

Introduction: *Leadership in a Complex World*

Christians believe that the triune God created the world, and that should have some implications for the kind of world that it is. Many Christians have acknowledged the perichoretic shape of the life of the Trinity, and that in particular should leave some trace in the world that has been made and remade by the Father, Son, and Spirit.

—Peter J. Leithart, *Traces of the Trinity*

If everyone has to think outside the box, maybe it is the box that needs fixing.

—Malcolm Gladwell

Summary: There is a leadership crisis in the local church. When we look around, we see different visions of leadership competing for our devotion. We set these visions against one another—the convictional theologian against the soulful contemplative, for example. We choose the one we think is best. Living from insecurity, we exaggerate our favorite leadership image, and it crowds out the others. God didn't intend this. If we step back, we can see that God's own leadership is a beautiful mosaic. God's own complexity is the most appropriate model for leadership in a complex world. This book unpacks a fivefold vision of leadership rooted in the Trinity. You will see that God's redemptive leadership in the world is the basis for understanding the nature, purpose, and eternal impact of our own leadership. (*Leadership Mosaic*, p. 15)

Definition: : Leadership is knowing where people need to go and taking the initiative to get them there in God's way and by God's power.

Exploring the Story: *Complicated to Complexity*

Typically, churches lag behind the paradigm shifts that take place in our culture. But we should be on the leading edge of change. After all, we are meeting people where they are. We should be the ones who see the shifts taking place in their collective cultures. Let's be real—most of the time the church is operating in an old-school paradigm. Shifts are taking place in the worlds of science, business, and even warfare. Science has moved from the modern, reductive, and efficient ways of Newtonian physics to the complex, indeterminate, and integrated models of quantum mechanics. The business world has moved from scientific and bureaucratic management systems with clear, top-down authority and bottom-line results to systems of process and responsibility where minimum-wage workers are empowered to stop the assembly line for the sake of quality control and safety. Even the military looks less like a top-down chess match. Nations now fight with counterinsurgency methods. The days of throwing money at problems or simply thinking technology will solve all problems are coming to an end. Conducting business as usual in a way that lacks understanding and empathy or using merely complicated solutions to attack complex problems is no longer viable.

What we learn from these changes is that leadership in the world today is more complex than it was before the information age. We've moved from a merely complicated world to a complex and unpredictable one.

Strategic Paradigm Shifts		
	<i>Old-School Paradigms</i>	<i>New-School Paradigms</i>
Science	<i>Newtonian thinking:</i> atomistic, fragmented, reductive, determinate	<i>Quantum thinking:</i> holistic, integrated, both-and, indeterminate
Business	<i>Scientific and bureaucratic management:</i> top-down authority, results-oriented, decisions made remotely, bullet-proof strategic plans	<i>Lean management:</i> empowerment, process-oriented, decisions made on the spot with facts, organic strategy based in contingency and systems theory
Military	<i>Modern military:</i> race for newest and mightiest technology, chess match for greatest efficiency, decisions made by the brass	<i>Counterinsurgency:</i> long duration of engagement that seeks to change hearts and minds in order to change the political situation, each unit empowered to create strategy

(Leadership Mosaic, p. 21)

Questions

1. What emotions do you experience when you encounter complex situations and problems?
2. What paradigm speaks most to the leadership you have experienced?
3. Are you prone to wade into complexity or run away from complexity?

Three Eras of Christian Leadership in America¹

Whether we know it or not, we all have an image in our head that drives our work as leaders. I would argue that more often than not, our image of leadership is adapted from the images of leadership we see around us. This has been the tendency since the church began. Christian leadership took one cultural form in the time of Constantine and another during the Reformation. There are at least three distinctive images of Christian leadership that have been made right here in America:

<i>Era</i>	<i>Emphasis</i>	<i>Heroes</i>
Gentleman theologian	Personal and individualized discipleship	Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Wesley
Suburban churchman	Professional and efficient ministry programming	Carl F. Henry, Billy Graham, James Dobson
Entrepreneurial leader	Visionary leadership driven by the market and mission	Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, Matt Chandler

- *Gentleman Theologian* (1700s–1850s). A leadership image born out of the free and enlightened thinking of America’s Revolutionary period. The fastest-growing churches in this period of American life were the free churches—the Baptists, Methodists, and Churches of Christ who adopted democratic and congregational governing structures. The Christian leader in this period was a thinking man and a personable gentleman. He was faithful to challenge his congregants’ minds and hearts in personal and individualized ways.

Questions

1. Is it your great dream to start a new evangelical Harvard?
2. Are you attracted to models of leadership that focus on individualized and personal discipleship?

- *Suburban Churchman* (1860s–1970s). An image of the Christian leader born out of America’s cultural focus on industry and efficiency in the post-Civil War era. In this era,

1. Two articles by Craig Van Gelder helped me understand this historical progression: (1) “Theological Education and Missional Leadership Formation: Can Seminaries Prepare Missional Leaders for Congregations?” in *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), and (2) “An Ecclesiastical Geno-Project: Unpacking the DNA of Denominations and Denominationalism,” in *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*, ed. Craig Van Gelder, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

the American church became more organized and sectarian. Denominations bloomed and grew by adding agencies such as mission boards, Sunday school boards, and publishing houses. Churches packaged up the good life of the gospel with the American dream. The Christian leader in this period was a true professional. He stood firmly by his denomination's theological and political agenda.

Questions

1. Are J. G. Machen and C. F. Henry your theological heroes?
 2. Are you wondering why growing churches don't participate more in denominational life?
 3. Do you have an image of Christian leadership for an era after the culture war has been lost? Or after your denomination goes out of business?
- *Entrepreneurial Leader* (1980s–present). An image of the Christian leader born out of contemporary America's megachurch and church-planting movements. As loyalty to denominations has declined, parachurch societies such as Campus Crusade (now Cru), InterVarsity, and the Navigators have come into prominence. Growing evangelical groups today are often influenced by the parachurch methods as well as what might be labeled as market-driven or mission-driven models of doing church. The Christian leader must be a visionary leader who can forge ahead into the future.

Questions

1. Do you have more business leadership books on your shelf than books on pastoral care?
2. Are you confused when you hear some young leaders say, "I don't want our church to grow too big"? Are you thinking, "Why is 'growth' a dirty word?"

Five Contemporary Images of Christian Leadership²



Theologian All about: Truth	Conviction Clear beliefs Propositional/analytical thinking Theological purity
Innovator All about: Connection	Creativity Relevance Cultural engagement Community contextualization
Activist All about: Mission	Courage Change Visionary strategy Social advancement
Good Manager All about: Organization	Efficient collaboration Process Team-based strategy/management Planning/structure
Soulful Leader All about: Depth	Communion Relationships Contemplation/reflection Emotional health



(*Leadership Mosaic*, p. 20)

Questions

1. What is your default style or personal leadership image? Or which style do you most see yourself living from?
2. Which of these kinds of leaders do you most want to follow?
3. What does your church/organization expect of you?
4. What are the dangers of dismissing or discarding any of these strengths?

2. Adapted from Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006), 163.

Express What Matters

Leadership Mosaic is built on the premise of theologically driven leadership. All theology is practical, and all practice is theological. Unfortunately, most of our churches and spiritual communities are pragmatically driven. Their fundamental questions are:

- How do we get more people?
- How do we build bigger buildings?
- What do we do about the scarcity of cash?

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with asking questions about growth and fiscal health. But when these questions become the primary drivers of our spiritual communities, we have fallen prey to the spirit of pragmatism and consumerism. A theologically driven church asks:

- Where is God in my leadership? (Gal. 2:14; 5:16)
- How is my leadership a reflection of who God is? (Eph. 5:1)
- How do we do leadership in a way worthy of the gospel? (Phil. 1:27)

Great organizations have a *why*.³ For Sojourn Community Church, our *why* comes from a confluence of considering what God has done in the gospel, what God is creating in the church, and how God has sent the church into the world. In other words, a God-sized world needs God-centered leadership. When we look to the Bible, we shouldn't merely look for a theology of leadership. We must look for the Trinitarian God who leads and gives us theologically rooted answers to the big questions before us. Herman Bavinck was a theologian possessed with a God-sized vision of the world. This is what he wrote about the place of the Trinity in the Christian life:

The thoughtful person places the doctrine of the Trinity in the very center of the full-orbed life of nature and mankind. The [Trinitarian] confession of the Christian is not an island in mid-ocean but a mountain-top overlooking the entire creation. And the task of the Christian theologian is to set forth clearly the great significance of God's revelation for (and the relation of that revelation to) the whole realm of existence. The mind of the Christian is not satisfied until every form of existence has been referred to the Triune God and until the confession of the Trinity has received the place of prominence in our thought and life.⁴

Our Trinitarian doctrine of God is not a mathematical formula we must solve in order to pass an orthodoxy test. That makes it sound like the Trinity is optional. Rather, God—in all of his complexity—must be the operating system for our lives and our leadership. Only he can empower us to lead meaningfully in every situation and circumstance. That's why the apostle Paul writes, "Be imitators of God" (Eph. 5:1). But don't think this is merely our confession. It's a beautiful vision. The glory of this truth is that God has lived eternally in community. When he made mankind

3. Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, Reprint ed. (New York: Portfolio, 2011).

4. Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. William Hendrickson, Students Reformed Theology Library (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1978), 329.

in his image, he invited every human person to participate in his mission and leadership in the world. Leadership at its source is relational and not merely functional. As Christians, we don't simply lead like God. We lead *with* God. (*Leadership Mosaic*, pp. 23–24)

What are some initial connections that come to mind when you think about leadership and the Trinity? I believe only the Trinity is big enough to address everything leadership involves. A famed professor-pastor recently told me: “I have a robust theology over here and a robust ministry philosophy over there. But it’s hard to see how they connect. There is only pixie dust in between.” I believe God not only defines doctrine but also guides leadership. He is big enough to knit together our theology and our church budgets. He can join a leader’s spiritual life and his strategic planning. (*Leadership Mosaic*, p. 26)

From Fragmented to Theologically Driven

- Where do you find yourself? From the chart below, circle the statements that honestly seem to apply most closely to you and your organization.
- How can you let go of your old operating system? And how can you embrace a new vision, new desires, and new innovations with God?

<i>THEOLOGICALLY DRIVEN</i>	<i>CAUGHT-IN-THE-MIDDLE</i>	<i>PRAGMATICALLY DRIVEN</i>
Theological reflection and Spirit-driven practice; reflection on the Trinity is illuminating and challenging.	The Trinity is a theological-mathematical formula to pass the orthodoxy test. Trying to succeed and stay out of heresy is my goal.	I conform closer to a contemporary image of Christian leadership than any deep reflection on God as Trinity for my ministry.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am a thoughtful practitioner. 2. All theology is practical; all practice is theological. 3. I live in the tension—the apex—between theology and practice. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I care about theology, and I care about practice. I just don't know how they connect. 2. I have a theology, and I have a practice, but they are usually segregated. 3. I feel confused and haphazardly apply principles and programs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have never thought about how God or the gospel affects my practice. 2. What matters most is simply to get the job done. 3. Criticism or conformity to cultural pressure or church members' opinions drives my ministry.

Mosaic Manifesto: *Ten Theses for Theologically Driven Leaders*

Read the theses below and then answer the questions.

1. Christian leaders must break free from reductionist and simplistic images of leadership and hold together a holistic understanding and practice of leadership.
2. Christian leaders must lead with conviction, embodying knowledge, being, and doing, and model a better way.
3. Christian leaders must critically and creatively contextualize leadership in an ever-changing world, holding fast to the unchanging gospel.
4. Christian leaders must instruct, indict, and inspire followers with a compelling vision of a bigger and more beautiful mission.
5. Christian leaders must put off fear, shame, and guilt and put on faith, hope, and love, courageously preaching the gospel first to themselves, then to others.
6. Christian leaders must step into the unknown, unmanageable, and unsafe spaces and trust that God is with us always.
7. Christian leaders must live and lead into community and not forfeit the collaborative dynamic God has designed for his mission.
8. Christian leaders must fight for unity, celebrate diversity, and grow in collaborative maturity.
9. Christian leaders must hold in tension contemplation and action, being and doing, heart and hands.
10. Christian leaders must live and lead into the complexity, believing a better way is possible.

Questions

1. Which of these theses could you adopt as maxims, mantras, and goals to start living out right now as a leader?
2. Which of them challenge you most deeply away from the spirit of pragmatism?
3. Which ones could be used in your next meeting to help guide your people?

For Further Study

Leadership Mosaic is about doing what you do differently. You already binge watch Netflix. Replace Netflix with something new. Following are additions to the *Leadership Mosaic* bibliography. Remember, we always aim for informed minds, warmed hearts, and engaged hands.

Documentaries

- *Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World*. Directed by Werner Herzog. Saville Studios, 2016.
- *Press Pause Play*. Directed by David Dworsky and Victor Kohler. House of Radon, 2011.
- *We Live in Public*. Directed by Ondi Timoner. Interloper Films, 2009.

Books

- Haudan, Jim. *The Art of Engagement: Bridging the Gap between People and Possibilities*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2008.
- Martin, Roger L. *The Opposable Mind: How Successful Leaders Win through Integrative Thinking*. Boston, MA.: Harvard Business School Press, 2009.
- Zander, Rosamund Stone, and Benjamin Zander. *The Art of Possibility*. Boston, MA.: Harvard Business School Press, 2000.

Articles

- Mancini, Will. "3 Kinds of Leadership Complexity." *Church Leaders*, August, 2016. Accessed August 1, 2016. <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-blogs/145450-3-kinds-of-church-complexity-and-what-to-do-about-it.html>.