinman, *Genesis*, 384.

House, further elaborate that “Joseph made it clear that he was speaking about the one God, not the numerous false gods that filled the Egyptian court.”⁷⁸ By articulating that the interpretation came from God, Joseph shows a willing heart to be used by God. His willingness to serve as an agent of God also builds his credibility. Adaptive leaders rely on their credibility to motivate followers to a successful outcome.

Another observation by Pett is the use of the word “to hear” in verse 15. It meant to “understand the language,” indicating that “Pharaoh was saying “as you hear you understand.”⁷⁹ Based on Pett’s observation, a reasonable inference can be drawn that Joseph had acquired listening and speaking fluency in the language of his adopted country. The ability to communicate clearly was unveiled in the verses that explained the dream and later in the narrative when Joseph proposed a plan. Joseph’s integration into Egyptian culture placed him in strong standing with Pharaoh. Pharaoh was able to converse with Joseph in the language of the land. Adaptive leaders such as Joseph understood the importance of connecting with those that would be his followers and the need to articulate in a meaningful way a creative solution to a challenging crisis.

In addition to his oral communication, Joseph used deliberative listening techniques, knowing that every detail he heard was likely important to the interpretation. A close examination of Joseph’s use of communication and listening techniques indicated the same effective leadership characteristics that are required by pastor leaders in the 21st

⁷⁸ Earl Radmacher, Ron Allen and H. Wayne House, *Compact Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc. 2004), 33.

⁷⁹ Pett, “Commentary on Genesis 41,” Verse 15,

century during crisis. Joseph's incorporation of listening skills not only led to an accurate interpretation of the dream, but it validated Pharaoh's foreboding feelings about the dreams thereby building a bridge of understanding between the two men. Relationship was a foundational to healthy leadership and transformational leadership, as exemplified in Gen. 41, indicated a strong partnership between the triad of Joseph and Pharaoh and the people.

Despite the numerous challenges Joseph encountered, including the forgetfulness of the cupbearer, Joseph continued to exemplify integrity through his honesty and moral principles. According to Erickson, "Joseph was wise enough to recognize God's hand in all this."⁸⁰ Joseph's character, wrought through time in his challenging crucible of life, molded and readied him for his upcoming leadership role in history. These years of challenges equipped Joseph with characteristics that adaptive leaders rely on for positive results.

Pharaoh Values Joseph and Promotes Him to Leadership in Gen. 41:33-45

Based on Joseph's declaration that God was in charge of the situation and based on the juxtaposition of verses 32-33, it appeared that a plan to address the crisis was also in God's hands. Joseph presented a plan that called for Pharaoh to find a wise man to head up the project with regional commissioners to oversee the collection of one-fifth of the harvest for seven years when the crops would be abundant. Radmacher, Allen, and House explain that though one-fifth seemed a large sum, it "would allow for spoilage, for

⁸⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 373.

trade, and grain to plant after the famine.”⁸¹ The storage of this harvest supplied the people of Egypt and neighboring lands with the ability to avoid the effects of starvation brought on by famine (Gen. 41:33-36). MacArthur points out that “Joseph, a slave and a prisoner, appended to the interpretation a long-term strategy for establishing reserves to meet the future need, and included advice on the quality of the man to head up the project.”⁸² This extension to the interpretation of the dream exhibited Joseph’s ability for creative thinking in a crisis situation, his level of courage to propose an idea to Pharaoh when it was not requested, and his skills to manage such an endeavor.

Pharaoh processed the plan, considered the personal benefit for himself as “an expansion of his authority”⁸³ and found it worthy. Pharaoh’s query showed his desire to find a man suitable for the job. Interestingly, he wanted a man “in whom [was] the spirit of God” (Gen. 41:37-38). It appeared through the juxtaposition of verses 37-38 and verses 39-40 that Pharaoh was immediately impressed with Joseph, stating that “there is no one so discerning and wise as you” (Gen. 41:39). Using this critique of Joseph’s skill set, Pharaoh appointed Joseph immediately to oversee the project. Joseph’s position was clearly established with his placement on the Egyptian hierarchal organizational chart—all the people submitted to Joseph, and Joseph was only directly responsible to Pharaoh (Gen. 41:39-40).

⁸¹ Radmacher, Allen, and House, *Nelson’s Compact Bible Commentary*, 34.

⁸² MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 157.

⁸³ Radmacher, Allen, and House, *Nelson’s Compact Bible Commentary*, 34.

To finalize the arrangement, Joseph was presented with the signet ring, a symbol of authority. Radmacher, Allen, and House indicate that Joseph's commands carried the same weight as Pharaoh's and "Joseph uses the ring to mark clay or wax to authenticate royal documents and laws."⁸⁴ MacArthur continues with a list of benefits bestowed on Joseph, including "official and recognizable transportation (Gen. 41:43), an Egyptian name (v. 45), and an Egyptian wife (v. 45)."⁸⁵ Joseph did not interpret the dream and propose a plan of action for worldly rewards, but rather he was exhibiting a willing heart to be used by God. Rewards may be an "added value" to being faithful to the mission, but when it is a primary pursuit, it can cause the leader to re-prioritize the essential values of the organization and its goals. If Joseph had focused solely on the rewards he might receive, he may have jeopardized the ingenious plan God gave to save the world.

To save the world from famine, Joseph had to navigate a multitude of challenges. Within a few years he went from the son of a wealthy agricultural family, to a slave in a foreign country, to a prisoner falsely accused, to the second in command in the mightiest nation of the known world. From each of these experiences he learned. Joseph demonstrated adaptive leadership characteristics in companionship with transformational and servant leadership attributes. Under normal circumstances, this moment might have wrought some anxiety for a young Joseph, but the challenges of his earlier days had prepared him for this moment. Furthermore, with an impending famine about to devastate the known world, the stakes were much higher. Because of Joseph's flexibility, he

⁸⁴ Radmacher, Allen, and House, *Nelson's Compact Bible Commentary*, 34.

⁸⁵ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 158.

acclimated well to his environment having language facility in the Egyptian tongue and awareness of cultural norms. Strong leaders such as Joseph were able to communicate articulately resolving tensions during crises. More importantly, Joseph was able to cast God's vision for his chosen people. In addition, Joseph's assimilation into his new society allowed him to more effectively lead them.

Joseph also honed the transformational leadership characteristics of humility and authenticity (by giving credit for the interpretation of the dream to God) and courage (by discerning the meaning of the dream and offering a plan of action). Pharaoh recognized these characteristics and named Joseph as the new prime minister. This new position guaranteed Joseph would have to exert reasoned, creative, and focused leadership during this predicted worldwide famine.

Joseph as Prime Minister in Gen. 41:46-57

The author of the Joseph narrative was careful to point out that Joseph was thirty years old when he was promoted to the rank of prime minister (Gen. 41:46). In thirteen years, Joseph ascended from slave to second in authority to Pharaoh as noted in the table below.

Table 3: Joseph's Journey to Becoming the Prime Minister

Age	Joseph's Situation	Bible Reference
17	Joseph is sold as a slave to Egyptian slave traders by his brothers	Gen. 37:2
28	Joseph is imprisoned and forgotten	Gen. 41:1 and 46
30	Joseph is made Prime Minister	Gen. 41:46

An intriguing journey of challenges led Joseph to the place where he was named as the prime minister of Egypt. Just as Joseph said, the seven years of abundant harvest came, and Joseph's plan was executed to store up the grain in various cities throughout Egypt. Interestingly, the narrator of the story pointed out that meticulous records of the intake of grain were originally kept, but the abundance was "beyond measure" so the process of bookkeeping was discontinued (Gen. 41:47-49). This detail acknowledged God's sovereignty, the precision and execution of the plan, and Joseph's effective leadership. Steinmann comments on Joseph's leadership skills stating that "without any central planning the normal human tendency is to overindulge when there is plenty, leaving no reserve for future need."⁸⁶ Joseph utilized strong, central planning to act methodically to save the known world.

Though the famine was devastating to the land, Joseph's food project was fully operational. MacArthur notes that the use of the word "all," when referencing the land, served as a hyperbole that "emphatically indicated the widespread ravaging impact of famine far beyond Egypt's borders."⁸⁷ The people were told by Pharaoh to "go to Joseph" (Gen. 41:55), indicating that "Joseph's authority remained intact, and Pharaoh still fully trusted his vizier."⁸⁸ Through Joseph's directive, the storehouses opened and grain was sold to the Egyptians (Gen. 41:50-57).

⁸⁶ Steinman, *Genesis*, 384-385.

⁸⁷ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 159.

⁸⁸ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 159.

Joseph was the prime minister during catastrophic times: a worldwide famine. The known world was unprepared, but God, through Joseph, revealed a divine plan to save mankind. Joseph demonstrated adaptive leadership by incorporating a creative plan to prevent the starvation of the known world's population. He expressed an openness to a new way of thinking and showed innovation. By saving grain for seven years in storehouses, he was able to accrue an abundance for the lean seven years. He incorporated a system that delegated jobs of collection to commissioners so that the enormous project could be completed in seven years.

Characteristics of Adaptive Leadership Exhibited by Joseph

Smith reminds the reader that “Joseph experienced multiple crucible experiences which spanned thirteen years (Gen. 37:2, 41:41).”⁸⁹ His brothers betrayed him, Potiphar's wife accused him of sexual misconduct, and the cupbearer did not remember the compassion and favor Joseph showed him. Smith sees this as Joseph's crucible building “character growth through hardship.”⁹⁰ Smith further concedes that “in the Joseph account, rising to power so abruptly and in such a drastic reversal could ruin a young leader,”⁹¹ but for Joseph, “his sufferings nurtured a meek spirit.”⁹² The hardships that Joseph faced might have left him bitter, feeling everything was out of his control. However, God was protecting him for a higher calling. Joseph knew his personal sphere

⁸⁹ Smith, “Joseph Authentic Leadership,” 291.

⁹⁰ Smith, “Joseph Authentic Leadership,” 291.

⁹¹ Smith, “Joseph Authentic Leadership,” 291.

⁹² Don N. Howell, Jr. *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 24.

of control was limited, but God placed him over Potiphar's household soon after arriving in Egypt. He allowed the prison guards to give Joseph leadership over the prisoners when Joseph was wrongly placed in prison. God gave him the gift of interpreting dreams.

Power has always been an interesting phenomenon. Psychologists labeled an aspect of power-the paradox of power. Dacher Keltner asserts that "the skills most important to obtaining power and leading effectively were the very skills that deteriorate once we had power."⁹³ For example, a rising leader may have displayed the qualities of friendliness, a solid work ethic, and a spirit of collegiality on the journey to that leadership position. Once reaching the position, researchers have noted that these same leaders often became selfish and even aggressive. The crucible of life that Joseph had endured did not erode the positive traits of leadership that Joseph possessed. He found favor with others through his compassion and his use of his gifts for their betterment. Upon becoming the prime minister, Joseph continued to display these traits.

In addition, Joseph exemplified integrity and honesty in his dealings with others. George asserts, "Integrity is the one value that is required in every authentic leader. Integrity is not just the absence of lying, but telling the whole truth, as painful as it may be."⁹⁴ Joseph's narrative indicated specific episodes when his integrity was called into play. When the cupbearer and the baker sought his insight, the cupbearer received good news whereas the baker learned of his death (Gen. 40:8). Joseph did not deter from the

⁹³ Dacher Keltner, "The Power Paradox," *Greater Good Magazine: Science-based Insights for a Meaningful Life*, December 1, 2007, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/power_paradox.

⁹⁴ Bill George, *Authentic leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 20.

truth. Adaptive leaders like Joseph utilized discernment, clarity of thought, authenticity, and integrity when identifying the problem and proposing a workable solution. Time to think and plan was not an option when once again, Joseph's talents were sought and this time the stakes were higher; he stood before the Pharaoh of Egypt. Walton asserted that Pharaoh was considered a god himself.⁹⁵ And yet, after acknowledging to Pharaoh that God alone interpreted dreams, Joseph standing courageously unfolded the historical events of the famine that would span the next fourteen -7 years of bounty followed by 7 years of famine.

Another leadership trait that Joseph exhibited was humility. Even before being summoned before Pharaoh, Joseph upon receiving his prison sentence showed humility. Scripture does not provide any evidence that Joseph was indignant over being unjustly imprisoned. In another more dramatic situation, Joseph's humility was on display. When Pharaoh summoned Joseph, Joseph quickly affirmed that the gift of interpreting dreams was not of his doing, but of God's (Gen. 41:16). Joseph directed the glory from himself to the Almighty. Arnold explains that Joseph's proclamation in verse 16 "was at one and the same time a refutation to Pharaoh and his worldview and an undeniable confirmation of the truth of Joseph's."⁹⁶ Again, Joseph was not afforded the commodity of time to offer his interpretation, and as an adaptive leader with humility and integrity, he creatively addressed a solution to the problem.

⁹⁵ John Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary, Genesis: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 674.

⁹⁶ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 153.

Joseph's character as an adaptive leader was examined by L. Pollard and P. Pollard in their writings in which they identified several characteristics of leadership exhibited by Joseph: choice, vision, endurance, self-management, discernment, diligence, and compassion.⁹⁷ Both researchers stressed that Joseph made an intentional decision not to be like the members of his dysfunctional family. For example, when Joseph's brothers perceived favoritism by their father towards Joseph, they became jealous which led to selling Joseph to the Egyptians. Joseph, on the other hand, when presented with an equally difficult situation with Potiphar's wife chose to reject the advances and was incarcerated. Joseph held to a faith that God was still working for him.

Vision, according to L. Pollard and P. Pollard, indicates God's calling, which was revealed to Joseph in dreams that he would become a leader. Joseph never loosened his grip on this promise and persevered demonstrating "that rejection of the dreamer did not kill his dream."⁹⁸ Self-management "describes the leader's ability to control their own thinking, emotions, and behavior"⁹⁹ and this trait was highlighted in Joseph's responses to each challenge he faced and perhaps most descriptively in his interaction with Potiphar's wife. Diligence, the steady efforts of someone to accomplish or complete a task, is another characteristic that L. Pollard and P. Pollard mention. Joseph's diligence was rewarded while he was in prison and for that, he was given a leadership role (Gen.

⁹⁷ Leslie N. Pollard and Prudence L. Pollard, "The Joseph Factor: Seven Principles of Effective Leadership," *Ministry* (November 2008): 5-9.

⁹⁸ Pollard and Pollard, "The Joseph Factor," 6.

⁹⁹ Pollard and Pollard, "The Joseph Factor," 8.

39:22). Compassion was the seventh component L. Pollard and P. Pollard acknowledge, which was exemplified in Joseph's treatment of the cupbearer as he listened and interpreted the meaning of his dream, his concern for the people of Egypt during the famine, and even in the naming of his firstborn son, Manasseh which means "God caused me to forget all my suffering" (Gen. 41:51). Joseph exhibited characteristics of adaptive leadership. These are delineated in the table below with biblical reference and research support. Each of the characteristics emerged from actions described in scripture and confirmed by researchers in the field of leadership.

Table 4. Characteristics of Joseph Aligned to Biblical Reference and Researcher

Characteristics of Joseph	Biblical Reference	Researcher
Shows a willing heart to be used by God	Gen. 41 and 50:19-20	Longman & Dillard (2006); Erickson (2004); MacArthur (2005); Radmacher, Allen & House (2004); Arnold (1998); Pollard & Pollard (2008)
Accepts his situation and still offers his best efforts	Gen.39:2-6; Gen.39:21-23; Gen. 40; Gen. 41	Erickson (2004); MacArthur (2005); Longman and Dillard (2006); Smith (2019); Pollard & Pollard (2008)
Serves as an active agent of God which enables credibility	Gen.41:16	MacArthur (2005); Radmacher, Allen & House (2004); Marzouk (2019); Pett (2022); Erickson (2004); Arnold (1998); Pollard & Pollard (2008)
Communicates the message of God clearly and in the native tongue of the Egyptians	Gen. 41:16; Gen. 41:25-36	Pett (2022); Kim (2013); Marzouk (2019); MacArthur (2005); Radmacher, Allen &

		House (2004); Arnold (1998)
Acts as an interpreter on behalf of God	Gen. 40; Gen. 41:16; Gen.41:25-36	Pett (2022); Kim (2013); Marzouk (2019); MacArthur (2005); Radmacher, Allen & House (2004); Arnold (1998)
Listens carefully to others to fully understand the situation	Gen. 41:17-24	Pett (2022)
Shows courage	Gen. 41:16; Gen. 41:25-36	Bakon (2013); MacArthur (2005); Walton (2001); Arnold (1998)
Models a life that bridges ethnicities and the power welders and the marginalized shows compassion	Gen. 39:2-6; Gen. 41	Kim (2013); Marzouk (2019)
	Gen. 40:6-8; Gen. 41:33-36; Gen. 41:56-57	Smith (2019); Marzouk (2019); Pollard & Pollard (2008)
Proposes and executes a plan of action; vision	Gen. 41:33-36; Gen. 41:47-49	Radmacher, Allen & House (2004); MacArthur (2005); Pollard & Pollard (2008)
Exhibits integrity, honesty, discerning, and wise	Gen. 40:12, 18; Gen. 41:28; Gen. 41:39; Gen. 41:54	Smith (2019); George (2003); Arnold (1998); Pollard & Pollard (2008)
Exhibits humility	Gen. 41:16	Arnold (1998); Smith (2019); MacArthur (2005); Howell (2003); Arnold (1998)
Exhibits endurance and steadfastness	Gen. 41:1; Joseph's life from age 17-30	Pollard & Pollard (2008)

Joseph showed astute wisdom and unwavering faith as he navigated an early childhood in a dysfunctional home, followed by false accusations by his boss's wife, and finally imprisonment for a crime he did not commit. God was readying him for leadership during a global crisis that required the particular and unique set of leadership skills Joseph was developing. Because of Joseph's challenging past, God was able to use Joseph's skills to provide a solution to a global famine. More importantly, Joseph's leadership helped move God's redemptive plan forward by saving the Israelites from whose lineage Jesus would come.

Joseph's steadfastness to the commands of God allowed him to remain unwavering when challenges, not necessarily of his own making, placed him in perilous situations. With no experience wasted, God raised Joseph to leadership, leaving behind Joseph's legacy of perseverance and steadfastness despite life's circumstances. As Gnuse points out, there were themes of the "underdog healer/interpreter" who can "perform the task that the king's chosen servants cannot do."¹⁰⁰ Smith reminds the reader that "Joseph's admirable character traits, however, developed over time through endurance was cultivated by hardship."¹⁰¹ Joseph's evolution as a leader was exemplified in his unwavering commitment to God, and God's call to Joseph to take on a leadership role. Successful leaders throughout history, who have found themselves in crisis, remained dedicated to their vision and mission, followed the plan, and were unwavering in the face

¹⁰⁰ Gnuse, "The Hero Who Helps a King in Jewish and Greek Literature," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2010): 44.

¹⁰¹ Melody Smith, "Joseph Authentic Leadership," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 9 no.1 (Fall 2019): 291.

of challenges. Joseph's adaptivity through his early life provided skills of adaptive leadership when the stakes were higher. His acculturation with Egyptian culture enhanced his ability to be a transformational leader. His concern for the people who would starve without a plan indicated his attitude of servant leadership. His ability to embrace a plan outside the status quo based on a dream, use the talents God gave him to their optimal performance, and establish trust and credibility positioned him as an adaptive leader.

Conclusion

Global crises, whether it was Moses's negotiating the end of slavery for the Israelites and moving them towards the promised land, or Joseph's use of his gift of interpreting dreams and a God-given plan to address the global famine, or the COVID pandemic of the 21st century, required leadership that is adaptive and transformative. Embracing a flexible mindset to address a changing environment while creating positive changes for the followers in the pursuit of an end goal were essential components of the leadership styles of both Joseph and Moses. Joseph and Moses both exemplified characters of integrity who had an unwavering commitment to the mission to which God had called them. Their personal characteristics of honesty and humility allowed them to value and respect those they led. For these reasons, Joseph and Moses have continued to serve as rich and essential role models that God has used magnificently in times of crisis. Pastor leaders of the 21st century should seek these models as evidence of adaptive, transformational, and servant leadership in crises.

CHAPTER THREE: A REVIEW OF CRISIS LEADERSHIP LITERATURE

The problem addressed in this study targeted the scarcity of best practices available to pastors when facing a crisis. In this chapter, the researcher focused on the areas of crisis leadership, leadership theories/traits, and adaptive leadership. To show the relationship between crisis leadership, the evolution of leadership theories, and the emergence of adaptive leadership, the researcher began by laying the foundation with a concise definition of the word crisis as it applies to systems and organizations.

Crisis Leadership

Definition of Crisis and Leadership

The word crisis is rooted “in the Greek *krisis*, which denotes choice, decision, or judgment.”¹⁰² Crisis is defined as a period of difficulty in which important and turning point decisions are required, often without the luxury of time. According to Firestone, a crisis “is a situation that develops quickly and requires a response to mitigate the consequences.”¹⁰³ Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, and Coombs further explain that “an organizational crisis—an event perceived by managers and stakeholders as highly salient, unexpected, and potentially disruptive—threatens an organization’s goals and has profound implications for its relationships with stakeholders.”¹⁰⁴ Scholars agree that a crisis is seldom an event for which an organization plans. It has the power

¹⁰² Carsten Lund Pedersen, Thomas Ritter, and C. Anthony Di Benedetto, “Managing through a Crisis: Managerial Implications for Business-to-Business Firms,” *Industrial Marketing Management* 88 (July 2020): 315, DOI: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.05.034.

¹⁰³ Steve Firestone, “What is Crisis Leadership?” in *Biblical Principles of Crisis Leadership* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020): 8, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-44955-1_2.

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Bundy, Michael D. Pfarrer, Cole E. Short, and W. Timothy Coombs, “Crises and Crisis Management: Integration, Interpretation, and Research Development,” *Journal of Management* 43, no. 6 (July 2017), 1662.

to divert resources toward addressing the disruption. When this occurs the goals and missions may be diverted as survival becomes the apex of attention. A crisis, therefore, has the potential for significant impact on all members and stakeholders of an organization.

Crisis management research indicates that a crisis is composed of five phases: pre-crisis, crisis emergence, crisis occurrence, crisis aftermath, and post-crisis.¹⁰⁵ In the pre-crisis phase, “organizations seek to *prevent* (if possible), *predict*, or *prepare* for it.”¹⁰⁶ Some crises such as hurricanes and earthquakes enable organizations to be more predictive in determining the next storm. However, others, such as a global pandemic, may not provide that opportunity. During the emergence phase, “a crisis has not started, but its signs have become clearer.”¹⁰⁷ Once the crisis occurs, the organization jumps into crisis response which “usually is tactical in nature, involving communication, actions, and behaviors.”¹⁰⁸ Carsten emphasizes that “the need for strong leadership tends to be pronounced in this phase of a crisis.”¹⁰⁹ The crisis aftermath ushers in a new normal before organizations return to business as they knew it before. This phase includes “rebuilding destroyed property, giving overworked response units some time off, and catching up on postponed or disrupted work flows.”¹¹⁰ Though scholars have been able to study various crisis situations and identify specific phases, one cannot infer that one phase ends before the next one begins. For example, crisis emergence and crisis occurrence can be blurred at times

¹⁰⁵ Pederson, “Managing through a Crisis,” 318.

¹⁰⁶ Pederson, “Managing through a Crisis,” 317.

¹⁰⁷ Pederson, “Managing through a Crisis,” 317.

¹⁰⁸ Pederson, “Managing through a Crisis,” 317.

¹⁰⁹ Pederson, “Managing through a Crisis,” 317.

¹¹⁰ Pederson, “Managing through a Crisis,” 317.

dependent on the speed at which a crisis interrupts the workings of the organization. In addition, scholars do not place a time frame around each phase. Variations in time may depend on various factors such as the type of crisis, the damage inflicted due to the crisis, the organizational protocols that may or may not be in place, and the type and quality of leadership the organization has to guide it through the crisis.

Leadership during these unexpected, disruptive times requires a genre of leadership known as crisis leadership. Crisis leadership considers the process and strategies that a leader uses to respond to a crisis. According to Firestone “crisis leadership looked at the enduring role of a leader before, during, and after the crisis”¹¹¹ whereas the crisis manager was focused on an “immediate recovery. The distinction between a leader and a manager as articulated by Firestone prominently places the leader as present before the problem, during the problem, and afterwards; the leader is intricately involved in all five phases of the crisis. The manager, on the other hand, is an immediate change agent focused on the crisis itself. The researcher examined the dynamics of leadership rather than those who took on a managerial role..

Impacts of Crisis

A crisis of any measure, whether it be a strike of the rail services transporting goods across a country or a lack of staffing in an organization to provide needed services, results in impacts on other systems. If the railway is not operative, manufacturing and retail services are directly affected both on the production side at the factories and getting products to market. If a company is short-staffed, then customers cannot be serviced, and the business faces potential failure.

¹¹¹ Firestone, “What is Crisis Leadership?” 19.

Impacts from crisis are felt both initially and residually. Elmore includes a unique perspective on the global pandemic by examining the culture and environment impacted. The author, Elmore, noted that though the world appeared unprepared for the pandemic, elements of society had been nourishing an environment that would stimulate unrest in the event of such a crisis. He explains that, “over the first twenty years of this century, our world became on-demand, and instant access, driven by a gig economy, with a 24/7 news cycle on broadcast and social media.”¹¹² This constant barrage of news feeds, touting such continuous banner phrases as “Breaking News,” only heightened a sense of urgency that was compounded multiple times a day. This bombardment heightened anxiety and readied a population for potential unrest and confusion.

Elmore continues to describe a stage of unrest by noting the number of CEOs that left positions—both willingly and unwillingly. *Fortune* magazine dubs it “The Great CEO Exodus of 2020.”¹¹³ Elmore continues his exposition on the exodus of CEOs by describing the environment in which leaders found themselves as complicated, difficult, and complex. He posits that leaders were faced with a complex situation, meaning “a difficult situation stares you in the face that is constantly evolving.”¹¹⁴ A crisis of magnitude seemingly affected the top leadership and their desire to continue under such circumstances. Leadership change through the exodus of CEOs emerged as a direct result of the impact of a real or perceived crisis. Leadership in ministerial service mirrored the business world as pastors were faced with a complex situation, a pandemic,

¹¹² Tim Elmore, *The Eight Paradoxes of Great Leadership: Embracing the Conflicting Demands of Today's Workplace* (Nashville, TN: HarperCollins Leadership, 2021), 2.

¹¹³ Elmore, *The Eight Paradoxes of Great Leadership*, 3.

¹¹⁴ Elmore, *The Eight Paradoxes of Great Leadership*, 8.

just as secular leaders. Both types of leaders felt the weight of the magnitude of stress and pressure. Elkington states that prior to the pandemic “statistics show that three pastors in North America leave the vocational ministry every day to move into a different career path.”¹¹⁵ Add the pandemic and its ramifications to the already stressful tasks of CEOs and pastors, leaders can become overwhelmed. When the stress is unrelenting, the emotional well-being of individuals becomes endangered. During a crisis, people are faced with the unknown and that breeds behaviors such as fear, misrepresentation of facts, anger, and even conspiracy theories.

The barrage of media coverage on a continual and repetitive cycle compounded with a mentality by the population of immediacy nurtured a state of crisis over-reaction. These factors influenced the level of organizational preparedness for crisis—the pre-crisis stage. According to Bundy and his team, the level of organizational preparedness for crisis tended to either minimize or maximize the impact of crisis. Bundy and his team examined the internal structuring of organizations and found that reliability and a positive culture/structure were the best indicators of organizations that successfully withstood a crisis. Bundy defines reliability as the ability of organizations to “orient themselves—via changes in culture, design, and structure—to prevent system breakdowns that may lead to crises.”¹¹⁶ Regardless of outside influences, effective organizations were able to keep a clear focus on the internal workings of the organization by nourishing the culture and creating positive relationships through purposeful design.

Even with organizational structures firmly implanted, impacts from a crisis may still resonate throughout systems. Carsten acknowledges that “even if the crisis is unpredictable and

¹¹⁵ Robert Elkington, “Adversity in Pastoral Leadership: Are Pastors Leaving the Ministry in Record Numbers, and If So, Why?” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1, [http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ ve.v34i1.821](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i1.821).

¹¹⁶ Bundy, “Crises and Crisis Management,” 1667.

evolving, decision-makers must follow logical patterns, which can be especially difficult with insufficient or conflicting data.”¹¹⁷ However, Carsten points out that “decision-making speed” often caused organizations to fall “victim to ‘analysis paralysis.’”¹¹⁸ The more complex a situation becomes and the more the environment shifts, often fed with contradictory information, the more flexibility and adaptability is required by leaders to be effective.

Leadership Theory and Characteristics

Leadership has been studied for centuries by scholars searching for those characteristics that would solidify a profile of a strong and effective leader. There is little question that effective leadership is especially necessary during a time of crisis. To understand this pursuit by scholars, the researcher took a cursory exploratory glance at the theories that set the groundwork for adaptive leadership with a focus on transformational and servant leadership.

Leadership has never been especially easy, but Van Wart, from his observations, states, “leadership is difficult in all eras, to be sure, but it seems that today’s leaders face additional challenges.”¹¹⁹ To grasp the evolution of leadership from pre-1900 to the 21st century, Van Mart constructs a detailed document that revealed characteristics scholars found during each major historical period. One approach, called theories of leadership, allowed these scholars to hone in on an explanation of why certain individuals rose to power by examining the behaviors and characteristics of those leaders. Van Mart condenses the eras of leadership theory and research into a table shown below.

¹¹⁷ Carsten, “Managing through a Crisis,” 318.

¹¹⁸ Carsten, “Managing through a Crisis,” 318.

¹¹⁹ Montgomery Van Wart, “Public-Sector Leadership Theory: An Assessment,” *Public Administration Review* 63, no. 2 (March/April 2003): 214.

Table 5: Eras of Mainstream Leadership Theory and Research¹²⁰

Eras	Major Time Frame	Description
Great Man	Pre-1900; continues to be popular in biographies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on emergence of a great figure such as a Napoleon, George Washington, or Martin Luther, who has substantial effect on society. • Era influenced by notions of national social change by uniquely talented and insightful individuals.
Trait	1900-48; current resurgence of recognition of importance of natural talents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the individual traits (physical, personal, motivational, aptitudes) and skills (communication and ability to influence) that leaders bring to all leadership tasks. • Era influenced by scientific methodologies in general (especially industrial measurement) and scientific management in particular (for instance, the definition of roles and assignment of competencies to those roles.)
Contingency	1948-80s; continues as the basis of rigorous models but with vastly expanded situational repertoire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the situational variables that leaders must deal with, especially performance and follower variables. Shift from traits and skills to behaviors (for example, energy levels and communication skills to role clarification and staff motivation). Dominated by bimodal models in its heyday. • Era influenced by the rise of human relations theory, behavioral science (in areas such as motivation theory), and the use of small group experimental designs in psychology.
Transformational	1978-present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on leaders who create change in deep structures, major processes, or overall cultural. Leader mechanisms may be compelling vision, brilliant technical insight, and/or charismatic quality. • Era influenced by the loss of American dominance in business, finance, and science, and the need to re-energize various industries which had slipped into complacency.
Servant	1977-present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the ethical responsibilities to followers, stakeholders, and society. Business theorists tend to emphasize service to followers; political theorists emphasize citizens; public administration analysts tend to emphasize legal compliance and/or citizens. • Era influenced by social sensitivities raised in the 1960s and 1970s.

¹²⁰ Montgomery Van Wart, "Public-Sector Leadership Theory: An Assessment," 218.

Multifaceted	1990s-present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on integrating the major schools, especially the transactional schools (trait and behavior issues largely representing management interested) and transformational schools (visionary, entrepreneurial, and charismatic). • Era affected by a highly competitive global economy and the need to provide a more sophisticated and holistic approach to leadership.
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Source Data from Montgomery Van Wart, "Public-Sector Leadership Theory: An Assessment," *Public Administration Review*, 63, no. 2 (March/April 2003): 218. Table 1.

The Great Man Theory

The Great Man Theory "assumes that the capacity for leadership is inherent" and "often portrays leaders as heroic, mythic and destined to rise to leadership when needed."¹²¹ Another author states that this theory "espouses that great leaders are born, not made."¹²² There are two underlying assumptions in this theory, first presented in the 19th century by such historians as Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle takes a historical view that all of history rested upon the individual biographies of great men. One underpinning assumption is that great leaders possess "certain traits that enable them to rise and lead."¹²³ The other assumption is that "great leaders can arise when the need for them is great."¹²⁴

¹²¹ Rose Ngozi Amanchukwu, Gloria Jones Stanley, and Nwachukwu Prince Ololube, "A Review of Leadership Theories, Principles and Styles, and Their Relevance to Educational Management," *Management* 5, no. 1 (2015), 8.

¹²² "The Great Man Theory Explained," Villanova Leadership, last updated September 6, 2022, <https://www.villanovau.com/resources/leadership/great-man-theory/#:~:text=The%20Great%20Man%20Theory%20of%20Leadership%20espouses%20that,lead%20while%20shaping%20the%20very%20pages%20of%20history.>

¹²³ "The Great Man Theory Explained," Villanova Leadership.

¹²⁴ "The Great Man Theory Explained," Villanova Leadership.

Not all thinkers agreed with Carlyle. Herbert Spencer, the famed philosopher during the Victorian era, found the theory to be “childish, primitive, and unscientific.”¹²⁵ Spencer believes that “society has to make” the leader.¹²⁶ The Great Man Theory has also been criticized as male-centered and standing in contradiction to the idea of learned leadership. Burns adds more concerns in that the heroes of years past “were often shown to be morally flawed, or in fact the product of myriad others who shared little of the glory.”¹²⁷

The Great Man Theory must be considered in a discussion of crisis and adaptive leadership in part due to the second assumption—great leaders arise when the need for their leadership is required. Organ asserts the importance of recognizing the value of this theory in that “there are innate differences among leaders and those who follow them.”¹²⁸ Organ further posits that because “the timely emergence of situational forces greatly affects the successes and failures of those who lead us, how, then, are we to explain what seems painfully obvious if we refuse to recognize the Great Man Theory.”¹²⁹ A major limitation of this theory for a crisis situation seems to rest with the finding that when the situation appears, a leader arises. However, that seems contradictory to the scholars who suggest that effective leaders are present before during and after a crisis.

¹²⁵ “The Great Man Theory Explained,” Villanova Leadership.

¹²⁶ “The Great Man Theory Explained,” Villanova Leadership.

¹²⁷ James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership* (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 11.

¹²⁸ Dennis W. Organ, “Leadership: The Great Man Theory Revisited,” *Business Horizons* 39, no. 3 (May-June 1996): 4.

¹²⁹ Organ, “Leadership,” 4.

The Trait Theory

The trait theory dates back, according to Van Wart, to the 1900s and is currently enjoying a resurgence of interest by scholars. This theory espouses that all leaders who were effective would exhibit certain, identifiable traits. According to Pervin, the most difficult task scholars have dealt with was agreeing on a working definition of the word *traits*. Some scholars equate traits with “functioning and behaviors”¹³⁰ while other scholars have added “thoughts, feelings, and motivation.”¹³¹ In 2002, the Project Manager Competency Development (PMCD) framework was developed, identifying competencies of achievement and action, helping and human service, impact and influence, managerial, cognitive, and personal effectiveness.¹³² Included in these competencies are relationship-building, information seeking, self-confidence, flexibility, organizational commitment, and initiative.¹³³ A study by Kapucu and Ustom examines leadership competencies and the effectiveness of crisis management in Turkey and found that “task-oriented, people-oriented, and organization-oriented categories of leadership behaviors were found with the highest level of impact on the effectiveness of crisis management.”¹³⁴ The ability to identify traits or characteristics seems to provide a way of sorting

¹³⁰ Lawrence A. Pervin, “A Critical Analysis of Current Trait Theory,” *Psychological Inquiry* 5, no. 2 (1994): 108.

¹³¹ Pervin, “A Critical Analysis of Current Trait Theory,” 108.

¹³² Dean R. Gehring, “Applying Traits Theory of Leadership to Project Management,” *Project Management Journal* 38, no. 1 (2007): 47.

¹³³ Gehring, “Applying Traits Theory of Leadership to Project Management,” 48.

¹³⁴ Naim Kapucu and Yusuf Ustun, “Collaborative Crisis Management and Leadership in the Public Sector,” *International Journal of Public Administration* 41, no. 7 (2018):548, DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2017.1280819.

and sifting individuals suited for leadership. With the PCMD instrument, there appears to be an emphasis on the managerial aspects rather than leadership traits.

Pervin identifies flaws in the trait theory due to its inability “to come to grips with the issues of personality dynamics and personality pattern and organization.”¹³⁵ Due to this insight, Pervin views this model as static rather than dynamic. This theory has also been criticized because it fails to answer the question of “How do we explain people who possess those qualities but are not leaders?”¹³⁶ Fleenor adds that “researchers found very small relationships between these traits and leadership effectiveness.”¹³⁷ Another drawback to this theory is the lack of value placed on creative thinking and flexibility-two traits valued in adaptive leadership.

The Contingency Theory

The connection between identified traits, behaviors, and a given situation is connected in the contingency theory. The theory also recognizes that “no single leadership style is appropriate in all situations.”¹³⁸ Ideas, such as the effectiveness of a leader, are revealed in multiple ways: the leader’s problem-solving skills; the leadership style and the maturity of the followers; and, the appropriate match of leadership style to the situation. Several models, such as the Fiedler Contingency Model, Hersey and Blanchard Situational Theory, Evans and House Path-Goal Theory, Cognitive Resource Theory, and Strategic Contingencies Theory, have emerged over

¹³⁵ Pervin, “A Critical Analysis of Current Trait Theory,” 111.

¹³⁶ Amanchukwu, Stanley, and Ololube, “A Review of Leadership Theories, Principles, and Styles, and Their Relevance to Educational Management,” 8.

¹³⁷ John W. Fleenor, *Encyclopedia of Industrial and Organization Psychology*, (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, 2006), 831.

¹³⁸ Amanchukwu, Stanley, and Ololube, “A Review of Leadership Theories, Principles, and Styles, and Their Relevance to Educational Management,” 8.

time each with varied nuances. Contingency Theory provides a more holistic view of leadership from the Great Man and Trait theories.

Contingency Theory and its descendants concentrate on a given situation and its resultant impact on leadership behaviors. This approach may prove beneficial during a crisis as the leader discerns the range of severity of a situation and identifies the appropriate leadership skills to use. The pragmatism and execution of this approach makes it worthy of consideration. The creation of contingency theory propels the research of leadership theory forward and provided significant components found in the transformational and adaptive leader.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory advances the descriptive approach identifying characteristics of relationships between followers and leaders. Burns defines transformational leadership as a mutual or dualistic system in which both the leader and the followers engage in “raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation.”¹³⁹ In addition, Burns brings forward the term empowerment to describe the relationship. Burns posits that “instead of exercising power over people, transforming leaders champion and inspire followers.”¹⁴⁰ Another scholar, Barnard Bass, builds upon Burn’s theory of transformational leadership, developing the Bass Transformational Leadership Theory. Bass’s theory identifies four components of a transformational leader: intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Within each component, Bass identifies such behaviors as questioning the status quo, exploring new experiences and opportunities, engaging in creative

¹³⁹ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 20.

¹⁴⁰ James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 26.

thinking, making employees feel like they have a sense of ownership, sharing trust and respect for followers, having a strong sense of purpose, communicating a clear organizational vision, and motivating others to act at a higher level ethically.¹⁴¹ Bolsinger states that “the characteristics of transformational spiritual and organizational change leaders reveal a picture of attributes that make up a tempered, resilient leader: one that is grounded, teachable, attuned, adaptable, and tenacious.”¹⁴² Bolsinger further states that “if the purpose of a transformational leader is to hew stones of hope out of a mountain of despair, then we would expect that process to be as transformative for a leader.”¹⁴³ Transformational leadership impacts both the leader and the follower as the relationship is united through vision and a sense of mission.

Historically, crisis presented opportunities that tested the effectiveness of leaders. Bolsinger posits that “transformational leadership for uncharted territory lies at the intersection of three overlapping leadership components: technical competence, relational congruence, and adaptive capacity.”¹⁴⁴ Bolsinger explains that technical competence includes management of “those tasks, priorities, and relationships that protect and preserve the organization.”¹⁴⁵ Continuing, Bolsinger states that relational congruence is “the character, care, and constancy that create the necessary health and trust in an organization that enables it to let go, learn as you go,

¹⁴¹ Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁴² Todd Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders are Formed in the Crucible of Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 6.

¹⁴³ Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, 49.

¹⁴⁴ Bolsinger, *Leadership for a Time of Pandemic: Practicing Resilience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 13.

¹⁴⁵ Bolsinger, *Leadership for a Time of Pandemic*, 14.

and keep going.”¹⁴⁶ The component of adaptability exemplifies a leader’s “commitment to personal transformation.” Bolsinger reiterates his point by defining leadership that becomes transformational through its ability to be adaptive. The author further describes this capacity as “the ability to lead the process of shifting values, habits, and behaviors in order to grow and discover solutions to the greatest challenges brought on by a changing world.”¹⁴⁷

Transformational leadership theory highlights character, integrity, values, a viable and genuine concern for the followers, and a desire for growth and empowerment of both leader and follower.

Burns describes transformational leadership as “vigorous interaction between transforming leaders and their followers.”¹⁴⁸ He further states that this interaction “is itself a powerful causal force for change.”¹⁴⁹ The scholars tend to agree that during a crisis, a leadership approach that encompasses the ability to think creatively, interact vigorously and respectfully with employees, promote an unwavering organizational vision and motivate followers will prove effective. According to Desyatnikov, “one of the best leadership styles for managing an external crisis is transformational.”¹⁵⁰ Desyatnikov viewed the transformational leader as one who can “see the bigger picture to better understand the extent of the crisis before executing the response.”¹⁵¹ Transformational leadership provides an exemplary approach for leaders during

¹⁴⁶ Bolsinger, *Leadership for a Time of Pandemic*, 14.

¹⁴⁷ Bolsinger, *Leadership for a Time of Pandemic*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 25.

¹⁴⁹ Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 25.

¹⁵⁰ Russian Desyatnikov, “Management in Crisis: The Best Leadership Style to Adopt in Times of Crisis,” *Forbes* (July 17, 2020), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2020/07/17/management-in-crisis-the-best-leadership-style-to-adopt-in-times-of-crisis/?sh=4716229d7cb4>.

¹⁵¹ Desyatnikov, “Management in Crisis.”

crisis. This leader has established the personal integrity and has built the strong relationships, so when crisis comes, this leader can embrace the adaptive leadership model to move the organization forward.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership, like transformational leadership, presents an ethical component to its leadership model. Canavesi and Minelli define servant leadership as “a form of moral-based leadership where leaders tend to prioritize the fulfillment of the needs of followers, namely employees, customers and other stakeholders, rather than satisfying their personal needs.”¹⁵² Servant leadership is a values-based way to lead. This leader values people and chooses to behave in a way that is best for the employees or congregants rather than placing a priority on fulfilling his or her personal needs.

Greenleaf and his team examines a different type of leadership, leading to the incorporation of the term “servant leadership” which emphasizes the idea of humility as opposed to a narcissistic leaning in which leaders “act in their own best interest.”¹⁵³ Servant leadership was identified by certain features such as listening empathetically, awareness of the environment, commitment to others’ personal growth, and community building.¹⁵⁴ Osborne states that “it’s not so much about the *task* of leadership as it is about the *heart* of leadership.”¹⁵⁵ The servant leader

¹⁵² Alice Canavesi and Eliana Minelli, “Servant Leadership: a Systematic Literature Review and Network Analysis,” *Employee Responsibility and Rights Journal* 34, no. 3 (2022), 267, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10672-021-09381-3>.

¹⁵³ Suzanne Braun, “Leader Narcissism and Outcomes in Organizations: A Review at Multiple Levels of Analysis and Implications for Future Research,” *Front Psychology* 8 (May 19, 2017), 1.

¹⁵⁴ R. K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1977); Don M. Frick & L. C. Spears, *The Private writings of Robert K. Greenleaf: On becoming a servant leader* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

¹⁵⁵ Larry Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 5.

was not confined to a checklist of job description behaviors, but instead, through compassion, understanding, a genuine concern for others, and humility, acts with the follower in mind. In Canavesi and Minelli's study, the scholars find that "the interpretation of servant leadership prevailing in literature is positive, due to the promising attitudinal, behavioral and performance outcomes that it can produce on followers."¹⁵⁶ Significant attributes of a leader emerge from this theory such as a leader with humility, compassion, empathic listening skills, and a desire to build community. Servant leadership is relational at its heart.

Because of its holistic approach and its focus on individuals and teams, servant leadership "may be particularly effective in the post COVID-19 scenario and/or in contexts characterized by a high degree of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity."¹⁵⁷ During a crisis, leaders often struggle due to the quantity and rapidity of decisions that need to be made. A servant leadership approach can help by creating a positive culture and empowering individuals. In addition, a leader who desires foremost the best for the followers will be open to the flexible nature of adaptive leadership.

Multifaceted Leadership

Multifaceted theory is a holistic approach to leadership that tends to bridge components of transformational and transactional approaches.¹⁵⁸ Zheng finds that "leader identity development was not a uni-dimensional event"¹⁵⁹ but rather encompassed three facets. Zheng

¹⁵⁶ Canavesi and Minelli, "Servant Leadership," 285.

¹⁵⁷ Canavesi and Minelli, "Servant Leadership," 285-286.

¹⁵⁸ Van Wart, "Public-Sector Leadership Theory," 218.

¹⁵⁹ Wei Zheng, "Embracing Leadership: A Multi-faceted Model of Leader Identity Development," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 36, no. 6 (2013): 630, DOI:10.1108/LODJ-10-2013-0138.

identifies those facets as “expanding boundaries, recognizing interdependences, and discerning purpose.”¹⁶⁰ According to Dr. David Tuyo II, “leaders that are nimble and deploy a diverse set of leadership tactics can find greater success with their teams.”¹⁶¹ This theory, with transactional undertones, focuses on the cognitive experiences of leadership. This leader has a vision, understands that organizations are systems, and is clear about the purpose. This leader appears to be most concerned with the task at hand and seems to be equipped with strategies.

For crisis management, this theory of leadership indicates that leaders have previously garnered many skills, including transformational and transactional tools, and understand the appropriate execution of both approaches. Not only are multifaceted leaders able to understand a situation and choose appropriate leadership tools, but also they are able to articulate the vision and express value for the interdependency of the teams. With the ability to be multifaceted, leaders during crisis can easily move from the transformational leadership approach to the transactional one. Times of crisis may require a leader to be transactional, concentrating on short-term goals, structures, rules, and inflexibility when making quick decisions. However, this style of leadership appears to be lacking a diversity of perspectives, the mutual bond between leader and employees, and a sense of anticipating upcoming challenges as adaptive leadership does.

¹⁶⁰ Zheng, “Embracing Leadership: A Multi-faceted Model of Leader Identity Development,” 630.

¹⁶¹ David L. Tuyo II, “How Multifaceted Leadership Drives the Best Results in the Credit Union Industry,” *Credit Union Times*, updated November 5, 2021, <https://www.cutimes.com/2021/11/05/how-multifaceted-leadership-drives-the-best-results-in-the-credit-union-industry/>.

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership blends components of transformational and servant leadership to describe the behaviors of leaders under the pressure and stress of a crisis. Van Wart believes that partial understandings of leadership existed until the 1980s “when transformational approaches were (re)introduced.”¹⁶² However, a question that Van Mart wrestles with is whether transformational and servant leadership were enough during a time wrought with crisis. He alludes to a need for a more “sophisticated model that accommodates entirely different missions and environments.”¹⁶³ Adaptive leadership theory provides such a sophisticated model to address the creativity, flexibility, and resiliency of a leader during crisis.

Characteristics of transformational and servant leadership form a bedrock of effective leadership throughout the literature with many characteristics underpinning the adaptive leadership approach. Adaptive leadership is designed to solve problems or issues by incorporating a flexible mindset that allows for creative and practical decision-making within ever-changing environments. Adaptive leaders are open to change and experimentation. Navigating a changing environment requires that leaders are “capable of tackling and solving complex contemporary problems and issues, with collective, collaborative, timely, effective, and innovative solutions.”¹⁶⁴ Yukl and Mahsud, succinctly express the idea that adaptive leadership involved “changing behavior in appropriate ways as the situation changes.”¹⁶⁵ The significant

¹⁶² Van Wart, “Public-Sector Leadership Theory,” 224.

¹⁶³ Van Wart, “Public-Sector Leadership Theory,” 224.

¹⁶⁴ Cojocar, “Adaptive Leadership: Leadership Theory or Theoretical Derivative,” 9.

¹⁶⁵ Gary Yukl and Rubina Mahsud, “Why Flexible and Adaptive Leadership Is Essential,” *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 62 no. 2 (2010): 81, DOI: 10.1037/a0019835.

contribution of the theory of adaptive leadership is its ability to expand the characteristics that previous theories have provided to more fully encompass the challenges of a quickly changing and evolving world. The ability of the leader to embrace flexibility and creativity when solving complex problems that often appear in a rapid-fire manner allows for a more stable organization.

Heifetz's seminal work in the field of adaptive leadership identifies two clearly distinguishable phases during a crisis: 1) the emergency phase in which the leader is concentrating on stabilizing the situation, and 2) the adaptive phase in which "you tackle the underlying causes of the crisis and build the capacity to thrive in a new reality."¹⁶⁶ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky continue the discussion, emphasizing that the leaders who embrace the adaptive leadership approach "change key rules of the game, reshape parts of the organization, and redefine the work people do."¹⁶⁷ The paradigm of maintaining the status quo without examining traditional methodologies and perspectives is ill-equipped to embrace the realities of the 21st century with its new challenges requiring a more adaptable and flexible frame of mind.

Valeras and Cordes use a crisis backdrop of COVID-19, U. S. elections, the death of Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and the minimal legal disciplinary action after the death of Breanna Taylor¹⁶⁸ to establish the continued need for "adaptive servant leaders."¹⁶⁹ Adaptive leadership requires a basic understanding that "both problems and solutions require learning, and

¹⁶⁶ Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Mary Linsky, "Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis," *Harvard Business Review* 87 (July-August, 2009), 62.

¹⁶⁷ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, "Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis," 62.

¹⁶⁸ Andrew S. Valeras and Colleen Clemency Cordes, "Adaptive Leadership: Becoming the Change," *American Psychological Association* 38, no. 4 (2020): 495.

¹⁶⁹ Valeras and Cordes, "Adaptive Leadership," 496.

stakeholders must be engaged to discern solutions.”¹⁷⁰ Laird relies on the work of Northouse and Heifetz to identify roles that need to be embraced when in the midst of adaptive change. These roles include the ability to: 1) identify the challenge, 2) control affective distress, 3) stay focused and encourage others to do so also, 4) when possible, give the work back to the team, 5) provide covering or protection for the team.¹⁷¹ Roles and characteristics must be viewed as separate facets of leadership. Roles are the behaviors exhibited by leaders when undertaking a task. For example, Joseph took on the role of prime minister and executed the components or behaviors required in that position. Characteristics exhibited by leaders emerge from their holistic personhood—emotional, physical, psychological—and are not connected to the jobs they were doing.

Raei further extends an understanding of adaptive leadership by sharing the idea that situations “stimulate adaptive learning by asking tough questions and by reframing people’s expectations.”¹⁷² This paradigm requires more than thinking differently, but as Heifetz states, “learning to address conflicts in the beliefs and values people hold.”¹⁷³ This, of course, requires unlearning skills to embrace new ones. Raei continues by reminding readers that intervening adaptively to challenges can also create distress.¹⁷⁴ The tension at this point was, as Heifetz

¹⁷⁰ Scott A. Laird, “An Adaptive Change Project in Developing Leaders,” (DMin diss. Harding School of Theology, Memphis, Tennessee, 2019), 21.

¹⁷¹ Laird, “An Adaptive Change Project in Developing Leaders,” 100.

¹⁷² Mohammed Raei, “Development and Validation of the Adaptive Leadership with Authority Scale,” (PhD diss. Antioch University, Keene, New Hampshire, 2018), 16.

¹⁷³ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 22.

¹⁷⁴ Mohammed Raei, “Development and Validation of the Adaptive Leadership with Authority Scale,” 16.

states, “fight, flee, or freeze.”¹⁷⁵ The challenge for the leader is in maintaining balance because over-extending on either end of the tension continuum thwarts the effectiveness of the leader.

During crisis, organizations rely on effective leaders who can assess the situation accurately, push the limits of the status quo, explore ideas with a fresh perspective, and guide the organization. Adaptive leadership theory defines a leader who can see the challenge clearly, stay vision/mission/goal focused while encouraging others to do likewise, and refuse the status quo paradigm when the crisis calls for flexibility and creativity.

Effective Crisis Leadership

An examination of leadership theory provides crisis leadership characteristics that scholars deemed effective. The model of adaptive leadership brought about the most invaluable insights for a fast-changing and highly-media-exposed environment. Combining transformational, servant, and adaptive leadership, the following characteristics seemed to gain the most traction for effective and efficient leadership. Table 6 identifies effective leadership characteristics that must be observable to the organization and will become essential tools upon which effective leaders can rely during a crisis.

Table 6: Effective Leadership Characteristics for Crisis Management

Leadership Characteristics	Scholar/Author
personal character; moral agent	Bolsinger (2015); Burns (1978); Covey (2004); Trapero and De Lozada (2010)
common vision	Northouse (2022); McCloskey; Williams et al (2018); Laird (2019)
servant leader	Greenleaf (1977); Frick and Spears (1996); Valeras and Cordes (2020)
motivator – sees worth and potential in followers	Covey (2004); Burns (1978); Northouse (2022)
empathetic listener	Greenleaf (1977); Frick and Spears (1996)

¹⁷⁵ Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 66.

commitment to personal growth of their followers	Greenleaf (1977); Frick and Spears (1996); McCloskey
committed to community building	Greenleaf (1977); Frick and Spears (1996); Northouse (2022); McCloskey; Kelly and MacDonald (2019)
articulates vision, mission, and goals clearly	Kelly and MacDonald (2019); Gardner et al (2005)
authentic and transparent	Gardner et al (2005);
humility	Collins (2005); Burns (1978); Braun (2017); Osborne (2018)
flexible mindset	Cojocar (2009); Yukly and Mahsud (2010); Heifetz (1994); Raei (2018)
practical decision-making	Cojocar (2009); Yukly and Mahsud (2010); Heifetz (1994); Raei (2018)
open to change and experimentation	Cojocar (2009); Yukly and Mahsud (2010); Valeras and Cordes (2020); Laird (2019); Heifetz (1994); Raei (2018)

Descriptive Behaviors of Effective Crisis Leadership

From the models of leadership theory—great man, trait, contingency, transformational, servant, multifaceted, and adaptive—emerge characteristics and key terms that significantly underlie effective leadership. The characteristics underpinning effective leadership include: an inherent personal character/integrity, the ability to capture and articulate a clear and viable vision/mission/purpose, and the desire and skills to construct relationships based on credibility and authenticity.

Personal Character/Integrity

Many scholars agree that a definition of leadership often is best examined through a descriptive approach. Bolsinger explains that “it is not the title or position that a person held”¹⁷⁶ nor technical competence alone, but leadership requires “personal congruence and character.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 19.

¹⁷⁷ Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 15.

Personal character entails a holistic view of an individual including how the individual thinks and how the individual behaves. Personal character implies those moral qualities unique to an individual.

Effective leaders in the transformational, servant, and adaptive leadership model regard both character and integrity as non-negotiable characteristics. A sense of authenticity examined by Gardner indicates that the idea of the “person-oriented” leader model reveals richer and more rewarding relationships between the leader and the followers. His team posits that authenticity and transparency are key components to the relationship-connection of follower and leader.¹⁷⁸ A transparent leader is open and that might entail behaviors such as admitting errors and then, correcting and making amends for them. It implies a sense of accountability; the leader is a team player communicating openly with members of the team to achieve the identified mission.

One of the tools utilized by authentic leaders, articulated by the renowned leadership scholar, MacGregor Burns, is consensus. He defines a leader who uses consensus as one who “looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower.”¹⁷⁹ According to Burns, this relationship is mutual by elevating followers to become “moral agents.”¹⁸⁰ In order to convey to followers their worth as moral agents, leaders must first possess those qualities and serve as moral agents themselves. Stephen Covey, educator and businessman, discusses the importance of the leader in conveying to the people their worth

¹⁷⁸ William L. Gardner, Bruce J. Avolio, Fred Luthans, Douglas R. May and Fred Walumbwa, “‘Can You See the Real Me?’ A Self-based Model of Authentic Leader and Follower Development,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005): 343 – 372.

¹⁷⁹ Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 4.

¹⁸⁰ Burns, *Leadership*, 4.

and potential so that followers see it within themselves.¹⁸¹ A research study in 2018 concludes that organizations are best equipped when they first “seek credible leaders, then, provide those credible leaders with transformational leadership skills,”¹⁸² underlying the idea that leadership also has a moral element: a clear sense of integrity and credibility.

The authors, Trapero and Lazada, were able to determine that the transformational style of leadership is perceived to be more integrity-focused than transactional or laissez-faire. A conclusion of the authors is that perhaps the transformational leader is more person-oriented.¹⁸³ Williams and his team discusses the significance of credibility in leadership, a characteristic closely related to integrity. Credibility requires that the leader be trusted and integrity requires the leader have moral principles. Credibility is based on honesty and principles. Williams and his team created a model in which credibility is the precursor to transformational leadership, and it is the leader’s charisma that “positively moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance.”¹⁸⁴ Those leaders who exhibit credibility are leaders who are trusted. Trust by the followers towards their leaders emerges when leaders demonstrate honesty and reliability. The personal character and integrity demands the leader exhibit credibility and trustworthiness.

¹⁸¹ Stephen Covey, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 149-153.

¹⁸² Williams Jr., Raffo and Clark, “Charisma as an Attribute of Transformational Leaders: What about Credibility?” 520.

¹⁸³ Trapero and De Lozada, “Differences Between the Relationship of Integrity and Leadership Styles According to the Model of Bernard Bass,” 59.

¹⁸⁴ Williams, Jr., Raffo, and Clark, “Charisma as an Attribute of Transformational Leaders: What about Credibility?” 512.

Articulation of a clear and viable vision/mission/purpose

Vision, according to most scholars, continues to be a major element of leadership.

Organizational vision has been described in multiple variations of definitions. Slåtten, Mutonyl, and Lien mention several variations of vision, including:

being an ideal and unique image of the future, a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization, a business technology, or corporate culture in terms of what it should become over the long term and articulate a feasible way of achieving this goal, a guide to what the organization should become rather than a description of what it is, ideological goal that organization members can feel morally satisfied in pursuing, the primary guiding force of all organizational activity. Others suggest that an organizational vision should be motivational, build self-confidence and create a common purpose among those who are encompassed by the vision.¹⁸⁵

The definition of vision discussed in most research indicates a mental image of what the desired outcome of the organization should be: the primary impetus for all organizational work. It should be a unifying statement that motivates an organization towards excellence. The vision requires clear, motivational, and passionate leadership to accomplish the desired long-term outcomes.

The actual task of creating the organizational vision often reveals the preferred leadership style of the leader: an authoritarian, laissez-faire, democratic, or combination model. David Carlin, in his article for *Forbes* magazine, explains that the authoritarian leader has full control and power, telling the team/group what must be done; a laissez-faire leader allows the team/group full autonomy and chooses not to be a participant in decisions; and, a democratic leader “balances decision-making responsibility between the group and the leader.”¹⁸⁶ Based on

¹⁸⁵ Terje Slåtten, Barbara Rebecca Mutonyl, and Gudbrand Lien, “Does Organization Vision Really Matter? An Empirical Examination of Factors Related to Organizational Vision Integration among Hospital Employees,” *BMC Health Services Research* 21 (2021): 3.

¹⁸⁶ David Carlin, “Democratic, Authoritarian, Laissez-Faire: What Type of Leader Are You?, *Forbes*, (October 18, 2019), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidcarlin/2019/10/18/democratic-authoritarian-laissez-faire-what-type-of-leader-are-you/?sh=45d98cf42a6b>.

the situation, each style has its pros and cons. A study by Kelly and MacDonald indicates that the more authoritarian a leader is, the more likely the follower would not participate in a spirit of solidarity thereby becoming dissatisfied. The researchers note that solidarity is formed through interpersonal communication with followers.¹⁸⁷ The style of leadership in conveying the vision, according to scholars, often reveals the level of trust that exists between the leader and the followers. The stronger the relationship built on the leader's integrity, the more likely the leader relies on a democratic style of leadership. Personal character and integrity becomes more visible during crisis and the stronger both characteristics are within the leader, the greater success the leader will have articulating the vision and staying purpose-focused.

Construction of relationships based on credibility and authenticity

Organizational success can be predicted by the quality of the relationship between the leader and the followers. The solidarity of this relationship determines whether visions, goals, and desired outcomes are achieved. This explains the significance of relationship-building as a critical component in transformational, servant, and adaptive leadership theory. McCloskey concludes that leadership is a process in which interpersonal relationships between the leader and followers are established and sustained while pursuing a common vision.¹⁸⁸ Leadership is working with and through people towards goals, a vision, and objectives that followers agree are worth both the outcome and the effort – consensus.

¹⁸⁷ Stephanie Kelly and Patrick MacDonald, "A Look at Leadership Styles and Workplace Solidarity Communication," *International Journal of Business Communication* 56, no. 3 (July 2019): 444.

¹⁸⁸ Mark W. McCloskey, "What is Transformational Leadership," <https://people.bethel.edu/~pferris/otcommon/transformationalleadership.pdf>, 3.

Bartram and Casimir reiterate the need for leaders to be trusted by their followers, stating that “trust is the mortar that binds the followers to the leader.”¹⁸⁹ In addition, the organization benefits from positive “organizational citizenship behaviors, performance, and satisfaction.”¹⁹⁰ Gerpott, Fasbender, and Burmeister add the idea of ‘knowledge sharing’ as a component of rich and rewarding relationships between leaders and followers. The more knowledge the leader shares, the more transparent the leader appears. The more transparent the leader is, the more the leader is viewed as authentic and credible. Gerpott and his team suggest that a practical implication of their study might be applied to hiring. They state, “respectful behavior could be established as a selection and performance criterion for leadership positions.”¹⁹¹ Respectful behavior of the leader can be demonstrated through valuing team interactions, maintaining strong and empathic communication channels, and being mindful of avoiding self-promotion.

Effective leader-follower relationships stabilize organizations, allowing them to be healthy and achieve their set goals. If the leaders and the followers are not in a unified, cohesive, and close-knit relationship, then undue tension, stress, high rates of turnover, and low productivity would follow.¹⁹² Tyagi and Puri share a model as indicated in the table below in which the leader and followers engage in a reciprocal relationship that is relationally transparent. Outcomes from this transparency are acceptance, trust, and an inter-dependent leader-follower

¹⁸⁹ Timothy Bartram and Gian Casimir, “The Relationship Between Leadership and Follower in Role Performance and Satisfaction with the Leader: The Mediating Effects of Empowerment and Trust in the Leader,” *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal* 28, no. 1 (2007): 4.

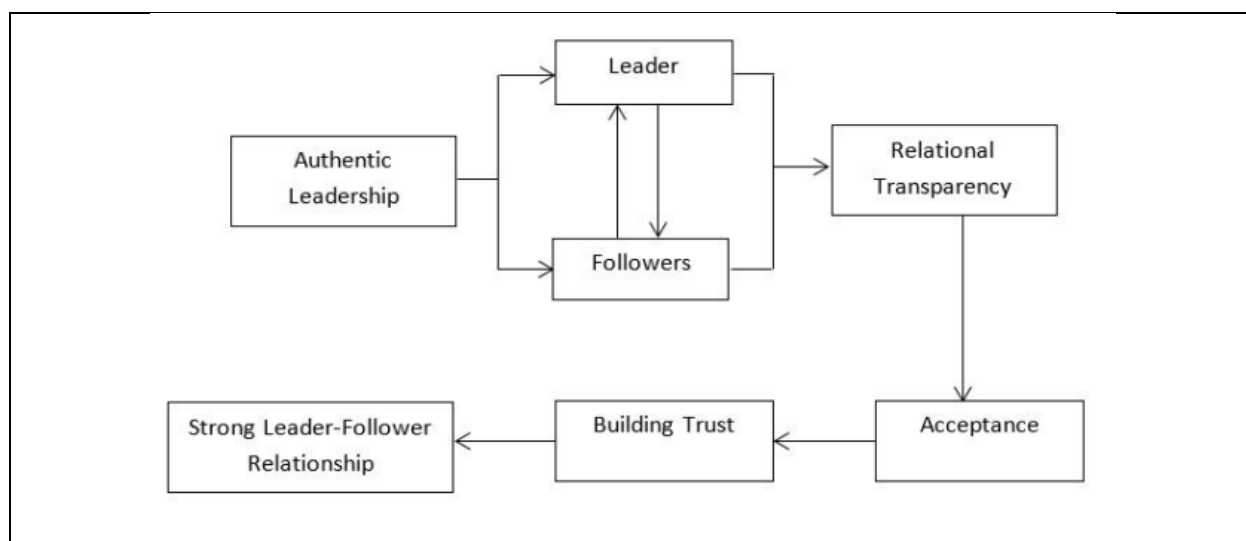
¹⁹⁰ Bartram and Casimir, “The Relationship Between Leadership and Follower in Role Performance and Satisfaction with the Leader,” 4.

¹⁹¹ Fabiola H. Gerpott, Ulrike Fasbender, and Anne Burmesiter, “Respectful Leadership and Followers’ Knowledge Sharing: A Social Mindfulness Lens,” *Human Relations* 73, no. 6 (2020): 804.

¹⁹² Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 157-184.

relationship.¹⁹³ The model, shown in Table 7, created by Tyagi and Puri becomes especially significant during a crisis when the organizational purpose may need re-examination and the work required by followers may need to be redesigned. Characteristics such as trust, reliability, and credibility must be established to ensure a more successful outcome.

Table 7: Authentic Leadership and Leader-Follower Relationship Model¹⁹⁴



Conclusion

Chapter Three examined crisis leadership, leadership theories/traits, and adaptive leadership. By defining a crisis, differentiating a crisis leader from a crisis manager, and identifying the five stages of a crisis, the researcher established context for review of leadership characteristics during a crisis. The stages of a crisis (pre-crisis, crisis emergence, crisis occurrence, crisis aftermath, and post-crisis) require defining characteristics on the part of the

¹⁹³ Ruchi Tyagi and Poonam Puri, "Building Leader-Follower Relationship through Authentic Leadership: The Success Mantra," *Amity Journal of Training and Development* 2, no. 2 (2017): 29.

¹⁹⁴ Tyagi and Puri, "Building Leader-Follower Relationship through Authentic Leadership," 29.

effective leader. The successful outcome, post-crisis, was dependent upon the readiness of the organization and the skill set of the leader.

Leadership theory reveals the characteristics and deficits of academic thinking over time. Each theory (Great Man, Trait, Contingency, Multifaceted, Transformation, Servant, and Adaptive) brought new insights. The addition of transformation, servant, and adaptive theories added depth to leadership characteristics needed during crisis by focusing on the following characteristics: an inherent personal character/integrity, the ability to capture and articulate a clear and viable vision/mission/purpose, and the desire and skills to construct relationships based on credibility and authenticity.

The researcher identified the problem of a scarcity of best practices regarding adaptive leadership available to pastors when facing a crisis. Examining transformational, servant, and adaptive leadership through a review of seminal and current research produced a number of characteristics that could improve the effectiveness of leaders during crises.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nature of the Research

This qualitative study explored the leadership characteristics used by pastors during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 through December 2021. Using a multiple-case study research method with senior pastors who served during this period of time, the researcher analyzed, coded, and identified themes of leadership during the crisis. The researcher's goal was to explore and ascertain common behaviors and themes among the senior pastors and develop guidelines for best practices to utilize during a time of crisis.

Since “qualitative research does not deal with numbers, but with ideas and people,”¹⁹⁵ the researcher primarily chose to rely upon the case study incorporating interviews with pastors in Texas. The case study “is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community.”¹⁹⁶ The researcher considered the phenomenon to be the COVID-19 pandemic and the group to be pastors in Texas who were actively serving in churches during the time from March 2020 through December 2021. Using a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to explore adaptive leadership characteristics as they were manifested by pastors during the COVID-19 crisis.

Research Methodology

Using a multiple-case study research method, the researcher analyzed, coded, and identified themes focused on leadership characteristics exhibited by pastors during a time of

¹⁹⁵ Nancy Jean Vyhmesiter and Terry Dwain Robertson, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 42.

¹⁹⁶ Sharon B. Merriam and Associates, *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 8.

crisis. Myers asserts that in any research project, the “question of congruence must be asked,”¹⁹⁷ indicating there must be a good fit between the methodology and the project of the research. The researcher determined the best fit included the incorporation of a multiple-case study approach. The case study is designed to address a single event (COVID-19 and pastors) to generate a more in-depth study to better understand a complex issue (leadership during a crisis). Yin, in his seminal work on multiple-case studies, posits that the researcher must construct the research to have well-defined phases. These phases include: 1) defining and designing the study, 2) preparing, collecting, and analyzing the data, and 3) analyzing and drawing conclusions.¹⁹⁸ The researcher articulated a clear problem statement and proposed a case study and survey qualitative research project. The instruments—the interview guide and the survey—were carefully prepared and edited before being implemented. The data was meticulously collected and analyzed in hopes of identifying best practices for pastors to use during a crisis.

A theme-based survey was included as part of the data gathering to serve the purpose of retrieving information from a potentially wider audience than the case study. The goal was to collect data with specific perspectives and characteristics. The added benefit was that the survey was both voluntary and anonymous. Both instruments—the case study and the survey have strengths and inherent weaknesses.

¹⁹⁷ William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 2000), x.

¹⁹⁸ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009), 57.

A major strength of the case study is that the “study results in a complete, well-organized picture of the person or group studied.”¹⁹⁹ Crowe emphasizes the “in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in a real-life context.”²⁰⁰ Another strength of the case study is that it “can have implications both for theory development and theory testing.”²⁰¹ This may be useful as background information in planning for further investigations. Scholars have noted that the information garnered from the interviews often opens portals for further research. The case study is “appropriate where the objective is to study contemporary events, and where it is not necessary to control behavioral events or variables.”²⁰² The researcher in this project undertook to study a massive crisis known as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most often noted weakness of the case study is the inability to generalize the data on a single case. The researcher opted to approach the project using the multiple-case approach to counter this potential deficiency. Vyhmeister and Robertson remind the researcher that “The scope of the investigation may be limited in time.”²⁰³ This means that what is being studied is confined or bound by time or an event and may have limited contributions to situations outside the one being studied. The question of ethics has been raised by Guba and Lincoln. They claim

¹⁹⁹ Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 143.

²⁰⁰ Sarah Crowe, Katherin Cresswell, Ann Robertson, Guro Huby, Anthony Avery, and Aziz Shekh, “The Case Study Approach,” *Blood Marrow Concentrate Medical Research Methodology* 11 (2011): 1, DOI: 10.1186/1471-2288-11-100.

²⁰¹ Crowe, “The Case Study Approach,” 7.

²⁰² Guy Gable, “Integrating Case Study and Survey Research Methods: An Example in Information Systems,” *European Journal of Information Systems* 3, no. 2 (1994): 113, <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/5853/1/5853.pdf>.

²⁰³ Vyhmeister and Robertson, *Quality Research Papers*, 53.

that “an unethical writer could edit in such a way the researcher’s views are proven correct.”²⁰⁴

In addition to the potential ethics problem, Hamel questions whether it is possible to make sound generalizations by stating “the case study has basically been faulted for its lack of representativeness.”²⁰⁵ Furthermore, Hamel points out that “its lack of rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis of the empirical materials”²⁰⁶ highlights another argument for its weakness. Furthermore, “this lack of rigor is linked to the problem of bias.”²⁰⁷ Hamel concludes by stating, “this argument against case study research misses the point of doing this type of research.”²⁰⁸ Though Hamel is well aware of the shortcomings of the case study, he still finds himself an advocate for this type of qualitative research.

After examining the research of the advantages and disadvantages of the case study, the researcher determined that the opportunity to gather an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue such as the COVID-19 pandemic along with the rich narratives of pastors leading during the pandemic outweighed the disadvantages. The researcher chose to be mindful of the ethical concerns voiced by Guba and Lincoln by analyzing the information with a *prima facie* perspective. In addition, to address Hamel’s concern, great care was taken to preserve the integrity of the conversation by minimizing preconceived ideas or beliefs.

²⁰⁴ Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Effective Evaluation Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981), 378.

²⁰⁵ Jacques Hamel, Stephane Dufour, and Dominic Fortin, *Case Study Method: Qualitative Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1993), 23.

²⁰⁶ Hamel, *Case Study Method*, 23.

²⁰⁷ Hamel, *Case Study Method*, 23.

²⁰⁸ Hamel, *Case Study Method*, 23.

The other research instrument used in this study was the survey. The survey has several benefits when studying a particular event. Vyhmeister and Robertson posit that the survey acts conversely to the case study. While the case study drills deeply with many variables on a given group or individual, the survey "usually examines a small number of variables in a large group of people."²⁰⁹ Another strength of the survey is its cost-effectiveness. With tools such as email, Google surveys, Facebook, Twitter, Qualtrics, and Survey Monkey, the cost to the researcher is minimal.²¹⁰ By designing the survey with quality questions that are standardized for all participants, reliability, versatility, and generalizability increase. The survey allows the researcher to gather an abundance of information from a variety and a potentially large quantity of people.

The most often mentioned weakness of the survey is the lack of depth. The questions, to be standardized, must be more general and mindful of hitting an appropriate reading comprehension level. Surveys do not provide immediate corrective feedback (as an interview would) should a question be poorly worded or not understood by the participant. The development of the instrument is critical to the successful collection of data. Leedy and Ormrod remind the researcher of the importance of being mindful of bias within the questions and potential sampling bias.²¹¹ Fink states that a major pitfall in the use of the survey is the return rate or participation rate. Fink explains that "the response rate consists of the number of

²⁰⁹ Vyhmeister and Robertson, *Quality Research Papers*, 53.

²¹⁰ M. Siva Durga Prasad Nayak and K.A. Narayan, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Surveys," *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 24, Issue 5 (May 2019):33, <https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.%2024%20Issue5/Series-5/E2405053138.pdf>.

²¹¹ Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 181-182.

completed surveys divided by the number of surveys eligible for completion.”²¹² To maximize responses, she suggests several strategies including increasing the ease for respondents to take and submit surveys; if onsite, training surveyors to administer the survey; keeping responses confidential; and, providing rewards.²¹³ Nayak echoes the concern regarding the low participation rate of online surveys.²¹⁴ Even with the use of strategies to engage respondents, a survey that is voluntary and online may prove problematic for the researcher to attain a sample size for which conclusions may be drawn. As Fink explains “larger samples tend to reduce sampling errors when the samples are randomly selected.”²¹⁵

The researcher determined interviews with senior-level pastors and online, anonymous surveys sent across the state of Texas made the coupling of the case study²¹⁶ and the survey the most appropriate research model to use. Using both voluntary participants and a web online survey which provided anonymity, brought both benefits and drawbacks. Bell, Manjione, and Khan found in their research using anonymous volunteers on the web the opportunity for “under-

²¹² Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2006), 46.

²¹³ Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys*, 46.

²¹⁴ Nayak and Narayan, “Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Surveys,” 35.

²¹⁵ Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys*, 53.

²¹⁶ Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (NY: Pearson, 2019), 236; Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research in Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002) 178-180; Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014) 53-62; John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018), 96-102.

representation of demographic subgroups that have poor Internet access.”²¹⁷ The researcher concedes this is a concern, however, the benefit of receiving more honest feedback by allowing respondents to volunteer and remain anonymous was deemed most desirable.

To summarize, the researcher chose to use interviews with senior pastors from various areas of Texas. The pastors chosen were senior pastors with 5 years of experience who served during COVID-19. They represented various denominations, sizes of weekly attendance, and diverse ethnicities. The benefits of the interview included exploring the pastors’ opinions, behaviors, and personal experiences while navigating the crisis of COVID-19. The researcher used open-ended questions to collect a fuller account of each pastor’s experience.

The survey was another tool the researcher opted to use and was administered through Google Forms. The online survey was voluntary through an email invitation with an embedded link to the survey. Pastors, if they chose, could be entered into a pool for a \$50 Amazon gift card for participating. Pastors were asked to meet the criteria of being a senior pastor for 5 years and serving during COVID-19, March 2020 through December 2021. The benefits of the survey included the potential for a large population of respondents, the ability for respondents to volunteer, the opportunity for respondents to remain anonymous and perhaps provide more authentic responses, the ability to reach pastors quickly, the flexibility of pastors to choose what time they would participate, and data accuracy.

²¹⁷ Douglas S. Bell, Carol M. Mangione, and Charles E. Kahn, “Randomized Testing of Alternative Survey Formats Using Anonymous Volunteers from the World Wide Web,” *Journal of American Medical Informatics Association* 8, no. 6 (Nov-Dec, 2001): 620.

Research Process

Biblical and Theological Research

This project followed a linear design of intentional and research-based steps. To establish the foundation for the study, the first engagement was to explore biblical and theological literature related to the leadership characteristics of both Moses (Exo. 16–18) and Joseph (Gen. 41). The two leaders, Moses, who led the Israelites while in the wilderness, and Joseph, who endured many hardships, ended up in a government position second to Pharaoh, exemplified characteristics of leadership. They were guided by God and spoke on his behalf. Both leaders faced crises, embodied leadership traits, and relied on adaptive leadership. As a result, the researcher recognized that the characteristics these men exemplified could easily be identified as best practices, and these best practices could assist pastors as they face crisis situations.

This review of the literature began with an exegesis of the scriptures using both a historical and literary contextual lens. In addition, the researcher relied on scholars, commentaries, various translations, and a Bible dictionary to better ascertain the exact meaning of words and to grasp a better grammatical and syntactical context of the content. As Fee posits, the query is “What’s the point? We must try to trace the author’s train of thought.”²¹⁸ The beauty of this approach exemplified the depth of character, the adaptability of leadership styles, and the burning desire to serve God that both Moses and Joseph epitomized.

Joseph and Moses, in their moments of conflict, embraced a flexible mindset, a strong reliance on God, and a clear focus on the mission at hand. As transformational and adaptive

²¹⁸ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 32.

leaders, they lived above their circumstances, focusing on God. While the environment around them changed, they remained grounded.

Literature Review

The literature review was an exploration of relevant scholarly research on leadership characteristics, leadership theories/traits, and adaptive leadership. Setting the context, the researcher established a clear and concise definition of the two terms: crisis and leadership. Establishing the setting for the project from March 2020 through December 2021 narrowed the focus to a specific crisis—the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leadership is essential in the midst of a crisis, so the researcher concentrated on adaptive leadership with a focus on transformational and servant leadership. The literature exposed repetitive themes regarding the characteristics of leaders in crisis. Those themes included an inherent personal character/integrity, the ability to capture and articulate a clear and viable vision/mission/purpose, and the desire and skills to construct relationships based on credibility and authenticity.

The two steps of biblical and literature review provided the groundwork for the qualitative research project. With this groundwork, the researcher was able to identify best practices that shepherd leaders/pastors can use when facing crises.

Research Participants

Next in the research process was to identify and contact senior pastors in Texas who served as senior pastors during the height of the pandemic from March 2020 through December 2021. The interviews and the surveys were scheduled for November and December of 2022.

Texas is a diverse state with representatives from all ethnic backgrounds as reported in the United States census. The interview and survey data incorporated the identification markers

used by the United States census. Based on data sets gathered by the United States Census Quick Facts, the diversity of ethnic backgrounds in Texas are as follows: White, non-Hispanic—40.3%; Black or African American—13.2%; American Indian and Alaska Native—1.1%; Asian—5.5%; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander—.2%; Hispanic or Latino—40.2%.²¹⁹ The data for both the case studies and the survey indicated that congregants in the churches of the interviewed and surveyed pastors were representative of the demographics of Texas. However, when considering the ethnicity of the pastors, the pastors interviewed and surveyed do not directly correspond to the demographics of Texas. Only 13% of the pastors in the data set reported as Hispanic compared to 40.2% of the population.

The participants only partially represented the population of Texas both in ethnicity and gender. The female population of Texas according to the census is 50.1%.²²⁰ Only .6% of the pastors in the survey and the interview reported as female. To properly contextualize this number, a look at the statistics for female pastors in the United States indicated only 12.9% of females are pastors.²²¹ The data for female pastors interviewed by the researcher is 20% of the interview pool and 0% of the survey respondents.

The most recent statistics on the denominational preferences of Texans were from 2010. In Texas, about 40.18% were “unclaimed by any faith.” The top 4 denominations include

²¹⁹ “Quick Facts – Texas,” *United States Census*, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/TX?>.

²²⁰ “Quick Facts – Texas,” *United States Census*, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/TX?>.

²²¹ “Pastor Statistics by Gender,” *Pastor Demographics and Statistics in the US*, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://www.zippia.com/pastor-jobs/demographics/>.

Catholic, Southern Baptist, Non-denominational, and United Methodist.²²² Southern Baptist, Non-denominational, and United Methodist pastors were participants in the interviews and surveys. A table representing the twelve largest religious bodies in Texas is available in Appendix E.

Interviews

The pastors were chosen through the researcher's network of friends who facilitated introductions between the researcher and the pastors. The goal was to secure interviewees from various parts of the state. Requests were sent out to members of the researcher's network in all areas of Texas; however, the participation rate of return was 62.5%, resulting in the researcher interviewing five pastors.

The number of interviewees required for a solid study is highly debated among scholars. The question scholars wrestle with is at what point (number of interviews) does the researcher reach saturation where no new ideas emerge? According to Namey²²³, several renowned researchers,²²⁴ posit that themes are identified within 5–6 interviews.

The pastors interviewed represented the areas of South, Central, and North Texas. The largest church is located outside of San Antonio and has seen population growth in recent years.

²²² "Religious Affiliation in Texas," *Texas Almanac*, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://www.texasalmanac.com/articles/religious-affiliation-in-texas>.

²²³ Emily Namey, "Riddle Me This: How Many Interviews (or Focus Groups) Are Enough?" *R&E Search for Evidence*, (Blog), *Fhi360*, April 25, 2017, <https://researchforevidence.fhi360.org/riddle-me-this-how-many-interviews-or-focus-groups-are-enough>.

²²⁴ M. Granger Morgan and Baruch Fischhoff, *Risk Communication: A Mental Models Approach* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson, "How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability," *Field Methods* 18, no. 1 (February 2006): 59-82; Jill J. Francis, Marie Johnston, Clare Robertson, Liz Glidewell, Vikki Entwistle, Martin P. Eccles, et al., "What Is an Adequate Sample Size? Operationalizing Data Saturation for Theory-based Interview Studies," *Psychology and Health* 25, no. 10 (2010): 1229-1245.

One church was a cowboy church located in South Texas. This church had its roots as a Baptist plant. It is now non-denominational and continues to thrive. Interestingly, this church had never streamed its services, but since COVID-19 they increased congregants both in person and virtually. One of the churches located in Southwest Austin welcomes members of the LBGTQ community and the pastor, herself, is gay. Another church is north of Austin in a growing community along the I-35 corridor. Another pastor who participated leads a church located in a suburb north of the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Each interviewee was asked to fulfill the criteria of having served as a senior pastor for 5 years and having served during the pandemic of March 2020 through December 2021. The denominations represented were Baptist, non-denominational, and Metropolitan Community Church. The pastors served churches of varying sizes based on average weekend worship attendance: 1 church had less than 100, 2 churches were between 100-500 in attendance, and 1 church had between 500-1000 attendees. The congregations of these churches were diverse including ethnicities of Hispanic, White, Black, American Indian, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders. The ethnicities of the pastors represented included 1 Hispanic and 4 White. The gender identification for the 5 pastors included 4 males and 1 female. A table displaying demographic data is located in Appendix D.

The pastors were sent the required consent form and a time was established for a 1.5-hour interview on zoom. Attached with the invitation to the zoom interview, the pastors received a copy of the survey questions. All pastors were asked the same questions to ensure reliability. Follow-up questions were asked by the researcher for clarification and/or elaboration.

All interviewees were provided a consent form informing them that participation was voluntary and that information shared would be confidential. They were, however, asked for their permission to use the information obtained.

Surveys

The researcher contacted her pastor, and he agreed to use his website and his listserv to reach out to pastors across the state. The request for participation incorporated two windows of opportunity. After the first window, the number of respondents to the survey was less than desired by the researcher. The researcher opened a second window and prior to opening the window, the researcher contacted via email all pastors of Baptist and Methodist churches in Texas. The researcher prepared “a short, formal explanation to accompany the questionnaire form”²²⁵ with “a link to the survey’s URL”²²⁶. In addition, the researcher reached out to a leader of a large denomination in West Texas, who reviewed the survey and felt the pastors he oversaw would not be able to answer the questions well. The structure of his church, is hierarchal, and he, as the supervisor, had made all the decision during the most difficult days of the pandemic. Therefore, he chose not to participate.

An Amazon gift card was provided to entice participation in the survey following Fink’s tips for improving response rates.²²⁷ Once the second window of opportunity closed, the researcher had only ten participants. The pastors in the survey were not the same pastors who participated in face-to-face interviews. The pastors in the survey were also asked to fulfill the

²²⁵ Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys*, 35.

²²⁶ Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys*, 35.

²²⁷ Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys*, 57.

criteria of having served as a senior pastor for five years and having served during the pandemic of March 2020 through December 2021. The stability of the pastor prior to the pandemic would indicate an opportunity to build relationships with congregants before March 2020.

The respondents in the survey represented North Texas around the Arlington area, Northeastern Texas in Texarkana, Southeastern Texas in Dayton, and Central Texas in Austin and Pflugerville. The denominations represented included three Baptists, three Methodists, and four Non-denominational. The pastors served churches of varying sizes based on average weekend worship attendance: 2 churches had less than 100, 7 churches had between 500-1,000, and 1 church had more than 1,000. The congregations of these churches were diverse including ethnicities of Hispanic, White, Black, American Indian, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders. The ethnicities of the pastors represented included 1 Hispanic and 9 Whites. The pastors were all male. A table displaying the demographic data is located in Appendix D.

The online survey was developed to provide a companion data resource for the interviews. The survey was constructed using Google forms and was sent to pastors in Texas.

Survey Development and Distribution

The researcher's next step was to correlate the characteristics of leadership during a crisis as found in the biblical and literature reviews to the researcher-created questions (Appendix A).

From this document, the researcher prepared the open-ended questions for the interview (Appendix B) and the Likert-scale questions and responses for the survey (Appendix C). The Likert scales consist of a "declarative sentence, followed by response options that indicate varying degrees of agreement with or endorsement of the statement."²²⁸ According to Leedy, a

²²⁸ R. F. DeVellis, *Scale Development: Theory and Applications*, 2nd ed., (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2003), 78-79.

rating scale “is more useful when a behavior, attitude, or other phenomena of interest needs to be evaluated on a continuum of, say, ‘in adequate’ to ‘excellent.’”²²⁹ The Likert or rating-scale items allow the researcher to “simplify and more easily quantify people’s behaviors or attitudes.”²³⁰ The researcher decided to use the survey as a way of quantifying a person’s attitude or belief. The researcher was exploring characteristics of leadership during a crisis, so the rating scale seemed to be the most pragmatic tool.

The survey consisted of six questions focused on gathering demographic data such as church location, church denomination, average weekend worship attendance, ethnicities represented in the church, pastors’ ethnicity, and the gender identification of the pastor.

The next 15 questions were built using a Likert response model. The response choices were *low*, *needs improvement*, *average*, *good*, and *excellent*. The possibility exists that the respondent to the survey may be unclear about which descriptor would be the best fit for a response, therefore, the researcher incorporated “working definitions” in several of the questions.

The last two questions were open-ended. One question asked what personal moral values did you rely on to lead the congregation and the other question was what major accomplishments did your church have during the pandemic. The researcher chose to ask two open-ended questions because they offered the respondents an opportunity to provide a wide range of answers. In addition, respondents may answer questions in an unexpected manner that would “suggest follow-up questions”²³¹ or more avenues for further research. The questions were

²²⁹ Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 155.

²³⁰ Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 156.

²³¹ Michael R. Hyman and Jeremy J. Sierra, “Open-Versus Close-ended Survey Questions,” *Business Outlook* 14, no. 2 (February 2016): 3.

divided into 4 sections based on findings in the biblical and literature reviews in Chapters 2 and 3: leadership style, personal character and integrity, vision/mission/purpose, and relationships based on credibility and authenticity.

The online survey invitations were first sent out using my pastor's network and his web page. The researcher secured online directories with email addresses for churches in Texas and sent out over 200 individual emails inviting pastors to participate. The email sent to pastors in Texas explained the survey, its purpose, the confidentiality of responses, and an incentive to be given in a random drawing.

Interviews

The researcher conducted personal interviews with 5 Texas pastors who had served as senior pastors for 5 years and served during the pandemic from March 2020 through December 2021. By serving 5 years, the pastor would have had the opportunity to establish a degree of relationship with the congregants prior to navigating them through the pandemic. The researcher constructed some questions that indicated the culture/climate in the church prior to COVID-19 as compared to how it was during the pandemic. The interviews were conducted via zoom and were scheduled according to the pastor's schedule. The interview questions found in Appendix B were used to guide the interview.

The researcher focused questions on discovering best practices for adaptive leaders during a crisis. During the interviews, the researcher would "seek clarifying information when necessary"²³² to ensure that there was a minimal misinterpretation of messaging from the pastors.

²³² Leedy, *Practical Research*, 160.

The interviews began with 6 questions focused on gathering demographic data such as church location, church denomination, average weekend worship attendance, ethnicities represented in the church, pastors' ethnicity, and the gender identification of the pastor. The interview questions were primarily open-ended with a follow-up question asking for an explanation or rationale for the response. The questions were divided thematically based on biblical and literature reviews in Chapters 2 and 3. The areas included leadership style, personal character and integrity, vision/mission/purpose, and relationships based on credibility and authenticity. There were 2 questions on leadership style, 8 questions on personal character and integrity, 4 questions on vision/purpose/mission, and 6 questions on creating relationships.

There were several leadership characteristics that the researcher asked the pastors to self-rank and elaborate on their responses. The characteristics included empathy, transparency, flexibility, concern for individual congregants, mechanics of disseminating communications, personal communication skills, decisiveness, clear vision, and problem-solving.

All interviewees were asked about any accomplishments their church had during the pandemic.

All the interviewees received the questions before the scheduled interview. Instead of recording the interview, the researcher transcribed the conversation using a note-taking form on the desktop. As the researcher took notes, opportunities presented themselves to ask the interviewees for clarification or elaboration. The interviews lasted approximately one and half hours.

The *Informed Consent* forms for each interviewee notified the interviewees of the purpose of the study, the expected length of time required for the interview, the option to

participate or opt out, the ability to omit a question if they preferred not to respond, and information on confidentiality.

Analysis of the Data

The last step was to collect and synthesize the data to identify best practices that pastors can use during crises. The researcher used coding of the responses from the interviewees to explore themes, and used the numerical data of mean, mode, and median to analyze the survey data.

Interviews

The researcher transcribed and analyzed interview data the same day as the interview occurred. This immediacy of transcription allowed for a higher level of accuracy as the information was fresh. The notes were then placed in a spreadsheet, using a sheet for each interviewee.

After examining the interview responses, the researcher began the process of coding the notes looking for themes. According to Zhang and Wildemuth, “a theme might be expressed in a single word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire document.”²³³ Continuing Zhang and Wildemuth posit, “When using the theme as the coding unit, you are primarily looking for the expressions of an idea.” Instead of words, Fink chooses to assign numbers to assign values and rank response categories.

Leedy suggests steps to coding that incorporate the identification of general codes such as characteristics and attributes, actions, processes, emotions, beliefs, values, and evaluations.²³⁴

²³³ Yan Zhang and Barbara M. Wildemuth, “Qualitative Analysis of Content,” *Human Brain Mapping* 30, No. 7 (2005): 3.

²³⁴ Leedy, *Practical Research*, 346.

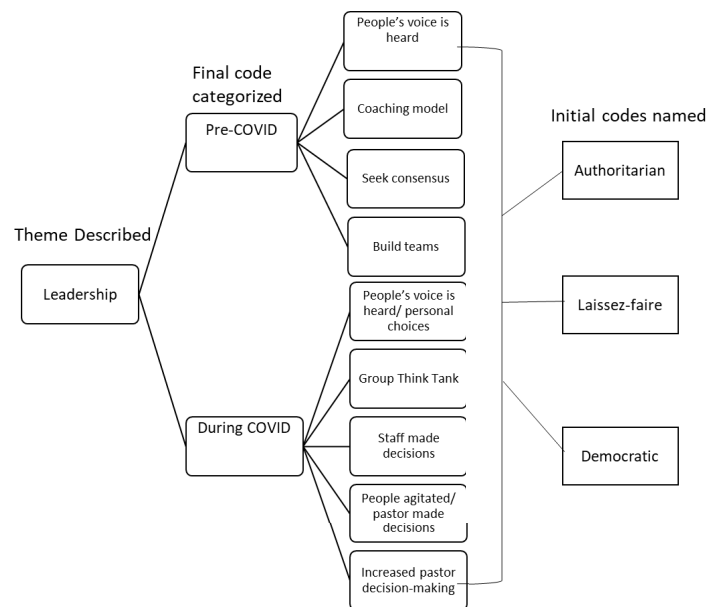
Using this process, the data was placed in meaningful units and subcodes. He suggests that multiple raters be involved in the process for reliability.²³⁵ A limitation of the researcher's project is the use of a singular rater. Creswell and Poth suggest using a visual display and incorporating words and phrases when coding.²³⁶

The researcher determined that the data set was small and that blending Creswell and Poth with the approach described by Zhang and Wildemuth would work well with the interview responses. The researcher posted the pastors' responses into the spreadsheet and coded each pastor's response. Once each pastor's sheet was transcribed and coded, the researcher created a new sheet placing all five pastors' responses in columns adjacent to one another. This allowed the researcher to explore the responses looking for emergent ideas. From the data on the spreadsheet, the researcher created a visual of the process. Below is an example of the 5 pastors' data housed in a visual showing the coding process.

²³⁵ Leedy, *Practical Research*, 349.

²³⁶ Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 189-196.

Table 8: Visual of Coding Pastors' Responses on Leadership Style



Survey

Google forms generate a spreadsheet of all the data accumulated from the online survey. In addition, Google forms create graphs of the data breakdown. The researcher used these documents to explore the characteristics that pastors relied on during the pandemic. The results of the interviews and surveys are included in Chapter 5 of this report.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify best practices that shepherd leaders/pastors can use when facing crises. A multi-case study methodology and a survey instrument were used to obtain the data sets. It included research in the biblical and current literature on the topic of leadership characteristics of pastors during a crisis by concentrating on adaptive leadership with a focus on transformational and servant leadership. From the scholarly review, the researcher concluded that adaptive leadership characteristics can be seen by exploring leadership style, creation and adherence to mission and purpose, and an intended emphasis on developing relationships that are mutual between the leader and the followers. The steps the researcher used

to obtain data from the field included primary data collection with interviews and a survey. The multi-case study approach provided construction validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

In Chapter 5, the researcher will present and analyze the data collected. Through analysis of the data sets, the researcher hopes to identify those adaptive leadership characteristics that can be used as best practices for pastors when encountering a crisis.

Qualitative research focuses on and finds interest “in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds.”²³⁷ The researcher is charged with uncovering and then interpreting that meaning.

²³⁷ Merriam and Associates, *Qualitative Research in Practice*, 39.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This study explored the problem of the scarcity of best practices regarding adaptive leadership available to pastors when facing a crisis. The research design for this study used a qualitative methodology to explore Texas pastors' leadership characteristics exhibited during the pandemic crisis from March 2020 through December 2021. The analysis and interpretation of data led to an identification of best practices. The interviews and the survey elicited in a self-reporting format pastors' perspectives on the following areas of leadership: 1) leadership style, 2) personal character and integrity, 3) vision, purpose, and mission, and 4) relationships based on credibility and authenticity. According to Zhang and Wildemuth "qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, theme, and patterns. . . it allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner."²³⁸ The researcher used the data to analyze how closely the field experience of pastors aligned with the scholarly research to determine what best practices were more likely to provide a positive outcome during crisis.

Pastors Participating in the Surveys

The five pastors each had unique stories and settings which added to the richness of the narrative. Case Study #1 was an energetic middle-aged pastor who with his wife had been in ministry for twenty years. He suffered from social anxiety and found addiction a way to numb

²³⁸ Yan Zhang and Barbara M. Wildemuth, "Qualitative Analysis of Content," *Human Brain Mapping* 30, no. 7 (2005): 1.

the situation. Once he met Jesus, he gave his life totally to Jesus and went into ministry. The church's website proclaimed: "Love God, Love People/Live Like We Mean It."

The pastor in Case Study #2 was a bi-vocational pastor who taught school and pastored a Cowboy Church. The church began as a Baptist plant, but in the last five years, the church has chosen to embrace the non-denominational label. The website states that "We are a church of second chances and new beginnings."

Case Study #3 was the pastor of a church that embraces all people with a special outreach to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community. The pastor was Presbyterian and studied at a Presbyterian seminary, but when that denomination refused to ordain gay pastors, she left and was ordained by her current denomination. The church focuses on God's love and serving others exemplified through finding opportunities to engage with the community in activities such as the food ministry and social justice. The pastor described her congregation as predominantly Democratic-leaning, so they did not have as many conflicts over whether to wear a mask or whether to be vaccinated as other more diverse churches encountered.

Case Study #4 was a pastor who had been leading the church since 2012. The church began as a multi-site church plant. The church became an independent church in 2013 with 80-100 congregants and now has almost 1,000 weekly attendees. During COVID-19, the church faced several challenges including difficulty coming to a consensus on many issues such as masking and vaccinations. The pastor leaned on the COVID-19 decisions made by the school district to ease the tension within the church. During COVID-19, this church bought and paid for a plot of land to build a permanent building valued at \$2,000,000.

The pastor in Case Study #5 leads a church with just under 1,000 members. The website stated that "Our goal is to bring people to come to know Jesus and move people to live a life

devoted to Jesus, our church family, and the mission of teaching how to bring others to follow Christ. We are committed to being intentional in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.” In his conversation with the researcher, he shared that the church is open to change and values flexibility. The church allowed the leadership to experiment and rethink how they had been doing “church.”

Themes and Findings

Chapter 2 presented biblical leader models, Moses and Joseph. Both leaders were able to adapt their leadership styles to address the crises they faced. Their personal character revealed openness, authenticity, and transparency. Chapter 3 highlighted scholarly research that applauded the effectiveness of leaders who were able to adapt their leadership style to best address a crisis while maintaining their integrity, sense of mission and purpose, and commitment to building and maintaining respectful and mutual relationships.

The surveys and interviews were built on the research from Chapters 2 and 3 in which adaptive leaders with a transformational and servant leadership focus were able to perceive others’ feelings, were transparent in interactions, and were open to feedback. These leaders also displayed integrity, authenticity, and transparency. They were able to stay true to the mission of the organization while seeking creative and flexible problem-solving strategies. The researcher synthesized these characteristics into 4 themes that include: 1) adaptability of leadership style and decision-making, 2) inherent personal character/integrity, 3) clarity of vision/mission/purpose, and 4) relationships built on credibility and authenticity. Each of the themes is analyzed below.

Adaptability of Leadership Style

Interviews

Leadership style was delineated into three basic styles: authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic. Scholars indicated that during a crisis, a style of leadership such as democratic or

laissez-faire may evolve to more decisions made using the authoritarian style. Alsamaray in his study, which investigated three leadership styles each related to crisis management, found that within organizations that leaders who favor authoritarianism during a crisis are more likely to succeed.²³⁹ Based on this finding in the literature, the researcher created two questions to explore whether this phenomenon also occurred in churches.

The first finding from the interviews indicated that pastors had a preference for a democratic style of leading. The definition used in the interview and survey questions was that a democratic leader balances decision-making between the group and the leader. All the pastors chose democratic or democratic/laissez-faire as their *modus operandi* before COVID-19 entered the world in 2020. This style of leadership values collaboration, feedback, flexibility, and the mindset of being a “team player.” Pastors were also asked to self-identify the leadership style they employed during COVID-19. Though democratic leanings were prevalent in the responses, pastors felt a need to be more autocratic at times. For example, when pastors needed to make decisions about wearing masks or whether to meet in person, often those decisions were solely made by the pastor. In a study by Nyakundi and Ayako, a similar question was posed to pastors, and the team found that “although the majority of pastors claimed to be practicing a democratic type of leadership style, a larger percentage of the congregants at Kianungu Church district perceived their leaders as having adopted an autocratic leadership style.”²⁴⁰ Self-identified traits,

²³⁹ Hussain A. Sinjar Alsamaray, “Impact of Leadership Styles on Crisis Management According to Module H,” *European Journal of Business and Management* 6, no. 2 (2014): 40, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234625206.pdf>.

²⁴⁰ Tengeya Isaac Nyakundi and Richard Ayako, “Leadership Styles and Their Influence on Church Membership Growth: A Study of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church Kianungu District Nyamira County,” *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publication* 10, no. 8 (August 2020): 312. <https://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0820/ijsrp-p10438.pdf>.

by their nature, carry inherent bias, and perceptions can be skewed. According to a study by Adams and his team, “in 87% of 37 comparisons, self-reported adherence rates exceeded the objective rates, resulting in a median over-estimation of adherence of 27% (absolute difference).”²⁴¹ Based on these studies, there exists a possibility that what pastors perceive to be true and what congregants perceive to be true may be at odds. Further research exploring perceptions by pastors of their leadership style as compared to those of congregants may yield insights for pastors’ to better hone their leadership styles. The ability of pastors to adjust their preference for leadership style based on factors of time and amount of viable information indicated the ability to adapt to the situation to solve the problem.

Another aspect the researcher considered was whether denominational leanings would influence the choice of leadership style. The researcher wondered if the denominational church may be less independent than a non-denominational church and have less freedom to make autonomous decisions regarding the handling of a crisis. Though the number of interviews was small, the responses were highly similar. The researcher did conclude that denominational affiliation did not seem to sway the self-identified trait of being a democratic leader.

A third aspect of the theme of leadership style matched the literature review in that leaders in crisis tend to edge towards more authoritarian behaviors. Though pastors tended to lean toward being more democratic in their leadership style before COVID-19, during the COVID-19 pandemic, three of the pastors admitted that decisions had to be made using a top-down model. Often, the pastors mentioned time as a factor. In one case, the church was unable to

²⁴¹ A. S. Adams, S. B. Soumerai, J. Lomas, D. Ross-Degnan, “Evidence of Self-report Bias in Assessing Adherence to Guidelines,” *International Journal of Quality Health Care* 11, no. 3 (June 1999): 187. DOI: 10.1093/intqhc/11.3.187. PMID: 10435838.

find common ground. Finally, to ease the conflicts on whether to wear a mask, whether to be vaccinated, or whether to meet in person, they decided to follow the lead of schools in the area.

Surveys

For the surveys, the researcher used the three basic styles of leadership, but this time, the questions were developed using a Likert scale with no opportunity for the respondent to explain their answers. The number of responses on the survey does not meet a level of significance for the researcher to make generalizations. However, interestingly, the surveys mirrored the responses from the five pastors that were interviewed and should be viewed as an “added value” resource. Franck, suggests that the data though, statistically insignificant, should be discussed. She adds that it is reasonable to “discuss what it implies if it is true.”²⁴² The survey data merits discussion as it enriches and adds depth to the responses garnered through the interviews.

The leadership style favored in the survey was democratic, and the denominational affiliation did not seem to change the democratic leadership and decision-making. However, one email exchange with the leader of a structured denomination was striking. He looked over the survey and determined that since he made all the decisions during the pandemic, that the input of the individual pastors under his supervision it would not be helpful to the body of research of this project. . In his case, the structure of the church did dictate that decisions were made in a hierarchal fashion.

²⁴² Marina Franck, “How Do You Discuss Results Which are Not Statistically Significant in a Dissertation?” (blog). April 20, 2014. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/post/How_do_you_discuss_results_which_are_not_statistically_significant_in_a_dissertation/53542b15d039b1e43a8b4588/citation/download.

The survey identified that at least 10% of the pastors changed their leadership style somewhat during COVID-19, leaning towards more authoritarian decision-making. This data is similar to the data secured through the interviews.

Personal Character and Integrity

Interviews

Personal character and integrity were inclusive of such characteristics as authenticity, transparency, consensus building, moral agency, credibility, honesty, principle-driven, and trustworthiness. The seven questions that elicited responses on these characteristics were a mixture of open-ended and self-ranking responses.

Personal character remains unequivocally an essential component of effective leadership. According to Crossan and her team, “Character fundamentally shapes how we engage the world around us, what we notice, what we reinforce, who we engage in conversation, what we value, what we choose to act on, how we decide.”²⁴³ The pastors agreed wholeheartedly with the significance of living a life of integrity. Their responses to the question on moral values reflected a reliance on such characteristics as authenticity, hope and love, integrity, honesty, faith, and trustworthiness.

A resounding finding was the value that the pastors placed on character and integrity. In the coding, the researcher found that the pastors offered the word *authenticity* 4 times. One pastor stated it this way, “Who you are can get you through a hard time.” Another added a dimension of service by stating that he was “making sure what I was doing was right and just for each person in their situation.” Another pastor spoke of how integrity and character are what is

²⁴³ Mary Crossan, Jeffrey Gandz, and Gerard Seijts, “Developing Leadership Character,” *Ivey Business Journal* (January/February 2020), <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/developing-leadership-character/#:~:text=When%20it%20comes%20to%20leadership,in%20his%20or%20her%20competencies.>

inside and a “crisis opportunity is a time when the pastor goes to what is always there.” The pastor of the largest church with the most contention stated that he relied on “stubbornness” and by that, he meant sticking to what was right.

Another finding was the high reliance the pastors placed on empathy, transparency, flexibility, and concern for individual congregants. One pastor acknowledged that churches were changing how they do business. The pastors indicated in the interviews that in the past, the church leaders waited for the people to tell them what they needed. With COVID-19, the focus was outreach. This finding of interviewed pastors concurred with the survey of the Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations: Innovation Amidst and Beyond Covid-19 project, which found “a greater percentage of churches agree their congregation [are] willing to change to meet new challenges and agree they are actively involved in the local community.”²⁴⁴ When churches were closed, one pastor took up residence in her church to ensure that food supplies could be dropped off and the food ministry could continue throughout the day. The pastors were candid in speaking of the difficulty of showing empathy and care to people who were stirring up dissension. For example, one pastor said that his empathy in April was high, but by May, it had dropped to average, and then, in June it was low. He noted that the more disgruntled some of his congregants became, the more difficult it became to reason with them. He further stated that “empathy had become a diminishing quality.” He, then, noted that people were hurting and in their hurt condition they were not always being kind. Another pastor mentioned how often some

²⁴⁴ “Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations: Innovation Amidst and Beyond Covid-19,” *Congregational Response to the Pandemic*, December 2021: 5. https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Congregational-Response-to-the-Pandemic_Extraordinary-Social-Outreach-in-a-Time-of-Crisis_Dec-2021.pdf.

wanted to force their opinions on everyone else. All the pastors acknowledged the fear that their congregants were facing and how they desired to provide comfort for them.

The findings from the self-ranking interviews indicated that transparency and flexibility rated as the highest characteristics even though all scores were reasonably high. Both transparency and flexibility are essential to successful leadership during a crisis, as Drenik discusses. Holding on to information and waiting for all the pieces to come together before communicating with the followers does not tend to build a strong interdependent organization. Drenik states, “waiting to communicate or be transparent until we think we have the perfect answer or solution is old, industrial-age leadership and that is not what is required in a world that requires post-conventional, inclusive leadership.”²⁴⁵ The pastors recognized the importance of “radical transparency” as they reassured the congregants, that “we are in this crisis, just like you.”

Surveys

The researcher used similar questions for the survey to those posed to the pastors during the interview; however, the questions were created using a Likert response technique. The survey choices were *low*, *needs improvement*, *average*, *good*, and *excellent*.

The researcher provided working definitions embedded within the question for terms such as empathy, transparency, and flexibility. Three descriptive statistical measures were pulled from the data set. The measurements of central tendencies include mean, mode, and median. The mean is the average of the responses; the mode is the most frequently occurring value; and, the

²⁴⁵ Gary Drenik, “The New Rules: How Leaders Are Becoming Flexible in Times of Crisis,” *Forbes* (October 11, 2022), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/garydrenik/2022/10/11/the-new-rules-how-leaders-are-becoming-flexible-in-times-of-crisis/?sh=8f6a5642ac68>.

median captures the set of values located in the middle of the data set. In the data analysis, the researcher will use the mean as the main statistical indicator when talking about trends and themes as it provides a more comprehensive review of the data by incorporating all values both high and low.

The survey results were similar to the findings from the interviews. Table 9 below indicates the questions posed, the distribution of the responses, the mean, the mode, and the median.

Table 9: Survey Results for Personal Character and Integrity

Question	Totals		Mean	Mode	Median
Question #9: How would you rate your empathy as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Low	0	3.8	4	4
	NI	1			
	Av	2			
	Good	5			
	Excel	2			
Question #10: How would you rate your transparency as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Low	0	4.6	5	5
	NI	0			
	Av	0			
	Good	4			
	Excel	6			
Question #11: How would you rate your flexibility as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Low	0	4.2	4	4
	NI	1			
	Av	0			
	Good	5			
	Excel	4			
Question #12: How would you rate your concern for individual congregants as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Low	0	3.8	5	4.5
	NI	0			
	Av	2			
	Good	3			
	Excel	5			
Question #13: How would you rate your communication skills as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Low	0	4.3	5	4.5
	NI	0			
	Av	2			
	Good	3			
	Excel	5			

The definition of transparency given in the survey stated that transparency means being honest and straightforward with all stakeholders related to the church business. Sixty percent of the pastors felt they had achieved excellence in meeting the definition and forty percent felt they had achieved a rating of good. The mean score of survey respondents was 4.6 compared to 4.8 for the interviewees.

Flexibility was defined on the survey as the ability to modify both a style of leadership and approach to a situation based on the circumstances. Forty percent of the respondents felt they had an excellent rating, fifty percent felt they had a good rating, and ten percent felt they were average in this area. The mean score of survey respondents was 4.2 compared to 4.8 for the pastors interviewed.

Pastors indicated that leadership characteristics of transparency and flexibility were relied on when facing a crisis. This finding adds value to the results from the interviews.

Vision, Purpose, and Mission

Interviews

Vision, purpose, and mission were inclusive of such descriptors of vision as a mental image of desired outcomes for an organization and/or a unifying statement that motivates an organization toward excellence.²⁴⁶ In addition, to instill vision in an organization, the leadership

²⁴⁶ Terje Slåtten, Barbara Rebecca Mutonyl and Gudbrand Lien, "Does Organization Vision Really Matter? An Empirical Examination of Factors Related to Organizational Vision Integration among Hospital Employees," *BMC Health Services Research* 21 (2021): 3; Stephanie Kelly and Patrick MacDonald, "A Look at Leadership Styles and Workplace Solidarity Communication," *International Journal of Business Communication* 56, no. 3 (July 2019): 444; David Carlin, "Democratic, Authoritarian, Laissez-Faire: What Type of Leader Are You?, *Forbes*, (October 18, 2019), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidcarlin/2019/10/18/democratic-authoritarian-laissez-faire-what-type-of-leader-are-you/?sh=45d98cf42a6b>; Stephanie Kelly and Patrick MacDonald, "A Look at Leadership Styles and Workplace Solidarity Communication," *International Journal of Business Communication* 56, no. 3 (July 2019): 444.

must be articulate, motivational, and passionate. According to some scholars, the creation of the vision may reveal a leadership preferred style of authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire.²⁴⁷ The style the leader uses often directly impacts the level of trust between the leader and the followers. The four questions that elicited responses were a mixture of open-ended and self-ranking responses.

The researcher identified a shortcoming by not providing working definitions for vision, purpose, and mission. A common mistake during the interviews was to intermix the three and even believe that by answering the mission question, they had identified the purpose and the vision. That being said, the pastors quickly responded by acknowledging the mission of their church. Examining the websites of each church provided more evidence that church leaders may share some confusion or lack of knowledge of how vision, purpose, and mission are different.

A finding from the data set is that the pastors have a sense of mission and purpose for their church. For example, one pastor stated that if you “love God and love people,” everything falls into place. He continued by saying that “it is important to do life with people.” The pastor of the Cowboy Church said the vision was to “spread the word by loving God and loving others.” The mission was “to immerse as many people into the message.” The church friendly to the LBGTQ community had a vision of a “church without walls,” meaning they want to take down all barriers that would keep them from going into the world. The largest church had a mission to

²⁴⁷ David Carlin, “Democratic, Authoritarian, Laissez-Faire: What Type of Leader Are You?, *Forbes*, (October 18, 2019), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidcarlin/2019/10/18/democratic-authoritarian-laissez-faire-what-type-of-leader-are-you/?sh=45d98cf42a6b>; Stephanie Kelly and Patrick MacDonald, “A Look at Leadership Styles and Workplace Solidarity Communication,” *International Journal of Business Communication* 56, no. 3 (July 2019): 444.

experience and express God's love in the community. As the pastor said, "the church needs to show what life with Jesus looks like."

Another finding was the variance among the five churches regarding how often the mission was articulated during the crisis. A pastor north of Austin used his mission of "loving God, loving people" as a filter to make decisions and guide all activities of the church. His church also doubled in weekly attendance during the pandemic. Another pastor said that the mission was the DNA of his church, and he just put words to the actions they were already doing. However, he felt he did not articulate the mission often enough during COVID-19.

Another finding was that the process for making decisions before and during the pandemic did not change. The churches had a process that worked well for their congregation even though each church looked a little different in its implementation. Some had elders, others had boards, and others had senior leadership staff. The pastors indicated that the pandemic did not derail the decision-making process. This speaks to the importance of having sound, organic, and practical processes in place that can work well regardless of the challenges. Brown posits that "organizations can benefit from adopting an organic paradigm of management to maximize the benefits of quality and business excellence strategy."²⁴⁸

The findings from the self-ranking interviews indicated that articulating a clear vision was ranked the lowest even though all scores were reasonably high. One pastor described the time as one when "life was not clear; pretty muddy." Another commented that she was not sure

²⁴⁸ Alan Brown, "Organizational Paradigms and Sustainability in Excellence: From Mechanistic Approaches to Learning and Innovation," *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences* 6 no. 2/3 (2014): 181, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-02-2014-0020>.

the church would survive but was pleased to say (post-pandemic) that God has plans and a purpose for her church moving forward.

Surveys

The researcher used similar questions to those posed to the pastors during the interview, but this time the questions were created using a Likert response technique. The survey response choices were *low*, *needs improvement*, *average*, *good*, and *excellent*. In addition, terms such as empathy, transparency, and flexibility had working definitions embedded in the question.

Again, the survey did not receive a significant number of respondents to allow the researcher to make generalizations and therefore, can only be used as an added resource. The survey seemed to concur with the self-ranking responses in the interviews. Table 10 below indicates the questions posed, the distribution of the responses, the mean, the mode, and the median.

Table 10: Survey Results for Vision, Mission, and Purpose

Question	Totals		Mean	Mode	Median
Question #15: How would you rate your ability to articulate a clear vision for the church during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Low	0	3.7	4	4
	NI	1			
	Av	2			
	Good	5			
	Excel	2			
Question #16: How would you rate your problem-solving skills as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Low	0	3.7	4	4
	NI	1			
	Av	3			
	Good	4			
	Excel	2			
Question #18: How would you rate your ability to remain guided by your vision, mission, and purpose during the pandemic?	Low	1	4.2	5	4
	NI	0			
	Av	0			
	Good	4			
	Excel	5			

When asked about articulating a clear vision during the COVID-19 crisis, the interviewed pastors showed a mean of 3.8 compared to 3.7 for those pastors participating in the survey. With the question focused on problem-solving during COVID-19, the survey showed a significant difference from the interviews in the area of problem-solving. The mean for this indicator on the survey was 3.7 compared to 4.4 for the pastors interviewed. Survey respondents, by the nature of the tool, were denied an opportunity to explain their responses. The researcher acknowledges that question construction and readability may have been a factor. Without a significant number of respondents, the researcher is unable to conclude.

Relationships Based on Credibility and Authenticity

Interviews

Relationships must be established and sustained while pursuing a common vision.²⁴⁹ The leader must work with and through people toward a vision, goals, and objectives. These must be solidified by followers and seen as worth both the outcome and the effort. Marin and his team posit that “better goal achievement through visionary leadership is therefore achieved through cognitive alignment of followers.”²⁵⁰ Characteristics of relationships built on credibility and authenticity include seeking consensus, building trust, knowledge sharing, transparency, and establishing a unified, cohesive, and close-knit relationship that is reciprocal. Relationships must be interdependent. The six questions that elicited responses were all open-ended.

²⁴⁹ Terje Slåtten, Barbara Rebecca Mutonyl and Gudbrand Lien, “Does Organization Vision Really Matter? An Empirical Examination of Factors Related to Organizational Vision Integration among Hospital Employees,” *BMC Health Services Research* 21 (2021): 3.

²⁵⁰ Thomas K. Maran, Urs Baldegger, and Kilian Klösel, “Turning Visions into Results: Unraveling the Distinctive Paths of Leading with Vision and Autonomy to Goal Achievement,” *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 43, no. 1 (2022): 133.

One interesting finding was that overall, pastors saw growth in the relationships between the pastor and congregants. Pastors reported restoration narratives of members in their congregants in the areas of spiritual, marital, and personal growth. One pastor noted that he had seen several troubled marriages in his church restored. Another pastor mentioned spiritual restoration noting that his church baptized 30 people during the summer of 2020. The pastors found various avenues to continue nurturing relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic. One pastor created an evening zoom call every night except Saturday night where congregants could join in. This act of nurturing provided a time to ask questions, discuss the challenges, and engage in prayer. In another relationship-building effort, every congregant over 65 (65 and older was deemed by the CDC to be the most vulnerable population) was contacted personally by someone in the church. The call was designed to assess any needs and to pray for them. Another pastor had a tech-savvy member of the church reach out to those in the congregation who might be lacking in technology prowess, such as accessing text messages, reading and replying to emails, and locating the church's Facebook page. These outreach ventures helped maintain the established relationships and build new ones for those who were seeking a church during COVID-19. One pastor noted that the church would have "done more if they had known that COVID-19 would have lasted as long as it did."

When asked about where pastors sought guidance in making decisions such as whether the services would be in person or online or whether masks would be required, two pastors simply stated that they looked to the Bible and God, but three pastors added that they used various networks. The intriguing part of this discovery was how the networks looked. One was a simple network of three pastors from Houston, San Antonio, and Austin that met weekly via zoom to discuss the pandemic. Another pastor used a sibling who was a pastor, the elders, and a

resource on leadership by Carey Nieuwhof. The Baptist church used the government guidelines, the leadership team, and a group of other churches in the vicinity. The pastors not only relied on government and medical guidelines but sought support from networks. Those networks often included the leadership team and elders. More often, pastors sought additional resources through networks outside the church itself. The importance of a network cannot be underplayed as Norhrstedt found in his study. He posits in his comparative case study article on networks that “the cases show that stable interpersonal relationships, clarification of the terms of collaboration, shared problem perceptions, and coordination of joint decision-making constitute important assembly mechanisms for overcoming collective action problems.”²⁵¹ Sharing problems and solutions, especially during a crisis, can be a powerful tool.

Surveys

The researcher used similar questions to those posed to the pastors during the interview, and again, the questions were created using a Likert response technique. The survey response choices are *low*, *needs improvement*, *average*, *good*, and *excellent*. Table 11 below indicates the questions posed, the distribution of the responses, the mean, the mode, and the median.

Table 11: Survey Results for Relationships Based on Credibility and Authenticity

Question	Totals		Mean	Mode	Median
Question #17: How would you rate your credibility with your congregants especially when the messaging from the government about protocols seemed to waver during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Low	0	4.3	5	4.5
	NI	0			
	Av	2			
	Good	3			
	Excel	5			

²⁵¹ Daniel Nohrstedt, “Networking and Crisis Management Capacity: A Nested Analysis of Local-Level Collaboration in Sweden,” *American Review of Public Administration* 48, no. 3 (2018): 232, DOI: 10.1177/0275074016684585.

Question #20: How would you rate your planning and decision- making during the pandemic?	Low NI Av Good Excel	1 1 6 2	3.9	4	4
Question #21: How do you believe the congregants would rate your effectiveness in the decision- making process during the pandemic?	Low NI Av Good Excel	0 0 1 5 4	4.3	4	4

The survey revealed two areas below the 4.0 indicator: credibility and planning/decision-making. The survey differed from the interviews in that three of the 10 pastors saw themselves as *needing improvement* or *average* when asked about rating their credibility with the congregants in their respective churches. The question in the survey provided added context with the phrase “especially when the messaging from the government about protocols seemed to waver during the COVID-19 pandemic.” Of the respondents, seven reported a rating of *good* or *excellent*, indicating that perhaps any wavering in the messaging from the pastor did not adversely affect the relationship previously established between the pastor and the congregants. The researcher pondered the depth and robust nature of relationships before COVID-19 that perhaps provided such a bond, congregants were able to understand the fluid nature of the messaging. There was confusion in the government and medical establishments regarding protocols, and pastors were trying to stay abreast of the most current information. As the guidelines changed, so did communication from the pastors. Perhaps, congregants understood and because of the rich relationships, pastors were given grace. As mentioned earlier, the response rate on the survey did not reach a level of significance where generalizations could be drawn.

On the question regarding planning/decision-making, the respondents’ average dropped to 3.9. Interestingly, most of those who had consistently rated themselves as *excellent* on other

questions, dropped their rating to *good*, making *good* the mode. A reasonable inference is that the messaging from the government entities and the CDC greatly influenced the decision-making process established in churches. When a decision was made during the pandemic, that decision may have required a reversal within a matter of a few days as new information became available. The environment was changing rapidly and grounded decision-making processes appeared to be unsteady. When pastors were asked how they thought their congregants would rate them in this area, their mean score rose to 4.3. It seems that pastors, like many people, tend to judge themselves more harshly than others judge them. Brown examines this phenomenon in his book and posits that “one of the obstacles to inner work and spiritual realization is the painful and difficult one of the inner critic, the coercive agency within us that criticizes, judges, compares, condemns, blames, and attacks us and others mercilessly and constantly.”²⁵² The difficulty of self-reporting may result from personal biases as well as misinterpretations of the events based on faulty information, personal blind spots, and personal worldviews.

Achievements During Covid

Both the interview guide and the survey posed an extra open-ended question regarding major accomplishments that they were able to see during COVID-19. One church doubled in size, another church increased its outreach, even converting a truck into a shower and taking it out to the homeless camps, and another one bought (and paid for) a \$2,000,000 plot of land to construct a new church building.

A concern many pastors had, when the pandemic first swept across Texas and churches were not allowed to meet in person, was about the level of giving. All of the pastors agreed that

²⁵² Byron Brown, *Soul without Shame: A Guide to Liberating Yourself from the Judge Within* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1999): ix.

the level of giving did not waiver and in some cases increased. The pastors had no explanation as to why the giving either remained the same or increased, there may be several factors at play. One cannot eliminate the power of an Almighty God to take care of his church. Another factor may be that since more people were working from home, daycare centers were closed, and cars were not being driven, people had more discretionary money that could be given. One pastor I interviewed initiated and completed a building program drive raising two million dollars during this time. What seemed an unlikely time worked well for the church. Another factor may be that during tragedy and hard times, people are drawn to church. Hansen states that “so even though people may have had limited access to buildings like churches or synagogues during the pandemic, they still had access to spiritual resources that can help them navigate traumatic events. This may explain data showing that some individuals are stating their faith is stronger than it was before the COVID-19 pandemic.”²⁵³ Based on the interviews, pastors related anecdotal evidence that lives were changed, relationships were restored, and many accepted Jesus during the pandemic.

The number of lives and relationships restored were repeated narratives. As Hansen explains when people are hurting and the world becomes confusing and maybe unmanageable, they tend to access spiritual resources to navigate the event. The church had to change the programs offered, incorporate new platforms for services and small groups, and re-examine outreach ministries. As one pastor mentioned every person over 65 in her church was contacted by someone in leadership for a wellness check. The church reached outside its walls seeking

²⁵³ Danielle Tumminio Hansen, “Do People Become More Religious in Times of Crisis?” *The Conversation* (May 5, 2021): 4, <https://theconversation.com/do-people-become-more-religious-in-times-of-crisis-158849>.

ministries such as the “traveling shower” to homeless camps and food deliveries to homes. COVID-19 served as a wake-up call to the churches represented by the pastors interviewed. No longer could the church wait to hear about a need, as one pastor stated. Instead, the church had to be active rather than reactive. The pastors interviewed shared how the outreach into the community increased, people came to know Jesus and were baptized (one church had 30 baptisms during the pandemic), and people grew spiritually.

Summary

This study used a qualitative approach in which the researcher interviewed 5 pastors that served as pastors during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 through December 2021. The researcher also created an online survey sending invitations to participate to over 300 pastors in Texas. The characteristics of adaptive leaders analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3 were synthesized under 4 themes: leadership style, personal character, mission/purpose/vision, and relationship-building. In a crisis, those leaders that are adaptable in their leadership styles, willing to push the boundaries of the status quo through creative decision-making and flexibility in their thinking are likely to enjoy successful outcomes. This was evident in the pastors’ stories of moving to online service when the church had never had one, a pastor living in the church to ensure the food ministry continued, a pastor zooming every night with congregants to offer prayer and comfort, and a church group converting a van to a portable shower for the homeless. The leaders who identify the mission, purpose, and vision of the organization and use that information as the lens when making decisions about the next steps help to keep the congregation focused on Jesus rather than the circumstances. Leaders who have personal character and integrity will lead by example and, by doing so, create relationships that are built on credibility and authenticity.

The literature review indicated that leaders who were adaptable to situations, had personal character/integrity, had a clear sense of vision, purpose, and mission, and had built rich relationships with followers tended to emerge with successful outcomes. The questions on the survey and interview guide incorporated those characteristics. The finding from the interviews and surveys supported the research. The pastors in the study incorporated these characteristics, albeit to varying degrees, that allowed them to lead their congregations through the pandemic.

Though the research is limited in size and location, the best practices utilized by the participants indicated that relying on a clear and articulated mission, strong pastor/congregant relationships, and a character of integrity would bring successful results. With evidence in the literature, including profiles of great leaders who used these characteristics, and the responses from the participants, the researcher believes that these best practices would assist any pastor going through a crisis.

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation of this research project required careful consideration and reflection on the weaknesses and strengths of the methodology used. In addition, the researcher proposed recommendations for delving more deeply than just incorporating a self-reporting model to explore other methods of comparative reflections, such as creating a survey to gather the congregant's perception of the pastor's performance. Avenues for further research can be built on this first exploration.

Evaluation of Project Design and Implementation

This qualitative research project took a multi-case study approach with the purpose of identifying adaptive leadership characteristics of pastors serving in churches in Texas during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 through December 2021. The procedures used by the researcher included the development of the steps explained in Chapter 4. The steps included a review of a biblical and theological framework focused on the lives of Moses and Joseph. This was followed by a literature review of significant scholarly works on leadership. Upon completion of these steps, the interviews and survey were undertaken, followed by analysis and evaluation of the data. The research for chapters two and three were completed in sequential order, but the gathering of data from the interviews and surveys overlapped. The researcher did not have to make any changes in the steps delineated in Chapter 4.

The biblical-theological research provided several findings on the lives of Moses and Joseph and how they embraced adaptive leadership. Both men received a calling from God that led to a strong reliance of both men on God for direction in the challenges they faced. Both men were clear about their mission. For Moses, it was to lead the people

out of Egypt into the promised land. For Joseph, it was to save the known world during a global famine. Both men exhibited personal integrity and strong character. Joseph, for example, refused to engage in an adulterous affair, and when interpreting the baker's dream remained truthful even as he foretold the man's impending death. Another finding in the biblical study revealed the devotion each man had to the people they were leading. No matter the issue among the people, Moses would listen, consult God, intercede on behalf of the people, and deliver the solution clearly to the people. By empathic listening and the use of God-driven solutions, he was able to establish a trusting relationship with the people.

The review of the related literature added to the revelations in the biblical study. Leaders have encountered crises since the beginning of recorded history. Those who successfully navigated those crises displayed certain identifiable characteristics. The leaders, who prevailed, had a strong personal character laced with integrity. They also understood the mission ahead of them, clearly articulated the vision to the followers, and motivated followers to join the cause. This ability to motivate people and live a life of integrity generated a sense of trust that built and sustained a viable relationship between the followers and the leader.

In addition, the literature review supported the benefits of a blended leadership style of a servant, transformational, and adaptive leadership. This blend is essential for effective Christian leaders. Servant and transformational leadership place the focus on the follower and the follower's needs. Building strength at this point allows for a leader to move into an adaptive mode when a crisis arises. The culture of respect and team-mindedness is already cultivated, making the shift to address the crisis more manageable.

The literature review, also, provided evidence that during a crisis, a leader may need to adjust his/her leadership style. For example, a leader who is democratic-leaning in his/her style of leadership may recognize the need to become more authoritarian during a crisis to achieve a successful outcome.

Project Design Strengths

A major strength of the multi-case study is that the “study results in a complete, well-organized picture of the person or group studied.”²⁵⁴ The case study, according to Gable, is “appropriate where the objective is to study contemporary events, and where it is not necessary to control behavioral events or variables.”²⁵⁵ According to research by Quintão and her team, the multi-case study used in this project involved several participants giving it construction validity.²⁵⁶ The case studies also had internal validity because a relationship is established between COVID-19 and the characteristics of leadership employed by the pastors. The five pastors represented different denominations, congregation sizes, and regions of Texas, allowing for external validity. Because the semi-structured interviews were used uniformly among the interviewees, the researcher was able to identify similar themes between the case studies, indicating reliability.

²⁵⁴ Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 143.

²⁵⁵ Guy Gable, “Integrating Case Study and Survey Research Methods: An Example in Information Systems,” *European Journal of Information Systems* 3, no. 2 (1994): 113, <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/5853/1/5853.pdf>.

²⁵⁶ Cátia Quintão, Pedro Andrade, and Fernando Almeida, “How to Improve the Validity and Reliability of a Case Study Approach,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education* 6, no. 2 (2020): 267, <https://doi.org/10.32674/jise.v9i2.2026>.

The second strength was that the interview questions were tightly aligned to the biblical-theological and literature research findings. Using the same questions for each interview provided ease in the search for patterns and themes. The researcher interviewed five pastors and that concurs with the research in that themes can be identified with five to six interviews (Morgan 2002; Guest et al. 2006; Francis et.al. 2010).²⁵⁷

The relevance of the project to the researcher was the third strength. First, as a lay leader, the researcher directly feels the impact of strong or weak pastoral leadership. When the messaging is clear, mission-driven, and based on integrity and respect for congregants, followers respond more quickly and optimistically. As a leader of both a life group and a cancer network, the researcher acknowledges the role and significance of leadership to both groups. As a leader, the researcher must strive to live a life of personal integrity, understand and clearly articulate the mission, and build those lasting personal relationships.

Project Design Weaknesses

One of the weaknesses of the research project was the researcher's accessibility to pastors serving in Texas from March 2020 through December 2021 time period. The researcher contacted her network of friends and asked for an email introduction to their pastor as a potential interviewee. Interestingly, the participation rate of return on this method was 62.5%. The survey was more challenging. The researcher did not have a pastor listserv or other mailing list, so she reached out to her pastor who sent it out on his

²⁵⁷ Emily Namey, "Riddle Me This: How Many Interviews (or Focus Groups) Are Enough?" R&E Search for Evidence, Blog, last modified Apr. 25, 2017, <https://researchforevidence.fhi360.org/riddle-me-this-how-many-interviews-or-focus-groups-are-enough>.

list of contacts and posted it on his website. The researcher then individually contacted every Baptist and Methodist church in Texas using a directory found online. The researcher also contacted the Baptist seminary in Texas and the Baptist Convention project leaders but never received a response.

Another weakness came to light in an email exchange with the leader of one denomination. The researcher was informed that the survey did not take into account the structure of his church, and he declined to send the survey out.

Another weakness of the survey seems to be a phenomenon known as “survey fatigue.” Because consumers are bombarded daily with requests for feedback of some form, some are opting out of taking voluntary online surveys. In research conducted by Pew Research in 2012, “the response rate of their typical telephone surveys had dropped to 9% versus 36% in 1997.”²⁵⁸ Even though the number of respondents who took the survey was low, the results correlated with the themes and patterns emerging from the interviews.

Another weakness of both the survey and the interviews is that representatives of all areas of Texas were not interviewed. The South, Central, and Northeast parts of Texas had representatives. Three invitees—a pastor from West Texas, a pastor from East Texas, and the denominational leader overseeing various churches in West Texas—did not choose to participate.

²⁵⁸ Pew Research Center, “Assessing the Representativeness of Public Opinion Survey” accessed December 10, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2012/05/15/assessing-the-representativeness-of-public-opinion-surveys/>.

A consideration to address the weakness of the online survey would be to exchange two or three online (chat feature) or zoom forums for the survey. With forums and enough time to notify pastors in an area, it might be possible to get added to an already scheduled meeting.

The Effect of Crisis on Pastors

The narratives in Chapter 2 of Moses and Joseph are as relevant today as they were then. Life is sprinkled with challenges, and some of those challenges are horrific. To imagine two to five million people fleeing Egypt and miraculously crossing the Red Sea, only to then find themselves in a desert without good drinking water and food generated a major crisis. Imagine standing before Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the world, who at his whim could be your executor, with only your gifting of dream interpretation. Truly, these men faced a real, viable, and challenging crisis. Both men seemed to be poised for the mission and accepted that reality is filled with highs and lows, challenges and victories.

The literature review provided data from studies, but also offered narratives that highlighted insight into modern leaders facing crises such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, and John F. Kennedy. Burns, for example, studied great leaders to better describe what makes a leader great.²⁵⁹ The ability to transform lives through authentic relationships was one of his findings. The question of interest is: what characteristics or best practices allow great men to be successful? Emerging from the literature were themes of personal character and integrity. Live what one believes. Have a

²⁵⁹ Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 10.

clear mission and purpose and use those as a filter for decision-making. Build closely-knitted relationships that are reciprocal in nature. When crisis comes, and it will, the framework for an adaptive leader is established.

Pastors, like all other leaders, must have tools and practices that allow them to lead. They must have a vision, a mission, and a purpose. This must become the passion that propels them forward. Building relationships with the congregants in which they feel valued and heard is essential. When a crisis comes, the church has its framework built on God, led by leaders who have the best practices of leadership at hand.

A crisis, such as COVID-19, was multi-dimensional. It was a health emergency. It was also an emotional pandemic. Fear set in because this virus was unknown. The medical field had little evidence or data. Unfounded conspiracy theories and talk of Armageddon instilled a spiritual fear in a portion of the population. Fear stymied the thinking processes, people become depressed and even suicidal. This was the crisis that faced pastors beginning in March 2020.

As the researcher interviewed pastors, the responses indicated that they were overwhelmed with all the aspects of the pandemic. Most did not consider themselves mental health experts and did not even realize how this pandemic was going to impact all the aspects of life that it did. They said they felt at times very inadequate. As a lay leader, the researcher began to understand the impact of the pandemic on leaders within the church setting. It was refreshing and inspiring to acknowledge that local pastors reflected

Jesus and God's love as compared to the self-promoting leaders such as Reverend Spell in Louisiana who were often featured in the media.²⁶⁰

Adaptive Leadership and Pastors

The literature study presented the adaptive leadership model as a framework that embodies transformational and servant leadership to describe the behaviors of leaders under the stress of a crisis. Adaptive leadership focuses on solving problems. The adaptive leader has an open mind and a willingness to experiment. This leader must be willing to change behaviors based on a changing and evolving situation.

Moses certainly faced a changing landscape with such incidents as the people crying out for drinking water and demanding food. Moses, on one occasion, consulted God for an answer and God instructed Moses to throw a tree in the water to make the water drinkable. Moses exhibited his open mind and willingness to experiment. Though this remedy may have seemed strange and unusual, Moses executed it as God commanded.

The pastors interviewed showed their ability to adapt. They made plans, but held those plans loosely. They created new ways to reach the members of the church through experimentation. One church partnered with a daycare that was receiving government food, but had no clients due to the lockdown. So the daycare cooked the food, and the church delivered it to the children's families. It might have seemed ill-advised to have a

²⁶⁰ Wesley J. Wildman, Joseph Bulbulia, Richard Sosis and Uffe Schjoedt, "Religion and the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Religion, Brain and Behavior* 10, no. 2 (2020): 115. DOI: 10.1080/2153599X.2020.1749339.

building program in the middle of COVID-19, but one church did and was able to pay in full for a plot of land costing \$2,000,000.

To assuage the fear and anxiety that people were feeling, one pastor had a zoom call open every night except Saturday night for anyone who wanted to jump in and participate. The pastor referred to it as a time of healing and providing comfort. As a result, new groups were created and those groups are still going post-pandemic.

Again, the researcher was inspired by the creativity and perseverance of the pastors interviewed. The ability of the pastors to adapt to the changing landscape of COVID-19 indicated great flexibility and problem-solving.

Best Practices

The study aimed to identify best practices for pastors to use during a crisis. Moses and Joseph provided examples of leadership that is applicable to today's world. The literature review provided a framework for those practices to equip leaders to be successful during a crisis. The interviews provided authentic data that fleshed out the framework from the literature. Three themes emerged: personal character and integrity, vision/mission, and purpose, and creating relationships based on trust and authenticity.

The pastors mentioned that being transparent and authentic were probably the personal traits they relied on before and especially during COVID-19. All the pastors shared how they had personal challenges and how they shared them with their congregants. They were transparent about their own bouts of anxiety and rolling emotions. Pastors assured people they were walking with them and their faith was in a God who was in control of the situation. Their messaging about the pandemic explained the "what" and the "why" of decisions. The pastors all self-rated their moral agency as

high with a strong sense of right and wrong. One pastor added that he was “a work in progress.”

The mission permeated every interview. During COVID-19, one pastor was not sure her church was going to survive, but when the pandemic appeared to have eased, she came to realize that God was not done using them. Another pastor said there were so many aspects to consider and things often got “muddy.” This pastor targeted such issues as masking and when to meet in person and when to continue remote services.

The pastors unanimously praised the relationships they had built before COVID-19 and how most of those weathered the storm. There were those congregants who thought the church didn’t decide on issues fast enough and those who thought the church was too slow in making decisions. Some of those people left the church. The churches, however, saw growth during this time, even when they were meeting online. People seemed to be hungry for spiritual reassurance that God was still in control.

The researcher was inspired by the way the pastors navigated the turmoil that the pandemic presented on several fronts. Pastors sought authenticity and transparency as the messaging from mandates and protocols often became convoluted. Instead of fighting the pandemic, pastors seemed to want to steer a course forward, making decisions that were reasonable and for which the “what” and “why” were clearly articulated.

Research Discussion and Findings

The purpose of this research project was to identify best practices that pastors/leaders can use when facing a crisis. The research is organized into the following themes: 1) leadership style, 2) inherent personal character and integrity, 3) articulation of a vision, mission, and purpose, and 4) relationships built on integrity and trust. The data

were analyzed using analyses of the biblical and literature reviews, the interviews, and the online survey to access themes regarding leadership.

Leadership Style

Leadership style and decision-making laced the literature on leadership (Appendix A) with such scholars as Amanchukwu, Stanley, and Ololube (2015); Benmira and Agboola (2021); Desyatnikov (2020); Carlin (2019); Kelly and McDonald (2019); and Trapero and De Lozada (2010). Questions 1 and 2 in the interview guide and on the survey focused on three leadership styles: democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire. A leadership style is a method used to guide an organization, implement plans and strategic goals, and motivate people. A leader who understands his/her learning style can improve communication and build stronger relationships. The terms were identified in the survey and in the interview as follows:

Authoritarian – tends to make all or most decisions; retains full control and power
 Laissez-faire – empowers teams to have full autonomy and chooses not to participate in the decisions
 Democratic – balances decision-making responsibility between the group and the leader

The literature indicates that the more authoritarian a leader is, the greater the discontent of the followers.²⁶¹ The thematic thread from the interviews indicated that four of the pastors saw themselves prior to COVID-19 as democratic leaders, and one pastor hedged between democratic and laissez-faire. The ability of the democratic leader to build relationships prior to COVID-19 seemed to enable the pastors to ease into an authoritarian mode when a crisis decision needed to be made. As one pastor stated,

²⁶¹ Kelly and MacDonald, “A Look at Leadership Styles and Workplace Solidarity Communication,” 444.

“people were agitated, so they struggled to make decisions. I listened to others’ opinions, but finally, I made the decision.” Several of the pastors echoed the same sentiment and indicated that time was often a factor in having to choose to make an authoritarian decision.

The survey respondents saw themselves as 90% democratic and 10% laissez-faire prior to COVID-19. During COVID-19, there was a slight change with 80% remaining democratic, 10% remaining laissez-faire, but 10% choosing authoritarian. The survey complemented the interviews on style of leadership prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19.

Through the literature, the survey, and the interviews, the emergent theme is that establishing a more democratic leadership style as a *modus operandi* provides the strong confidence to make more autocratic decisions in times of crisis. The Australian Commonwealth resource guide states, “in a crisis, changing circumstances may prompt a change in management style from consultative to a ‘command and control’ approach.”²⁶²

Personal Character and Integrity

The literature review of scholars (Appendix A) provides such descriptors of personal character and integrity as authenticity, transparency, seeking consensus, being a moral agent, credibility, honesty, principled, and trustworthiness. According to scholars, “a leader’s commitment to integrity has been universally identified by extensive

²⁶² ”Decision Making During a Crisis: A Practical Guide,” Commonwealth of Australia, 2018. 6, <https://www.organisationalresilience.gov.au/Documents/decision-making-during-a-crisis-a-practical-guide.pdf>.

leadership research as the most important element possessed by leaders in establishing their personal credibility.”²⁶³

Questions 3-8 in the interview guide and the survey capture the key themes of personal character. When interviewees were asked about consensus-building, four pastors believed they had a strong consensus and one pastor emphatically stated that she had “100% buy-in.” The pastor of one of the larger churches felt that during COVID-19, there was no consensus. In his appraisal of the situation, it was a divided and contentious time. However, this pastor’s understanding that “people were afraid, which was causing their anger” was significant in his continued efforts to move forward.

All of the pastors shared anecdotal incidences of being transparent, authentic, and vulnerable. One pastor went through a divorce during this time and openly shared the experience with the church. The church supported her during this personal crisis because they trusted and believed in her leadership. All of the pastors reported that they assured the congregants that they were having the same anxieties and concerns. Sharing vulnerabilities can be safely done when the pastor has established integrity and exhibited personal character.

Descriptive statistics on all variables used in the analyses for the characteristics of personal character and integrity are presented in Appendix F. On average, respondents, including interviewees and survey takers, tend to report relatively high levels of reliance on these characteristics during the COVID-19 pandemic. A subgroup of attributes that

²⁶³ Cam Caldwell, Rolf D. Dixon, Larry A. Floyd, Joe Chaudoin, Jonathan Post, and Gaynor Cheokas, “Transformative Leadership: Achieving Unparalleled Excellence,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 109 (2012): 176. DOI 10.1007/s10551-011-1116-2.

make up the personal character and integrity category include empathy, transparency, flexibility, and concern for individual congregants.

The *n* for interviews is five and satisfies the research criteria of five to six interviews as reported in Chapter 4 (Morgan 2002; Guest et al. 2006; Francis et al. 2006; and Namey, 2017). The *n* for the survey is ten. Though the survey is not statistically significant, the researcher found that the data from the surveys correlated well with the interviewees.

The researcher found from the data that pastors had great concern for their congregants. They continued ministries such as delivering food, helping the homeless, and group activities on zoom. Some pastors tended to act once they knew of a need, but others proactively sought out the needs in their church and community. For example, one pastor, had her deacons call all congregants over 65 (considered a vulnerable population) to ensure they had food, had services such as electricity, and understood how to access technology to receive church messaging. Another pastor had a member call all the people in the church that might not be technology savvy to talk them through accessing messaging being sent out via technology. This level of care is an extension of a heart of empathy. The pastors did note that constant dissenters often tried their patience, and one pastor said his level of empathy fluctuated, especially around November 2020 with the election. All of them mentioned the part political affiliations played in the levels of dissension. One pastor identified her church as “blue” (Democrats) and noted that the congregants seemed to be on the same page with a concern for the health and well-being of others rather than focusing on personal rights.

During this time, being transparent and flexible was viewed as critical by the pastors. The pastors all had a plan for moving forward with varying degrees of specificity. As one pastor described it, these plans were “loosely held” so they could easily shift directions. The importance of personal character is discussed by Brenda van Camp, Founder and Managing Partner at Upwardly. She posits, “character is fundamental to effective leadership because good character builds trust, and without trust, people will not follow you. Without followers, obviously, one cannot lead.”²⁶⁴

Vision, Mission, and Purpose

The literature review of scholars (Appendix A) provides a rich background for understanding vision, mission, and purpose. The vision is “where the company is going.”²⁶⁵ The mission, according to Croneberger, is “more like an actionable vision statement. It’s the ‘what, who, and why.’”²⁶⁶ The purpose is best identified by “asking, as a company, why you are doing the work you are doing.”²⁶⁷

Questions 9-12 on the interview guide and the survey capture the key themes of vision, mission, and purpose. When interviewees were asked about the vision, mission, and purpose, all were quick to give a mission statement, but only two stated the vision.

²⁶⁴ Brenda van Camp, “The Importance of Character in Leadership,” *the SharpAlice blog*, January 3, 2017, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/importance-character-leadership-brenda-van-camp/>.

²⁶⁵ Jen Croneberger, “Vision, Mission and Purpose: The Difference,” *Forbes* March 4, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/03/04/vision-mission-and-purpose-the-difference/?sh=7730b05280ed>.

²⁶⁶ Croneberger, “Vision, Mission and Purpose.”

²⁶⁷ Croneberger, “Vision, Mission and Purpose.”

To clarify the terms, the researcher could have provided working definitions because it seems that the three terms are woven together as one to some of the interviewees. Loving God and loving people was an idea expressed by three pastors. One church had a vision of a church without walls and a complementary threefold mission: “1) affirming your unique journey; 2) creating hope and healing; 3) connecting you to God, others, and community.” Another church took the name of the church and made the mission to be an acrostic of its name. For example, the acronym for the name of the church is FBC, so the F stands for faith in Christ, the B for belonging to the community, and C for commissioned Christians constantly developing.

An essential finding was that a mission-guided decision-making model allowed churches to make better decisions about which activities the church would undertake during COVID-19. With conflicting government and medical messaging, the reliance on their mission tended to help them navigate the situation. One pastor described the situation as “muddy” at times; however, it was the mission of the church that provided the firm foundation for moving forward.

As part of the data collection, pastors were asked about four characteristics that fall under the heading of vision, mission, and purpose. Those include the ability to articulate the mission clearly and keep it in front of the people, decisiveness, communicating the mission and other messaging clearly, and problem-solving. The mean data points may be found in Appendix F.

Interestingly, the surveyed pastors tended to show lower scores in the self-rating questions than those participating in face-to-face interviews. Though scores of 4 or 5

were prevalent in the survey, the outliers, such as the one respondent who rated himself a “low” on decisiveness, may have skewed the data somewhat.

A finding from this review was the paradox of having a clear mission statement and yet, lower rankings on actually articulating the mission. All of the pastors stated or inferred that their decision-making was directly tied to the mission. Even so, they still felt that they should have done more to keep it in front of the congregants.

Another finding revolves around problem-solving. One pastor gave himself an average rating because he realized how “broken” the people were and he wanted to “fix” their situation. Some were struggling with mental issues. He said, “fixing things is easy, but people are more challenging.” He seemed to indicate that not being able to problem-solve people’s problems somehow lessened his ability to problem-solve. Another pastor said that if you “give me time, we will move forward.” Problem-solving in a crisis is quite different from the routine problem-solving a pastor would be involved with. In a calm environment, systems are in place to gather “reliable” information and teams come together to weigh the options. In a crisis such as the pandemic, the systems may be in place, but the information was often “unreliable” and rapidly evolving. It appears that pastors who used their systems and built room to be fluid within the boundaries of their systems felt the most successful.

The ability to be decisive is also reliant on “reliable” information. The pastors all struggled with the “back and forth” of information and protocols. Some anchored all decisions for the church’s COVID behavior on what the schools in the area were doing. This seemed to appease many of the congregants because they were able to see some stability.

Relationships Based on Credibility and Authenticity

The literature review of scholars (Appendix A) yields such descriptors as consensus-building, trust, knowledge-sharing, transparency, authenticity, reciprocal relationships, and interdependence to describe relationships based on credibility and authenticity. Effective relationships between the leader and the followers help stabilize organizations. The mutual respect of a close-knit relationship helps build a healthy organization, and if this is the *modus operandi*, then, when a crisis comes, according to Northouse, the outcomes such as tension, stress, turnover, and productivity will be less impactful.²⁶⁸

Questions 13-18 on the interview guide and the survey capture the key themes of relationships prior to and during COVID-19. When asked about the pastor-congregant relationships, pastors indicated that for the most part, the relationships were solid, but one pastor noted that “there was some chipping away” during the pandemic. Some of the pastors noted that during the pandemic, relationships actually became stronger. Another pastor indicated in her answer to whether the relationship between the pastor and congregation improved or regressed, that relationships grew and more people approached her about getting involved. When asked about whether the relationship between pastor and congregants was reciprocal, three of them responded with an additional statement “for those who took the time to engage.”

The pastors all saw themselves as strong moral agents and attributed that to two basic characteristics: authenticity and transparency. As they used their agency as moral

²⁶⁸ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*.

leaders, they all shared ways that they motivated their teams and the congregation. One pastor stated that they “saved a lot of energy by not chasing lots of different ideas.” Instead, they decided to stand on the scripture to “wait upon the Lord” (Psalm 132:2). Another pastor referenced Joseph and his trials, reminding team members and congregants that God is in control. He referred to Gen. 50:20 when Joseph explains that what was intended for harm has been used by God for good. Messaging by lead pastors through “just-in-time” videos and using Facebook, provided more avenues of keeping the teams and congregants focused on God and connected to each other. The pastors also relied on such managerial-type activities as phone calls, staff meetings, check-ins, and showing up on zoom when smaller groups were meeting or in person when that was allowed. In addition, most pastors delegated leaders to contact those in their sphere of influence. For the larger churches, this was the most effective way to ensure everyone was contacted.

A truth about relationships, according to Brene Brown is “people aren’t themselves when they’re scared. It might be all they can do.”²⁶⁹ The pandemic incited fear in people around the world as well as in those who attend church. The data indicates that the relationships built between the pastors and the congregants are a crucial factor in the stability of the organization. Relationships created on trust, reliability, authenticity, and credibility take time but are so worth the effort to cultivate. With a strong relationship in tow, facing a crisis becomes a team effort, with a central goal built on a clear mission.

²⁶⁹ Valerie Orton, *Everyday Resilience: Creating Calm from Chaos* (Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, 2016), 63.

Research Project Conclusions

The final conclusions from the research project resulted from an analysis of scholarly literature on leadership, individual interviews, and the online survey. This data was used to answer the central research problem. This project addressed the scarcity of best practices regarding adaptive leadership available to pastors when facing a crisis.

The biblical and theological review provided two narratives of strong, adaptive leadership models in the lives of Moses and Joseph. Examination, both theologically and historically, provided salient evidence that both men were pillars of personal character and integrity. They both clearly understood and executed their mission and purpose. Moses built a relationship with the people first as their hero, leading them to freedom. From there, he was the conduit of God's provision to the people. Joseph seemed to be welcomed into the world he faced in Egypt. For example, Potiphar respected him, the prison guards gave him leadership duties, his friends, the baker and cupbearer, sought his advice, and Pharaoh saw such potential, he promoted him to Prime Minister.

The adaptive leadership model provides a framework that embraces these attributes of strong leadership in a crisis situation. The pastors in the study exemplified the ability to be flexible, mission-minded, and empathic during the COVID-19 crisis.

One conclusion from reviewing the data is the complexity of a crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic wasn't a flat canvas but a multi-dimensional one. The health issues were real and frightening, both to congregants and pastors. Health protocols such as masks, vaccinations, and even social distancing became more than health issues. They became politicized with some using the banner of individual rights versus government authority to rebel against government mandates and health protocols. These issues came

with an emotional dimension that seeped over into the congregations, often causing unnecessary conflict.

Another conclusion from the data was that the pastors in this complex situation chose Jesus over politics. All the pastors interviewed refused to take a political stance and encouraged congregants to keep their eyes on Jesus and love others. This helped to minimize dissension. All the pastors concurred that they lost some people because of the decision-making of the church, but there was growth during this time.

A clearly articulated mission statement and its importance in making decisions and keeping a clear focus in the midst of distractions was stated by all pastors as essential. The mission was used as the filter or lens with which decisions were made, activities were kept or new ones created, and people were motivated to look outside themselves to serve others.

The importance of personal character and integrity built over time through multiple interactions built a foundation for trust during a crisis. The positive history built with the pastor prior to COVID-19 allowed the congregants to be more flexible and accepting when messaging from the pastor seemed to change often due to the changing protocols and mandates.

The creativity of pastors and churches during this time was another data point. Adaptive leadership is designed to solve problems or issues by incorporating a flexible mindset that allows for creative and practical decision-making within ever-changing environments. Two churches had never had live online services prior to COVID-19. As a result of implementing live online services, the churches are planning to continue to keep

the practice. Another pastor took up residence in the church to ensure that an established food distribution ministry continued.

Heifetz states that the adaptive phase is the time in which “you tackle the underlying causes of the crisis and build the capacity to thrive in a new reality.”²⁷⁰ The pastors were embracing a new reality. According to the interviews, pastors and their leadership teams were examining every program and activity they were doing. They were asking themselves if the activity had value and if it needed to be kept or abandoned.

Another conclusion from the data is that even in the crucible of the crisis, there are benefits for those who persevere. The researcher queried the pastors about the accomplishments they saw during COVID-19. The pastors shared that people were saved and baptized, marriages were restored, giving was sustained or went up, outreach efforts increased, the opportunity to experiment with new projects was available, increased attendance, and growth in the membership of the church.

COVID-19 was a crisis, unlike any most Texans, had ever seen in their lives. Pastors who put Jesus first, motivated their congregants, and lived what Christ taught, saw miracles. Pastors who were faithful to the mission and purpose, stayed true to their personal character and integrity, and placed a premium on relationships built on trust can join with the pastors interviewed in saying, “God is working, even in something chaotic.”

Summary

Two attributes of project design and identification of best practices included examining the flow of the project and whether the chosen project design provided the

²⁷⁰ Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Mary Linsky, “Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis,” *Harvard Business Review* 87, no. 7-8 (July-August, 2009), 62.

most appropriate framework for a response to the problem and its subproblems. The researcher detailed the strengths and weaknesses of the design. The researcher provided a summary of the conclusions from the findings as related to each theme. The various angles examined in this study support the original research question, and by doing so, provide a contribution to the scope and depth of identifiable best practices for pastors to use during a crisis.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

The research project provided an opportunity for exploration, revision of paradigms, and personal growth. The role of the pastor/leader is a lonesome position requiring grounded faith in God and an appreciation and utilization of God-endowed giftings. Leadership, whether as a pastor in a church or a high school principal as the researcher was, can be both challenging and inspiring. In reflection, the researcher would like to highlight, based on the data gathered in the project, the following three topics.

Recommendations for Future Research

As mentioned earlier, the scholarly research available that focused on pastors and the best practices used in a crisis was limited. In addition, COVID-19 increased the stakes and seemed to be more extreme than expected. Because of this, the opportunities for more research are vast and highly important. The researcher presents the following recommendations based on the findings of this study.

1. *A Quantitative Approach.* The case studies provided in-depth personal reflections, but those reflections were self-reported. Setting up a two-group descriptive design might provide an opportunity to tease out any bias in a self-reporting model. A descriptive research design is studying one phenomenon (COVID-19) with the goal of trying to identify characteristics (best practices). A possible configuration would be to have the pastors self-report using a survey and have the congregation, using the same survey, provide data. The challenge would be in finding a pastor who is willing to have his/her congregation assess his/her leadership characteristics.

2. *Reflective Debriefing*. The pastors interviewed were pleased to have the opportunity to “de-stress” and reflect on the months when the pandemic was at its peak in Texas. One even mentioned that he felt that he had some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A study designed to determine what kind of debriefing would be safe, authentic, and useful seems to be highly needed.
3. *Networking*. All the pastors mentioned they had an informal or formal network. The researcher wonders how the groups originated, the authenticity of the members in the group, how much “groupthink” is prevalent, and how best to create a safe and progressive network.
4. *Extending the Study Geographically and Politically*. The researcher limited the project to pastors in Texas. It would be interesting to see if assessing a wider range geographically would make a significant difference. Another angle to explore is the impact of politics on the behavior of pastors. All five pastors interviewed in this project clearly separated politics from the pulpit and articulated that to the congregants. One pastor did note that her congregation was democratic-leaning.
5. *Gender/Age*. The researcher was interested in whether gender significantly affected how questions were answered. For example, stereotypically, one might expect females to be more empathic and show more concern for congregants. Perhaps this is not true, and it could be proven statistically. Another area of interest is the age factor. Do younger pastors have a different

response to crisis than older ones? If so, would that impact how they navigated a crisis?

Personal Reflection on the Thesis Experience

The writing of this dissertation brings to completion only the beginning of research into a topic that began to interest the researcher, especially around 2016, as the cultural, political, and social landscape of the world seemed to be changing. This change included people becoming more vocal, oftentimes spewing hatred and malice even from the mouths of those who call themselves “Christians.” The researcher, grateful for the church she attends that keeps Jesus as a focus, often found herself appalled by pastors’ reactions and behavior during COVID-19 as highlighted in the media. Many of these vocal pastors led and influenced large megachurches across the nation.

Drawing upon the researcher’s previous studies and research as a graduate student focusing on leadership in education, the researcher questioned whether pastors had access to best practices when faced with a crisis. With a cursory examination of the literature, the researcher determined that COVID-19 was unique as a crisis. Compounded by the politicized nature of every governmental decision in the United States, but especially in Texas, the researcher focused on identifying best practices for pastors.

The researcher dove into the scriptures looking for leaders that impacted their world during a global event. Genesis provided two stellar heroes, who changed the world following God’s call. The question for the researcher was exactly how they accomplished this. It would be easy to say it was a miracle of God (which it was) and dismiss any leadership characteristics that Moses and Joseph provided. Sifting through the scriptures, the researcher noticed the adaptability of leadership exhibited by both men. Their ability

to exist and learn in each situation (Moses in his 40 years with the Moabite people and Joseph in his early Egypt time) nourished and matured their leadership behaviors. The researcher realized that hidden in the scriptures, below the narratives themselves, lay foundational leadership behaviors for leading during a crisis.

The literature review confirmed the leadership behaviors of personal character and integrity, vision/mission/purpose, and the creation of closely knit relationships found in the scriptures. The interviews with pastors confirmed these characteristics as powerful tools they relied on, albeit in varying degrees. For example, the mission of each church was clear and distinct, but some pastors wished they had articulated it more during the crisis.

This research endeavor provided personal spiritual growth for the researcher. The chapter on biblical research required the researcher to utilize the tools of hermeneutics learned in previous courses. Reading beyond the narratives of two patriarchs of the faith required the researcher to examine the text not only for its historical and literary context but at times to reach into early linguistic meanings and structures of sentences. For example, when Moses was confronted by the people in Exodus 16, the murmuring went throughout the community. As one scholar pointed out, the phrasing leads to a reasonable inference that the problem had been brewing as opposed to erupting suddenly. Such findings added depth to the researcher's understanding of the scripture. This process of using more sophisticated hermeneutics when reading the Bible has been incorporated into the researcher's daily Bible study time.

The researcher had been feeling disillusioned with pastors who seemed to be clamoring for the spotlight rather than leading others to Jesus. Their agendas appeared to

be political and not spiritual. According to the Survey Center on American Life and the University of Chicago, one of the main reasons younger adults were leaving the church was “they disagreed with their church’s stance on political and social issues.”²⁷¹ Friends and acquaintances of the researcher often used the word “Christian” with derision—a result of these verbose, opinionated leaders. After interviewing the pastors in this study, it was clear that the pastors who lived under the spotlight of the media were solidly committed to leading their congregants to Jesus and not to a political party. Their exuberance for the good news was contagious, and the researcher felt affirmed that the work of the Lord was moving forward in spite of the negative witness of some of these high-profile leaders. This truly was a beautiful and “good gift” from God.

The researcher was also touched by what seems to be a need for pastors to have someone outside their church circles with whom they can debrief. Each pastor told me they were eager to talk about the COVID-19 crisis and that the questions asked during the interview helped them work through the effects and outcomes of the crisis. One pastor unashamedly told me that the interview we were engaged in was like talking to a counselor; he was so appreciative of the opportunity. The researcher would love to work with pastors in this capacity, but currently, she is not aware of opportunities to do so.

As a leader of two ministries at her church, the researcher feels that her understanding of the essential characteristics necessary to serve successfully are being developed as a result of the research. The researcher has re-examined her personal

²⁷¹ Adam Gabbatt, “Losing Their Religion: Why US Churches Are on the Decline,” *The Guardian*, January 22, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/22/us-churches-closing-religion-covid-christianity>.

mission and her mission for both ministries. Being mindful of those purposes, she has been articulating them in her facilitation of the groups. For example, the mission of the life group is to love God, serve others, and grow spiritually. When the group arrives at the application portion of the weekly study, the researcher often will say, “If we love God, serve others, and grow spiritually, what actions will be taken this next week based on what we learned tonight?”

The researcher does not know at this point where God is leading her other than as the leader of the two ministries she currently heads. As a result of this research, the researcher is eager to use her gifts to support pastors and enhance the spread of the good news of Jesus.

On a more academic level, the researcher experienced growth in research and writing skills through the process. The taste of the fruit of knowledge was powerful and invigorating. This experience leads the researcher to want to complete more research on the topic. The researcher is inspired and motivated by Proverbs 18:15 which says, “An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”

APPENDIX A

Correlation of Interview/Survey Categories, Scholarly Research and Question Number

Interview and Survey Categories	Scholars reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3	Question Number on Survey
Leadership Style and Decision-Making	Amanchukwu, Stanley, Ololube (2015); Benmira and Agboola (2021); Desyatnikov (2020); Carlin (2019); Kelly and McDonald (2019); Trapero and De Lozada (2010)	7, 8
Descriptive Behavior – inherent personal character/integrity	Bolsinger (2015); Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, Walumbwa (2005); Burns (1978); Covey (2004); Williams and Clark (2018); Trapero and De Lozada (2010); Kim (2013); Marzouk (2019); Smith (2019); George (2003); Arnold (1998); Pollard & Pollard (2008); MacArthur (2005); Howell (2003)	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
Descriptive Behavior – clarity of vision/mission/purpose	Slåtten, Mutonyl, Lien (2021); Carlin (2019); Kelly and MacDonald (2019); Childs (2004); Stuart (2006); Pett (2022); Kim (2013); Marzouk (2019); MacArthur (2005); Radmacher, Allen & House (2004); Arnold (1998); Radmacher, Allen & House (2004); MacArthur (2005); Pollard & Pollard (2008)	15, 16, 18
Descriptive Behavior – relationships built on credibility and authenticity	McClosky; Bartram and Casimir (2007); Gerpott, Fasbender, and Burmesiter (2020); Northouse (2013); Tyagi and Puri (2017); Childs (2004); Stuart (2006); Hamilton (2011); Hess (2016); MacArthur (2005); Radmacher, Allen & House (2004); Marzouk (2019); Pett (2022); Erickson (2004); Arnold (1998); Pollard & Pollard (2008)	12, 17, 19, 20, 21

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

Interview Questions	
Questions specifically address characteristics of leadership exhibited by senior pastors during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 through December 2021.	
<p>Demographic Information:</p> <p>Church Name:</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>What denomination best describes your church?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Baptist <input type="radio"/> Catholic <input type="radio"/> Disciples of Christ <input type="radio"/> Episcopal <input type="radio"/> Lutheran <input type="radio"/> Methodist <input type="radio"/> Nondenominational <input type="radio"/> Presbyterian <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) <p>What is the average weekend worship attendance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Less than 100 <input type="radio"/> 100 – 500 <input type="radio"/> 500-1000 <input type="radio"/> More than 1000 	<p>What ethnicities are represented in your church? Check all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hispanic <input type="radio"/> White, non-Hispanic <input type="radio"/> Black or African American <input type="radio"/> American Indian <input type="radio"/> Asian <input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander <p>Pastor Ethnicity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hispanic <input type="radio"/> White, non-Hispanic <input type="radio"/> Black or African American <input type="radio"/> American Indian <input type="radio"/> Asian <input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander <p>Pastor Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male
<p>Leadership Style and Decision-Making:</p> <p>Definition of leadership styles:</p> <p>Authoritarian – tends to make all or most decision; retains full control and power</p> <p>Laissez-faire – empowers teams to have full autonomy and chooses not to participate in the decisions</p> <p>Democratic – balances decision-making responsibility between the group and the leader</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Using the definitions given for authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic, which style do you favor the most often in daily practice? Explain. Using the definitions given for authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic, which style did you favor or feel the need to employ given the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020-December 2021? Explain. 	
<p>Descriptive Behavior – inherent personal character/integrity</p>	

3. As you sought to build consensus during the pandemic regarding decisions, were you able to get “buy in” from your congregants? If so, how did you achieve that? If not, what would you do differently?
4. How did you convey to the congregants their worth and potential during the pandemic?
5. How would you rate each of the following characteristics as you exercised them during the COVID-19 crisis using a rating scale of: 1-low; 2-needs improvement; 3-average; 4-good; 5-excellent.

Empathy

Transparency

Flexibility

Concern for individual congregants

6. What moral values (i.e. authenticity, transparency, honesty, integrity, people-centeredness, trustworthiness) did you rely on within yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic?
7. How would you rate your communication skills during COVID-19 pandemic using a rating scale of: 1-low; 2-needs improvement; 3-average; 4-good; 5-excellent? Communication skills would include notifying congregants of in-person vs. online services, newsletters with current changes, updating the website to keep it current with the changes during the pandemic, establishing a call center for questions about services and resources, incorporating bulk text messaging for notifications, etc.
8. How did you build/maintain trust with your congregants during the pandemic?

Descriptive Behavior – clarity of vision/mission/purpose

9. How would you describe the vision, mission, and purpose of your church?
10. How did your church agree on the vision and mission statement for your church?
11. How are decisions made in your church under normal circumstances? During the COVID-19 pandemic?
12. How would you rate each of the following characteristics as you exercised them during the COVID-19 crisis using a rating scale of: 1-low; 2-needs improvement; 3-average; 4-good; 5-excellent?

Communication Skills

Decisiveness

Clear Vision

Problem-solving Skills

Descriptive Behavior – relationships built on credibility and authenticity

13. How would you describe the relationship between the congregants and the pastor in your church? Is the relationship transparent? Do the congregants feel that you are working as a moral agent? Define moral agency as having a strong sense of right and wrong along with a willingness to be held accountable for actions and behaviors. Would they say you have a reciprocal relationship?
14. Do you believe that the relationship between pastor and congregation improved or regressed? What indicators drew you to your conclusion?
15. As you moved through the pandemic, where did you look for guidance to make crucial decisions for the congregants?
16. What was your process to make decisions regarding what church would look like during the pandemic?
17. How did you keep your team motivated during this time when faced with challenges such as finding accurate information, side-stepping the politically-charged attitudes of congregants, and meeting the spiritual needs of the congregants?
18. How did you keep your congregation motivated during this time when faced with challenges such as finding accurate information, side-stepping the politically-charged attitudes of congregants, and meeting the spiritual needs of the congregants?
19. Did you believe your congregants felt your planning and decision-making was successful during the pandemic?

Extra Question:

What major accomplishments did your church have during the pandemic?

APPENDIX C

Survey Questions

Survey Question	
Questions specifically address characteristics of leadership exhibited by senior pastors during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 through December 2021.	
<p>Demographic Information:</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>What denomination best describes your church?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Baptist <input type="radio"/> Catholic <input type="radio"/> Disciples of Christ <input type="radio"/> Episcopal <input type="radio"/> Lutheran <input type="radio"/> Methodist <input type="radio"/> Nondenominational <input type="radio"/> Presbyterian <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) <p>What is the average weekend worship attendance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Less than 100 <input type="radio"/> 100 – 500 <input type="radio"/> 500-1000 <input type="radio"/> More than 1000 	<p>What ethnicities are represented in your church? Check all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hispanic <input type="radio"/> White, non-Hispanic <input type="radio"/> Black or African American <input type="radio"/> American Indian <input type="radio"/> Asian <input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander <p>Pastor Ethnicity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Hispanic <input type="radio"/> White, non-Hispanic <input type="radio"/> Black or African American <input type="radio"/> American Indian <input type="radio"/> Asian <input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander <p>Pastor Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male
<p>Leadership Style and Decision-Making:</p> <p>Definition of leadership styles:</p> <p>Authoritarian – tends to make all or most decision; retains full control and power</p> <p>Laissez-faire – empowers teams to have full autonomy and chooses not to participate in the decisions</p> <p>Democratic – balances decision-making responsibility between the group and the leader</p> <p>7. Using the definitions given for authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic, which style do you favor the most often in daily practice? Authoritarian, Laissez-faire, Democratic</p> <p>8. Using the definitions given for authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic, which style did you favor or feel the need to employ given the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020-December 2021?</p>	
Descriptive Behavior – inherent personal character/integrity	

9. How would you rate your empathy as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic? Empathy is the ability to place yourself in another's situation; to truly understand, connect, and form a bond with another person.

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 - excellent

10. How would you rate your transparency as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic? Transparency means being honest and straightforward with all stakeholders related to the church business.

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

11. How would you rate your flexibility as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic? Flexibility is the ability to modify both a style of leadership and your approach to a situation based on the circumstances.

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

12. How would you rate your concern for individual congregants as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

13. How would you rate your communication skills during COVID-19 pandemic?

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

14. How would you rate your decisiveness as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

Descriptive Behavior – clarity of vision/mission/purpose

15. How would you rate your ability to articulate a clear vision for the church during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

16. How would you rate your problem-solving skills as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

18. How would you rate the ability to remain guided by your vision, mission, and purpose during the pandemic?

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

Descriptive Behavior – relationships built on credibility and authenticity

12. How would you rate your concern for individual congregants as exercised during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent

<p>17. How would you rate your credibility with your congregants especially when the messaging from the government about protocols seemed to waver during the COVID-19 pandemic? Credibility with your congregants is defined as the congregation maintaining trust in you and your communications. 1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent</p> <p>19. How were decisions made during the pandemic? Pastor alone, board/elders/deacons, leadership team composed of salaried pastors, leadership team chosen as representatives of the views of the congregation, congregation, other</p> <p>20. How would you rate your planning and decision-making during the pandemic? 1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent</p> <p>21. How do you believe the congregants would rate your effectiveness in the decision-making process during the pandemic? 1-low, 2 – needs improvement, 3 – average, 4 – good, 5 – excellent</p>	
<p>Extra Questions:</p>	<p>22. What personal moral values did you rely on within yourself in order to lead your congregation?</p> <p>23. What major accomplishments did your church have during the pandemic?</p>

APPENDIX D

Demographics of Pastors Surveyed and Interviewed

Topic	Interviews – 5 Participants		Surveys	
Location of Church	North Central Texas South Texas Central Texas South Texas North Texas		North Texas Central Texas Upper Gulf Coast East Texas	
Denomination	Baptist Catholic Disciples of Christ Episcopal Lutheran Methodist Nondenominational Presbyterian Other	1 2 Post denominational – 1 Metropolitan Community Church - 1	Baptist Catholic Disciples of Christ Episcopal Lutheran Methodist Nondenominational Presbyterian Other (please specify)	4 3 4
Average Weekend Worship Attendance	Less than 100 100 – 500 500-1000 More than 1000	1 2 2	Less than 100 100 – 500 500-1000 More than 1000	2 7 1
Ethnicities Represented in the Church	Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black or African American American Indian Asian Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	5 5 4 2 4 3	Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black or African American American Indian Asian Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	8 10 8 1 5 1

APPENDIX E
Texas Largest Religious Bodies²⁷²

Religious Body	Adherents	Percentage of the Population
1. Catholic	4,673,000	18.59%
2. Southern Baptist	3,722,194	14.80%
3. Non-denominational	1,546,542	6.15%
4. United Methodist	1,122,736	4.46%
5. Muslim (estimate)	421,972	1.68%
6. Church of Christ	351,129	1.40%
7. LDS (Mormons)	296,141	1.18%
8. Assembly of God	275,565	1.10%
9. Presbyterian Church	155,046	.62%
10. Episcopal Church	148,439	.59%
11. Lutheran-Missouri Synod	132,508	.53%
12. Lutheran – E.L.C.A.	111,647	.44%

²⁷² “Religious Affiliation in Texas,” Texas Almanac, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://www.texasalmanac.com/articles/religious-affiliation-in-texas>.

APPENDIX F

Comparative Mean Data Points for Survey and Interviews

Personal Characteristics and Integrity with Combined Data (Mean Data Point) from the Survey and the Interviews

Characteristic	Survey	Interview
Empathy	4	4
Transparency	4.6	4.8
Flexibility	4.2	4.8
Concern for the Congregant	3.8	4.4

Vision, Mission, and Purpose with Combined Data (Mean Data Point) from the Survey and the Interviews

Characteristic	Survey	Interview
Communication	4.3	4.4
Decisiveness	3.9	4.4
Clear Vision	3.8	3.6
Problem-Solving	3.4	4.4

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