**Approaching Leadership Studies Priority 3: Learning What You Can Assignment**

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Biblical & Theological Foundations of Leadership: CLED-700

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August 15, 2025

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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# **Introduction**

In the realm of leadership studies, where myriad models and philosophies vie for influence, a distinctly Christian approach demands a foundational reorientation toward eternal truths rather than transient human wisdom. This assignment embarks on a structured exploration of Christian leadership, guided by three priorities: first, understanding God and humanity as the bedrock of all leadership; second, critiquing alternative models through a biblical lens; and third, discerning valuable insights from those alternatives while remaining anchored in scriptural fidelity. Drawing from core doctrines of the Christian faith, the discussion begins in Part 1 with an examination of God's nature—His triune essence, sovereign rule, and holy justice—as the ultimate reference point for leadership. Part 2 shifts to humanity's identity: created in God's image, marred by the Fall, yet redeemable through Christ, which informs the human capacity for leading and following. Part 3 defines Christian leadership itself, emphasizing the call to under-shepherding, holistic care, and sacrificial service under the Chief Shepherd. Building on this foundation, Part 4 exposes an alternative leadership model through a summary and critical interaction, assessing its assumptions, alignments, misalignments, and potential reinterpretation from a Christian worldview. Finally, Part 5 extracts three redeemable elements from the critique, illustrating how even secular frameworks can yield lessons when filtered through biblical priorities. Through this outline, the assignment aims to equip believers with a robust, God-centered framework for leadership that glorifies Christ and serves His kingdom.

# **Part 1. Approaching Leadership Studies: Priority 1 - Who is God?**

The profound question "Who is God?" serves as the cornerstone of theological exploration, especially within evangelical Christianity, a vibrant movement rooted in Protestantism that emphasizes personal faith, biblical authority, and the transformative power of the Gospel. Evangelicals, deriving their name from the Greek word "euangelion" meaning "good news," affirm that God is not a distant or abstract entity but a personal, relational being who actively reveals Himself to humanity for the purpose of salvation and fellowship (National Association of Evangelicals, n.d.). This revelation occurs primarily through the Bible, which evangelicals regard as the inspired, infallible Word of God, providing the definitive lens for understanding divine identity (Pew Research Center, 2011). Core to evangelical belief is the conviction that God is the eternal, sovereign Creator who exists as a Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—while being holy, loving, just, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent (The Gospel Coalition, n.d.). Unlike anthropomorphic depictions that might limit God to human forms, evangelicals reject such notions, viewing God as spirit (John 4:24[[1]](#footnote-1)) yet incarnate in Jesus Christ, who is fully divine and human, embodying God's redemptive plan. However, recent surveys highlight doctrinal challenges, with some self-identified evangelicals holding views contrary to historic orthodoxy, such as denying Jesus' full deity—a reminder of the need for robust biblical teaching (LifeWay Research, 2020; Eternal Perspective Ministries, 2022). Despite these variances, mainstream evangelical theology, as articulated in statements like the National Association of Evangelicals' faith declaration, upholds the triune God as central (National Association of Evangelicals, n.d.).

This paper delves into this question through three pivotal doctrines: the Trinity, God's sovereignty, and God's holiness and justice. Each doctrine is illuminated by biblical names of God, which serve as revelatory descriptors enriching our comprehension of His nature. Scripture is also frequently cited to align with evangelical commitments to scriptural primacy. Drawing from systematic theologies like Grudem (1994) and Akin (2014), as well as practical applications in Tripp (2021), this exploration demonstrates how these doctrines not only define God's essence but also inform worship, ethics, and daily living. Insights from Laniak (2006) on shepherd leadership underscore God's relational rule, while Smith (2009) connects doctrinal understanding to cultural formation through worship practices. Even secular analogies from Zimmerli et al. (2007) on corporate ethics parallel divine governance, highlighting accountability and integrity. By integrating these perspectives, the paper illustrates that knowing God transcends intellectual assent, fostering a life-altering relationship that addresses human sinfulness through Christ's atonement and empowers believers for mission in a broken world.

Understanding who God is forms the bedrock of Christian leadership, as it equips leaders with a divine perspective that transcends human limitations and aligns their actions with eternal purposes. Biblical foundations reveal that effective leadership begins with a profound knowledge of God's character, as seen in the creation narrative where humanity is commissioned to rule as stewards under divine authority (Genesis 1:26-28), fostering qualities like humility, accountability, and vision. This awareness cultivates servant leadership modeled after Christ, who led by submission to the Father, emphasizing that true influence stems from intimacy with God through prayer and Scripture, as leaders reflect His image in guiding others toward flourishing. In evangelical contexts, such understanding prevents self-centered ambition, instead promoting a missional approach where leaders prioritize God's kingdom, inspiring followers through authenticity and dependence on divine wisdom.

# **Doctrine 1: The Trinity (God as One in Three Persons)**

This foundational evangelical doctrine asserts that God is eternally one in essence yet subsists as three distinct, co-equal, and co-eternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who share the same divine nature while fulfilling complementary roles in creation, redemption, and sanctification (Grudem, 1994). As articulated in Akin's edited volume, Trinitarian thought provides the basic structure in which all theology should operate, uniting Christians in the affirmation that God exists as three persons in one essence, clearly taught in Scripture and affirmed throughout church history (Akin, 2014). This mystery, while not explicitly named "Trinity" in Scripture, is inferred from biblical texts that reveal God's unified plurality, such as "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001, Deut. 6:4) and the baptismal formula: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Additional support includes the apostolic benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14). The Trinity answers "Who is God?" by portraying Him as inherently relational and communal within Himself, avoiding both unitarian simplicity and polytheistic division, and emphasizing that divine love existed eternally among the persons before creation (Bowman, n.d.). In practical terms, as Tripp emphasizes, the Trinity models all Christian relationships, with Jesus praying for believers' unity mirroring the Father-Son bond (John 17), transforming everyday interactions through doctrinal belief (Tripp, 2021). The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology provides comprehensive entries that underscore the Trinity's biblical and historical foundations, reinforcing its centrality in evangelical thought (Treier & Elwell, 2017).

To elucidate this using names of God, consider *Abba* (Aramaic for Father), which highlights the Father's intimate, paternal role in initiating salvation and providing care, as Jesus prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36), and believers echo, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Rom. 8:15). *Yeshua* (Jesus, meaning "Yahweh saves" from Hebrew roots), represents the Son's incarnate mission to redeem humanity through His life, death, and resurrection, as "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). *Ruach Hakodesh* (Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of Holiness"), signifies the Spirit's role in convicting, regenerating, and empowering believers, manifesting God's indwelling presence, as David pleaded, "Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11), and Paul described Christ as "declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Additional names like *Elohim* (a plural noun for God), suggest divine plurality while affirming unity, as in "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1) and "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Gen. 1:26), often interpreted by evangelicals as an early hint of the Trinity's collaborative work in creation. *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), though not exclusively trinitarian, conveys the omnipotent strength shared among the persons, seen in the Father's promises: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless'" (Gen. 17:1). These names collectively depict God as a dynamic unity of love and purpose, essential for understanding salvation: the Father plans it, the Son accomplishes it, and the Spirit applies it (Grudem, 1994). Historically, this doctrine was formalized in creeds like the Nicene Creed (AD 325) to combat heresies, but evangelicals prioritize its biblical basis over creedal authority alone. Implications include worship directed to all three persons and the assurance that God's internal harmony models perfect community for believers. Smith's work on cultural formation indirectly supports this by viewing worship as shaping desires toward the triune God, though not explicitly detailing the doctrine (Smith, 2009).

The doctrine of the Trinity provides a foundational model for Christian leadership by exemplifying collaborative, relational authority where unity and diversity coexist in perfect harmony, guiding leaders to foster team-based ministry rather than individualistic control. Drawing from 1 Peter 5, Peter's Trinitarian framework underscores that leaders should emulate the Father's oversight, the Son's sacrificial service, and the Spirit's empowering presence, promoting shared decision-making and mutual submission among church elders. This triune pattern encourages leaders to build communities that reflect divine love, as the eternal fellowship within the Godhead serves as a blueprint for relational dynamics in leadership, ensuring that authority is exercised with humility and interdependence. Practically, it inspires educational and pastoral leaders to integrate Trinitarian principles into training, cultivating environments where members contribute uniquely yet cohesively toward God's mission.

# **Doctrine 2: God's Sovereignty (God as Supreme Ruler)**

In evangelical theology, God's sovereignty denotes His absolute, unrivaled authority and control over all creation, history, providence, and salvation, where nothing occurs outside His permissive or directive will (Frame, n.d.). This doctrine affirms that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and immutable, ensuring that all events serve His glory and the ultimate good of His people, as in "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11) and "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). It counters views of a limited deity by portraying God as the unchallengeable King who governs with perfect wisdom, even incorporating human choices and evil into His redemptive plan without being culpable for sin, such as in Joseph's story: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen. 50:20). Thus, "Who is God?" is answered as the ultimate, all-determining Authority whose rule provides security amid uncertainty, motivating prayer, evangelism, and trust in divine election (Grudem, 1994). Akin's theology affirms both God's sovereignty and human responsibility, presenting them as complementary truths that Southern Baptists should embrace without division (Akin, 2014). Laniak's exploration of pastoral traditions portrays God as the ultimate Shepherd-Ruler, with human leaders serving as undershepherds under His sovereign guidance, drawing from biblical metaphors where God leads His people through wilderness and promises faithful shepherds after His own heart (Jer. 3:15) (Laniak, 2006). The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology includes detailed entries on sovereignty, emphasizing God's control over life, death, and history (Treier & Elwell, 2017). Tripp stresses that belief in sovereignty transforms real life, offering comfort in trials by affirming God's control and goodness, even when circumstances seem chaotic (Tripp, 2021). While Zimmerli et al.'s work on corporate governance focuses on secular ethical leadership, it parallels divine sovereignty by advocating accountable, ethical oversight in organizations, which can analogize to God's just rule over creation, though without explicit theological ties (Zimmerli et al., 2007).

Illustrating this through names, *El Elyon* (God Most High), portrays God as exalted: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!'" (Gen. 14:18-20); and "I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me" (Ps. 57:2). *Adonai* (Lord or Master), demands human allegiance: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool'" (Ps. 110:1) and "'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you'" (Mal. 1:6). Expanding with *Yahweh* (the LORD, derived from "I AM"), signifies God's self-existence: "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you"'" (Ex. 3:14). *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), highlights all-sufficient power: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless'" (Gen. 17:1); and "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'" (Rev. 1:8). *Jehovah Jireh* (the LORD Will Provide), demonstrates sovereignty in providence: "So Abraham called the name of that place, 'The Lord will provide'; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided'" (Gen. 22:14). These names reveal God's sovereignty as benevolent, reconciling it with evangelism: though God sovereignly saves, believers proclaim the Gospel as His means, "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" (Rom. 10:14-15) (Grudem, 1994). This doctrine comforts in trials, fuels worship, and guards against anthropocentric views of faith.

God's sovereignty lays a crucial foundation for Christian leadership by assuring leaders of divine control over outcomes, freeing them to act boldly in faith while submitting to His overarching plan, thus balancing initiative with reliance on providence. Biblical examples, such as God's appointment of leaders like David (1 Samuel 16:1-13), illustrate that sovereignty empowers human responsibility without diminishing it, encouraging leaders to trust in God's orchestration amid uncertainties. This doctrine fosters resilient leadership, as seen in how it prepares individuals through spiritual formation to lead effectively, recognizing that all authority derives from God's supreme rule and serves His redemptive purposes. In practice, it motivates evangelistic efforts and organizational stewardship, as leaders draw comfort from knowing that their efforts align with an infallible divine will, promoting ethical governance and strategic vision rooted in humility.

# **Doctrine 3: God's Holiness and Justice (God as Perfect and Righteous)**

Evangelical Christianity upholds God's holiness as His intrinsic moral perfection and transcendence, meaning He is utterly pure, separate from all sin and evil, and the source of all goodness; from this flows His justice, where He upholds righteousness, punishes sin equitably, and vindicates the oppressed (Grudem, 1994). This is evident in "And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!'" (Isa. 6:3) and "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you" (Ps. 89:14). This doctrine reveals that God's holiness demands atonement for human sin, satisfied through Christ's propitiation: "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25-26). It addresses "Who is God?" by depicting Him as the unapproachable standard of purity whose justice is retributive yet merciful, ensuring ultimate accountability while offering forgiveness. In Akin's theology, God's holiness is discussed alongside attributes like love and eternity, impacting church life through calls to ethical living (Akin, 2014). Smith's cultural liturgies framework connects worship to God's holiness, arguing that embodied practices shape desires toward authentic humanity in response to the holy God (Smith, 2009). The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology features entries on holiness and justice, highlighting their foundational role in God's character and human ethics (Treier & Elwell, 2017). Tripp views holiness as God's essence, driving sinners to the Savior for reconciliation, with practical implications for daily dependence on Christ (Tripp, 2021). Zimmerli et al.'s corporate governance text, while secular, explores ethical challenges in business, which can reflect divine justice by emphasizing accountability and moral integrity in leadership, akin to God's righteous rule (Zimmerli et al., 2007).

Using names to explain, *Yahweh Tsidkenu* (The LORD Our Righteousness), promises that God imputes His righteousness to sinners through faith in Christ: "In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness'" (Jer. 23:6); similarly, "In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness'" (Jer. 33:16). *El Qanna* (Jealous God), reflects His holy zeal: "You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (Ex. 20:5) and "for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. 34:14). Further names include *Qadosh Yisrael* (Holy One of Israel): "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged" (Isa. 1:4). *El Hakkadosh* (The Holy God): "But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness" (Isa. 5:16). *Shophet* (Judge): "Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Gen. 18:25); and "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he" (Deut. 32:4). These names illustrate that God's holiness isn't abstract but relational, demanding human holiness: "since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:16). Practically, it inspires ethical living, social justice advocacy, and awe in worship, as seen in evangelical emphases on personal sanctification and divine wrath against unrepentant sin (Grudem, 1994).

The doctrines of God's holiness and justice establish a moral compass for Christian leadership, compelling leaders to embody purity and equity in their decisions, thereby modeling divine standards that inspire trust and transformation among followers. Holiness calls leaders to personal sanctification, separating them from compromise while justice demands fair treatment, as exemplified in commands to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8), ensuring that leadership reflects God's impartial righteousness. This foundation promotes servant-oriented authority, where leaders prioritize ethical integrity and advocacy for the marginalized, drawing from Christ's example of holy living and just dealings. In church and community settings, it equips leaders to address injustices biblically, fostering environments of accountability and grace that advance God's kingdom through transformed lives.

In summary, the doctrines of the Trinity, sovereignty, and holiness and justice, enriched by biblical names such as *Abba*, *El Elyon*, and *Yahweh Tsidkenu*, offer a comprehensive response to "Who is God?" portraying Him as the relational, authoritative, and righteous Creator who initiates salvation through Jesus Christ. These tenets, firmly anchored in Scripture and championed by evangelical scholars, underscore God's self-revelation as both transcendent and immanent, inviting humanity into a covenant of grace amid a fallen world (The Gospel Coalition, n.d.). While surveys reveal that not all who identify as evangelical adhere strictly to these orthodox views—evidencing a need for renewed catechesis—the core teachings remain vital for authentic faith (LifeWay Research, 2020; Reddit, 2023). As Tripp (2021) articulates, these doctrines are not mere abstractions but life-changing truths that foster dependence on God, ethical integrity, and communal harmony. Smith's (2009) emphasis on worship as formative practice aligns with this, suggesting that engaging God's identity reshapes human desires and cultural engagements toward holiness. Laniak's (2006) shepherd imagery further illustrates sovereignty's pastoral dimension, while Zimmerli et al.'s (2007) governance principles echo justice's demand for accountability in all spheres. Ultimately, understanding God in this evangelical framework cultivates hope in His promises, resilience in suffering, and zeal for evangelism, compelling believers to proclaim the Gospel and live as reflections of His character in an increasingly secular society. This knowledge not only answers existential queries but empowers a missional life, echoing the Great Commission and anticipating Christ's return.

In synthesizing these doctrines, understanding who God is as triune, sovereign, holy, and just solidifies the foundation for Christian leadership, urging leaders to operate from a theocentric worldview that integrates divine attributes into practical governance and influence. This holistic grasp empowers leaders to navigate complexities with confidence, as biblical precedents show that knowing God's nature—through His Word and Spirit—equips them for servant-hearted rule that mirrors Christ's humility and authority. Ultimately, it transforms leadership from mere management to a redemptive calling, where leaders cultivate flourishing communities by aligning their vision with God's eternal purposes, ensuring legacy through faithful stewardship and missional impact.

# **Part 2. Approaching Leadership Studies: Priority 1 - What is Humanity?**

Understanding the nature of humanity forms a critical foundation for Christian leadership studies, as it directly influences how leaders perceive their own identity and the individuals they serve. Theological anthropology, rooted in Scripture, portrays humanity as beings created in God's image, marred by sin, and capable of redemption through Christ. Psalm 139:13-14 beautifully illustrates this creative act: "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."[[2]](#footnote-2) This biblical framework not only shapes ethical decision-making but also guides relational dynamics in leadership, emphasizing dignity, humility, and transformative growth (Huizing, 2011). By prioritizing these doctrines, Christian leaders can integrate faith with practice, fostering environments that honor God's design for human flourishing. As Tripp (2021) emphasizes in exploring historic doctrines, true belief in humanity's nature must translate into everyday life, affecting how leaders shepherd others toward God's purposes.

From a biblical standpoint, humanity encompasses all individuals as created beings endowed with purpose, relational capacity, and moral agency, yet affected by the fall and oriented toward redemption. Genesis 1:26–27 affirms, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'" This imago Dei includes substantive (inherent qualities like rationality), functional (dominion and stewardship), and relational (communion with God and others) dimensions, distinguishing humans as unique among creation (Wilburn, 2017). Ecclesiastes 3:11 adds depth: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." However, the narrative of sin introduces distortion, fracturing these aspects, while the promise of redemption through Christ restores alignment with God's mission.

In the context of leadership studies, this understanding of humanity informs approaches that view followers not as mere subordinates but as image-bearers deserving of empowerment and respect. Hammett's chapter in A Theology for the Church outlines the doctrine of humanity as dichotomous—body and soul—rooted in the imago Dei, which imparts value and calls for ethical treatment in communal settings (Akin, 2014). Huizing argues that Christian leadership must begin with a theology that prioritizes followership, noting, "Christianity, at its deepest essence, is a practice of followership. The final command of Jesus before bodily leaving this earth was to go and make disciples" (Huizing, 2011, p. 59). This shifts the focus from self-aggrandizement to discipleship, aligning with biblical anthropology where humanity's essence is submission to Christ as King.

Ayers bridges theology and anthropology by emphasizing character rooted in Christ's example, particularly through Philippians 2:5–11, which exhorts believers to adopt Christ's mindset of humility for unity and service. He posits that leadership emerges from ontology—the essence of being—stating that "the process of becoming a leader is the same process that makes a person a healthy, fully integrated human being" (Ayers, 2006, p. 6, citing Bennis). Tangen (2023) extends this through the S-E-R-V-E framework (Spiritual, Equipping, Relational, Visionary, Effective), which integrates Trinitarian views of relationality, portraying humanity as inherently communal and called to reflect God's triune nature in leadership practices. Smith (2009) adds a formative perspective, viewing humans not primarily as thinkers but as "desiring animals" shaped by liturgies and practices that direct loves toward God's kingdom.

The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology reinforces this by defining theological anthropology as the study of humanity in relation to God, covering creation, fall, and redemption (Treier & Elwell, 2017). Thus, humanity's nature demands a balanced leadership paradigm: one that acknowledges inherent dignity while addressing brokenness, ultimately directing toward Christlikeness. This holistic view equips Christian leaders to navigate diverse contexts, promoting ethical influence and communal transformation.

# **Doctrine 1: Humanity Created in the Image of God**

The doctrine of creation establishes humanity's foundational identity as bearers of God's image, imparting inherent dignity, relational depth, and stewardship responsibilities. Genesis 1:28 commands, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over...every living thing." This functional aspect of the imago Dei positions humans as co-creators with God, exercising authority that mirrors divine order and creativity, rather than mere dominance (Huizing, 2011). Genesis 2:7 details this intimate formation: "then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Wilburn elaborates that the imago Dei involves both ontological (being in God's likeness) and functional (ruling as a result of that likeness) elements, quoting Peter Gentry: "The ruling is not the essence of the divine image, but rather a result of being made as the divine image" (Wilburn, 2017, p. 101). This underscores humanity's unique role in reflecting God's character through responsible governance.

Hammett in Akin's volume emphasizes that the imago Dei includes rationality, morality, and relationality, setting humans apart for leadership roles in creation (Akin, 2014). In Christian leadership, this doctrine implies affirming the intrinsic value of every person, creating spaces where creativity, relationships, and purpose thrive. Leaders must foster environments that honor followers' dignity, recognizing diverse gifts as expressions of the imago Dei. Wilburn connects this to anthropological telos—the trajectory toward Christ—advocating flexibility in leadership styles, such as those in Situational Leadership Theory (directing, coaching, supporting, delegating), to adapt to followers' competency and commitment levels. He asserts, "Anthropological telos calls for flexibility as the key Christian leadership principle guiding followers toward relationality as a formative end and resurrection as a final end" (Wilburn, 2017, p. 90). This plasticity aligns with Kathryn Tanner's view of human adaptability, where spiritual nourishment reshapes individuals according to God's image.

Psalm 8:4–5 further exalts this created state: "What is man that you are mindful of him...Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." James 3:9 reinforces the imago Dei's persistence: "With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God." Ayers links this to leadership ontology, where character balances authority with humility, enabling transformational influence. He notes that leadership qualities are "not skills that can be learned...but the natural expression of the fully functional personality" (Ayers, 2006, p. 7, citing Thompson). Tangen (2023) reinforces this through the Relational dimension of S-E-R-V-E, viewing humanity as inherently communal, reflecting Trinitarian interdependence and calling leaders to cultivate virtue ethics in interpersonal dynamics. Laniak (2006) portrays God as the ultimate Shepherd, implying humanity's created need for guidance, with leaders serving as under-shepherds after God's heart (Jer. 3:15).

This doctrine counters dehumanizing leadership practices, such as exploitation, by promoting solidarity and ethical stewardship. Zimmerli et al. (2007) add a corporate perspective, viewing humanity as ethical agents in governance, resolving dilemmas through hermeneutical ethics that consider contextual responsibilities. As Huizing observes, leadership in creation's narrative includes "Adam’s dominion in the garden (Gen. 1:26)" as a model of God-governed authority (Huizing, 2011, p. 74). Christian leaders, therefore, empower teams to co-create, ensuring actions align with divine intent and foster human flourishing in organizational and communal settings.

# **Doctrine 2: The Fallen Nature of Humanity**

The fall, as narrated in Genesis 3, introduces sin, distorting the imago Dei and infusing human nature with self-centeredness, broken relationships, and moral frailty. Genesis 3:6 captures the moment: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." Romans 3:23 encapsulates this reality: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," highlighting the universal impact of sin on humanity's capacity for good. Jeremiah 17:9 warns, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" This distortion manifests in leadership through pride, power abuse, and relational conflicts, necessitating vigilance and humility.

Hammett details how sin affects the totality of humanity, corrupting body, soul, and relationships (Akin, 2014). Christian leadership must account for this fallen state by prioritizing accountability and heart-level transformation over mere behavioral compliance. Huizing illustrates this with David's census (1 Chronicles 21:1–4), where sinful motives undermine actions: "There is no foolishness in the action—unless there is a sinful heart behind it...This clearly illustrates how the ‘why’ question becomes far more important to Christian leadership than the ‘what’ question" (Huizing, 2011, p. 62). He critiques outcome-focused theories, urging a Christ-centric approach that addresses sin's relational disruptions.

Wilburn notes that the Fall breaks relationality "in the now," requiring leaders to evaluate followers amid limitations, using flexible styles to guide toward restoration. He draws on Wolfhart Pannenberg's historicity, viewing humanity within a narrative of exocentric destiny, where sin hinders but does not eradicate the image of God (Wilburn, 2017, p. 98). Romans 7:18 expresses this internal struggle: "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out." Ayers addresses sin through insecurity: "Many leaders possess deep insecurity about their identity and worth and thus exhibit behavior that undermines leadership...Their leadership actions flow from insecurity" (Ayers, 2006, p. 8, citing Palmer). This calls for self-examination, as in Ephesians 2:1–3, which describes humanity as "dead in...sins," following worldly influences.

Smith (2009) views the fall as misdirected desires, where liturgies of the world shape loves away from God, calling leaders to redirect affections through formative practices. Tangen (2023) integrates this into the Effective dimension of S-E-R-V-E, balancing moral and instrumental goods through stewardship, mitigating selfish motives with virtues like prudence. Leaders model repentance and forgiveness, creating safe spaces for growth. As Huizing (2011) warns, without faith alignment, practices deviate from Scripture, reflecting fallen desires for glory. This doctrine tempers leadership optimism with realism, emphasizing structures like mentorship to navigate conflicts and pursue ethical integrity.

# **Doctrine 3: Redeemed Humanity Through Christ**

Redemption renews humanity's distorted image, transforming individuals into new creations through Christ's work and the Holy Spirit's empowerment. 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Ephesians 2:8-10 elaborates: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." This process orients humanity toward conformity with Christ, restoring relationality and purpose.

In leadership, redemption manifests as servant-hearted influence that empowers others for discipleship. Huizing frames this as embodying Christ: "Mission does not happen until the leader knows what it means to embody Christ and is already on the path of faith to which others are invited and are empowered to join" (Huizing, 2011, p. 66). Leaders, as "jars of clay" (2 Corinthians 4:7), display God's power, shifting from self-glory to Gospel proclamation. Tripp (2021) applies the doctrine of humanity to daily life, urging believers to live out their redeemed identity, combating sin through grace and influencing others toward transformation.

Wilburn ties redemption to eschatological telos, with Romans 8:29 emphasizing predestination: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Flexible leadership directs followers toward progressive sanctification and resurrection, prioritizing soul care over structure (Wilburn, 2017, p. 100). Colossians 3:9-10 instructs: "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." Ayers draws from Philippians 2:5–11, where Christ's kenosis redeems through humility: "The mantra of Philippians 2:5-11 is that through the humility, selflessness, and sacrifice of Christ mankind is redeemed and he is exalted as Lord" (Ayers, 2006, p. 20). This inspires sacrificial unity, enhancing transformational traits like inspirational motivation.

Tangen (2023) embodies redemption in S-E-R-V-E's Spiritual and Visionary elements, grounding leadership in Trinitarian mission and hope. Galatians 5:22–23 lists Spirit fruits—love, joy, peace—as marks of redeemed behavior, fostering relational ethics. John 3:16 underscores God's love: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son..." Leaders reflect this by prioritizing equity and healing, anticipating God's kingdom. Laniak (2006) highlights redeemed leaders as shepherds after God's heart, caring for the vulnerable as God does. Redemption thus inspires visionary, compassionate leadership that restores dignity and advances eternal goals.

Humanity—created in God's image, fallen into sin, and redeemed through Christ—offers a comprehensive theological foundation for Christian leadership, promoting dignity, humility, and hope. Integrating these doctrines enables leaders to guide with wisdom, transforming individuals and communities for God's glory (Tangen, 2023). As Smith (2009) reminds, this involves shaping desires toward the kingdom, ensuring doctrine informs practice.

# **Part 3. Approaching Leadership Studies: Priority 1 - What is Christian Leadership?**

Christian leadership stands distinct from secular models, rooted deeply in the biblical narrative where God Himself is portrayed as the ultimate Shepherd of His people. This assignment explores the essence of Christian leadership through the lens of the shepherding motif prevalent in Scripture. By examining this motif, we uncover a leadership paradigm that emphasizes care, guidance, and sacrifice, modeled supremely by Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. This overview will articulate foundational truths derived from biblical texts and scholarly interactions, highlighting the uniqueness of Christian leadership as a divine calling to steward God's flock. In a globalizing church context, this motif offers a timeless framework that adapts to diverse cultural settings while maintaining biblical fidelity. Central to this discussion is the question of who is called to such leadership, a divine appointment that demands specific qualifications and a heart aligned with Christ's example.

Christian leadership, at its core, is the God-ordained stewardship of His people, patterned after the shepherding motif that permeates Scripture. Unlike secular leadership, which often prioritizes efficiency, power, or outcomes, Christian leadership is relational and sacrificial, viewing followers not as resources but as a flock entrusted by God. The shepherding metaphor originates in the agrarian context of ancient Israel, where shepherds were responsible for the well-being of sheep—vulnerable creatures prone to wandering and danger. In Scripture, this motif depicts God as the compassionate Shepherd who provides, protects, and restores (Psalm 23:1-3). Jesus embodies this fully, declaring, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Scholars emphasize that this motif critiques failed human leadership while promising divine restoration, as seen in prophetic texts where neglectful leaders are condemned (Ezekiel 34:1-10). Christian leaders, therefore, serve as under-shepherds under the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), accountable to God and called to emulate Christ's example. This leadership is not about authority for its own sake but about nurturing spiritual growth, fostering community, and advancing God's kingdom. Interaction with academic sources reveals that the shepherd model integrates care with accountability, offering a holistic framework for pastoral theology that transcends cultural contexts. For instance, in analyzing John 10, the impetus for such leadership lies in a heart motivated by genuine concern for the flock, rather than mere tactics, ensuring leaders prioritize the sheep's welfare in today's diverse church environments. Furthermore, socio-rhetorical studies identify key characteristics like spiritual feeding and protection, reinforcing the motif's primacy in defining Christian pastoral roles (Pickwell, 2022).

# **Who is Called to be a Christian Leader?**

Who is called to be a Christian leader within this shepherding framework? Biblically, the call originates from God, who appoints shepherds after His own heart to lead His people with knowledge and understanding (Jeremiah 3:15). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit appoints overseers to shepherd the church (Acts 20:28), emphasizing a divine initiative rather than self-selection. Primarily, this calling applies to elders, pastors, and deacons, who must meet stringent qualifications outlined in Scripture. For elders, these include being above reproach, able to teach, managing their households well, and not greedy or domineering (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Deacons, as servant-shepherds, are called to roles of practical care, requiring maturity, responsibility, and a good reputation (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). The call is confirmed through testing in home and church life, ensuring leaders demonstrate godly character and willingness to serve humbly. While formal leadership roles are specified, all believers are called to elements of shepherding influence, such as mutual edification, but the structured shepherding of the flock is entrusted to those divinely equipped and church-affirmed. Scholarly analysis supports this, noting that leaders are called to embody shepherding through spiritual and relational competency, often extending to emerging adults and diverse communities (Sarver, 2020).

# **Foundational Truth 1: Christian Leaders are Under-Shepherds Accountable to the Chief Shepherd**

The first foundational truth of Christian leadership is that leaders function as under-shepherds, deriving their authority and purpose from Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, to whom they are ultimately accountable. This truth underscores the Christocentric nature of leadership, where human shepherds do not assume God's role but participate in His ongoing ministry. In Ezekiel 34, God rebukes Israel's leaders for self-serving neglect, promising to shepherd His people Himself and appoint a Davidic shepherd—a prophecy fulfilled in Christ (Ezekiel 34:11-24). Jesus reinforces this in John 10, contrasting Himself with hired hands who abandon the flock, emphasizing His ownership and care: "I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14). Peter extends this to church elders, exhorting them to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you... not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you" (1 Peter 5:2), with the promise of reward from the Chief Shepherd.

This accountability implies that not all are called to leadership; rather, God selects those with the right motives and qualifications, such as humility and doctrinal faithfulness, to serve as undershepherds (1 Peter 5:1-5; Numbers 27:16-17). Academic sources affirm this accountability, arguing that pastoral care is fundamentally God's work, with leaders imitating Christ's character rather than relying on human functions, ensuring a biblical and transformational approach. Pastors are accountable as stewards, managing church resources wisely to fulfill God's mission, as emphasized in 1 Corinthians 4:2 (Kelly, 2023). Socio-rhetorical analysis identifies stewardship as a core characteristic, where leaders recognize the flock as God's, leading with humility and ideological alignment to biblical ecclesiology, countering secular models that emphasize personal gain (Pickwell, 2022). In a globalizing church, this accountability fosters a "diasporadically conscious" approach, where pastors maintain scriptural authority while engaging cross-cultural dialogues, ensuring leadership remains faithful across diverse contexts. Thus, this truth guards against authoritarianism, fostering humility and dependence on Christ.

To arrive at this truth, one begins with exegesis of key passages like Ezekiel 34 and John 10, identifying the contrast between false and true shepherds. Cross-referencing with 1 Peter 5 reveals the hierarchical structure: human leaders under Christ. Scholarly analysis then integrates these texts, deriving principles of accountability through thematic synthesis.

# **Foundational Truth 2: Christian Leaders Provide Holistic Care: Feeding, Guiding, and Protecting**

A second foundational truth is that Christian leaders provide holistic care to the flock, encompassing feeding with God's Word, guiding through life's challenges, and protecting from spiritual dangers. This mirrors the shepherd's daily responsibilities in Scripture, where sheep require constant nurture due to their vulnerability. Psalm 23 vividly illustrates this: "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:2-3), depicting provision and restoration. In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrates this compassion, seeing crowds as "sheep without a shepherd" and teaching them (Mark 6:34). He commissions Peter to "Feed my lambs... Tend my sheep" (John 21:15-17), linking care with discipleship. Paul echoes this to elders: "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock... to care for the church of God" (Acts 20:28).

Those called to this care must exhibit maturity and conviction, as seen in the selection of deacons for practical shepherding (Acts 6:3), ensuring they can address the flock's diverse needs with courage and wisdom. Scholarly engagements enrich this truth, detailing God's actions in Ezekiel 34—seeking the lost, strengthening the weak, and providing peace—as models for leaders, centered on Christ's redemptive work (Pickwell, 2022). The shepherding model entails meeting the broad spectrum of human needs, defined by inspiration rather than self-perceived desires, reflecting Jesus’ ministry of grace and truth (Rudolph, 2024). Socio-rhetorical studies outline characteristics like protection from threats, care for strays, and inspection of needs, urging pastors to create restorative cultures and address burnout through shared ministry (Pickwell, 2022). This truth ensures leadership addresses the whole person, promoting flourishing in community.

Deriving this involves thematic analysis of passages like Psalm 23 and Acts 20, categorizing shepherd actions (feed, guide, protect). Scholarly synthesis confirms these as enduring principles applicable across contexts.

# **Foundational Truth 3: Christian Leaders Embody Sacrificial Love and Service**

The third foundational truth is that Christian leaders embody sacrificial love and service, willing to lay down their lives for the flock, following Christ's example. This distinguishes Christian leadership as selfless, countering self-interest condemned in Scripture. In John 10, Jesus states, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11), fulfilled in His crucifixion. Ezekiel 34 contrasts this with exploitative leaders, promising a shepherd who unites and restores (Ezekiel 34:23). Peter urges elders to shepherd "not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2-3), linking service to Christ's return.

The call to sacrificial service requires leaders to follow God's heart, relying on the Holy Spirit for perseverance and compassion, as those appointed must prioritize the flock over personal gain (Jeremiah 3:15; Mark 10:45). Sources reinforce this sacrificial ethos, tying it to union with Christ, where leaders partner in His redemptive sacrifice, empowered by the Spirit (Sarver, 2020). Leadership is characterized by sacrifice, mirroring Christ's suffering, with servant leadership as the central model (Kelly, 2023). In John 10, the impetus is a heart motivated by singular concern for the sheep, prioritizing self-sacrifice over tactics. Socio-rhetorical analysis adds selflessness, willingness, and modeling, where pastors sacrifice personally while exemplifying Christ-like lives, fostering trust and replicable behavior (Pickwell, 2022). This truth cultivates authentic, enduring leadership.

To derive this, examine John's Gospel for sacrificial language, correlate with prophetic promises, and apply to epistolary exhortations. Scholarly insights validate through historical and theological lenses.

In summary, Christian leadership, through the shepherding motif, is a divine vocation of accountability to Christ, holistic care, and sacrificial service, extended to those God calls and qualifies for the role. These truths, drawn from Scripture and scholarly discourse, provide a robust framework that prioritizes God's people and His glory. As under-shepherds, leaders must continually align with the Good Shepherd, ensuring their ministry reflects biblical fidelity and transformative impact in an increasingly global church landscape.

# **Part 4. Approaching Leadership Studies: Priority 2 - Exposing Alternative Models**

In the exploration of leadership studies from a Christian perspective, this paper exposes and critiques an alternative model of leadership. This analysis—which draws on biblical truths about God's sovereign and triune nature, humanity's creation in the imago Dei yet fallen state, and Christian leadership as Christ-centered servanthood—examines Robert Greenleaf's seminal essay, "The Servant as Leader." Greenleaf's model, while superficially resonant with biblical themes of service, is rooted in secular assumptions that diverge from a scriptural worldview. This critique will summarize the essay, interact with its main thesis, and expose its underlying foundations, drawing on academic sources to highlight alignments and misalignments with Christian leadership principles.

# **Part 4.1: Brief Summary of the Article**

Robert Greenleaf's (1970) essay, "The Servant as Leader," introduces a paradigm where leadership emerges from a primary orientation toward service. The idea originated from Greenleaf's reading of Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*, in which a servant named Leo sustains a group on a journey, only to be revealed as the true leader whose absence causes chaos. This narrative inspired Greenleaf to propose that great leaders are first seen as servants, with leadership bestowed upon those naturally inclined to serve.

The main thesis posits that society faces a leadership crisis resolvable only if more "natural servants" assume leadership roles or if people refuse to follow non-servant leaders. The servant-leader is defined as one who serves first, driven by an innate desire to meet others' highest-priority needs, rather than seeking power or possessions. The ultimate test of this leadership is whether those served grow as individuals—becoming healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to become servants themselves—while ensuring no harm to the least privileged in society (Greenleaf, 1970).

Greenleaf (1970) outlines key characteristics of servant-leaders, including listening intently to identify group will, accepting and empathizing with people without rejection, and using persuasion over coercion, as exemplified by Quaker abolitionist John Woolman. Other traits include foresight (intuitive insight into future outcomes), awareness (heightened perception for better decision-making), conceptualization (dreaming great dreams to inspire), healing (seeking wholeness for self and others), and building community (fostering small, face-to-face groups for genuine care). He emphasizes that leadership involves risk, initiative, and working with human imperfection, assuming that societal progress depends on individuals stepping forward as servants.

Throughout, Greenleaf (1970) draws on examples from literature, history, and personal experience, such as Danish educator Nikolai Grundtvig's Folk High Schools, to illustrate how servant-leadership transforms institutions like universities, businesses, and churches. He critiques coercive, hierarchical models and advocates for a dynamic, intuitive approach where leaders view problems as internal ("in here") rather than external, promoting personal growth and communal wholeness.

# **Part 4.2: Interaction and Critique of Author’s Main Thesis/Argument**

Greenleaf's (1970) central thesis—that the servant-leader is servant first, with leadership as a conscious choice stemming from a natural desire to serve—presents an alternative model that warrants exposure from a Christian viewpoint. While elements align superficially with biblical teachings, such as Jesus' command to serve—“But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45)—the model's foundations reveal a secular, humanistic worldview that diverges significantly from the framework of Christian leadership. This critique exposes Greenleaf's assumptions, evaluates alignments and misalignments, and draws on academic sources to debunk aspects incompatible with a scriptural theology.

# **4.2.1 Assumptions and Worldview of the Author**

At its core, Greenleaf's (1970) argument assumes an optimistic view of human nature, positing that individuals possess innate potential for growth, intuition, and heroism if led wisely. He views humans as a mix of good and evil but emphasizes their capacity for dedication and wholeness through service, without acknowledging the doctrine of total depravity or original sin central to biblical anthropology: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Humanity is defined biblically as created in God's image yet fallen, requiring redemption through Christ for true transformation. Greenleaf's model, by contrast, relies on self-motivated service and intuitive insight, implying that leadership emerges from human effort alone, not divine empowerment. This humanistic foundation, inspired by Hesse's mystical narrative rather than Scripture, reflects a worldview where problems are resolved internally through personal initiative, sidelining God's sovereignty and the Holy Spirit's role in gifting leaders: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone... All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 11).

# **4.2.2 Alignments with Christian Leadership**

One alignment with Christian leadership is the emphasis on service and follower growth. Greenleaf's (1970) "best test"—measuring leadership by whether followers become healthier, wiser, and more servant-like—echoes Jesus' model of servanthood, where He washed the disciples' feet and instructed, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15), and taught that greatness comes through serving others: “It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28). Academic analyses affirm this overlap; for instance, servant leadership is seen as principally biblical when aligned with virtues like humility—“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3)—as it promotes distributed leadership and mutual submission mirroring the Trinity (Patterson, 2016). Similarly, Christ's teachings provide a foundation for servant-leadership traits like empathy and commitment to growth, which Greenleaf secularizes but which originate in biblical examples of leaders like Moses, David, and Paul, who served despite personal cost (Locke & Smith, 2021).

# **4.2.3 Misalignments and Critiques**

However, significant misalignments arise in the model's roots and application. Greenleaf's (1970) thesis is not biblically derived; it stems from eastern mysticism via Hesse and treats religious texts as mere human stories, not authoritative revelation (Locke & Smith, 2021). Critiques highlight that while Greenleaf's approach may yield practical benefits like employee engagement, it lacks Christian theology's emphasis on service as obedience to God, not just others. For example, power in Greenleaf's model comes from followers granting authority based on trustworthiness, whereas in biblical leadership, authority derives from God—“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Romans 13:1)—with Christ as the ultimate source, not subordinate needs. (Locke & Smith, 2021). Moreover, Greenleaf's persuasion over coercion ignores Jesus' occasional autocratic style, such as rebuking Peter—“Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Mark 8:33)—or sending disciples with strict instructions: “These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’” (Matthew 10:5-6), prioritizing mission over participative input (Patterson, 2016).

Exposing the worldview, Greenleaf's (1970) assumptions promote a relativistic ethic where intuition and foresight bridge rational gaps, without reference to divine wisdom or prayer. This contrasts with the view of God as the triune leader who models sacrificial service—“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8)—and humanity's need for redemption to lead rightly (Johnson, 2020). Academic sources debunk this by noting servant leadership's potential failure when follower values misalign, as in Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler, where even perfect servant traits did not yield transformation due to lacking readiness: “And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (Mark 10:21-22)—a reminder that true change requires spiritual alignment, not just humanistic service (Mizzell & Huizing, 2020). Critics argue Greenleaf's model risks utopian idealism, incompatible with profit-driven contexts or the biblical call to serve God first—“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10)—potentially diluting the Gospel by making servanthood an end rather than a means to glorify Christ (Locke & Smith, 2021).

# **4.2.4 Reinterpretation from a Christian Perspective**

In reinterpretation, Greenleaf's (1970) focus on community, healing, listening, and empathy offers valuable elements that can be redeemed and integrated into a Christ-centered framework, but *only* when subordinated to biblical principles *and* the redemptive work of Christ in the soul of the individual. For instance, Greenleaf's emphasis on building community through small, caring groups can be reinterpreted through the lens of the early church in Acts 2:42-47, where believers devoted themselves to fellowship, breaking bread, and sharing possessions, resulting in communal wholeness grounded in the apostles' teaching and prayer: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... And all who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:42, 44). This biblical community is not merely humanistic but empowered by the Holy Spirit, fostering unity that reflects the Trinity and advances God's kingdom (Ephesians 4:1-6).

Similarly, traits like foresight and conceptualization—Greenleaf's call to "dream great dreams"—can be adapted by anchoring them in prophetic vision and divine calling, as seen in leaders like Nehemiah, who rebuilt Jerusalem's walls through God-inspired initiative despite opposition (Nehemiah 2:17-18). However, Christian reinterpretation insists that such intuition *must* derive from prayerful discernment *and* Scripture, *not* innate human potential, to avoid the pitfalls of self-reliance. Academic discussions support this adaptation; for example, servant leadership can serve biblical themes when its precepts—such as putting service before self-interest and inspiring trust—are explicitly tied to Jesus' example, transforming Greenleaf's secular model into a tool for missional living (Hejazi, 2011). Furthermore, healing in Greenleaf's model, aimed at wholeness, finds deeper meaning in Christ's restorative ministry, where physical and spiritual healing point to eternal redemption (James 5:14-15), requiring leaders to address sin's root causes through the Gospel.

Ultimately, reinterpreting Greenleaf requires infusing his ideas with the doctrine of atonement and dependence on God. Service becomes not a natural inclination but a response to Christ's sacrificial love: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24). This shifts the focus from societal progress through human servants to kingdom advancement through redeemed sinners empowered by grace. As one scholar notes, while Greenleaf's theory is not inherently Christian, it can be reimagined as "Jesus-like" servant leadership when centered on devotion to Christ's mission, calling leaders to serve the church's wider purpose rather than individual growth alone (Holloman, 2023). His secular roots thus expose a worldview that elevates human potential over divine dependence, assuming societal change through individual servants without acknowledging sin's pervasive impact or the need for atonement, but careful reinterpretation allows Christians to glean practical insights while upholding scriptural authority.

In summary, Greenleaf's (1970) "The Servant as Leader" offers a compelling alternative model emphasizing service, growth, and community, yet its secular foundations—rooted in humanistic literature and an optimistic anthropology rather than Scripture—fundamentally diverge from the biblical priorities of Christian leadership, which demand recognition of human sinfulness, divine sovereignty, and Christocentric servanthood. By exposing and critiquing these assumptions, including the reliance on intuition over revelation and self-motivated service over Spirit-empowered obedience, this analysis reveals the model's limitations in addressing the full scope of leadership within a fallen world. Nevertheless, through reinterpretation, elements of Greenleaf's framework can be redeemed to enhance Christian practice, provided they are realigned with the Gospel's transformative power and the ultimate goal of glorifying God. This underscores the necessity for Christian leaders to discern secular theories through the lens of Scripture, ensuring that all leadership models serve to advance God's redemptive plan rather than human ideals alone. In doing so, believers can engage alternative perspectives critically, extracting wisdom while remaining anchored in eternal truth.

# **Part 5. Approaching Leadership Studies: Priority 3 - Learning What You Can Assignment**

Building on the critique of Robert Greenleaf's (1970) "The Servant as Leader" in the previous assignment, which exposed its secular humanistic foundations and divergences from a biblical worldview—such as its optimistic anthropology and reliance on intuition over divine revelation—this priority shifts focus to extracting valuable insights from the alternative model. Despite these misalignments, Greenleaf's framework offers practical elements that, when redeemed through Scripture, can enrich Christian leadership. This analysis identifies three learnable aspects, demonstrating how Christians can discern and integrate wisdom from secular sources while remaining anchored in Christ-centered principles.

# **Three Elements from Critique That Can Be Learned from Alternative Model**

# **5.1 Servant-First Orientation**

One key element from Greenleaf's (1970) model that Christians can learn from is the emphasis on a servant-first orientation, which prioritizes meeting others' needs before assuming authority. In the critique, this was exposed as rooted in humanistic self-motivation rather than obedience to God, potentially sidelining the doctrine of total depravity and the need for redemption. However, when reinterpreted biblically, this orientation provides a practical reminder of Jesus' example: "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001/2016, Mark 10:45). Learning from Greenleaf here encourages Christian leaders to cultivate intentional habits of humility and empathy, such as active listening and persuasion over coercion, as tools for fostering trust in ministry contexts. For instance, in church settings, adopting this servant-first mindset can counteract hierarchical abuses by promoting mutual submission, as Patterson (2016) notes in aligning servant traits with Trinitarian virtues. This learning does not endorse Greenleaf's secular roots but adapts his insight to enhance obedience to Christ's command: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001/2016, John 13:14-15). By integrating this, Christian leaders can better embody servanthood in daily interactions, ensuring service flows from grace rather than innate potential, ultimately glorifying God through transformed relationships.

# **5.2 Follower Development and Growth**

A second learnable element is Greenleaf's (1970) focus on follower development and growth, tested by whether those served become healthier, wiser, freer, and more servant-like themselves. The critique highlighted this as misaligned when detached from spiritual redemption, risking utopian idealism that ignores sin's barriers, as seen in Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler: "And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.' Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001/2016, Mark 10:21-22), where service alone failed to produce change without heart alignment. Yet, this aspect offers valuable lessons for Christian leadership by underscoring the importance of investing in others' holistic growth, which echoes biblical discipleship models like Paul's mentoring of Timothy: "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001/2016, 2 Tim. 2:2). Academic sources support this adaptation; Mizzell and Huizing (2020) argue that while servant leadership can fail without shared values, its emphasis on empowerment can be redeemed to promote biblical maturity when tied to Gospel transformation. Christians can learn to apply Greenleaf's "best test" practically in mentoring programs or small groups, measuring success not just by organizational metrics but by spiritual fruits like wisdom and autonomy under God's sovereignty. This integration strengthens Christian practice by blending Greenleaf's intuitive approach with prayerful discernment, ensuring growth aligns with the body of Christ building itself up in love: "from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001/2016, Eph. 4:16).

# **5.3 Building Community and Pursuing Healing**

Finally, Greenleaf's (1970) advocacy for building community and pursuing healing—through small, face-to-face groups fostering wholeness—presents a third element worth learning, despite its critique as overly humanistic and lacking acknowledgment of sin's root causes or the Holy Spirit's role. In the analysis, this was contrasted with the triune God's model of unity and Christ's redemptive healing, yet it aligns with practical biblical applications like the early church: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... And all who believed were together and had all things in common" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001/2016, Acts 2:42, 44). Christians can glean from Greenleaf the importance of intentional community-building in modern, fragmented societies, using traits like empathy and awareness to create spaces for vulnerability and restoration. Holloman (2023) reaffirms this by reimagining servant leadership for clergy as mission-oriented, where healing seeks not just emotional wholeness but eternal redemption: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001/2016, James 5:14-15). By learning this, leaders can implement Greenleaf-inspired strategies, such as fostering small groups for accountability, while subordinating them to Scripture to avoid relativism. This element thus equips Christians to address contemporary isolation, transforming secular community ideals into kingdom tools that reflect the Trinity's relational nature and advance God's redemptive plan.

In summary, Greenleaf's (1970) servant-leadership model, though critiqued for its secular divergences, yields learnable elements—a servant-first orientation, focus on follower growth, and community-building with healing—that can enhance Christian leadership when reinterpreted through biblical lenses. These insights promote practical humility, discipleship, and unity, provided they are grounded in Christ's atonement and divine empowerment rather than human effort alone. By discerning what can be learned, believers fulfill the call to "test everything; hold fast what is good" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001/2016, 1 Thess. 5:21), enriching their service to glorify God in a fallen world.

# **Conclusion**

This assignment has navigated the intersection of Christian doctrine and leadership studies, underscoring that true leadership emerges not from human ingenuity but from alignment with God's character and redemptive plan for humanity. From the doctrinal foundations in Parts 1 and 2—highlighting God's Trinity, sovereignty, and holiness alongside humanity's imago Dei, fallen state, and redemption—we established the priority of theological grounding. Part 3 illuminated Christian leadership as a divine calling marked by accountability to Christ, comprehensive shepherding, and selfless service. In Part 4, the critique of an alternative model revealed both its worldview-driven shortcomings and occasional synergies with biblical principles, prompting a reinterpretation that upholds God's supremacy. Part 5, in turn, demonstrated the value of humble learning, identifying three elements from the alternative approach that, when redeemed, can enrich Christian practice without compromising core truths. Ultimately, this exploration affirms that Christian leaders are stewards of God's flock, called to lead with humility, wisdom, and eternal perspective. As under-shepherds, may we continually prioritize knowing God, understanding our redeemed humanity, and engaging the world critically yet graciously, all for the glory of the Chief Shepherd who laid down His life for us.

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2. All Scripture references will be from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated. Crossway, *Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)