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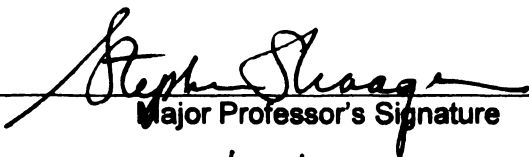
LEADERSHIP PRACTICE INFLUENCED BY CHRISTIAN
FAITH: A PORTRAIT OF THREE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
PRESIDENTS

presented by

DOUGLAS RICHARD NEWBERRY, JR.

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of the requirements for the

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**LEADERSHIP PRACTICE INFLUENCED BY CHRISTIAN FAITH:
A PORTRAIT OF THREE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE PRESIDENTS**

By

Douglas Richard Newberry, Jr.

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Abstract

LEADERSHIP PRACTICE INFLUENCED BY CHRISTIAN FAITH: A PORTRAIT OF THREE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

By

Douglas Richard Newberry, Jr.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of faith on the leadership practice of Christian college leaders. Through the examination of three Christian college presidents, this study creates a portrait of their leadership practice influenced by faith. The question that is asked in the research is this: *In what ways does Christian faith influence the leadership practice of selected Presidents in Christian higher education?*

To answer this question the methodology of portraiture was used to paint a portrait of three different Christian college presidents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). Through extensive interviews on the campuses of Bethsaida College, Capernaum University, and Galilee University, individual portraits were created using Kouzes and Posner's (2003) five leadership practices as a framework for viewing leadership.

Christian Colleges have played a significant role in higher education over the years. However, many of these colleges have drifted from their original faith and historic church commitment (Marsden, 1994). Today, there is a segment of Christian colleges that are part of the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities. These colleges are committed to the systematic model which expresses a specific faith commitment in their mission as well as in the hiring of faculty and staff. As these colleges espouse the importance of the integration of faith and learning, it is assumed that this integration also takes place in the leadership practice of the presidents, as well as other leaders at the

institution. What resulted from the research are several themes that emerged to create one portrait of the ways in which faith influences the leadership practice of three Christian college presidents.

First, their faith-based leadership practice was seen as a partnership with God. Secondly, there was a commitment to maintaining, preserving and promoting the mission of the institution. Each president was involved in the interview process to ensure that the mission of the college. Third, these presidents conversed with God in their leadership practice. These conversations occurred in their prayers to God. Fourth, their leadership practices were shaped by pastoral action and demonstrated a heart of a pastor. They presidencies could be best described as a “president-as-pastor” leadership model. Fifth, their leadership rhetoric featured “God-talk” in their conversations with people and with groups. They often included spiritualized talk and acknowledged God and His work with others. Sixth, their vision was seen as a joint vision between them and God and focused on the growth of the college. While not God-given, their visions were ordained and inspired by Him. Seventh, their leadership practice promoted a spiritual agenda which was rooted in their commitment to chapel. This emphasis was of primary importance at these Christian Colleges.

The leadership practices that were most influenced by the faith of these presidents were “model the way,” “inspire a shared vision,” and “encourage the heart.” Through these leadership practices, the three presidents displayed leadership that was highly symbolic as an expression of their own personal faith as well as the faith commitment of the college.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my two sons, Caleb and Benjamin, who I pray will become men of faith and committed Christian leaders who seek to advance the Kingdom of God throughout their lives. May they learn from my mistakes and the lessons I learned along the way and always seek their Heavenly Father for His guidance and direction.

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CHAPTER ONE

I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME

Introduction and Reflections on My Journey

I never thought it could happen to me. After all, I had worked for twelve and a half years at my alma mater, a Christian university in the Midwest, and anticipated leaving to go to another job in the prime of my performance. When you go out on top, you think that those around you will express their sorrow for losing a valued employee and colleague—they will wish you the best as you pursue a new opportunity.

This is certainly not how it happened for me. During the month of November, in the year 2000, the mood of the president changed. He had come to realize that the university, even though it had grown rapidly and accomplished much in the last ten years, was on the edge of a financial crisis. Because money had not come in as expected in the first multi-million dollar capital campaign and the leadership had overextended its financial commitments, drastic cuts in expenses needed to take place.

At a meeting with the university personnel in November, the president announced that some cuts would be made in the upcoming months and referenced the possibility that this might include positions. Obviously, this created concern, however no one really knew the extent to which the cuts would come and how deep they would go.

I remember sitting among the personnel never thinking that my position could be in jeopardy. I thought I was “safe” and “untouchable” at the university because of my longevity and performance. My experience had been one that demonstrated regular promotions to the next level rising from staff level to executive director levels in the

university. In each position, I demonstrated the competency to lead and to be a catalyst in the president's efforts to advance the university to the next level. Every performance evaluation I had was a positive reflection of the contributions I had made. I just did not think it could happen to me.

When I was born in 1966 my father was in Vietnam fighting in a war for our country. This was a difficult time for my mother not knowing if my father would return from the war. My father had left when my mom was three months pregnant. Even though this time was challenging, she had the support of her parents who also lived in the same town. My mom lived with her parents while her husband (my father) was gone.

I remember my father telling the story of how he heard about my birth. While he was at the base, he received a message that his wife had given birth to a baby boy and had named him after his father. I can't imagine being miles away in a strange land fighting a war as your wife gives birth to your firstborn son.

During this time while my father was in Vietnam, I lived with my mom and her parents. My grandfather was a Southern Baptist preacher. Throughout his lifetime, he led thirteen different churches as their pastor. My mom took me to my grandfather's church just after I was born. In many ways, my grandfather was a father to me during this time. It must have been difficult on my mother. However, she had faith in God and believed that He would take care of her husband, and now her newborn son.

From that point forward, church would become an integral part of my life. I grew up in the church and became a product of my grandfather's faith. At the age of ten, I decided to accept this faith in God through my own personal decision. It was a

commitment that I made based on my belief that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to provide forgiveness for sins and the gift of eternal life. I remember praying the prayer of salvation in my pastor's office one Sunday morning in May in a suburban church.

As I reflect back on this decision, I believe that this influence was an integral part of my faith development as well as the result of growing up in a Christian home. I had come to a greater understanding and level of commitment in my faith. However, I still had a long way to go. I still remember my pastor saying that I was a changed person and that my faith would influence all of my life. Little did I know what this actually meant at the time nor the journey I would take in my life.

In the middle of December 2000, two close colleagues told me that my name was "on the list" for potential position elimination. At first, I did not believe them. When they said that their positions were also on the list, I could not believe that this was possible. Both of these individuals were "in the know" because they served as vice presidents at the university. I trusted them. They were part of the process along with the president until he decided that both of their positions would be eliminated. As my friends, they were the first to give me a "heads up" on this situation. I appreciated this inside information; nevertheless I experienced great anxiety in not knowing what would happen.

The next day I discussed what I knew with two other colleagues who were part of the leadership team making the decision along with the president. Both were good friends and I knew that they would fill me in on my potential fate. For the next two

weeks, my name was on the list, off the list, and back on the list. It almost seemed to change daily as the administrative team bantered and bartered for which positions to eliminate until it came their final meeting and decision on January 3, 2001. After their meeting, I talked to my two colleagues and they told me that the decisions had been finalized and I would be formally told my fate in a meeting the next morning.

Growing up as an evangelical Christian was not always easy. I remember my junior high years as being very difficult. While we went to church most every Sunday, my family seemed to stray from our commitment. We lived our lives during the week never allowing our faith to affect how we lived. Part of the problem for our family was that our church was about a half an hour away. This made it difficult to get involved. However, this was no excuse for our lack of commitment.

It wasn't until we moved to a new house and town that my family was able to find a church that was about five minutes away. This was a good thing. My family became very involved in this church—going every time the door was open. I enjoyed it because I was able to connect with the youth group. My close friends were those I found at the church. We did it all together—all-nighters, bowling parties, and youth group meetings. This was my social connection. This also became the place and the context for where my faith would develop.

During my junior year of high school, on a winter retreat, I believe that God was calling me to ministry. Don't ask me how I knew this, but I just felt convicted that God wanted me to use my life for service to Him. At the time, I thought this meant doing

what my grandfather did—pastor a church. I did not realize that this “calling” could be broader than this.

Because of this conviction, my college focus shifted from studying business at a local university to pursuing a Christian education at a Christian college a few hours away. It was the only Christian college I really knew. My church youth group had gone over to visit on a couple of occasions and my best friend, who was a year older than me, had decided to go to college there as well. It seemed like a good choice for me at the time.

It was very difficult to sleep that night. I wrestled with feelings of anger, disappointment, and depression. What had I done, or not done, to get my name on the list for position elimination? Was it merely a matter of my salary level and the need to eliminate significant dollars that my position was chosen? What would I do?

This is not something I planned for, dreamed of, or even considered. I even began to question my faith in God. God, why are you doing this to me? This isn't the way I'm supposed to leave this place? How will I care for my family and pay my bills? And God, what type of job will I get now?

The questions were difficult. Just the day before, a friend had given me a copy of the book, *The Prayer of Jabez*, to read. He told me that this book would change my life if I prayed the same prayer that Jabez prayed. I read the short book that night—the night before I was told that my position would be eliminated.

I had never heard of Jabez before, yet I had read the Bible through a couple of times and had studied it quite extensively in seminary. Jabez was just a “blip” in the

Bible—barely mentioned in the middle of a genealogy. It was amazingly simple and encompassed two short verses. These verses focused on the prayer that he prayed.

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I gave birth to him in pain." Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request. (I Chronicles 4:9-10, The Bible, New International Version)

God granted his request. If God could grant Jabez his request by blessing him and enlarging his territory, He could do the same for me. That is, if I had the same type of faith that Jabez had then God would lead me the next step of the way. I began to pray that prayer that night, knowing that the next day would be the beginning of a journey—a journey of faith.

I woke up early on the morning of January 4, 2001. I dressed in my usual professional attire with a nice dark blue suit. That morning I had scheduled a meeting with a close friend at a coffee shop near the university. He was the youth pastor at a large church in the area and had been a mentor to me for several years in my faith as it related to ministry and leadership. Steve had just recently left the university to pursue this church ministry opportunity.

I admired his passion for God and ministry. He was one who always wanted to do what was right and to reach out to other people. Steve was a dreamer and I worked well with him as the implementer. That morning, I told Steve what was about to happen when I got into the office. He encouraged me, prayed with me, and even dreamed about

working together at his church (he was trying to create a job for me). He also challenged me that God was in control and that my faith in Him would be strengthened as I depended upon Him for the upcoming journey.

I really enjoyed going to a Christian college. Having attended public schools all of my life, I did not know what it meant to experience a Christian education. I knew that I would be with other students and faculty who held the same Christian faith. However, I did not know much about what it meant to integrate a Christian worldview in my classes. It was more than just beginning class with prayer or studying the Bible in class; the Christian college experience was the commitment of the professor to share a biblical perspective and to integrate faith with the content area that she or he had mastered.

This is where I really began to think about my faith and leadership and where I first began to develop as a leader. At the end of my freshman year I decided to run for the position of vice president for the next year. I vaguely remember using some gimmicky rhyme in my campaign speech—Vote for Rick . . . I won't lay around like a brick because I'm quick to do the trick—or something like that. I guess it must have worked since I was elected by my classmates. Certainly, my understanding of leadership at that time was based on election to a formal position. However, through this opportunity I was able to begin to learn about leadership—that it was much more about the practice rather than position.

During my junior and senior years I was elected as the student body president. Leadership became an act of service to my peers. At this stage in my faith and leadership development, my leadership practice focused on working to improve the college through

the involvement of my classmates. We chose the theme of “Catch the Action” to rally the student body. One of the highlights of this leadership experience was leading the students to plan a children’s carnival as an outreach into the community. We called this event “Spring Splash” since it was held in April. The students rallied around this initiative and, as an act of service, provided a great opportunity for children to enjoy fun and games on a Saturday afternoon.

My leadership perspective grew to focus on service. As an expression of my faith, I believed that Jesus Christ came to serve, rather than to be served. He served the needs of those around Him. For me, I believed that my faith was integrally linked to leadership through this service. Certainly, I could say that leadership includes service—service to the needs of an organization or group of people. However, this service is deeper than this—it is the attempt to follow the leadership model of Jesus Christ.

At 9:30 a.m. on Thursday morning I met with the Executive Vice President, the Director of Human Resources and the Executive Director of Advancement (my direct supervisor). This was one of the most difficult meetings I had ever anticipated. I knew what I would be told in the meeting; however the finality of it all raised my anxiety level to new heights.

The three of them met with me but my direct supervisor did the talking. He seemed nervous and anxious himself. I am sure that this was very difficult for him to go through, especially since his department was the hardest hit with four position eliminations. I was the third one that they met with that morning.

He began by saying that he had a printed letter for me to read. Apparently, because of the nature of the position eliminations, he needed to follow a prescribed procedure that was being carried out on “Black Thursday,” (at least that is what I called it) throughout the university.

The letter was written from the President of the University and it said as follows: “This letter is to inform you that effective today, Thursday, January 4, 2001, your position has been eliminated at the University. Because of the need to ‘right-size’ the university, I have had to take these necessary measures. Thank you for your service to the university.”

According to procedure, he then asked me for my cell phone, university credit card, and office keys. He informed me that I would have until 5:00 p.m. the next day to move out of my office.

The finality of it all hit me. I cried. The emotions were overwhelming. The difficulty for me was the letter. It seemed so cold. Here were three men meeting with me to communicate the bad news. What frustrated me the most was when I asked who made this decision? The executive vice president responded that the president had been the one to make the final decision.

Where was the president? Why wasn’t he the one to tell me the decision he had made instead of sending his messengers to read a letter? How could a person committed to living the Christian faith lead in such a way? Why wasn’t he willing to meet with me to express his sorrow over the decision he had to make? I felt as if he was hiding in his office.

The incongruence of his faith and leadership practice hit me. I wrestled with the idea of how faith should influence his leadership practice during this situation. It seemed inconsistent. The President described himself as a man committed to his Christian faith and yet the way he practiced his leadership in this situation seemed disconnected with this belief. Where was the compassion of his faith in this leadership moment? Where was the love that a Christian leader should display to his employees? Where was the authenticity of his struggle to be responsible for both the organization and the people? If it was there, I certainly did not see it at the time. I struggled with seeing how his Christian faith influenced his leadership. From my perspective, his faith seemed disconnected from his leadership practice.

I had never been on such an extensive job search until this time since I had never been unemployed—that is such a difficult word to say. And yet, this was a journey of a lifetime. The University gave me a nice severance package paying me for the next 16 weeks while I searched for employment. Because of my service to the university, I received the most weeks of severance as compared to the others who lost their job.

My job search included looking for positions of leadership in higher education, secondary education, church ministry, and para-church ministry. I was wide open to the opportunities and looked at many job possibilities.

The one that caught my attention was a leadership position as Headmaster of a large Christian school in the South. I went through the in-depth interview process and was offered the position. From that point forward, I would now be in the position where

others would closely watch how my faith would influence my leadership practice in greater ways than I had ever experienced before.

After leaving my alma mater and my friends, I packed up the family and moved over 1,500 miles away. I soon began the leadership role as headmaster of a private, Church-related K-12 school. With almost 900 students and over 100 employees, the challenges and opportunities for leadership were great.

One of the greatest challenges I faced came in the summer of 2002. Because I had proposed and the board passed a 15% tuition increase for the 2002-03 school year, we saw our retention rate slide significantly. This created a loss of students and therefore, a loss of revenue. In order to make the budget balance, I was forced to eliminate several positions.

Immediately I knew that the influence of my faith on my leadership practice would be tested. Since I had gone through my own position elimination, I now had the opportunity to experience it from the other side—from the perspective of the one making the decisions for the eliminations.

While I struggled through the decisions of who would lose their position, I was committed to allow my faith in God guide my leadership responsibility. First, I committed the decisions to prayer asking God to give me wisdom in my search. While God never sent me a telegram with his explicit direction, I believed that I was following Him through the decisions I made. I sought the counsel of others in these decisions. My faith was rooted in the reality that God sovereignly directs His people. While God was

directing me, He was also working in the lives of those individuals whose positions I eliminated to lead them to another opportunity.

Secondly, it was very important for me to communicate my decision to those it would impact. Even though this was difficult to communicate, I believed that the way God had worked in my own life could be used as an encouragement to them. I was able to communicate my love for them, the difficulty of this decision, and the reality that God was in control of their life as a person committed to their faith.

My faith and leadership was certainly stretched during this challenge and crisis event. I never thought that I would go through this myself let alone from both sides of the equation. However, the preparation had begun just a year earlier when I lost my position. Having been on this side, I knew better how to handle this situation as a leader. While I would not say that I handled this situation flawlessly, my faith and own personal experience profoundly influenced my leadership practice.

The Problem with Faith and Leadership

And now, my quest continues in my leadership journey—to understand how faith influences leadership practice, not only in my own life but in the lives of those around me. I recognized the tension and inherent disconnection between faith and leadership practice. This provided the personal catalyst to invest my time and energy into a study that would be of significance to me as well as to other leaders.

During my four years at a Christian college, I gained valuable education through the influence of the faith throughout all of my subject areas. Before I attended college, I assumed that this influence would include prayer at the beginning of class and courses

taught by Christian faculty. However, the influence of faith was much broader than this early conception.

While I certainly had many courses in biblical and theological studies, this college had a core curriculum in the liberal arts. These core classes included the integration of faith with each discipline. For the first time in my educational experience I learned what it meant to integrate faith with learning. As a student this integration meant that my Christian faith helped to shape my understanding of the world and the knowledge I gained in the classroom. I realized that my faith was relevant and integral to studies in science, math, history, English, as well as other areas. This integration of faith and learning was certainly dependent upon the teaching of the faculty—faculty who were committed to their faith, the mission of the college, and knowledge of their respective discipline.

I often wondered, though, what this integration of faith and learning looked like in other contexts. For instance, at this Christian college they claimed to integrate faith with all of life. This certainly included the administrative leadership of college. Little did I know at that time, while as a college student, I would graduate and then work as an administrative leader in the same college. As a leader, I was certainly expected to integrate my faith with my work and my leadership.

However, my experiences in this setting of a Christian university did not equate to a clear understanding of this integration and influence. This integration was often assumed and rarely discussed. I looked to others to model this integration in their own leadership practice. I saw it modeled in many different ways and at different levels of

intensity. In some cases, the influence was obvious. In others, it seemed to be non-existent.

I wrestled with questions about this influence. How should my faith affect my leadership practice? What does this influence actually look like in other leaders and in my own practice? Do the espoused values of faith integration at a Christian college work itself out in actual leadership practice? How is the leadership practice of Christian leaders influenced by their faith? It is from this personal backdrop that I seek to create a portrait of the influence of faith on leadership practice.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of faith on the leadership practice of Christian college leaders. Through the examination of three Christian college presidents, this study will create a portrait of their leadership influenced by faith. The question that will guide my research is this: *In what ways does Christian faith influence the leadership practice of selected Presidents in Christian higher education?* In addition, I will seek to answer the following sub-questions:

- How does Christian faith influence the five exemplary leadership practices as described by Kouzes and Posner (2003) in *The Leadership Challenge*?
- What themes emerge that depict leadership practice influenced by Christian faith for the Christian college president?

The underlying assumption to this study is that leadership practice influenced by Christian faith can be described and that it can be differentiated in some way from that which is written about in the leadership literature.

In order to understand the educational significance of this proposed study it is important to realize that many colleges and universities in the United States were founded by a church (Noll, 1984). Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale are all examples of private colleges that were founded by a church (Ringenberg, 1984). Although these colleges have separated from their founding church relationship (Marsden, 1994), many colleges today are related to a church and are committed to the integration of faith and learning.

The historic purpose of the church-related college was to integrate faith and learning (De Jong, 1990). Noll says, "Commitment to a Christian worldview is the academic *raison d'être* of the evangelical colleges" (1984, p. 92). Essentially, this Christian worldview is the effective integration of faith and learning. Therefore, this was and still is the chief mission of the Church-related and Christian college.

Just as faculty are expected to integrate faith with their discipline in the classroom, administrative leaders are expected to do the same. The President, as the chief executive officer, must preserve and protect this mission. He or she also has a responsibility to provide leadership influenced by faith.

Kingsley says that "this moral imperative is part of the leadership vision in the church-related college, and again the primacy of that vision becomes evident. It shapes all acts of leadership, all plans and strategies, all hiring and firing, all time management, all budgeting, all the assorted elements of 'administrivia' that gulp our days and ways" (1992, p. 70). He further states, "This vision is similar to that in any good college in its emphasis on quality but distinctive in its moral affirmation and its ability to be values-driven rather than values-neutral" (p. 70).

Today it is as important as it has ever been for presidents of Christian colleges and universities to understand this mission. “The president must articulate this mission to all constituencies of the university and to the general public. The president is in the pivotal position internally and externally with regard to the mission of the college. This is one of the most important tasks of the president to which the trustees must hold him accountable” (De Jong, 1990 p. 92). Not only must the president understand and articulate this mission, she or he must understand the integration of faith with leadership practice since this is tightly aligned to the core of the college.

Therefore, it is essential to know how presidents understand the influence of faith on leadership. While there has been literature written to describe this integration of faith and learning in the classroom, no research has been conducted to examine how presidents, or other leaders, of Christian universities display this influence. This research will help to build a beginning framework for understanding the influence of faith on the practice of leadership.

CHAPTER TWO

LEADERSHIP, FAITH, AND THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Introduction

Bolman and Deal tell a story about Steve, a leader in search of something more in his career, and Maria, his mentor and spiritual advisor. Through this contemporary parable, they stress that the “heart of leadership is in the hearts of leaders” (Bolman & Deal, 2001). It is where the spirit and the soul connect. This connection is what they describe as where leaders reach deep within to know themselves and the faith in which they believe. Furthermore, they suggest that soul, spirit, and faith belong at the heart, or the very core, of leadership. While not tied to any one faith or religious tradition, Bolman and Deal suggest that the message of their book is simple: “Your life journey is a continuing opportunity to deepen your faith, develop your gifts, and enhance your contribution to what the world becomes” (p. 236).

For the spiritual leader, the actual intersection of one’s beliefs about leadership and faith is at the individual’s core. From this core, what results is the outflow into the journey of experience and the actual practice of leadership. As one practices leadership, the influence of faith takes place.

In order to explore this concept and attempt to better understand the influence of faith on the leadership practice of selected presidents in Christian higher education, it is important to consider the leadership literature. While there are volumes of writing on the subject of leadership both from a practitioner or research-based perspective, it is important to discuss the literature that is relevant to this study. In all, my goal as the

researcher is to lend additional insight and understanding into this emerging conceptual understanding of the practice of “spiritual” or faith-based leadership.

The Popularity of Leadership

The topic of leadership has become very popular in recent years. Leaders of business, education, and non-profit organizations want to discover any way that they can improve—taking initiative, casting vision, motivating employees, creating change, empowering others. These are just some of the topics of interest in the leadership literature.

A quick glance in any major bookstore will reveal numerous books, most of which were printed in the past year, concerning leadership in the for-profit and not-for-profit world. From the political leader, Rudolph Giuliani, capitalizing on his presence in the media after 9/11 by writing a book simply called *Leadership* (2002), to the third edition of Kouzes and Posner’s book, *The Leadership Challenge* (2003), books and resources on leadership abound. “Leaders appear and recede, rise and fall. At different moments, we are enthralled or intimidated by, even contemptuous of, particular leaders, but we remain hooked on the idea of leadership” (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 44).

Why are we so “hooked” on leadership? Why is leadership such an intriguing topic? It seems that organizations and individuals are “hungry” to know the latest leadership methods, practices, and “secrets.” They believe that this will help them gain an advantage personally and/or professionally in their sphere of influence. The literature is based on the idea that I can learn from the success of someone else and this can be

directly applied to my own experience. We have become enamored with leadership and what it means to be successful.

Bennis and Nanus (1985), well-respected writers in this field, believe that “leadership is the pivotal force behind successful organizations” (p. 2). In other words, successful organizations require successful leaders. Organizations get from “A” to “Z” because leaders chart the course and steer the ship. As Graham (1991) states, “the ideal leader is one who knows where to go, how to get there, and can motivate others to make the trip” (p. 105). However, we often focus on the study of “the” leader making it all about the position and its power. We look to presidents and CEOs as the one who make things happen and attempt to do it “Jack Welch’s way” while always looking to the bottom line of profitability to measure the organization’s success.

The leadership literature is largely represented by that which is practitioner-oriented as compared to that which is research-based, although this has grown significantly in the last few decades. However, even with the volumes of writing, Bolman and Deal (2003) suggest that “though the call for leadership is universal, there is much less clarity about what the term means” (p. 92). Rost quotes Stogdill, a “guru” of leadership writing, “the endless accumulation of empirical data has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership” (1993 p. vii). Rost further accentuates this point in his own writing:

On the surface, this view of the leadership literature—that it is in disarray—is perfectly accurate. The words that scholars have used to define leadership are contradictory. The models that leadership scholars have developed are discrepant. The emphasis on periphery and content, as opposed to the essential nature of leadership, does make for highly personalistic and undisciplined views of leadership that do not cross over to other persons and disciplines. The confusion of leadership with management and the equation of leaders with leadership do cause serious conceptual problems that are hard to reconcile in the real world.

And finally, the exploitation of the concept of leadership in terms of symbolic mythmaking (for instance, as the savior of organizations, communities, and societies that have somehow lost 'it') and in terms of the almost sexual appeal that has been attached to the word by some advertisers, trainers, program developers, and authors has clearly indicated that the concept has lost its moorings, if not its essential character. (Rost, 1993, p. 92)

It is with this backdrop that we proceed to gain a current understanding of leadership as an important component to this research project.

Current Understanding of Leadership

Leadership has been difficult to define in a way that transcends into a universal conceptualization. The definitions that have resulted have focused in several different areas depending on the vantage point that one is examining the subject. In their comprehensive literature review, Yukl and Van Fleet state that "leadership has been defined in terms of individual traits, leader behavior, interaction patterns, role relationships, follower perceptions, influence over followers, influence on task goals, and influence on organizational culture" (1990, p. 148). This quagmire has clouded and compounded our understanding.

The most common theme in the definitions on leadership focuses on the process of influence and is usually geared to the influence that a leader has on some group of people. Yukl and Van Fleet define leadership as "a process that includes influencing the task objectives and strategies of a group or organization, influencing people in the organization to implement the strategies and achieve the objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of the organization" (1990, p. 149). Furthermore, Northouse echoes this definition by saying that "leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common

goal” (Northouse, 2001, p. 3). Leadership is about an individual or a group moving another individual or group toward a desired result.

From this, it can be assumed that the influence of followers in an organization is specifically linked to leadership. This is similar to Gardner’s concept that leadership is a process of persuasion or example by which an individual motivates a group to pursue objectives held by the leader (Gardner, 1990). Bolman and Deal further add the concept of “mutual” influence to the definition. This influence goes both ways—from the leader to the follower and back to the leader. It is two-directional between a leader and a follower. Because of this, leadership is seen as being cooperative in an effort to serve the purposes of both the leader and the follower for the sake of the organization.

However, even with this basic concept, Rost identifies some problems to understanding leadership. The first problem is based on the notion that authors have focused on the “peripheral elements and content rather than with the essential nature of leadership as relationship” (1993, p. 5). This relationship of a leader to a follower or group of followers is certainly related to influence and will be discussed later. In fact, Rost and others will go on to suggest that leadership is about this relationship. Secondly, Rost says that no one has been able to define leadership so that they can describe it when it is happening. Finally, he states that no one has been able to develop a school of leadership that integrates our understanding of research from both research and practitioner literature. Although, in recent years, this school of leadership literature has been growing and developing.

One attempt to develop schools of leadership literature has been the recent writings on transactional and transformational leadership. This topic has been

represented frequently and thoroughly in recent literature (B. B. Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bycio, Hacketter, & Allen, 1995; Den Hartog, Van Muijen, & Koopman, 1997; Edwin P. Hollander, 1992; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Yammarino, Spangler, & Bass, 1993; G. Yukl & Van Fleet, 1990; G. A. Yukl, 1989). “According to this new genre of leadership theory, such leaders transform the needs, values, preferences, and aspirations of followers from self-interests to collective interests” (House & Shamir, 1993, p. 82).

Transformational leadership, as a current theory of leadership, is also discussed alongside of and contrasted with transactional leadership. In order to understand the leadership literature, these topics will be discussed in the following sections.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is significantly different from transformational leadership and is presented to provide the necessary contrast as conceptualized initially by Burns. Burns (1978), while writing about the transformational political leader, distinguished this concept of leadership from the transactional leader. He was the first to make this distinction (see also Yammarino et al., 1993). Burns argued that transactional leadership occurs “when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things” (p. 19). This leadership type is about the “transaction” that takes place between two individuals or groups. It is more about making things work in an organization rather than taking the organization to a heightened or greater level. Burns explains the difference in transformational leadership “occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers

raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 20). It is in these higher levels of motivation that transformation takes place.

Bass (1985) elaborates on the idea of transactional leadership by suggesting that Burns’ “transactional political leader motivated followers by exchanging with them rewards for services rendered” (p. 11). Simply stated, if a follower does “x” then he or she will be rewarded “y.” Or, perhaps a more crass way to say it is this: “If you do this for me (or the organization), then I will do this for you.” Interestingly enough, this exchange is very important in organizations. Every organization, including colleges and universities, needs people to do what is expected in their job and to perform their duties. It’s the reason why jobs and positions exist—to fulfill tasks that are essential to the operations of an organization.

Bass goes on to extend Burns’ definition to supervisor-subordinate relations in that the transactional leader places value on a reward system for work performance. In other words, this leader recognizes the needs of the subordinates by providing rewards for their effort. This is the “transactional” exchange that the leader gives for the reward of the subordinate’s performance. “The transactional leader pursues a cost-benefit, economic exchange to meet subordinates’ current material and psychic needs in return for ‘contracted’ services rendered by the subordinate” (p. 14). Conger and Kanungo (1988) suggest that this relationship is indefinite, lasting only as long as both parties are satisfied from this exchange.

The concept of transactional leadership is further described by Bass and Avolio (1993). They suggest two factors for transactional leadership: “contingent-reward” and “management-by-exception.” The contingent-reward “involves a positively reinforcing

interaction between leader and follower that emphasizes an exchange” (B. B. Bass & Avolio, 1993, p. 51). In other words, the follower receives a “reward,” typically pay and promotion that is contingent upon the employee’s performance. Management-by-exception is used by the leader to make a correction “when things go wrong” or are against the direction of the supervisor (p. 52). At this time, a leader will step in, take over, and make things right through corrective action.

Transactional leadership is often viewed by some as a less significant leadership style. One of the main reasons for this perception is that this type of leadership is seen as less glamorous than transformational leadership. The transactional leader will keep the organization operational by managing objectives while the transformational leader will often take the spotlight in an organization by pushing an agenda and vision for the organization to move to the next level as it is often defined. After all, a transformational leader is the one who is able to “transform” the organization by influencing and motivating followers to new levels of performance. Let’s now examine the concept of transformational leadership.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is often discussed in contrast to transactional leadership. The transactional leader attempts to work within the organizational culture to get things accomplished whereas the transformational leader works to change and transform the culture. “While the transactional leader motivates subordinates to perform as expected, the transformational leader typically inspires followers to do more than originally expected” (Den Hartog et al., 1997, p. 20). It is the performance level from the

individual within the organization that makes the difference. Doing more than expected enables the organization to move forward toward greater possibilities. And when this occurs, Bass argues that “the transformational leader changes the social warp and woof of reality” (B. M. Bass, 1985, p. 24).

As mentioned earlier, Burns was the first to develop the concept of transformational leadership (1978) from descriptive research on political leaders. The key issue for Burns in his description of the transformational leader is motivation—the motivation of followers to reach higher levels of performance. This is supported by Bennis and Nanus (1985) in their work when they describe this new leader as an agent of change who commits others to action. Yammarino, Spangler and Bass (1993), argue that these leaders “attempt to raise the needs of followers and promote dramatic changes of individuals, groups, and organizations” (Yammarino et al., 1993, p. 82). These dramatic changes come as a result of individuals working within an organization to bring it to greater levels of growth and prosperity. Bass (1985) describes Burns’ transformational leader as one who “tends to go further, seeking to arouse and satisfy higher needs, to engage the full person of the follower” (p. 14). For Bass, this type of leadership can make significant changes or transformations in an organization by motivating personnel to do more than originally expected.

We certainly hear a lot about transformational leaders and the need to transform organizations today. In some ways, this topic has become the “buzz” of the leadership literature. Vision appears to be a significant attribute of the transformational leader. Vision portrays a view of the future that is better than what exists today and it inspires those within the organization to action (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Vision is always

forward-looking and seeks to move an individual, group or organization to a better state. It is the description of tomorrow that ignites the excitement to move people from the past-based paradigm from which they are operating. This is the compelling reason for its essential link to the transformational leader as he or she envisions the future.

This discussion is relevant for our understanding of leadership in the context of higher education. Birnbaum (1992) conducted a significant study of 32 presidents in the late 1980s. During this research, Birnbaum focused on the transformational and transactional leadership theories as it was applied to presidential leadership. He concluded that leaders, such as the presidents of colleges he studied, can make a difference. However, this difference occurs only under certain conditions and is not applicable to other campuses or in other times. Birnbaum believes that the transformational leader in the presidency often leads to disruption and failure rather than the desired change at the institution.

However, Fisher and Koch (2004) argue that Birnbaum's conclusions are often inconsistent with what is found in the research. The main criticism that they levy against Birnbaum is that "interviews and observers may tend to hear and see what they expect (or want) to hear and see" (p. 21). Furthermore, they suggest that specific hypotheses need to be tested and the study should be replicable and have a scientific, empirical base. While this argument is significant, qualitative research does have a place in giving a "thick" description to specific cases of presidential leaders that can provide the basis for hypotheses to be derived for further quantitative research.

Through their research on college presidents, they found that there is significant overlap between the effective president and entrepreneurial presidents. While not exactly

the same, presidents who act entrepreneurial utilize transformational leadership in their practice. They describe entrepreneurial presidents as being “prudent risk takers who seldom, if ever, make truly important decisions without analysis and forethought” (p. 33). It is certainly a calculated and well-thought out risk. To the personnel, the risk may seem to be prompt and decisive. However, to the entrepreneurial president, the risk is well thought out and necessary to lead the transformation of an institution.

This current understanding of the entrepreneurial, transformational, or transactional leader is foundational to our discussion on the emerging focus on relationship-centered leadership. For any leader, relationships become critical to achieving the vision.

Relationship-Centered Leadership

In the decade of the 1990s, several practitioners and scholars began to write about a new paradigm of leadership (Block, 1993; Bogue, 1994; Bolman & Deal, 1997; DePree, 1989, 1992, 1997; Gardner, 1990; Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1991, 1998; Heifetz, 1994; E. P. Hollander, 1993; Edwin P. Hollander & Offermann, 1990; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 1994). The writing in the literature has identified the essence of leadership at all levels as a relationship with the people of the organization and it is focused on the actual practice of leadership as it relates to people within the organization.

Kouzes and Posner (2003) suggest that “leadership is not about position or title. It’s about caring, about relationships, and about what you do” (p. 1). In the case of the transactional or transformational leader, the definition often centers around the person involved. Bolman and Deal support this perspective by saying that “the heroic image of

leadership conveys the notion that leadership is largely a one-way process: leaders lead and followers follow. Such a view blinds us to the reality that leadership fundamentally involves a relationship between leaders and their constituents” (Bolman & Deal). This relationship is critical to leadership since it can be defined by what occurs between the one who aspires to lead and those who choose to follow.

Through his analysis of leadership writing and studies throughout the 1900s, Rost (1993) suggests that the 21st century will bring a leadership shift from an industrial paradigm to a post-industrial paradigm . The industrial paradigm asserts that leadership concerns what “great individuals do” through a position and its respective power. However, the post-industrial paradigm suggests that leadership is a relationship existing between leaders and collaborators. Rost chooses to use the word “collaborator” instead of follower to describe the activeness to the relationship. The emphasis is on this relationship that exhibits a sharing of purpose and influence. The key difference between these paradigms is that there is a shift from the individual in the industrial paradigm to an emphasis on the relationship between individuals in the post-industrial paradigm.

This new paradigm of leadership is similar to the concept that Robert Greenleaf coined in the 1970s of “servant leadership” (Greenleaf, 1977, 1991). Whereas Rost has identified this as “collaborative leadership,” Greenleaf chose the imagery of a servant in his conceptualization of leadership. Until recently, little attention has been given to this concept. Greenleaf’s writings were rooted in his experience in the corporate world and often depicted his reflective thoughts of a leadership ideal and what works best in organizations. The servant leader seeks to serve the needs of the organization and the

people first rather than serving himself or herself. In some regard, the concept of servant leadership is linked to the idea of symbolic leadership.

Symbolic Leadership

Through this understanding of the leadership literature, higher education is experiencing change and transformation in the 21st century and, as a result, there is a call for a new form of leadership. Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989) write that there is the perception of a leadership crisis in higher education that calls for a better, stronger, visionary, and bolder leader. Because of this, much of the focus on leadership has been on the style and personality of the leader. Thus, trait theories have dominated the discussion (Trow, 1994) and much attention has been given to transformational leadership that was developed by Burns (Burns, 1978) and later extended by Bass (1985; B. M. Bass; B. M. Bass).

Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum suggest that we are experiencing a shift in our understanding of leadership in higher education from a rational perspective toward a more cultural and symbolic perspective. This is more of a focus on what the leader actually does than the position. They see this as being highly compatible with higher education. The symbolic leader helps to cast the vision and provide meaning to events in the organization by using symbolic action and rhetoric to enact their leadership. It's more of the stories and the rituals that are performed that make the difference in the organization.

Bolman and Deal discuss the symbolic leader in their work on Reframing Organizations (1997). It is one of their organizational frames from which leaders lead

and see a particular problem or dilemma. They suggest that a symbolic leader uses symbols to capture attention, tell stories, frame experience, and discover and communicate a vision. They equate this symbolic frame with the transformational leader since they are visionary leaders and they suggest that visionary leadership is symbolic.

In some ways, this symbolic shift is similar to the developing understanding of leadership that is collaborative, person-centered, servant-focused, and transformational. The essence of the connection lies in the relationship that exists between the leader and follower—a relationship that is built on the symbolism used in rhetoric and action.

As a part of this symbolic and collaborative shift, there is an emphasis on teams and teamwork in higher education. In another work by two of these authors, Bensimon and Neumann (1993) call for a commitment to teams in higher education as an alternative to individual-centered leadership. This corresponds to the paradigm shift that Rost has discussed in his work and the emphasis that Plas (1996) gives in his writings on “person-centered” leadership. Teams focus on the relationship of its members working together through mutual influence to accomplish a shared vision and, thus, shared responsibility. It is this type of leadership that may very well be needed for the challenges of change and transformation in higher education during the beginning of this new century.

“Spiritual” Leadership

Closely related to this discussion is the emerging focus on spiritual leadership. The spiritual leader, as the example given from Bolman and Deal’s writing in the introduction, is paramount to the discussion at hand, especially as it relates to the study to

identify the ways in which the faith of Christian college presidents influences their leadership practice.

In Bolman and Deal's modern day parable, they lead us to the concept of a spiritual leader through which he or she offers four gifts to the organization—authorship, love, power, and significance (Bolman & Deal, 2001). The gift of authorship empowers the employee to think creatively and innovatively while not being told exactly what to do in the organization. Love is the gift in which the leader expresses care and concern for others. For the gift of power, the spiritual leader gives away the power to empower others. Finally, through the gift of significance, the leader places the most importance on the mission of the organization rather than on the bottom-line. This spiritual leader is one who has an inner connection with who he or she is and the beliefs that are at the core. Then, from within, this passion of belief influences every aspect of the leader's practice in the organization.

In a similar tone, Moxley writes about spiritual leadership in his work (2000). The leader uncovers the spirit as something "other" than who they normally are in life. It is where the leader connects with what is at the core as well as the connection that takes place with others. While not connected to any one particular faith or religious movement, it is more about the intersection with another dimension in the leader's life. However, this view of spiritual leadership lacks any type of an understanding of a transcendent sense of spirit.

For the Christian, this concept of spiritual leader is deeply integrated with a belief in God. To be a spiritual leader is to emulate the example of Jesus Christ in the Bible. For example, Wilkes wrote a book entitled *Jesus on Leadership* (1998). In it, he looks at

the leadership practice of Jesus and provides this model for the Christian, or spiritual, leader to follow. Other approaches discussing this concept use examples from leaders in the Bible to discuss how the Christian leader should lead.

A Christian classic on the discussion of spiritual leadership is Sander's work (1967). In his book he illustrates spiritual leadership principles from the lives of several important Biblical leaders including Moses, Nehemiah, Paul and David. The essence of his description of spiritual leadership is rooted in a relationship with God. He uses the examples of these leaders to show how they led according to God's will.

Blackaby suggests that spiritual leadership is "moving people to God's agenda" (2001, p. 20). In his book he suggests that there are several things that the spiritual leader does. First, the spiritual leader is tasked with moving people to where God wants them to be. It is about God's will, rather than the will of the leader. Secondly, he suggests that the spiritual leader depends upon the Holy Spirit. For the Christian, he believes that God's Spirit provides guidance, direction, and conviction as one seeks to live. Leaders depend upon the Spirit for direction in their leadership practice. Third, spiritual leaders are accountable to God. While they certainly have a human boss, their ultimate boss is God. Fourth, spiritual leaders influence people toward God. Finally, spiritual leaders work from a higher agenda—God's agenda—rather than their own.

Beckett shares his personal legacy in his journey of faith. In his observations, he has seen that those who have been effective leaders have been those who have developed a "sturdy faith" (2002, p. 41). This sturdy faith is rooted in understanding who God is and who we are. A faith in God then seeks to motivate one to follow God's will and

direction in this life. For him, “faith becomes an active ingredient of the capacity to lead” (p. 52).

There is certainly a wide range of understanding for this emerging concept of spiritual leadership. To the evangelical Christian it means one thing and to another person it may mean something else. The essence, however, is that this leadership practice is tied inextricably with one’s belief system. It pushes down to the core of one’s soul and works itself back out through its influence in life and leadership practice. Certainly these approaches are helpful to attempt to understand this emerging concept. However, they are not based upon a research-based approach. It is critical to gain this understanding, especially as it relates to leadership practice in the Christian College.

The Christian College and Faith

Our discussion of the leadership literature, specifically that of spiritual leadership, goes hand-in-hand with what some authors have been writing on Christian leadership. While the literature is certainly not as broad and lacks a research base, several practitioners have written books as an attempt to describe leadership influenced by faith.

Julian (2001) compiles a series of articles on various aspects of leadership from a Christian perspective in his book, *God is my CEO*. Graves and Addington (2002) provide a similar work in their book, *Life@Work on Leadership: Enduring Insights for Men and Women of Faith*. Briner and Pritchard (1998) provide lessons on leadership from the leadership practice of Jesus Christ (1998). Most of the work has been practitioner oriented, often using biblical examples of men and women and how they provided leadership in the context of their faith commitment in God. I believe the essential issue

that a person of faith has to wrestle with is the integration of his or her beliefs with leadership practice.

An Evangelical Christian Faith

Broadly defined, faith represents the value and belief systems of an individual. People can have faith in anything or anyone. Typically, this faith when related to spirituality is focused on some kind of a higher power or Supreme Being. Throughout our world, people have faith whether it is in Allah, Buddha, Muhammed, or Jesus Christ. However, the faith we are discussing here is the Christian belief system in the God of the Bible. It is a specific faith that centers one's worldview on the reality of God's existence and His involvement in the lives of those who choose to follow His son, Jesus Christ. It is rooted in the belief that the Bible is God's word and gives direction for how those who believe in Him should live out their lives.

Elwell, in his *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, defines faith this way: "The term regularly used to denote the many-sided religious relationship into which the gospel calls men and women—that of trust in God through Christ" (Elwell, 1984, p.). He further suggests that understanding the biblical idea of faith necessitates three things: (1) Faith in God involves right belief about God; (2) Faith rests on divine testimony; and (3) Faith is a supernatural divine gift.

These "right beliefs" about God, according to the Evangelical Christian tradition, include the belief in one eternal God who created everything that exists. Through this creation, He chose to create all of humanity. This humanity was created in His image as a finite replica of the infinite God. The right relationship with the God of the universe for

humanity involves obedience. Through obedience, the finite creation mirrors the infinite God.

However, because the first man and woman of his creation chose to disobey God, they were separated from a right relationship with Him. Thus, the Bible is the narrative story of God pursuing a restored relationship with His creation. By sending his son, Jesus Christ, to live in his full humanity and deity, He provided a way to restore this relationship. Christ's sinless life, ultimate sacrifice on the cross, and triumph over death in the resurrection, provides an opportunity for all to repent and believe in Him. Through Jesus Christ and belief in him and his work, a right relationship is restored to the individual. The individual then, seeks to live in a right relationship with God by faith and obedience.

For the evangelical Christian, she or he seeks to follow the principles and commands of the Bible. The Bible becomes the spiritual grid through which all of life is sifted. It is the lens through which all of life is viewed. Faith, then, is the belief system in the truth of the Scripture presenting God and His son, Jesus Christ. It is a faith that is to be integrated with all of life.

Christian Higher Education and Presidents

Historically, colleges and universities were traditionally founded by churches, as has already been discussed briefly. In the early 1600s the colonial colleges were founded which included Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, Dartmouth and Princeton. DeJong suggests that "a religious impulse lay behind the founding of most of the colonial colleges; even when the college was not directly affiliated with a denomination, the

intentions of the founders was to enrich the moral and spiritual growth of the students along with their intellectual and cultural growth” (De Jong, 1990, p. 42).

Operated as Christian colleges and universities, Noll says that “all sought to answer the Protestant need for a literate laity and a learned clergy and the democratic need for informed citizens” (Noll, 1984, p. 5). Marsden (1994), in his monumental work, traces the disconnection of the American university from the church—from “Protestant establishment to established non-belief.” Therefore, there is no need to retrace his steps in this discussion. Poe suggests, however, that there has been so much attention on this area that we have neglected to focus our attention on why institutions remain Christian (1999).

It is interesting for the sake of our discussion to consider the fact that the president of the colonial college was typically trained in theology and a practicing minister. This “pastor-as-president” model existed for the earliest colleges in America. Noll says that usually presidents were selected for their achievements, intellectual ability, and ministry leadership in the denomination. These presidents sought to create an environment in which the Christian faith influenced every aspect of the collegiate experience (Noll, 1984). The president also taught a senior level capstone course to provide final Christian integration for the college career and final exhortations concerning the kind of citizenship good Christians should practice.

The president operated as the one who provided spiritual direction, as well as directing the educational focus, to those at the university. The beliefs of the church were expected to be carried out by the president and the faculty through their commitment to educating the next generation of leaders—leaders who also serve the church as well as

society. Nearly twenty years ago Dagley suggested that the president of the church-related college should be a spiritual director (1988). He said that the first task of the spiritual director is to articulate and embody the college's mission statement. Secondly, a president looks for opportunities to move the college forward even in an adverse environment. The commitment of the president of the Christian college as the spiritual director must be to protect the college mission to integrate faith with all of learning.

Integration of Faith and Learning

While many of these colleges and universities have separated from their religious roots and presidents are no longer teaching a senior level capstone course, the Christian college is "alive and well" in the 21st Century. In 1958, the Commission of Higher Education of the National Council of Churches defined a Christian college as one that attempts to develop the whole personality of every student in accordance with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (Noll, 1984).

In her book, *God on the Quad*, Riley takes a look at the "missionary generation" (Riley, 2005). This is the generation of young people who are currently studying at Christian colleges throughout the United States. In her study, she believes that this group of colleges will be a "vital component in this country's future" (p. 262). One of the main reasons for this is the intellectual challenge that students receive from a faith-based perspective. It is the commitment and belief in this underlying philosophy that is an essential component to the Christian college education and makes it unique and sustains interest among those in our world. She believes that these colleges will be a vital component in our country's future.

Litfin describes two models of Christian Colleges (Litfin, 2004). The first is the umbrella model in which the Christian college provides a “canopy” over which many different Christian voices can exist. At the same time its sponsoring religious perspective is not sacrificed. Christian thinking is open in this environment but is not expected of everyone. The second approach is the Systematic Model. Christian thinking is systematic throughout the institution from faculty and staff rooted in a similar branch of faith, typically the sponsoring denomination or religious affiliation.

The Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU) include institutions that are described by this systematic model. Christian colleges belonging to this group must ascribe to a mission statement that is both Christ-centered and seeks to integrate faith into all learning. Also, full-time faculty and administrators must have a personal faith in Christ. This group has just over 100 colleges in its membership.

Some of these Christian colleges are affiliated with churches and others describe themselves as being non-denominational, not committed to any one church body but committed to the same mission as the church-related college. DeJong uses the phrase “‘church-related’ in referring to the colleges affiliated with the mainline Protestant denominations. This is simply because this phrase historically was used by these denominations for their colleges and by these colleges to refer to themselves” (De Jong, 1990, p. xii). Typically, a college is described as being church-related if it has some tie to a particular church or church organizing body. This tie is most often manifested in a governing or controlling relationship which continues today. In some cases, church-related is used synonymously with Christian colleges. However, it is not necessary for a

Christian college to be church-related. The core mission of these two are typically the same in that they promote the integration of faith and learning.

Mission is critical for the Christian college. It must actively describe the heart and soul of the institution. Moseley suggests that the mission statement “sets forth the college’s frame of reference: the underlying values of the college’s program and operation; religious concepts that are basic to the college—concepts and ideas about the nature of the world, God, and humankind in relation to God; and the global perspective with which the college goes about its task of education” (1988 p. 22). This is the distinguishing factor as compared to non-sectarian colleges. The president is the one who provides leadership and a continued commitment to this mission.

For the evangelical Christian, all of life is shaped by a biblical or Christian worldview. A worldview is a perspective from which all of life is based, lived, viewed, and evaluated. Worldviews are foundationally based upon a specific set of presuppositions and may be defined as “the comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things” (Taylor, 1986). At the heart of every individual is a worldview that formulates and evaluates every aspect of life. Every person has a worldview whether they realize it or not. Individuals are conditioned by their environmental upbringing in the formation of their worldview.

The integration of faith, which is typically the focus of the mission statement of the Christian college, is described by Arthur Holmes in the Church-related college (Holmes, 1991). He says that “the Christian college does not simply add biblical studies to a broader range of subjects. Nor does the Christian college merely provide a pious and spiritually supportive environment for learning.” He goes on to say that “the real

distinctive is a holistic integration of faith and learning, an active penetration of all the disciplines and all life's callings with the beliefs and values that make up a Christian worldview" (p. 4). This "active penetration of all the disciplines" is the essence of faith integration—integrating a belief system with the educational experience. Students must not be offered faith and learning side-by-side, rather "students should observe how faith gives direction and meaning to learning and see how learning enriches and enlarges faith" (De Jong, 1990, p. 133).

Every person has a worldview. Arthur Holmes argues that the human need for a worldview is fourfold: "the need to unify thought and life; the need to define the good life and find hope and meaning in life; the need to guide thought; [and] the need to guide action" (A. F. Holmes, 1983, p. 5). Just as we need food and water for survival, we also need to live by a system. Albert Wolters suggests that a worldview is more basic to life than food and sex because we need some kind of creed to live by or some map by which to chart our course (Wolters, 1985). A worldview provides this map for our lives. It functions as a compass to point us in a particular direction to attempt to answer life's questions. A worldview provides the basic form which all of life is lived in a consistent pattern of being, knowing, and doing.

The essence of the Christian faith, and the Christian worldview, is the reality of its connection and influence to all of life. The Christian worldview is rooted in the reality of God's existence. God's existence is centered around a relationship with His creation. Through faith in God, the Christian chooses to live according to this worldview. And for the Christian College, this worldview permeates its mission. In his work on Christian Colleges, Ringenberg (1984) said it well:

If an institution wishes to be recognized as a Christian college, it should proclaim that fact openly and boldly. A college which becomes timid and apologetic about its traditional Christian orientation is usually moving in a secular direction. Its reticence may represent the uncertainty of its leaders about what it should hold as its primary mission. A college cannot long remain thus divided; usually it becomes increasingly less Christian in its orientation. The college which wishes to remain Christian must go beyond a mere statement of that fact. It is not enough to publish doctrinal statements, hold chapel services, and require Bible courses; rather, the whole program must radiate the Christian faith (1984 p. 145).

As a Christian College “radiates” this faith, it flows throughout everything that occurs in the institution. Whether it is the academic teaching in the classroom, the residence hall life, or the leadership practice of the president, this faith should be evident throughout these functions.

Leadership Practice Influenced by Faith

The leadership practice that takes place on a Christian College campus should look different according to this Christian worldview. However, in my attempt to connect this faith commitment to leadership practice, I have found very little literature on this subject. Most of what exists has been written from a practitioner perspective rather than being research based, as discussed earlier. Typically, the writing refers to spiritual leadership in the church. Andy Stanley, pastor of North Point Community Church in Atlanta, writes a prime example of the Christian leadership literature. In his book, *The Next Generation Leader*, Stanley examines five concepts in leadership: competence, courage, clarity, coaching, and character (Stanley, 2003). Through his discussion of each concept, he discusses what he has learned in ministry leadership.

Wilkes (1998) uses the life and actions of Jesus Christ in his book on leadership—*Jesus on Leadership*. Since Jesus is the example whom we are to follow, it makes sense

to write a book on His teachings on leadership. Essentially, Wilkes equates Jesus Christ's leadership as "servant leadership." Seven principles of servant leadership from the life of Christ are then presented:

1. Jesus humbled himself and allowed God to exalt him.
2. Jesus followed his Father's will rather than sought a position.
3. Jesus defined greatness as being a servant and being first as becoming a slave.
4. Jesus risked serving others because he trusted that he was God's Son.
5. Jesus left the place at the head table to serve the needs of others.
6. Jesus shared responsibility and authority with those he called to lead.
7. Jesus built a team to carry out a worldwide vision. (p. 11-12)

Wilkes believes that "the pendulum has swung from personality-centered leadership to character-based leadership" (p. 15). This character-based leadership is based on the example of Jesus Christ as depicted in the Bible.

In another similar work, Phillips (1999) uses the life of King David from the Bible to write his book on leadership lessons from this important biblical figure. He discusses David's faith in God and his role as king of Israel. These two are related by God's desire for David to lead the chosen nation of Israel. The successes and failures of David are discussed as an example of how Christian leaders can learn important leadership lessons from his life.

Leadership practice that is influenced by faith has been written about by several Christian authors as evident in the above discussion. However, this is typically written from the author's perspective and experience and has not been based on current research methodology. Because of this gap in the literature, it is critical to move forward and lay a foundational framework for this study.

As I pursue this research journey, it is important to use a leadership framework. There are many different options to consider such as viewing leadership through the

Bolman and Deal's four organizational frames or transformational leadership. However, since I will be observing leadership practice of three selected presidents of Christian colleges, I have decided to use Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leaders. Their research provides a framework for understanding leadership practice and is useful in this study for examining presidents in higher education.

Ironically, during my research, Kouzes and Posner released a new edited book on their five leadership practices (2004). This time, they provided Christian reflections on these practices. This work came as a result of John Maxwell's request, a prominent Christian writer on the subject of leadership. His desire was to use the five practices as the framework to organize a leadership conference. Then, as a response to the conference, he "offered to compile a book that would make The Five Practices leadership framework speak more directly to Christian leaders, weaving together faith and leadership" (p. 3).

Kouzes and Posner (2004) suggest that five themes "give us a deeper appreciation for how faith informs and supports leadership, no matter the context" (p. 119). The five themes they discovered are as follows:

1. Credibility is the foundation of leadership
2. Leadership is personal
3. Leaders serve
4. Leaders sacrifice
5. Leaders keep hope alive

These themes form the conclusion to this brief work. While they do not significantly expound on any of these themes, they do provide a short description. This will be discussed further in the concluding chapter as I review my findings in light of Kouzes and Posner's five leadership practices.

A Framework for Studying Leadership Practice—The Leadership Challenge

The practice of leadership—it's what a leader does. This is where the rubber meets the road. It's not so much about a position as it is the practice of what a leader does that makes a leader a leader. This is where the action occurs and that which can be experienced and seen by the others. If all we see is a person in a position or study a specific trait theory, then we miss the activity of the actual leader.

This study is about leadership in action. It is also a study about the outworking of faith and its influence on leadership. What does this look like? In what ways does faith influence leadership practice? In order to answer this question, this study must be researched through a grid of leadership practice. This necessitates a framework to understand leadership practice.

In the late 1980's, Kouzes and Posner released the first edition of their study on leadership practice and have since revised it to its current third edition. As has already been suggested, these authors have been part of the thrust of the research based leadership literature. It is interesting to note that on the first page of their book they say that "leadership is not about position or title. It's about caring, about relationships, and about what you do" (James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner, 2003, p. 1). Therefore, the backdrop that I have provided concerning the leadership literature moving to a focus on relationships corresponds with their research.

Kouzes and Posner originally studied more than 1,100 managers / leaders to discover their personal best experiences as a leader. Initially, this research was developed through case study analyses and then was supplemented with in-depth

interviews. Through this research, they discovered emerging patterns of leadership actions and behaviors.

And now, with the release of their third edition, they say that “for over two decades we’ve been conducting research on personal-best leadership experiences, and we’ve discovered that there are countless examples of how leaders mobilize others to get extraordinary things done in virtually every arena of organized activity” (James M. Kouzes & Barry Z. Posner, 2003). Getting extraordinary things requires exemplary leadership practice.

Kouzes and Posner narrowed their findings to key areas of leadership practice of exemplary leaders. They found five leadership practices of exemplary leaders—these practices emerged as leaders were at their best. These actions and behaviors were grouped into five practices of leaders which forms their model of leadership. The following is a list of these practices which correspond each to two commitments as presented in their book:

1. **Model the Way**
 - a. Find your voice by clarifying your personal values
 - b. Set the example by aligning actions with shared values
2. **Inspire a Shared Vision**
 - a. Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities
 - b. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations
3. **Challenge the Process**
 - a. Search for opportunities by seeking innovative ways to change, grow, and improve
 - b. Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from mistakes.
4. **Enable others to act**
 - a. Foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust
 - b. Strengthen others by sharing power and discretion
5. **Encourage the Heart**
 - a. Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence
 - b. Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

Since these leadership practices are commonly found in leaders, these five areas will be used as my guiding framework for viewing leadership. This helps to narrow the understanding of leadership to five common categories. While these practices are not suggested or intended to be Christian or non-Christian, I am interested in discovering in what ways these five practices are influenced by Christian faith. Since this framework will guide my research, I will provide a brief overview of each of these practices as presented by Kouzes and Posner.

Model the Way. Leaders must establish their values and then choose to practice them. Words without action can promote disillusionment in the organization. Therefore, it becomes critical for the leader to “model the way” in order for the people of the organization to follow the plan. A leader is committed to looking inside to discover one’s personal values. By clarifying these personal values, Kouzes and Posner believe that the leader finds his voice.

In order to be an effective model to the organization, a leader must know who he or she is—this inner voice—and then seek to live out their values through their actions. Their actions become a reflection of these values. Kouzes and Posner (2003) say that “leaders deeds are far more important than their words when determining how serious they really are about what they say” (p. 14).

Credibility and integrity become key components to the practice of leadership. This is who the leader says he or she is to those within the organization. Kouzes and Posner suggest that “exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behavior they expect of others” (p. 14). Leaders are examples to others within the organizations. Through their example,

they establish a standard of behavior among others. This way in which a leader acts is based on his or her guiding principles. These guiding principles are the values that a leader ascribes to and seeks to act on in a leadership position. The leader is also committed to setting the example by aligning his or her actions with the shared values within the organization.

Inspire a Shared Vision. Leaders point the people and the organization toward a new and desired future. Vision is often discussed in the literature as an important component to leadership practice. This discussion is also rooted in the concept of transformation. Everyone wants a better organization—whether it is more profits, a better working environment, or improved quality.

The leader has the opportunity to create a picture of this future. Often this is done in context with others. It is taking a look at what could be and then inspiring the people in the organization to work to get there together. “They gaze across the horizon of time, imagining the attractive opportunities that are in store when they and their constituents arrive at a distant destination. Leaders have a desire to make something happen, to change the way things are, to create something that no one else has ever created before” (2003, p. 15). This “inspiration” is critical for the leader. The leader must have the ability to “rally the troops” and get everyone excited about the possibilities of tomorrow. The leader then becomes the catalyst for inspiring this vision.

This brings the leader to another critical part of this concept. The vision must become shared throughout the organization if it to be successfully achieved. The leader can’t do it on his or her own and needs the cooperation and ownership of the people. As they share in the vision, they become part of implementing a better tomorrow.

Challenge the Process. Leaders face challenges along the way. The key is what the leader does to address the challenge that makes him or her exemplary in their practice. Whether it is a financial or personnel challenge, it is critical for the leader to challenge the process and seek innovation. This is the opportunity for the leader to change the course for the organization by taking a risk and seeking innovation.

Challenging the process can be viewed in two different ways. The first approach has been suggested in the preceding paragraph as the challenging situation that exists within the organization. However, the second is where leaders look beyond the familiar and the current ways of doing business to seek innovation and change. It is a challenge to doing things differently rather than continuing down the same path that has produced the same results. Kouzes and Posner (2003) suggest that “leaders are pioneers—people who are willing to step out into the unknown. They search for opportunities to innovate, grow and improve” (p. 17).

The process represents the current way of doing things. The leader brings a new way of thinking and acting that challenges this current way of thinking that opens up new possibilities within the organization. As the leader moves forward by challenging the process, he or she seeks small wins along the way and learns from mistakes. Certainly, by taking risks and seeking innovation, mistakes will be made along the way. An exemplary leader will not get sidetracked or bogged down in their mistakes. Rather, they will respond by taking additional opportunities to succeed and generate small wins.

Enable Others to Act. Leadership is not a “one-person” show. Leaders cannot function on an island nor try to do it all alone, although some try. The people within the organization are critical to the leader’s success. She or he must work with and through

others to accomplish the shared vision through cooperative goals and the desired transformation. When goals are cooperative, there is shared ownership among the people. They willingly participate in the desired results by investing their time and energy in the organization.

The concept of a team is an important parallel in the organization. Just as the football team has a coach who directs the players, the team members must do their job and they must excel on the field. The exemplary leader, as head coach, provides the tools and motivation for the personnel to participate at the highest levels. In some cases, this leader becomes more of a facilitator to enable others to act in their areas. In turn, this builds trust and respect among the personnel for the leader as they are able to share in the organizational goals.

Kouzes and Posner suggest that power must be shared by the leader in order to enable others to act. When leaders wield all the power, the people become powerless to act on their own. This fosters a negative spirit within the organization. For the exemplary leader, this power is shared. Authority and power is dispersed and the people are empowered to act within the organization.

Encourage the Heart. Closely related to enabling others to act, the exemplary leader is involved in encouraging the hearts of the people. The leader must encourage the people within the organization to carry out the shared vision. In order to encourage, it becomes critical for the leader to have a relationship with those in the organization. From this relationship comes the desire to show appreciation for everyone's contribution and to create an atmosphere based in the celebration of success.

People are often motivated when they can hear words of a job well down from a leader. Showing this appreciation can provide the encouragement that people need in their jobs. There is something very positive about being recognized and appreciated for what a person accomplishes for the organization. This certainly helps to improve employee contributions to and longevity in the organization.

Not only does the leader celebrate these individual accomplishments, but he or she also creates a spirit of community by celebrating the values and victories in the organization. Whether it is reviewing the mission statement and re-emphasizing the reason why the organization exists or celebrating a significant victory as a community, the hearts of the people are encouraged. They see results and find hope in the future of the organization which in turn gives them a positive and good experience for their personal investment.

Thus, the practice of leadership as presented by Kouzes and Posner becomes the grid through which I will use as my research framework. This has already been utilized to look at Christian leaders and business leaders. Also, in a recent work Kouzes and Posner have written the *Academic Administrators Guide to Exemplary Leadership* (J. M. Kouzes & B. Z. Posner, 2003). In this book, they use the same five exemplary practices of leadership while integrating it with case stories from leaders in colleges and universities.

Furthermore, they identify that “numerous scholars have applied the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership framework to their investigation of leadership in higher education; several even began with the personal-best leadership case study

approach” (p. 4). They sight studies of college coaches (Elliott, 1990; Coffman, 1999) to presidents (Bauer, 1993), vice presidents (Plowman, 1991), business and finance officers (Stephenson, 2002) and deans and department chairs (Xu, 1991).

Coupled with their recent adaptation of the Leadership Practice to include Christian reflections, this framework becomes an obvious option for this study. This framework has been used as a basis for understanding leadership practice in higher education and continues to be a well-respected guide for leaders in today’s for-profit and not-for-profit worlds of leadership.

Moving Forward

As I consider my own leadership journey and what I have evidenced in others, I believe that the Christian faith influences a leader in several ways. First, the Christian leader is motivated by his faith in God to provide leadership. This motivation does not place emphasis on oneself through personal gain. Rather, the motivation is focused on doing everything to honor and glorify God in the organization. The Christian leader leads to please God, rather than people. Secondly, the Christian leader inspires people to do their best in the organization in order to bring honor and glory to the God they serve. There is a higher purpose to their work and the Christian leader brings the focus to this area as a servant to his/her people and the needs of the organization. Third, the influence of the Christian leader is not based on the improper use of power. With the responsibility of leadership, comes the responsibility to lead with non-coercive power. Power is not used to get what you want; rather, it becomes the goal of the Christian leader to empower others and thus share the responsibility. Finally, the Christian leader places great

emphasis on prayer as a way to receive direction from God to provide the leadership needed to the organization. For the Christian leader, there is a great dependence on God for guidance in a leadership role. This faith relationship is critical for the Christian leader.

There certainly is a need in the leadership literature to understand the ways in which faith influences the leadership practices. By examining the leadership practices of three select presidents of Christian colleges, this research will provide the foundation to future research in this area.

CHAPTER THREE

CREATING THE LEADERSHIP PORTRAIT

Introduction

Much of the leadership literature today is written by practitioners—leaders who write about their own personal experiences. These works are readily available at any local bookstore. In recent years, there has been a significant influx of research-based literature written on the subject. As researchers have probed this area of study, they have attempted to apply different methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, to understand this important subject that spans the for-profit and not-for-profit world.

The use of a qualitative methodology provides a much deeper description for the researcher, especially for the study of leadership. In 1990, Yukl said that “it is rare to find observational studies in leadership that include supplementary methods, such as interviews with key figures, to discover the context and meaning of events” (1990, p. 183). However, since Yukl’s writing, many researchers have focused on the use of qualitative methodology because it provides the “thick description” needed to understand leadership (Geertz, 1973a). Qualitative research gives the substance and the opportunity to observe and dialogue with the leaders and followers which, in turn, provides more insight into the subject.

As we have discussed in the literature review, there is a gap in the current research concerning the influence of faith on leadership practice. This suggests the need to use a research tool that will function inductively. Through qualitative research, ideas and emerging themes can be generated to aid in further research. These qualitative

methods are at their best when they are being used in an exploratory fashion for generating many concepts and ideas. These concepts and ideas can then form the basis for additional research as a foundational inquiry is established.

In qualitative research, Creswell (1998) says that “the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). By talking to the leader and followers in their natural setting, important concepts and insights can be gleaned. Therefore, this study of leadership practice calls for use of a qualitative methodology.

In some ways, what I will be attempting to do is similar to what Denzin and Lincoln described as making a quilt (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This “maker of quilts” uses “the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand (p. 6).” As another metaphor, they suggest that qualitative researchers also use montage as in the method of editing cinematic images. “In montage, several different images are superimposed onto one another to create a picture” (p. 6). The qualitative researcher who uses montage is like a quilt maker who cuts, stitches, and makes the pieces into an entire interpretive whole. These pieces, while just pieces in and of themselves, will be sewn together by the researcher to create a new and more complete work. As a quilt maker, this researcher will attempt to piece together stories to create a portrait that depicts the influence of faith on the leadership practice of three Christian College presidents.

A Life of Stories

Stories captivate the imagination and the mind. Stories provide the intrigue to ignite a deep search for meaning in life. Our lives are shaped and bound by our stories. These stories provide a tapestry through which meaning and understanding can be woven for one to discover. In order to research a life, we must seek out the stories from a person's life. These stories then become part of the larger narrative.

The use of stories is common to our experiences. We tell stories about what happened at work. We pass down stories to our children of what it was like for us growing up. We hear stories in the news and read about them in magazines. Stories are a regular part of our lives. It's how we speak and communicate. It's also how we understand life. Stories communicate experience and through this we learn, grow, and change.

Researchers have recently latched onto storytelling as an appropriate methodology in the field of qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 1998). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that "narrative and story-telling, two intimately related terms, are increasingly evident in the literature that swirls around these compelling scientific-humanistic modes of inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The use of stories are often found in qualitative methodologies such as ethnography, life history, biographies, and case studies. While qualitative research privileges no single methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), the use of stories is a compelling tool.

Life is composed of stories. "Narrativists believe that human experience is basically storied experience: that humans live out stories and are story-telling organisms" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 77). They believe that one of the best ways to study

“human beings is to come to grips with the storied quality of human experience, to record stories of educational experience, and to write still other interpretative stories of educational experience” (p. 77). These written stories are called narratives.

The use of stories will be the primary methodology conducted in this research. These stories are told within the context of a plot—this plot represents the movement of a person’s life. The plot creates the order of a person’s life, or a period of a person’s experience, and therefore takes the reader and the researcher on the journey to discover meaning. The meaning is uncovered through the work of the artist and the portrait that is painted.

The Art of Portraiture

This journey has been developed in a new form of qualitative inquiry called “portraiture” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Like an artist painting on a canvas, the researcher paints an artistic expression through the narrative of life stories. “The portrait, then, creates a narrative that is at once complex, provocative, and inviting, that attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure, and history” (p. 11). The narrative documents human behavior and experience in context—the context of the subject’s life and experience. Lawrence-Lightfoot calls this research methodology a blend of the “curiosity and detective work of a biographer, the literary aesthetic of a novelist, and the systematic scrutiny of a researcher” (p. 15).

English (2000) writes that “Lawrence-Lightfoot broke new ground in performing research in educational leadership with the release of her 1983 book, *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture*” (English, 2000). This new ground enabled

her to display her methodology of portraiture. Lawrence-Lightfoot suggests that the portraitist is interested in “searching for the central story, [and] developing a convincing and authentic narrative” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 12). This narrative provides the flow for understanding the story at hand.

Furthermore, she says that “this requires careful, systematic, and detailed description developed through watching, listening to, and interacting with the actors over a sustained period of time, the tracing and interpretation of emergent themes, and the piercing together of these themes into an aesthetic whole” (p. 12). With the emergence of themes, the researcher is able to paint the portrait.

English suggests that “it is in the notion of ‘voice’ that Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis stake their claim to the difference in research method” (English, 2000). In most cases, the voice of the researcher is silent. Lawrence-Lightfoot says that the person of the researcher is “more evident and more visible than in any other research form” (p. 13). Just as the artist creates a sketch of the portrait through his or her eyes, the researcher does the same in portraiture while the voice of the researcher comes through loud and clear. The portrait tells the story of the researcher and the researched. “In portraiture, the voice of the researcher is everywhere: in the assumptions, preoccupations, and framework she brings to the inquiry; in the questions she asks; in the data she gathers; in the choice of stories she tells; in the language, cadence, and rhythm of her narrative” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 85).

Lawrence-Lightfoot expresses voice in the form of autobiography. English (2000) writes that:

In voice as autobiography, the portraitist “reflects the life story of the portraitist” (1997, p. 95). Here the portraitist/researcher brings her own life story, her familial,

cultural, ideological, and educational experiences, to the research project. In the matter of discerning other voices, the voice of the portraitist/researcher differentiates between listening to a story and listening for a story. The latter implies a much more active role for the researcher, for it means that the portraitist is creating and molding a story instead of merely searching for one. Portraiture is thus a constructivist activity involving intervention instead of a passive observation of life in context. (p. 22)

It is very clear that the voice of the researcher is to be seen and heard, while being written into part of the story. She describes this simply: “from where I sit, this is what I see; these are the perspectives and biases I bring; this is the scene I select; this is how people seem to be responding to my presence” (p. 50).

The Voice of the Researcher

My voice is clear in this study. As an evangelical Christian, I believe in my faith in God. I was raised in a Christian home and was involved in church throughout my life. I have always been part of a religious community of faith. I believe in the God of the Bible and have faith that He sent His Son to provide salvation to any that call on His name. Furthermore, I believe that through salvation we enter into a relationship with God. Through this relationship, I seek to integrate my faith into every area of my life. It is a transformative process. The three leaders in this study have very similar backgrounds to mine. We have all been influenced by the beliefs of the Protestant Church and a theology that is conservative and evangelical.

I am also an aspiring and experienced leader. While I have not served as president of a Christian College, I have been involved in several upper level administrative positions in a Christian College and have also provided leadership to a private Christian K-12 school. These leadership experiences have given me the opportunity to probe into my faith and leadership practice and to discover my voice. This

is all part of this research journey. Not only am I searching for meaning in the lives of others, I am also looking for meaning and understanding in my own personal and professional life. This is an ongoing quest with which I am vitally concerned. As an artist in the process of painting this portrait it is impossible to separate my own journey from those that I paint. My experiences and beliefs, along with that of those researched, help to paint this portrait.

The Research Procedure and Process

The research process began with the selection of the presidents and colleges for study. It was critical to consider the best possible subjects and their availability for the research while realizing that this study should be replicated in a variety of contexts to provide deeper meaning and a greater opportunity for more broad-based conclusions.

Selecting the Subjects for the Canvas

The scope of this study focuses on Christian College presidents and their individual stories of leadership practice and the influence of their faith. This is the heart and soul of qualitative researcher, and that of portraiture. This allowed me, as the researcher, to spend considerable time with the interview subjects in their specific context. Lawrence-Lightfoot suggests that the single case is the best approach for one using the methodology of portraiture. She says that “the more specific, the more subtle the description, the more likely it is to evoke identification” (p. 14).

In order to paint the picture of the connection between faith and leadership, this study is focused on three Christian college presidents at three different colleges. As I

examined my subject possibilities for study, there were several guiding values that provided direction to me.

First, I believed it was important to select leaders from Christian Colleges that are part of a national organization adhering to the same set of core beliefs. All of these leaders are involved in a Christian university belonging to the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). With just over 100 institutional members, the CCCU is the recognized group of Christian colleges committed to the mission of advancing “the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth” (CCCU website). Their members must espouse a strong commitment to Christ-centered higher education and Christians must be hired for all full-time faculty and administrative positions. Therefore, the context for this study provides an explicit context for faith expression.

Secondly, as the researcher, I spent 12 years of employment at another CCCU school in which I graduated. While there are certainly variations within the CCCU among its membership, the core faith beliefs are clear and all are integrally committed to provide an education that is fully integrated with biblical principles. The similarities were apparent between the colleges as well as in my own experience. I was also familiar with this group which gave me additional insight into the study.

Thirdly, I had previously been on all three of the selected campuses and even had some connections with former colleagues. This familiarity and connection provided the advanced insight needed to launch my research. This, I believe, helped to provide open doors to my study.

Fourth, it was important to select colleges that were in close proximity to one another. This would help in travel time as well as provide a similar geographical context for the study. Just over 200 miles separate these three campuses which resulted in ease of travel between the three sites while doing my field study.

Finally, I believe that I could study any evangelical Christian leader at a college or university in this process, whether at a Christian college or a state university. However, because the scope of this research is not to study every leader, it was necessary to narrow the pool of potential candidates for several reasons. I considered studying several Christian presidents at different types of colleges. This could certainly be a possibility for a future study. While this would result in a rich study, I believe it is important to study leaders in a similar context and who had leadership challenges along the way.

Furthermore, I believe it is important for this initial study to lay a foundation by researching presidents who work for institutions in which the mission supports the integration of faith into all of life. Because of the prominence of the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities as well as my experience at a member school, I chose three colleges and their presidents from this membership that were similar in context and location.

Making Contacts

Knowing that my pool of potential subjects would come from the CCCU's membership of about 100 Christian Colleges, I began looking at specific geographic

regions. Because of the significant population of Christian colleges and my familiarity with this area, I chose the Midwest region.

Next, I reviewed the list of colleges in this region to identify any potential inside connections or relationships that I might have. I also sought the recommendations of a few other key individuals within Christian higher education. These recommendations centered around the leaders who might be considered as “exemplary leaders” as defined by Kouzes and Posner. This was based on the insights of a few key informants along the way. I knew that while the leader may not be classified as “exemplary” at all times, that I would likely find stories that emulated these five leadership practices.

Two Christian Colleges and their presidents initially stood out to me. I was very familiar with their colleges and in one case, had met the president. Both colleges had also gone through significant growth and transformation. Knowing this, I drafted a letter of introduction for my study and sent it to the respective presidents asking for their participation in the study.

In order to prepare them for my letter, I asked two individuals who knew these presidents to make preliminary introductory contacts for me. It was important that they would hear from someone they respected and trusted about this research proposal. One individual worked as a vice president at one of the selected Christian colleges. I had developed a peer relationship with him when I worked in Christian higher education. In the other case, a former colleague I worked with contacted this president. He had a long-term relationship with him. Both of these contacts occurred in September, 2003, and opened a door to pursue this research at these colleges and with these presidents. These sites visits were planned for November and December, 2003.

The final president and Christian college selection was more difficult. I had identified five other potential colleges to study and began the process of making contact with them. However, this time I did not have anyone to help me gain access. Because of a number of reasons ranging from busy schedules to disinterest, I was denied the opportunity to conduct my study with these presidents.

However, in networking once again with one of my contacts, he suggested that I study the president of Bethsaida College. He knew Dr. Bunton and he offered to make an initial contact with him. I immediately followed-up with a letter of introduction and then contacted him to ask his permission to be involved in the study. He agreed and I then conducted my interviews in April, 2004.

Three Presidents and Three Christian Colleges

In order to be a member college of the Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), all three colleges selected in this study must have “a public mission based upon the centrality of Jesus Christ and evidence of how faith is integrated with the institution’s academic and student life programs” (CCCU website).

Capernaum University was established in 1887 while affiliated with the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Because of hard times that the college faced, it was confronted with a decision of closing its doors or finding another church group to assume its operation. In 1953, the trustees of a Bible institute in the area assumed ownership of the college. Dr. Woods became the president of the college and led the school to record enrollment during his 25 years of leadership. In 1978, Dr. Peter Devitto became the next president of the college, leading it to enrollment of nearly 3,000 students, more than 100

programs of study, and a campus filled with new facilities. Dr. Peter Devitto now serves as the chancellor.

Galilee University has been educating students for over 130 years. It was founded by church leaders from a protestant denominational group and was open for students of all ages regardless of their religious convictions or beliefs. In the 1960s, this institution began to offer four-year programs of study. It has now grown to an enrollment of 4,000 students offering a wide-range of undergraduate and graduate programs. The university board of trustees selected the current president, Dr. Gilbert Belding in 1999. Even though he has only been in this position for a few years, he has faced some significant challenges while at the same time gaining the respect and trust of the faculty and staff.

Bethsaida College was founded in 1947 as a church-sponsored Christian college. This college was the liberal arts arm of this small Protestant church group. During the 1980s, this college nearly faced closure because of declining enrollment and financial pressures. In 1989, the college board of trustees selected Dr. Nathan Bunton to guide the college out from these difficult times. During his 15 year tenure, he provided leadership that would triple the enrollment and expand the facilities and programs. He certainly faced challenges along the way but through his leadership this college experienced a transformation.

All three of these Christian colleges have a strong heritage and are considered to be leaders in the CCCU. These presidents have had vast experience in their leadership role at these institutions as well as other colleges. Two presidents were able to look back on their presidential tenure as one had retired and the other was just three months away,

the other president could look forward to his presidency and career. Therefore, these leaders bring great experience and insight to this study.

Methods of Painting

Lawrence-Lightfoot says that “a sure intention in the methodology of portraiture is capturing—from an outsider’s purview—an insider’s understanding of the scene” (p. 25). As an outsider, I was able to gain access to each of these three colleges, the presidents and some key personnel who had worked closely with them.

Merriam (1998) suggests that a major source of obtaining data in qualitative research is the interview. The primary method of research I used in my research is the interview. These interviews and additional observations brought a “thick description” to the research (Geertz, 1973b).

I spent three days on each campus. During this time I was able to tour the campus and observe campus life. However, the focus of my time was on the interviews. For all of three of the colleges, I scheduled my days with between eight and nine interviews. The interviews began at 8:00 a.m. and lasted until 5:00 p.m. They were scheduled every hour on the hour. Most of the interviews lasted 45 minutes in length which allowed for some time in-between for reflection and journaling.

I spent considerable time with each of the three presidents in extensive and multiple interviews. In order to best deal with their schedules at two colleges, I divided out my time with the presidents by spending an hour on each day of the three-day site visit. This provided an opportunity to reflect on the previous interviews and to further engage some of the issues that I was hearing in the other interviews. In one case, the

president had already retired from his position as president and he was unavailable on campus during my visit. Therefore, I spent an afternoon with him in his home after I had conducted the interviews with the personnel on campus. By interviewing him after the interviews of the faculty and staff at his college, it had the same effect as I went in to the interview informed on the challenges and perspectives of those who had worked closely with him.

As a way to gain further insight into my research and the leadership practices of these presidents, I interviewed approximately 20 faculty and staff from each college. These interviews were focused on key subordinates to gain a picture of how they experienced and saw the president's influence of faith and leadership practice. I worked with the president's assistant at each of the colleges to identify the personnel for interviews. The main criteria I used to select from both faculty and staff was to focus on those who had had a long-term working relationship with each the presidents. This long-term relationship is defined as those who worked with the president throughout his tenure or who had been faculty and staff members of the university for over 10 years. In addition, this also included those who either reported directly to the president or who had close working relationships on committees within the administrative structure. This did include interviewing every vice president at each of the colleges since they worked directly for the president. A cross-section of faculty and staff who had direct or indirect reporting relationships with the presidents were interviewed. These faculty and staff members were also typically long-term employees of the college and could provide a greater historical perspective.

During each interview, extensive notes were taken by the researcher. The interviews were also tape recorded as a way to ensure the accuracy of the interview in case the notes were not legible. This provided a reference to go back to and review the details of the interviews.

Interview Protocols

In order to guide the open-ended interviews, the following interview questions were used as starting points for the conversations. These questions provided a lead into the topic and allowed for a free-flowing conversation on the subject at hand. The following questions were used with each of the presidents:

- Please express for me the essence of your faith. What does your faith mean to you?
- As you reflect back over your tenure as president, undoubtedly you have faced several critical leadership challenges.
 - Describe a few critical challenges in your leadership practice as president that demonstrated your faith and discuss any ways in which your faith played a role in that experience.
 - Describe a few critical challenges in your leadership practice as president in which your actions and experiences did not seem congruent with your faith.
- How do you believe those who work at the university might describe the influence of your faith on your leadership practice?

- How would you distinguish your leadership practice from that of a president who has a different or non-faith perspective?

The following interview protocol was used to guide in the questioning of the subordinates that worked closely with the respective president:

- Describe the president's leadership style and your relationship with him.
- I'm interested in understanding how presidents live out their faith in their leadership practice.
 - Please describe a few critical leadership acts, situations, or special challenges in which his/her faith was well exemplified in his/her leadership practice.
 - Describe a few critical leadership acts, situations, or special challenges in his/her leadership practice that, in your view, did not match or seemed inconsistent with his/her faith.
- You may have had direct personal contact with your president in your situation through a meeting, job duty, reporting-relationship or other way. How have you personally experienced your president's leadership practice and the influence or lack of influence of his faith on it?
- How would you compare the leadership practices of your president with those of other leaders you have worked with/for?

Interview Subjects

Based on the interaction with the assistants of each of the presidents, the subjects were interviewed during each site visit. In order to allow for freedom of expression,

pseudonyms were given for the colleges, presidents, and the personnel interviewed.

After the visit a chart for each of the subjects was developed and pseudonyms were selected. The following three charts, one for each college, represent a brief description for each subject. Each chart lists the pseudonyms of the persons employed at the college, position level or category, years of employment at the respective college, gender, and reporting relationship to the president.

Galilee University. A total number of 19 faculty and staff were interviewed at Galilee University. Of the 19 interviewed, six were faculty members, one of which was female. The faculty averaged 17 years of tenure at the university. Thirteen staff members were interviewed, six of which were on the vice president level. Of these thirteen staff members, three were female. Five of these staff members served on the vice president level, one of which was female. The staff members averaged 14.5 years of service at the university while the vice president averaged 5 years.

Pseudonym	Position	Gender	Years at University	Reporting Status
Belding, Gilbert	President	Male	4 years	Board of Trustees
Bond, Henry	Director Level	Male	40 years	Direct
Donovan, Wayne	Director Level	Male	7 years	Indirect
Davis, Marsha	Faculty	Female	26 years	Indirect
Homan, Richard	Dean; Faculty	Male	16 years	Indirect
Hunter, Christopher	Department Chair; Faculty	Male	13 years	Indirect
Hewitt, Karen	Director Level	Female	16 years	Indirect
Hilburn, Joyce	Director Level	Female	14 years	Indirect
Jette, Drake	Faculty	Male	39 years	Indirect
Jensen, Thomas	Vice President	Male	12 years	Direct
Jamison, Derek	Vice President	Male	4 years	Direct
Meger, John	Vice President	Male	2 years	Direct
Mandel, Richard	Faculty	Male	2 years	Indirect
Nichols, Peter	Faculty	Male	2 years	Indirect
Ogle, Mark	Vice President	Male	5 years	Direct
O'Conner, Brittany	Vice President	Female	2 years	Direct

Raymond, Scott	Director Level	Male	1 year	Direct
Salas, Brent	Staff Level	Male	4 years	Direct
Williams, Rodney	Dean; Faculty	Male	13 years	Indirect
Worden, Christian	Faculty	Male	20 years	Indirect

Capernaum University. A total of 22 faculty and staff were interviewed at Capernaum University. From this group, six were on the staff level, eight were vice presidents, and six were on the faculty. However, of the eight on the staff, three served as deans in an academic area and were considered faculty. Therefore, they could be included in either group. Since they have academic rank and serve this function, they have been included as faculty in this discussion.

Eight of the faculty interviewed had served Capernaum an average of 29 years. Only one of these faculty members was female. Of the six staff interviewed, they had worked at the university for an average of 24 years. Two of these staff members were female. Eight vice presidents were interviewed, three of which had recently retired from their positions. All of these vice presidents were male and averaged 23 years of service at the university.

Pseudonym	Position	Gender	Years at Univ.	Reporting Status
Anderson, Mark	Dean; Faculty	Male	39 years	Indirect
Ashman, Ida	Department Chair; Faculty	Female	22 years	Indirect
Austin, Jason	Vice President	Male	15 years	Direct
Bacon, William	Faculty	Male	26 years	Indirect
Barto, James	Director Level	Male	15 years	Indirect
Blackwell, Les	Director Level	Male	34 years	Indirect
Campbell, Denis	Dean; Faculty	Male	43 years	Indirect
Cobb, Matt	Vice President	Male	29 years	Direct
Devitto, Peter	President	Male	25 years	
Dockett, Sam	Faculty	Male	6 years	Indirect
Fuller, Sara	Director Level	Female	19 years	Indirect
Gaines, Peter	Director Level	Male	41 years	Direct

Goodman, Hank	Former Vice President, Retired	Male	33 years	Direct
Jones, Cecil	Former Vice President, Retired	Male	41 years	Direct
Meyers, Maddox	Department Chair; Faculty	Male	38 years	Indirect
O'Brien, Daryl	Vice President	Male	24 years	Direct
Reeves, Devon	Former Vice President, Retired	Male	33 years	Direct
Rhode, Jim	Dean; Faculty	Male	36 years	Indirect
Rosen, Derek	Faculty	Male	22 years	Indirect
Rudlow, Laura	Staff	Female	16 years	Direct
Rinker, Ryan	Vice President	Male	17 years	Direct
Reves, Caleb	Vice President	Male	20 years	Direct
Schroeder, Jake	Faculty	Male	24 years	Indirect
Simon, Roger	Director Level	Male	17 years	Indirect
Walker, Donald	Vice President	Male	16 years	Direct

Bethsaida College. At Bethsaida College, I interviewed one president and 21 faculty and staff. From the 21 interviews with faculty and staff, 10 were with faculty. Of the 10 faculty interviewed, three were female and seven were males. Four of these faculty members also served as department chairs. The length of service for these ten faculty members averaged just under ten years at the college.

On the staff side, 11 staff members were interviewed. All of the interview subjects were male. Of the 11 staff members, four served as vice presidents. These vice presidents reported directly to the president and had served an average of 14 years at the college.

Pseudonym	Position	Gender	Years at College	Reporting Status
Aristolli, Jack	Director level	Male	8 years	Indirect
Bunton, Nathan	President	Male	15 years	Indirect
Clark, Sara	Faculty	Female	7 years	Indirect
Cornwell, Greg	Department Chair, Faculty	Male	14 years	Indirect
Coyle, Sam	Vice President	Male	20 years	Direct
Elliot, Dillon	Vice President	Male	18 years	Direct

Emerson, Travis	Faculty	Male	10 years	Indirect
Evans, Jackie	Faculty	Female	14 years	Indirect
Foster, Jerod	Director level	Male	9 years	Indirect
Frank, Gary	Director level	Male	17 years	Indirect
Graves, Vanessa	Faculty	Female	13 years	Indirect
Harrington, Brandon	Faculty	Male	15 years	Indirect
Hewitt, Elaine	Department Chair; Faculty	Female	28 years	Indirect
Moon, Samuel	Dean	Male	15 years	Indirect
Morgan, Joseph	Vice President	Male	12 years	Direct
Pyles, Joshua	Department Chair; Faculty	Male	6 years	Indirect
Reuter, Cole	Director level	Male	15 years	Indirect
Samon, Douglas	Faculty	Male	7 years	Indirect
Slanski, Bailey	Department Chair, Faculty	Male	13 years	Indirect
Spellman, Justin	Vice President	Male	6 years	Direct
Wagner, Beth	Dean	Female	13 years	Indirect
Young, Shane	Director level	Male	16 years	Indirect

Summary. Besides the three presidents interviewed, a total of 63 faculty, staff and vice presidents were interviewed. Of the 63 interviewed, 25 were on the faculty, 20 on the staff, and 18 served as vice presidents. Ten of those interviewed were female with five on faculty, four on staff, and one as a vice president. The faculty averaged 18 years of service, the staff 17 years, and the vice presidents 16 years.

Categorized by Themes

Once the interviews were completed, the notes were typed and filed according to each interviewee and college. The notes were then reviewed and coded by emerging themes as they related to the leadership framework. Every recorded story was identified and categorized according to Kouzes and Posner's five leadership practices that they identified in their research. These selections were made according to essence of the

story that was best represented or depicted in these leadership practices. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to this as “coding” as a way to group the findings in similar themes together.

After the stories had been coded according to emerging themes, the stories were sorted. This sorting process took place by “cutting and pasting” each story by each leadership practice. These stories were then given a title that was recorded on the page and a yellow sticky note. These notes were then placed on a large piece of paper and then were grouped by specific themes and similar stories by each leadership practice. This was a critical step for this researcher to visually identify the themes that emerged as well as the overlap in stories that were told throughout the interview process.

Observations and Field Notes

Observations were made but were limited to the time that I was on each campus. These observations focused on the campus, the offices, and the people that I spent time with in the interview process. These observations were secondary to the primary method of interviewing that was used. However, they did play a role in the research.

In addition, field notes were taken to help my thinking in the process. Journaling provided the tools to help my role as the researcher to begin to paint the portrait of the leader. Lawrence-Lightfoot suggests that “once in the field, the portraitist engages in an iterative process of data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Each day in the field is followed by reflection and critique as the researcher works to reconcile what she is observing and documenting with her anticipatory framework” (p. 214). She calls this an “impressionistic record” in which the researcher interacts with the research. As the

researcher these thoughts, such as new questions or emerging themes and hypotheses, were recorded in order to continually guide and refine the research effort.

Triangulation of Research

The use of multiple interviews as the primary methodology provided an opportunity for a cross-check to my findings—a process that Denzin (1989) discussed as “triangulation.” Merriam says that the use of multiple methods enhance the validity of the finding (1998). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state that “triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously. Each of the metaphors ‘works’ to create simultaneity rather than the sequential or linear” (p. 8). Through the use of multiple interviews with a wide variety of subjects, the data were triangulated and cross-referenced for accuracy.

Creating the Portrait

Merriam (1998) says that “data analysis is simultaneous with data collection” (p. 14). This allows for adjustments to be made in the research along the way rather than waiting until the end. She also says that “to wait until all data are collected is to lose the opportunity to gather more reliable and valid data” (p. 14).

During the research, the findings were categorized by emerging themes. Lawrence-Lightfoot says “the development of emergent themes reflects the portraitist’s first efforts to bring interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order to the collection of data. This is an iterative and generative process; the themes emerge from the data and they give the data shape and form” (p. 185). The data was continually sorted

and dissected in an effort to organize the material in these emerging themes. “The emergent themes grow out of data gathering and synthesis, accompanied by generative reflection and interpretive insights” (p. 188).

The portraitist develops emergent themes using “five modes of synthesis, convergence, and contrast” according to Lawrence-Lightfoot (p. 193). First, the portraitist looks and listens for “repetitive refrains.” These are words or stories that are frequently spoken. Secondly, in the analysis of the stories, the researcher listens for “resonant metaphors.” These metaphors are ways that the subject reveal the way they share and experience their reality. Third, the researcher seeks to identify themes that occur and are important to the organizational culture. Fourth, as already mentioned, triangulation helps to provide validation to the emerging themes. Finally, the researcher looks for themes and patterns that are contrasting and dissonant by the subjects.

The Portrait

My goal as the portraitist then was to develop the central story by writing a narrative that is both convincing and authentic, comprehensive and insightful. Lawrence-Lightfoot echoes an earlier discussion that “the process of creating a whole often feels like weaving a tapestry or piecing together a quilt.” (p. 12). When the quilt is finally pieced together, it becomes whole. It looks different from the individual pieces on the table as the quilt-maker has made what was envisioned—“the aesthetic whole.”

Therefore, as the researcher my goal is to produce this aesthetic whole by creating a portrait expressing the influence of faith on leadership practice of three Christian college presidents. Just as Lawrence-Lightfoot reminds us of the “dual motivations

guiding portraiture: to inform and inspire, to document and transform, to speak to the head and to the heart” (p. 243). My desire is to do the same by creating a portrait of leadership practice influenced by faith in the context of Christian higher education.

Limitations and Advantages

There are several limitations to this study. First, because of the small sample size of three presidents, generalization is only possible to these three subjects. The findings cannot be generalized to other leaders in Christian higher education or the larger higher educational context. Generalization is sacrificed for a more detailed and thick description of the subjects studied.

Secondly, the subjects were relegated to one specific religious segment of Christian higher education. It does not include leaders from a more liberal theological bent nor does it include leaders of other faith perspectives. To widen the scope of this project, consideration could be made for leaders of other faiths including, but not limited to, Jewish, Catholic, or Muslim populations.

Third, this study was limited to three leaders serving in the position of president. The academy is made up of many leaders who serve in a variety of positions. Additional research should be conducted to examine this question at all levels throughout the institution.

Finally, this study did not consider leaders or presidents who are Christian in their faith commitment but serve in a university that is not faith-based or church-related. It would be interesting to consider how their faith expression is filtered or enabled based on the college context.

This research method does have its advantages. Because of the focus on individual cases—three different presidents and the colleges they serve, the depth of research provides a thick description of each voice. In turn, the inductive approach is used to glean insights and understanding into their lives and the question at hand.

CHAPTER FOUR

DR. GILBERT BELDING – GALILEE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

It was one of those rainy and dreary Midwest December days as I drove down a two-lane road out into the country towards this small university town. There are so many college towns like this that dot our country. This one was just a few minutes away from a neighboring city and acted as a bedroom community.

The first building I came upon was a large church. As a denominationally supported university, many colleges have a church on or near their campus. I could see some newer buildings out toward the road. However, I did not see a “grand” entrance to the campus. It was like I just arrived and the university was there. As I looked around, I could see several buildings from different eras. The university had the look and feel of one undergoing growth and change.

I arrived in the president’s office and was greeted by his assistant. For the next three days I would spend all of my time on this campus learning everything I could about this president, his leadership, and his faith.

Galilee University

For over 130 years, this university has been educating students. It was founded by church leaders from a protestant denominational group and was open to students of all ages regardless of their religious convictions or beliefs. Its original aim was to “urge holiness of life and thorough Christian training, together with the highest type of mental

culture.” For the first 50 years, it trained students at the primary, intermediate, and secondary levels—quite a different focus from the university it has become today.

Then, in the early 20s, the board voted to add a junior college to the academy. As the focus moved towards higher education, the primary and intermediate programs were dropped. This would become a defining moment for this small church-related institution as it now pursued a higher level of education. It wasn’t until the 60’s that this institution shifted to add a four-year program and received its degree-granting accreditation.

Continuing its expansion, the college began offering more degrees and expanded its off-site locations throughout the state. With the boom of adult degree completion programs, the university leadership had the vision to get out in front of this curve. As the expansion continued, the college added several master’s level programs.

Most recently, as many other colleges were moving to call themselves a university, this college also chose this path. Because of its growth in enrollment and academic programs, and its presence throughout the state, the leadership made this significant change. While some may view this as a marketing move and as a decision to keep up with other colleges making the same change, the board felt justified in its decision.

As a Christian university, Galilee “has distinguished itself as the place where faith and learning meet” (website). This university has remained true to its desire to educate students from the liberal arts tradition while at the same time integrating Biblical and spiritual principles into every aspect of the student academic and co-curricular life. With so many colleges beginning in our country with this commitment and then choosing to veer from this path, this college has kept its faith as a priority in its educational pursuits.

The next step for this Christian college to continue to advance its mission was to select a president that could embody and articulate its mission.

Foundation of His Faith

Belding grew up in a Christian home and a Bible-focused church that was more on the conservative spectrum in lifestyle and theology. His father was a public school superintendent. From this man, Belding learned to love education and leadership.

Belding reflected on this. He said, “My father would often involve his family in daily conversations at dinner time that centered around their lives, jobs, and relationship with God.” His father had a dramatic impact on his formative years.

His parents were committed to and involved the family in church. Through the centrality of church in his life, he discovered the value of all people regardless of social status. Also, the influence of his faith was apparent. “My dad was very optimistic. He had the view that all things worked out positively and he also had a deep respect for people.” This gave him a great love and heart for people much like that of a pastor which reached an important point in high school. “In high school I experienced a spiritual renewal in my life and a calling to serve God. This was a significant time for me to direct his life towards service to God.”

His leadership experience included a couple of years as a pastor of adult ministries. This pastoral position helped continued to fuel his passion for people. After this role, he knew, however, that the academic world was where his giftedness could be best utilized. He accepted a role as an academic dean in theology at a large Christian university and served in this position for many years. This position gave him the

administrative leadership experiences he needed to prepare him for the next level of university leadership.

Belding's educational achievements include a master's degree in business administration and a Ph.D. in philosophy. He was educated in the business principles of administering a college as well as the philosophical depth of leading the academic rigors required of the presidency.

Just two years prior to the Galilee search, Belding was in a presidential search for a college that was connected to his church background. Belding said, "I finished second in this presidential search because he did not have development or marketing experience that the other candidate had." He continued in his dean position knowing that there might be another opportunity.

During that same time period, Galilee University was led by a man who came out of retirement to serve as interim president for one year. Because they could not find the right leader in the search, he remained at the university for several years. The previous president did some good things yet seemed to leave the college in a difficult financial position. Yet, his interim period stretched for five years and gave some stability to the university.

In 1999, the college conducted a search for a new president. After a national search, the board chose Dr. Gilbert Belding. The Board knew that they needed a new leader who had the ability and passion to move Galilee forward. With the educational, pastoral, and leadership background, Belding had the preparation and the experience necessary to provide vision, presidential stability, and growth to Galilee University.

Donovan, a faculty member, remembers that Belding “did his research on whether he wanted to take the job. The reason he came is that he felt connected to the mission and saw the college as a ‘sleeping giant’.” One of his VP’s, Jamison, described him as “the complete package. He is a people person because of his pastoral background and has great administrative skills. He is a breath of fresh air.”

Galilee University was ready for a new leadership and new opportunities. Little did Belding know the immediate leadership challenges that would be upon him and the role that his faith and upbringing would play in his new position. The last decade of his leadership and pastoral experiences had prepared him so well for the challenges that were ahead.

Leadership Challenges

On the day the movers came to load his furniture in the truck, Belding received a call from the chairman of the board. Instead of wishing him a good trip, he instead told him of a board directive—to cut the current budget by one million dollars. Can you imagine the feelings that must have rushed through his mind? Questions like: “Why didn’t anyone tell me this when I was going through the interview process? Did they not know there were financial issues that needed to be addressed? Were they hiding this from me? One million dollars in cuts, how am I going to do that? Why do I have to be the ‘bad’ guy? God, what are you trying to tell me?”

Yet, he knew that he was in it for the long haul. Literally, by moving across the country, he had time to think, talk to key people, and pray. In his prayers, he knew that God had called him to this new leadership responsibility and that He would be with him

each step of the way. It wouldn't be easy, but God gave him the confidence that He was there and would not leave him on his own.

In the four first short years of his presidency, he would face several difficulties that revolved around financial issues. Initially, he would have to work through the issue of budget cuts in order to reduce spending by one million dollars. This also included carefully dealing with some issues on the board, including specific board members. Some of them wanted him to slow down his vision for growth and presented themselves as obstacles to his aggressive goals. Just recently, the state decided to cut back its financial aid budget for students at private schools. This would present additional financial challenges and pressures to meet the needs of students and to adjust budgets accordingly.

Other challenges would come his way. However in his short time as president, Belding would be able to set the direction and move the University forward on an aggressive path of growth.

Leadership Style

This new president was prepared and ready for these leadership challenges and others that would come his way. Hilburn, a faculty member, described his presence as "infusing new life and vision" into the college. Another faculty member likened him to Collins level 5 leader (Collins, 2002). Jensen said, "He has the integrity and the vision and allows people to do their thing by not micro-managing." He is a collaborator and a visionary, a good people person and participatory leader, decisive yet open to the ideas of others, committed to both excellence and mission, enthusiastic and focused, ambitious

and confident. Salas, a staff member, said, “He gives you a stir as you see something ‘go’” (Salas).

One faculty member tells a story of Belding’s college days. Belding had been recruited to a large state university to play quarterback. However, he decided to go a small Christian college that was sponsored by his church denomination. Since the college did not have a football program, he decided to play catcher for the baseball team. Worden said, “Whether it is the quarterback or the catcher, both positions control the game. He is used to being the guy in control. Because of the way he is wired, he fits perfectly as president.” Even in athletics, Belding’s leadership style was apparent and the position he played was indicative of his presidential role at Galilee.

While he is certainly the man in control, his leadership style emanates as one who is deeply passionate about his faith and the pursuit of knowledge. He is both a pastor and a philosopher at heart. As a pastor, he cares for the faculty, staff, and students. As a philosopher, he is committed to discovering the truth and applying it to life. As a leader, he demonstrates both in his practice as president.

Model the Way

Kouzes and Posner suggest that “exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behavior they expect of others” (p. 14). Leaders are examples to others within the organizations. Through their example, they establish a standard of behavior within the organization. This way in which a leader acts is based on his or her guiding principles. These guiding

principles are the values that a leader ascribes to and seeks to act on in a leadership position.

To model the way, a leader is committed to looking inside to discover one's personal values. By clarifying these personal values, Kouzes and Posner believe that the leader finds his voice. Also, the leader is committed to setting the example by aligning his actions with the shared values within the organization.

Sitting in the president's office can often be intimidating. Sometimes I feel the power and control and it is the feeling that I am lower on the "food chain." And yet, in this president's office, it is comfortable and personal. Rather than sitting behind a desk to demonstrate distance and power, he greeted me as another human being with significant value. He sits in a chair with a coffee table in between us just as if we were sitting in his living room. Immediately, I felt energized talking to him and knew that I could work for this man. Quickly, I learned more about him, his faith, and the values that drive his passion to do this job as president.

Modeling the way is important for this president. Sometimes it is what people see. However, his modeling begins with his own personal time. Belding said, "I begin every morning at 5:00 a.m. by reading my Bible, praying, and then reflecting on my faith. I pray for family and the executive team." He remembers some of the challenges and pressures they are facing and then asks God for direction and offers up specific requests. In the office, he quickly rattled off several specifics situations involving kids of his vice presidents. He knew them, knew what difficulties they were facing, and had been praying faithfully for them. He said "his care for them is rooted in his prayer for them."

Belding also remembers why God brought him to this university and the mission that it serves.

The Mission and the Concept

The president who led the college in its formative years developed the mission statement of Galilee. It became the heart and soul of the college. It also became what attracted this new president to the institution. Davis, a faculty member, said that “he has picked up on this more than any other president.”

Essentially, the “concept” is the mission statement of the university. It says that “Galilee University is a community of learners distinguished by our lifelong involvement in the study and application of the liberal arts, total commitment to Jesus Christ as the perspective for learning and critical participation in the contemporary world.” It is a statement that gives the personnel a focal point—a guiding statement that everything must flow through and from.

Not only is it a statement, it is something by which modeling takes place. Bond said, “This president lives by the concept. It is on everything. He is a real believer in it—He lives it, preaches it, and believes it.” This mission statement permeates what this president does as he leads by example.

O’Conner, a vice president, remembers a speech in which Belding said that “everything is the mission. Learn it, recite it, frame it if you don’t get it.” She then laughed because this speech was given at a recent leadership retreat. Everyone from the administrative team was to have had this mission statement memorized and then had to recite it to the group. When it was her turn to say the mission statement out loud, she got

it wrong. Belding then gave the speech and a subsequent fine to the entire team. In a humorous way to get his point across, the entire group was given a small fine even if one member of the team failed to get it correct. He was serious about this mission statement and its guiding concepts. He wanted them to memorize it, but he also wanted them to live it out in the “everyday” responsibilities.

Davis, a faculty member, said that “he has really done a good job of keeping people focused on it. He talks about it and writes about it. He believes strongly in it.” Mandel elaborates further that this “becomes his creed for him and his bully pulpit wherever he goes.”

For Belding, this mission permeates every aspect of the university and it emanates from his leadership by example. In order to better understand the mission and to effectively implement it through all disciplines, the faculty are required to take a special class in the mission of the university in their second year. From the perspective of a faculty member, Jette said that “everything is funneled through it.” This includes his desire for growth at the university. Ogle, a vice president, recalled Belding saying, “If this is the best thing going on then why wouldn’t you want to see more students?” This simply flows from his commitment to Christ and his commitment to students—more students who will be impacted by the mission.

One of the things that Belding realizes is that he has to be the “protector” of this mission. In this case, Belding tries to interview all potential new hires. Jamison said that “he meets with most new hires to get an understanding of their passion for the Lord, school and students.” Salas, a staff member, said that “he wants to know where their

faith is at. He does not want to know the credentials as he leaves this up to the director or department head. What he does want to know is that this person's faith is clear."

As an internal candidate for a VP position, Hewitt said that he asked her about her faith journey. "He wanted to know more than where she was now in her life. He wanted to know the past, her vision and goals. He asked questions about her relationships with family. He knew that life outside of the office profoundly affects one's performance."

Sitting in the president's office, he told me a story about a compass. A compass is a tool that points a person in the right direction. For him, it is important to have spiritual disciplines in place—the disciplines of prayer and Bible reading. These disciplines were in place in his life long before he came to Galilee. As he reflected, he said that "who he was before he got here works." This is who he is as a man of faith. Through his daily focus on the spiritual disciplines, God guides him in the right direction.

The spiritual compass and the mission of the university that is central to his heart motivate him in his leadership role. Even though he has been here for such a short time, he has already had the opportunity to consider another presidency. However, he says that he "has a long term commitment to the university and an ethical obligation not to pursue other offers. This enables me to be true to myself and to the Lord." He models his commitment to his faith and to the university he serves by staying—even when the challenges get tough and other opportunities are available.

Faith in Action

The way this president shows his faith is through modeling. Some Christian university presidents place great value on chapel. While Belding is not the charismatic

“preacher” that one might find at other Christian colleges, he is committed to the importance of chapel. He models this importance by attending whenever his schedule will allow as well as speaking once or twice a semester. Jamison, one of his vice presidents, said that when he speaks, “he never wastes the 40 minutes. He uses the time as best as he can and gears it to the students. He pulls in references so all different types of students can relate. Through this time, his faith is first and foremost.” When he is there, he models his faith.

This faith is also put into action as he team teaches a course, which is not typical of today’s busy college presidents. Mandel said that “this is very symbolic that he wants to teach.” Most presidents don’t have time to step into the classroom as they are called on more increasingly to focus on fundraising and external relations. However, Belding wants to be connected to the students as well as to the academic world. This is so important to him as a person, as president, and as an academician.

As he works with his leadership team, he also seeks to model his faith. Bond says that “he always lives out his faith. For example, he took the cabinet to an interfaith shelter as a way to reach out to the community.” This also helped them to bond together in their faith as they were able to practice it together.

Belding’s faith in action was apparent on “9/11.” It was such a dark day for America. Everyone was scrambling to understand what had happened. Belding received a call from Davis, one of his vice presidents, suggesting that they cancel classes and lead the campus in prayer. This vice president remembers him saying to the students, “Our faith in God is bigger than this event. We are not going to let this beat us.” He used this event as an opportunity to pray with students anytime he could. Instead of canceling

classes the next morning, the university kept the regular schedule. They already had a special convocation for the beginning of the school year planned. The faculty and staff marched in silence to set the tone for the convocation and to remember those who lost their lives the day before.

Value for People

One of the values that are clearly evident in this president is his love and respect for people. This comes from his father's influence on him as well as his pastoral experience. Sometimes, however, this value for people can get "sticky." Belding told the story of a vice president who wanted to pursue a presidential search at another college. He told him to go for it. So, he went through the search and the board offered him the position. He first said "yes" and then changed his mind twice. After he said "yes" the second time he sent Belding a letter of resignation. The next Sunday morning he called Belding to see if he could get his job back at the university since he was thinking of changing his mind once again. Belding told him that he had already given away three-fourths of his salary to fund other positions.

Even though he had high regard for this man, Belding was definitely frustrated and let him know that there was not a place here for him at the university anymore. He was "ticked" and hung up the phone on Belding. He could not power his way back into a position even though he had close relationships at the university. Belding knew that he could not tell others what really happened. He could not offer the full explanation as it appeared to some that he was running off good people. But he wasn't. This person was valued. In fact, Belding demonstrated his value of him by not telling others what really

happened. Belding reflects that he “can see the way God worked.” He did not malign him and attempted to value the person. At the same time, he had to steward the university and do what seemed best at the time.

Even though this situation was difficult to walk through, Belding remained committed to his value for people. Typically, his value for people often came out in his relationships with those around him. Meger, a vice president, called him and said that “he needed Belding’s help and right now.” He could do this because “Belding is my friend. He is the president but he is also Gilbert.” Raymond, a staff member, talked about the monthly one-on-one meetings that he has with the president. During this time they would talk more than “just nuts and bolts. There is an opportunity to dialog about areas of our faith. It has been really unusual from my experience for this to happen as he is really vulnerable with him.” Because of Belding’s concern for people, he modeled a heart of a pastor.

“God Will Provide”

Egos and pride can often be part of the image of the presidency—especially when the leader is successful. Belding feels the pride getting in the way when he is criticized by the trustees. He wants to come back to them and say, “What do you think you gave me when I took over?” Some thought the place would not succeed. He goes on to say that “pride is short-lived as he tries to be humble year-to-year.” One of his faculty members validated this. Worden said, “Belding is more pleased with the outcome than his role in it. It is his faith that keeps him from pride.”

Some would describe the way this president models his faith is intellectual. Perhaps this is because of his deep passion for philosophy or his connections to Richard Foster, a deep Christian thinker and author. After all, Pascal is his favorite author. He gave one of his books to his wife for as an anniversary gift. While he “does not wear his faith on his sleeve,” according to Mandel, he certainly has a “can-do” faith and one that believes that God will provide. He further describes him as being pastoral as he works through issues.

Meger, one of his vice presidents, feels that the president has a huge responsibility to steward this organization. He hears Belding say that he “wants to stay close to God so that he is not the one who screws it up.” Homan says that “he is a man of deep integrity and you never have to worry about him being ‘off-duty’.” There is a definite dependence on God and this brings him back to a position of humility. This value is significant for Belding as he models the way for others at the university to depend upon God for all things.

Inspire a Shared Vision

An exemplary leader inspires a shared vision. Knowing where the organization is going is critical to shaping its future. A leader must be able to envision the future of the organization by creating some excitement and invigorating possibilities. Through this, the leader is able to encourage others to join the effort by appealing to shared goals and desires.

It is interesting to consider one’s legacy and what it might be. For this president, Belding knew right away that he wanted his legacy to be one where he focused on the

mission and ensured the continuance of the culture of the University. For him, this means that under his presidency, the university will never leave its faith and Christian commitment. While many church-related and faith-based colleges have chosen to veer from this path, this will not occur under his watch.

This certainly takes vision. In fact, the Bible says that “without vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). As I sat in his office talking to him and others during my three days on campus, I heard much about his vision—the future path for this university. Meger, one of his vice presidents said, “A lot of leaders talk but they don’t cast. Belding talks and he deliver. He takes all of us. He is the energy and the glue.” In other words, he inspires a vision that is centered on the desire for growth and the integration of faith and learning.

Vision for Growth

It seems like most university presidents desire growth. Perhaps it is an ego thing as they think the bigger the university, the better; the more students, the more revenue. For Belding, his desire for growth is about becoming “a place of significance.” He said that “he doesn’t think he leads with ego. Raising scholars is deeply satisfying and growth helps to educate more.” In addition, he said that “you have to stay on a growth plan to get faculty salaries up.”

Belding’s vision for growth is aggressive. According to one of his vice presidents, Ogle said that he wants to have an enrollment of over 6,000 students by the year 2,010. At least 2,000 of these students need to come from the traditional student population in the undergraduate program. Right now, the total enrollment is approaching

4,000 students with approximately 1,500 students in the traditional program and 2,500 in the adult program. “When he first came in saying that, I was scared. But then I put together a plan by telling him what I needed.” Belding listened and gave him the resources he needed to move the vision forward.

Some of the faculty and staff remembered when he first came to campus. Hilburn remembers Belding saying that “you can curl up and die or you can aggressively grow.” He believes that Belding has a “real vision for growth and where we need to go.”

When he came he first began to share his vision for growth. Meger, a vice president, remembers him rattling off the things that they were going to accomplish together by 2,010. He still recalls the words that Belding said, “God has brought us here for a unique time—this is the time to smile on Galilee.”

Homan said that one of the things he did when he first came was to “take the strategic plan of his predecessor as a starting point. This was his blueprint and template and then he put his own twist on it. Until Belding came, he did not know what the previous president wanted. I think the former president was threatened by growth. Now Belding has come in and given us a clear vision for where the university is headed. He wants growth but not at any cost.” Belding’s commitment and vision for enrollment growth is rooted in his value for the mission of the university.

This desire for growth also includes increased academic quality. Davis said that “there has been a lot of Tier One talk since he came.” Essentially, this is the level of academic performance as compared to other similar schools. To be in the top tier means that the university competes with the best academically. However, Davis did not think

that the focus should be on reaching Tier One status. “We will never be a Wheaton or Taylor. We can be a good Tier Two, though. This is our niche.”

Not only is his vision for the university focused on growth and academic quality, it also includes transformation. Homan says that this transformation is focused on the “change that takes place in the lives of students through the power of Jesus Christ.” This is rooted in his own personal transformation. Jette suggests that his faith is not static but it is personal. “Because of what God has done for us, what we do in response is critical.”

Hunter tied this vision to the Bible. “So much of the Old Testament looks at prophets envisioning the future. The Christian faith is based on hope. A natural leader can convey this hope and look to the future. Belding came in and cast a vision. Because a visionary like him came in the university has been able to move forward. I hope he is here twenty years. In fact, I remember one of our former presidents who handed out 3x5 cards to all of us one afternoon for us to write out a vision for the school. I remember coming home saying that his presidency ended that day. If the president can’t cast a vision and has to rely on others to give it, then he should go.”

Belding is committed to this vision for growth, both in enrollment numbers and in academic quality. This vision is not much without some hard work. Belding’s perspective on this vision is that he “prays for miracles and then works for results.” Since he has been president for four years, the university is well on their way to reaching his goals.

Vision for Faith and Learning

Growth isn't the only area of focus in this president's vision. He is also committed to the continued integration of faith and learning as part of his vision. Williams believes that "he is actively interested in the strong integration of faith and learning." While Williams has seen "Christianity as a useful prop at other schools," he believes that Belding "wants to see the faith as a regular part of the university here."

As Hewitt reflected on Belding's vision, he said that "he has a good understanding of the role of higher education and faith. He makes a good argument on why Christian education is so important. When educating students, he says, how do you not ask the God question? Belding believes that you cannot be fully educated until you ask the God question."

According to David, Belding's vision for faith and learning isn't just a simple attempt to "tag on Jesus to learning." He wants the university to be a place where faith is truly integrated throughout the educational experience. This also includes his administrative leadership. He talks and lives this vision which inspires the faculty and staff around him to carry it out in the classroom. Nichols said, "He is really committed to this faith and learning and this drew him here." What drew him here also inspires him to continue to pursue this integration in a greater way as this becomes the essence of what makes Galilee a Christian university.

God's Leader for the Hour (and hopefully longer)

Many of the faculty and staff believe that the vision Belding is leading has been God-given. Jette believes that "the Lord sends the right people to lead the university at

the right time. We just finished our accreditation review, we had minimal debt, strong academics and a good physical plant. We were ready to take off. Belding really grabbed the reigns and has given us leadership. He sets goals and works toward them. He is the man for the hour.”

Jamison, one of his vice presidents said that “he has God’s calling on his life to be here. He has been given a vision for this university and we are seeing the fruits of his labor after a tough first year.” Even when Belding went through the search process, he committed the decision to God and His leading in His life.

“Belding was here about 20 minutes and he already knew our distinctives. He is smart, academically prepared, and the Lord’s man for this time—it’s awesome,” according to Hilburn. While some leaders flounder in this area, Belding has excelled. One of the reasons he has excelled is his desire for excellence as suggested by Meger. “He has always been an achiever. He is convinced that God expects the best in each of us. He expects excellence. People here weren’t thinking big enough. Instead of asking “why?” we should have been asking “why not?” This tipped the scale for me.”

Jensen doesn’t believe this vision is “God-given, but it is God-ordained.” In other words, God didn’t send Belding a note with the vision all laid out nor did God speak to him in an audible voice giving him the plan. Rather, God led Belding to Galilee to breathe vision and a future direction to the university. Through his own personal relationship with God, he has been led to carry out the vision on his heart. Jensen believes “God is honoring his leadership and he wants to see the university grow to impact the Kingdom.” For Belding, his work as president is simply God’s will for His life right now.

Sharing the Vision

To inspire the vision ultimately means to share it with others within the university. In the beginning of the academic year, Belding has a special workshop for faculty and staff. Donovan said, “Belding plans the topic, selects the speakers, and then sets the direction for the year.” This is so important to get everyone on the same page at the beginning of the year.

He also has developed an Institute to train faculty and staff in the mission and vision. Belding has actually co-taught three rounds in about 11-12 sessions. The key focus is to use this to transform the culture while inspiring his vision to be shared among them. This is required for faculty and staff to go through at some point in their career at the university.

Even with the community of Galilee, he has to inspire them to share his vision. For example, Bond shared a story of Belding’s work with the township board to build new tennis courts. Rather than getting angry with them when they said the university could not do this, some were irate and ready to “go to war.” For Belding, it was not worth the battle. What Belding wanted was new tennis courts and soccer fields for the community and the university. Community battles like this one can be difficult especially when politics and the needs of a growing and expanding university are on the table. Sometimes these two can be in conflict and opposition to one another.

Belding handled this situation with poise and political diplomacy. He worked through the obstacles with the township board and helped to inspire a shared vision for both the community and the university. Bond said, “His faith really came through as he did not get angry with the group. He compromised and presented a win-win solution that

made both the university and the township happy. Later, the township supervisor stood up in a meeting and thanked Galilee to the group. Belding took a difficult situation, looked into the future and was extremely perceptive.” In the past, the university president had developed an adversarial relationship with the community leadership. Now, Belding had turned the tides and the result was a “win-win” for both.

Challenge the Process

Exemplary leaders challenge the process. They look at the current ways of doing things and suggest new and innovative approaches. This involves taking risks and searching for opportunities to move an organization forward rather than leaving it in its current state to stagnate. As the leader takes these risks, he or she learns from mistakes and generates small wins along the way.

Challenges come in many shapes and sizes. Some are simple and some are complex. These challenges can come at you unexpectedly. For Belding, he did not see some of the challenges coming his way. It can be difficult to know quite what to expect as you move from the position of dean at one university to president at another. However, while some challenges come at you unexpectedly, there are some cases where you challenge what is going on in order to move the organization further along.

Belding faced two financial challenges during the first four years of his presidency. In the first situation where he had to cut \$1 Million dollars from the budget, he challenged the board and the consultant’s recommendation to create an innovate solution. In the second situation, where financial aid was being cut by the state, he focused on his commitment to the students by making up the shortfall. Belding also

faced challenges with some of his board members, he took a risk by hiring a Catholic Christian at a church-sponsored university connected with a Protestant denomination, and he led the college through the change to university status.

First Day on the Job—\$1 Million in Cuts

How could he have even predicted that he would get a call from the board chair the day his family's moving van was being packed for the long trip across the country? Belding remembers sitting on the front porch talking on the phone watching his furniture and boxes being loaded on the moving truck. The board member said to him that he would need to make \$1 Million dollars in cuts. He remembers saying to his wife, "Well, it looks like the honeymoon is over."

Actually it was probably good timing. He was able to drive across the country, consider this impending challenge, and how he would handle this difficult situation. He could think, strategize, talk to board members on the phone, discuss the issues with his wife, and above all, pray.

Jamison, one of his vice presidents, remembers this issue that he faced. "He had to cut \$1 Million dollars out of a \$27 Million dollar budget and he had not even begun yet. How do you do this without hurting morale?" What precipitated this need for financial cuts was the result of a study conducted by a consultant. Ogle, one of his vice presidents spoke negatively about the actual consultant who conducted the study. He remembers this consultant coming in at another college he used to work for and essentially concluding the same thing. "He used standard formulas and the same solutions. Essentially, he said that we needed to let go of some faculty and staff and

replace them with student workers. He also said that we should eliminate 20% of our academic programs—to get rid of the dead weight. The board members really grabbed his recommendations and told the president that he had to make these cuts.”

This would be the most difficult part. Another Vice President summed up the consultants report, “Cut, cut, cut, cut—it’s the only way.” Budget cuts have a negative result on the morale of the people. And, with this significant amount, this is not something a new president wants to do as his first presidential act. At least he could say that it wasn’t a mess that he created.

Homan believes that “the board was not fair with him. The board tried to hide this from him. Some of the leadership knew and did not tell him. This event could have really jettisoned his presidency. However, he came in here and dealt with it. It did not ruin his presidency.” He remembers Belding being upfront with the faculty and staff saying, “This issue is not of my doing and God will provide.” He had a steady confident spirit while he handled a difficult situation.

Williams, one of the long-term faculty members recalled that “this happened so often with every president. This became the reason why a board changes presidents. The difference is that Belding dealt with this issue in the appropriate way.” Belding dealt with this issue head-on by challenging the process. He was not stressed by the situation because he did not create it. He had to find a solution to the problem and he knew he had to do it in the way that would satisfy the board while minimizing the impact on faculty and staff. The consultant said that he needed to cut 14 positions. However, Belding knew that this could be challenged by seeking alternatives. There had to be another way and Belding would find it.

Based on his value for people, he knew that he could not cut these positions. Instead, he placed a hiring freeze on any unfilled positions and he also froze the new capital purchases budget. He froze wage increases and took the cap off on some course limits. While some were pushing him to make the cuts in other ways, he knew that he did not want this to be the beginning legacy to his presidency. Belding said, "As Christian leaders we have to have the guts to turn the knife when needed to make tough decisions. However, there are always options and choices to make. Because of the life long value of people that I was taught by my father, I place the highest respect for people and family. To me, this is an important component to what it means to be a Christian."

One of the other things that he did was to convince the board to spread these cuts over a three-year period. This was different from what the consultant had recommended to the board and was certainly a risk for a new president. However, according to Jette, he knew that this would be less of a blow to the budget and ultimately to the morale of the faculty and staff.

Some might have thought that this situation would stress out a new president. However, Hunter remembers that "as a measure of his integrity and leadership potential, you never saw him wear that stress. He came in and took the initiative and handled it in stride and committed to it in prayer. He was able to cast a vision by telling us where we were at and that we were going to do it right. That's what he told us on day one. There is no doubt that he was on his knees and praying to the Lord for direction. This is how he functions."

What was a challenging and unexpected situation became an opportunity for him to challenge the process and to do it a different way. He created some wins and set his

sites on an aggressive vision for growth. This made a difference early on in Belding's presidency and it became the catalyst for change at the institution.

Another Financial Crisis

This would not be the only financial crisis at the university in his short four year tenure. Similar to the first financial challenge, this next one would be one that was not created by him. The state in which the university was located created a mess with financial aid which actually resulted in two situations.

Salas, a staff member, said that "the state was supposed to provide money half way through the year. However, there was some paperwork that was not done and we ending up not getting \$100,000. The president responded that this is one of those things and no one lost their job or was 'out the door' for this mistake."

Another situation arose when the state decided that there would be reductions to the state grants for students at private colleges. This amounted to about \$300,000 in lost money for the financial aid packages of students. Hunter said, "His integrity came through to the students and to the faculty. He had to make a tough call. Do you replace this money with institutional money for the students or do you hire new faculty?" For Belding, his decision went with the students. He remembers Belding saying, "If you had to be loyal to someone it was to the students." The faculty were "kind of miffed at this because they were placed in overload situations." However, Belding had been loyal to faculty by increasing their salaries six times in the last three years as part of his ten year plan. Essentially, his commitment was to the students and to the faculty who were already a part of the university family.

In this meeting the faculty realized that he was committed to them. The university had just recently been reported as the lowest of all 42 colleges in the state for salaries. Homan said that “this offended the president and he was not going to balance the budgets on the backs of our people.” After he shared the full story with the faculty, they gave him a standing ovation for his commitment. Belding was willing to take a risk in this situation by focusing on the people of this university.

Ogle, believed that “with Belding, you never got a sense that we were sunk with this situation. His perspective was always, ‘if we are honoring God it will work out as long as we work at it. He has a firm belief that God will see us through because of what we are about.’” Even though these situations were difficult and the financial pressures were great, Belding depended on God, took risks, and generated wins for his leadership.

Board Issues

It seems like working with a board always presents challenges and issues for the president to deal with. Belding remembers his first week on the job when he was asked by two board members to fire a vice president. He responded to them by saying, “I may reach the same conclusion but I want to watch him for a year.” He watched him for a year and saw his strengths. But he also saw that he was not in the right position for his gifts and strengths to be used in the best way. Instead of firing him like the board members wanted, he decided to offer him a transition position. The vice president’s first words were, “this is such a relief.” He knew it, the president knew it, but the president handled it in such a way that brought honor and respect to this employee. Rather than

firing this person, he challenged the process and sought to do it his way—a way that valued people.

This helped the vice presidents to know that they would not be immediately fired, although he did have expectations for them. “I always want to hear the bad news first, to have full disclosure and for there to be no surprises. For the vice presidents it is important for them to be loyal or leave,” said Belding.

Often he would talk to the vice presidents about his frustration with the board. Jamison, one of his vice presidents, likened this situation to the old comedy about an undercover agent called Get Smart. He referred to the “cone of silence.” A cone would come down over the secret agent when he got a phone call about a top-secret matter. No one else would hear what was being communicated to him in the “cone of silence.” The same is true for the executive team meetings. Whatever is said in these meetings would stay there. “With the board, he was frustrated. But he did not attack. He used the team to vent and to also gain input. His faith and background kept him from going after people” and from allowing his frustration to seep out with other people.

“There were about six or so board members who were causing problems. They were never satisfied by saying that we’re moving too fast and wanted to slow it down. Some board members would rather park a truck in front of it and evaluate every step.” Belding wanted to move the university forward and was aggressive about implementing his vision for growth. Jamison remembers a defining board meeting at the end of Belding’s second year. A board member raised a trivial issue. Belding responded passionately that this “issue” really wasn’t an issue. He was able to stand for what he believed and challenged those for which he worked.

In another situation with a board member, he told him to stay away from another. “However, as soon as he had an opportunity, he made friends with him,” according to Salas. “He and his wife are now building an art gallery in front of the campus. Belding does not turn away from difficult people. He wants to clear the air since it is a new day.” Instead of running from or avoiding conflict, Belding embraced the person and won him over.

A Principled Hiring Decision

As discussed earlier, Belding is involved in the hiring process for all employees. And he is involved in the hiring of his vice presidents. One of his vice presidential hires was controversial. Belding was in the process of looking for a vice president when he got wind that a potential candidate was leaving the position where she was employed. O’Conner remembers getting a call from Belding. He said, “Could we talk?” He drove to meet her to talk to her about her vision and to express that he was interested in her. There had never been a female in a vice presidential leadership position at Galilee. Not only was she a female, but she was also a person of color and she was Catholic.

No one questioned her credentials. Her resume looked great. The main issue was that she was Catholic. Typically, colleges tied to Protestant denominational groups do not mesh with Catholics. There are some significant differences in beliefs. However, O’Conner remembers that “he opened up to her and said that there is a place in the community for people who love the Lord in the evangelical tradition. He opened this possibility up for me and it was not an easy decision for him.”

Belding knew that this could be a difficult political issue and he could not afford to risk the political capital on his own. He flew a board member out to meet her.

Nichols, one of the search committee members, said, "We knew it was his decision. One day he was speaking out of fear that we could not do this. The next day he made the decision. He prayed about it and knew this was the right decision for the right time."

Salas remembers him saying, "I'm clear; all hearts are clear on this one."

For Belding, there was no reason not to hire her and he stood up to challenge the process. However, this was certainly a risk for him. He decided that he would act by principle and challenge the process that a Catholic could not have the same faith as his university propounded. He made his decision and as a result, little criticism resulted. Now, Galilee has a minority female in a position of significant leadership at the university in contrast to most other Christian universities.

From College to University

One of the changes that Belding made was to aggressively position the college for continued growth. He felt that the status change from college to university was essential. Many other private colleges were making this move and he was not about to be left behind. Some on the board were once again concerned about this change. Ogle said that "some of the board members were here back when it was a junior college. They felt like the college shouldn't change and fought the idea of growth."

The faculty and vice presidents believed that this change should be made. Rather than pushing this through the board, he allowed the board to work. This was his way of seeking small wins and ultimately the innovation that he desired. It went through a

committee and then through the board. Jensen described this as “a miracle especially when a two million dollar proposal for marketing was approved to go along with this name change. We were expecting this huge battle but it moved right through. Prayer was the key.” In fact, the president suggested that the board have a prayer meeting first in an effort to see if this would be God’s will. This prayer was answered and the decision moved easily through the process. Sometimes what seems to be a challenge is nothing other than a perception issue to overcome.

Enable Others to Act

A president can’t do it on his own. He must enable others to act. Kouzes and Posner suggest that exemplary leaders encourage and stimulate collaboration among the employees of an organization. They do this through cooperative goals and, in turn, this build trusts. In order for the leader to do this, he or she must share power and discretion among the people.

Sometimes this can become difficult when egos are involved, especially for a university president. However, as Hilburn, a faculty member, described him, Belding “empowers people.” He is also not the type of president to use intimidation tactics to get people to do their jobs. Instead, another faculty member said that he is “so approachable.” Belding is the type of president who enables others at the university to act in their respective areas of responsibilities.

Relationships with Vice Presidents

It is essential for the president to work closely with the vice presidents. During his four years at Galilee, Belding has been building his administrative team. The only VP to continue on from the previous president is his Vice President for Enrollment. The others, for one reason or another, have transitioned thus enabling him to select his own team. At this time, only one Vice Presidential position remained in transition, the Vice President for Student Development.

Hewitt, a staff member and alumnus, said that “he concentrates on relationships with the VP’s and not a lot of others beyond that.” The administrative team is his focus as he works through them to accomplish the vision. Meger, one of his vice presidents commented that “he depends on the executive team for collaboration by asking, ‘What do you think we should do?’” This enables the team members to offer their own opinions as the group decides what is best to do as the leadership team of the university.

He has a close relationship with his vice presidents and will not overstep his boundaries with them. Jensen, a faculty member, said that “he allows the VP’s to get it done. He trusts you to get it done.” One of the issues that the executive team recently dealt with was the proposal to add a \$100 technology fee for all students. Ogle said, “Belding had definite feelings that this should be a fee. He allowed the discussion to go on and felt like he was heard.” Even though there was disagreement on this issue, Belding listened and then made a decision to move forward.

It is important for the vice presidents to come to him when a problem arises. For example, when Ogle realized that there had been a miscalculation in financial aid, he came to Belding. He said, “Here is what could happen. Belding then asked what are

some solutions? He was calm and controlled his emotions.” He lets his vice presidents do their jobs but he expects that they have solutions to the issues in their area.

On another occasion while meeting his vice presidents, they were all discussing whether or not to add an ROTC program. Belding said this “clashed with his soul because of his conservative church upbringing.” However, his academic vice president and vice president for enrollment wanted to do move forward with this program because of its potential to attract additional students. As an administrative team, they were able to have a “healthy” discussion on the issue. They decided as a group to add the program even though he did not want to do it. As they went from the meeting, Belding was able to defend and support the decision.

Because Galilee has changed presidents and vice presidents too often in recent years, it has been difficult to have a stable leadership team in place. This also makes it difficult to have a consistent strategic plan. Homan said that “this is the first time since 1988 that we have had a leader who leads by team.” Belding could have exerted his authority and the power of his position on some of these issues. However, he knew that it was important to enable others to act. After all, he was just one man and one voice. He sought to rely upon others to make critical decisions along the way, especially his administrative team of vice presidents.

Enabling Others in a Pastoral Role

One of the things that Belding did early on in his presidency was to lead in a pastoral role. According to Homan, a faculty member, “The former president meant well but he was nasty and did a lot of damage. Belding spent the first year in a pastoral role to

get beyond the hurt. He said, ‘Come in as often as you want and talk about what happened’.” This was the process that he needed to take in order to build trust back into the culture. Through this rebuilt trust, he would enable others to act.

September 11th was a difficult day for most Americans. With the results of a terrorist plot carried out before our eyes over and over again on our TV screens, the nation was gripped in fear of continued violence. Rather than calling classes off, Belding decided to go about business as normal. However, he did call several campus-wide events. He also encouraged faculty and staff to work through the crisis with the students. He knew that the faculty and staff were on the front lines with the students and they would be the best support to discussing this tragedy. Through this tragedy, Belding enabled the faculty and staff to act since they had the closest connection with the student impact and they could make the most impact during this time of crisis.

In another difficult time on campus, the Athletic Director remembers an incident with several soccer players who were caught drinking. It is always difficult when “star” athletes violate school policies. Typically, these situations receive significant attention from the University community as they watch to see what the administration will do. In this case, the student athletes had been drinking during the training camp prior to the beginning of the academic semester. The students had said that since classes had not officially started, that there were no lifestyle expectations placed on them. The coach had clearly outlined responsibilities on the first day of camp.

Raymond recalled that Belding’s response was that “we had handled it appropriately.” This was a difficult situation for the president since the parents were influential and had significant wealth. They came at him directly to get him to overturn

the decision. However, he allowed the coach and athletic director to act in this situation and was in support of their decisions. He enabled them to act in their areas of responsibility and Belding gave full support to them.

However, this support may not always be there even from the faculty and staff within the institution. One thing every president knows is that there will be faculty members that are on the edge or may not be liked by others. When Belding arrived, he recognized Worden, a faculty member who did not walk in the mainstream opinions of his colleagues. Rather than ignoring him, he took him out to dinner. This faculty member said that the president believed that “if this guy is going to be a problem then he will go to the source and see what he is really like. This president would rather deal one-on-one and work to take a lost canon and tie him down with the ropes of a relationship.” Belding was allowing this faculty member to act within the bounds of a relationship with him and the university.

In most situations, Belding seems to be a president that enables others to act. He hired vice presidents to take responsibility in their areas and to lead. As he empowers his vice presidents early on in his presidency, he will in turn build a team to move the university forward. Only time will tell the success or failures and potential longevity of this team.

Encourage the Heart

Building the community spirit in an organization takes encouragement—encouragement from the leader. Kouzes and Posner suggest that an exemplary leader encourages the heart of those within the organization. This occurs in two primary ways.

First, a leader is able to recognize the contributions of others and shows appreciation to them for their excellence. Secondly, a leader creates a sense of community by celebrating the values and victories within the organization.

For Belding, this encouragement takes on many forms. Whether it is through his focus on prayer and praying for the needs of the people, in the context of chapel, a Christmas party, one-on-one meetings, or a phone call, Belding encourages the hearts of the faculty and staff at Galilee.

A Praying President

Growing up in a Christian home, Belding was surrounded by praying parents. Through their example, as well as the example of other Christian leaders in his life, and his own personal journey, Belding demonstrated a focus on prayer in his leadership practice.

Jamison, one of his vice presidents talked about how he began meetings in prayer—even personal meetings. He said that “he likes to start and end meetings in prayer.” Another vice president remembered an executive team meeting in which Belding was late. Usually they begin meetings at 2:00 p.m. but on this day he came in at 2:20 p.m. This was not like him to be this late. He recounts the story of how Belding came back to campus from a lunch meeting. Before getting to the building where his office was at, he ran into a student whose mother was dying of cancer. He stopped to pray with her. This was why he was late. Meger said, “This is our Gilbert Belding.”

Talking to Belding, he remembered a story from the past weekend. One of his vice presidents called him on the weekend to tell him about his daughter running away

from home. He got in his car and drove around for three hours looking and praying for this girl. He was concerned about her and dropped the demands on his own personal schedule to care for and pray for one of his team members going through a difficult time.

Sometimes his prayers would be in private one-on-one meetings or in a specific situation. At other times, he would pray in public. Ogle, one of the vice presidents, suggested that his use of public prayer is somewhat related to his being a pastor. “He has been a pastor before and is used to starting meetings in prayer. However, I don’t get the feeling that his prayers are rote.” His prayers are a part of who he is and is an expression of his faith. In fact, sometimes his vulnerabilities come out in his prayers. Hilburn, a faculty member, remembered when Belding’s mother was dying of cancer. He shared how he was struggling with this and asked other people to pray for him and his family.

Several others commented on how his decisions were rooted in his prayer. A vice president sees this firsthand in the context of executive team meetings. O’Conner said, “He will say, ‘let’s pray about it together’ when facing a difficult situation. Every decision comes out of prayerfulness and he is influenced by what God’s will is for the institution.”

While faculty members may not see this personal side of him, the assumption is made that he prays for decisions that are to be made. Williams, a senior level faculty member, said that “clearly he is a person of prayer.” In meetings with the faculty and staff he will reference that he has been praying. Another faculty member, Jensen, suggested that he believes that prayer is involved in every decision that he makes.

One of the unique and close relationships that Belding has is with Worden, a faculty member. Early on in his presidency they chose to be accountability and prayer

partners. During their weekly time together, usually while exercising, they talk about what God is doing, confess sins to each other, analyze things going on at the college, and pray for one another. Typically, a president may not let a faculty member in this close to his life. However, this type of relationship is built on trust and respect for one another as well as the desire to grow in one's faith.

For this president and man of faith, his prayers come out of his deep relationship with God. According to Salas, it is not a desire to make a show, but rather it is attitude of humility and dependence upon God for all things. His prayerfulness deeply impacts his leadership practice as he seeks to encourage the hearts of others.

A Heart of Encouragement

Many commented about the different ways that Belding encourages the hearts of the University community. One form of encouragement that the president enacted was the creation of a motto for the year—"A togetherness thing." Donovan remembers that this helped to set the direction for the year. The motto was printed on all of our business cards. "It was a small cost but it is there. You will see them all taped all over computers and desks." While it was a simple step, it helped to provide encouragement that everyone was united together at this university.

While this was directed at the entire faculty and staff, Belding's main form of encouragement is directed at individuals. Davis remembers running into Belding after a faculty meeting. He ended up talking with her for about 20 minutes. "He never made me feel uncomfortable. In fact, he was driving the conversation in theology and he acted like

we had all the time in the world. It really feels like he is always willing to give people time.” For Davis, it was the simple gift of time that was such an encouragement to her.

Davis also needed to get a reference that Belding used in a recent meeting for her sister. Her sister lived in the northeast and was in education. She first thought, “I can’t call him on a Saturday morning to get a reference.” Getting over these initial feelings, she decided to call him. He answered the phone and said to her, “I’ve got all the time in the world,” when she told him that she was sorry for calling on a Saturday. Davis said, “He is so approachable I could talk to him all day.” Sometimes it is the simple phone call on a Saturday morning to a busy president that encourages the heart.

A couple of staff members talked about encouraging phone calls they had received from the president. Nichols ended up in the hospital twice. “Belding was the first one to call me to see how I was doing. He affirms the image of God in others. In some ways, he is like a ‘pastor’ president.” Meger, a vice president, said that, “He will just call me to see how I am doing today. The pastor spirit really comes out.” Through his phone calls, Belding demonstrates the heart of a pastor through his encouragement.

Yet, Belding encourages the heart in other ways at the university. Sometimes, it is words through a chapel or a small party. Last year, Belding spoke in chapel at the beginning of the semester. Hewitt remembers that “he started his talk by saying he wanted to express his heart. He called students by name referencing Heather and the passing of her mother and Andrew and the career conversation he had had. He was excited about what God was doing spiritually in their lives as well as on the campus. He was there for the students.” This president encouraged the students that day as he showed his love for them and weaved his faith into his talk.

Christmas parties can be fun and draining at the same time. For a university president, this time of year can be especially busy. Meger, one of his vice presidents, remembered the last Christmas party they had. “Belding talked about how much he appreciated us—his vice presidents. He then broke down and cried. He said that he prays for us every single morning when he gets up at 5:00 a.m.” Meger was encouraged at this president’s heart as he knows he has a disciplined time with God everyday. “Because of this, I am more inclined to follow his leadership. He has set his compass on Christ.”

Because of his passion for his faith and his love for people, Belding is well respected among the faculty, staff and students. This appreciation carried over among the faculty even though their major complaint is being part of a growing campus where they are overloaded and overworked. However, Hilburn said that “Belding expresses his appreciation to the staff for their work.” This is so important and it helps to cushion the overworked faculty. Ogle sees that “he allows people to feel validated. He thinks the best of people and this is a reflection of his own faith. He realizes that everyone has spiritual gifts and makes every effort to respect and honor the person.”

The president keeps an open door to the faculty and staff. Students will often stop by to speak to the president. Salas said that even the janitor can stop in to talk to him. “He has been such an asset to the campus,” said Hilburn. Most feel comfortable with him at the helm. They even feel comfortable to tease him every now and then. At a recent opening faculty/staff retreat, a couple of faculty members sang the song, “I’ve got you babe.” However, the word “Babe” was replaced with his last name. There is an atmosphere of love and respect for him and his leadership.

Raymond remembers when Belding showed up in the middle of baseball batting practice one day. “He gets out of his car, grabs a bat, and gets in line. He was standing there with his tie and dress shoes on. He then hits live with the guys. He has no idea what this does with the guys. At a girl’s soccer game, he comes by to stand and watch. Students actually root him on. He even wanders into the cafeteria and has lunch with kids.” Sometimes it is the simple action like this that encourages the hearts of others.

A President has the ability to encourage the heart. At Galilee, this president demonstrates this in many ways and in many situations because his faith encourages him to value other people. This makes the difference in his leadership practice. The faculty, staff, and students see it and are encouraged.

The Influence of Belding’s Faith on His Leadership Practice

One of Belding’s role models is the president of a major public university on the West Coast of the United States. Belding contacted this president to meet with him. He wanted to learn more about leadership and believed that he could benefit from the example of a successful president. However, the major difference between the two leaders was the faith commitment and mission of Galilee as compared to that of the public university. Both are successful at their respective universities and Belding wanted to learn from someone who had already been down this leadership path.

Exemplary leadership, as described by Kouzes and Posner, is reflected of leaders regardless of their faith perspective. While the leadership practice of both could be described as exemplary, one of the significant differences was the role of Belding’s faith in his role as president. In reflecting on Belding and his presidency at Galilee, there were

several areas where his faith influenced his leadership practice in ways that would not be evidenced in other leaders.

First, Belding's leadership acts were pastoral in nature. His value and respect for people as carried out in his leadership practice is driven by his faith commitment and his pastoral background. He seeks to reach out to those around him and shows a genuine care and concern for them. This concern emanates from his focus on the spiritual needs of those around him.

Secondly, Belding placed great emphasis on the role of prayer in his leadership practice. Prayer is the time when Belding spends talking to God about his life, his requests, and the challenges before him. Through this personal time in conversation with God, Belding is able to refocus on his faith and seek guidance from God as he leads this university. He also uses prayer when he is one-on-one, in small groups, or with the university community to show his dependence upon God.

Third, as a leader, Belding placed great importance on the pursuit of God's will as a joint process between him and God. Leadership challenges that have come his way have brought him back to the calling and direction of God upon His life to provide leadership as president. Belding, through his desire to provide vision for the university, would seek God for the direction of Galilee.

Fourth, the mission of this university, as defined in the Concept, provides the leadership rhetoric Belding uses to funnel everything that he does at the university. As a university seeking to integrate faith with learning, this mission is different from other non-church or non-faith based universities. Because of this difference, Belding's speech

is focused on “God-talk” whenever he is with a group. This also forms the basis for his action as he wants all thoughts and activities to flow out of this faith-based mission.

Belding believes that “God brought him to Galilee.” In his presidency, Belding is committed to living out his faith through his leadership practice. As he looks forward to the years ahead and the eventual legacy that he will leave behind, Belding hopes that he will remain true to his faith and the Christian mission of this university.

CHAPTER FIVE

DR. PETER DEVITTO – CAPERNAUM UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The small rural farming town had not changed much as I remembered it. I had been to this university campus on several occasions in the past. As I drove down the familiar roads to the campus, Capernaum University had come a long way in its growth and campus development since my previous visit. In some ways, the university had become the town with its new buildings.

Since there were no hotels in this same town, I had made arrangements to stay with a family that worked at the university who also owned a large farmhouse. They often rented out their extra rooms as a bed and breakfast for university guests.

The next morning, I woke early and drove over to the university. As I drove on campus, I could immediately sense the impact of the president's leadership. He had just retired from his 25 years as president and this was his first fall in his newly created position of chancellor. I walked past several new buildings on my way to his office. One of the largest buildings was named after this former president and his wife.

While I would not actually spend time with this former president during my three days of interviews, I actually worked out of his office. His office was located away from the busyness of the administration building. Yet, it was strategically placed in the student center. His assistant for many years worked closely with me during my stay. His office barely looked used. In fact, he had intentionally chosen to be away from campus since the new president took over. He had wanted to create the space for the new

president to exert his leadership style and presence without the pressures of the previous president looking over his shoulder.

For the next three days, this would become my home as I immersed myself in the campus interviewing many different faculty and staff who worked closely with him during Devitto's tenure. After my visit to this university, I would visit this former president in his townhouse in Florida where he now lived during the winter months.

Capernaum University

The university has been around since 1887. "Through the vision of five godly men who dreamed of a college that would provide Christian young people with an education that was offered within a spiritual framework" (University Catalog, p. 3). It was originally associated with another denominational church group for its first fifty years. However, because of difficult times, the trustees were faced with a decision to either close the college or find another group to lead it.

At just about the same time, another Bible institute within the same state was searching for a campus to move to in order to expand. The trustees of both colleges soon came to the decision that the Bible institute should assume ownership of the college campus. This occurred in 1953 and it soon became a Christian college of arts and sciences. The man who suggested this became the president who preceded Devitto. This president served for twenty-five years before Devitto was selected as president. At this time, the total enrollment had grown to 1,200 students.

For the next twenty-five years, from 1978 to 2003, Dr. Peter Devitto would provide leadership to the college. The college would experience rapid growth to nearly

3,000 students when he left, a transformed campus infrastructure, and more than 100 programs of study.

Over one year prior to his departure, Devitto announced his resignation. He wanted to ensure that an effective search could take place to find his successor. Just as the previous president led for twenty-five years, so did Devitto. During this leadership tenure, Capernaum was transformed to become the university of significance that it is today.

Foundation of His Faith

Devitto grew up in a Christian home. He remembers back to his senior year when “God changed his life.” He said that he “went from never reading his Bible to wanting to lead everyone to Christ.” Going to a Christian college in the Bible belt furthered his zeal for evangelism. “God opened the doors for me to preach ‘everywhere.’ Evangelism started early for me as I preached and sang in a quartet. I was also involved in radio ministry and Youth Crusaders. During college I preached in over 100 churches.”

His heart for evangelism shaped his desire to preach after college. In fact, he was invited to Capernaum by the former president in the mid-1960s to preach in chapel. Little did he know that he would come back to the college several years later as the president.

In 1971, his wife was actually hired as an English professor for the college and they moved to the rural town. While his wife taught at the college, he continued to preach as an evangelist throughout the nation.

Then, in 1978, the trustees began a presidential search. He remembers receiving a call from the president's office asking him for some names of people he could recommend for the position. Jerome, the president prior to Devitto, then mentioned that "your name keeps surfacing." Devitto knew that he had never led anything except for his own personal life and family. However, he began to consider this possibility and pray about the opportunity.

During that time, as part of his own personal spiritual journey, Devitto kept a special diary. In his diary he began to make a list of things that would be important for him to do if he was president. He also prayed a lot about it and made a list of reasons why he should or should not consider the position of president. He remembers thinking that he "had a heart for college students and discipleship ministries. This was opportunity to pursue this in a full-time way." Soon thereafter he walked out of his house and said to himself, "if there are two negative votes then I will not go." However, it was unanimous and decided to give it two years." He concluded that if it did not work and the leadership challenges were too great, he could always go back to full-time evangelism.

Leadership Challenges

Leadership challenges seem to come with the position of president. For Devitto, he would face one particular defining moment early on in his presidency involving a leadership struggle between an academic dean and his associate dean. What would result would be a clear statement of who was in charge during a particularly tenuous time in his leadership.

This event would clearly be the biggest hurdle and challenge that he would face. The others seem unparalleled to this. The challenge of leading a college through the innovative risk of being on the front-end of the technology wave would become a test of his relationship with the students. Other challenges he faced include moving the academic calendar from quarters to semesters and leading the change to university status. Finally, in his last year of presidency, he would get caught up in the middle of a political battle between the church group associated with the university and an opportunity to connect with another like-minded denominational group.

Leadership Style

Sitting on his screened-in back porch, Devitto reflected on his own leadership style. “God made me to be the one in charge—to have vision and to make decisions. There would come a time when the gavel needed to be dropped. I was a strong leader and was able to make decisions.” He also described himself as a “pastoral president” through his development success in relationships with donors and students.

During his presidential tenure, Devitto created a campus culture that demanded excellence and was led by his authoritative leadership style. His leadership style was simply described by Barto, a staff member, in this phrase: “I want things done my way.” Devitto knew what he wanted—he wanted quality and excellence throughout the institution. Bacon said that “he led by example. He took his own strengths and built them into how Capernaum operated.” He would spare no expense to reach his goal. Rinker described Devitto as “a unique blend of CEO and evangelist.” The college did not get an academic leader, but someone who was used to speaking and inspiring the crowds

with his Gospel message. He was better in front of the group rather than his one-on-one relationships with the faculty and staff. Rosen said that a relationship with him is like “hugging a cactus.”

Through his empowering and inspirational presence, Anderson said that he would lead from a “top-down approach.” Campbell, a faculty member, described him this way: “He gave Capernaum strong leadership. Yet, his weakness was that he most often decided before he asked. He would give you a say but you were not sure if it had an impact.” Rudlow, another staff member, said that “His spirit is warm and caring. Yet, he is direct. You know where he stands. He can synthesize quickly and drop the hammer.” Schroeder, a long term faculty member, said that “Devitto believed that the final decision was his to make.”

“He created an environment that supports a sense of entrepreneurial spirit. He likes new ideas and supported them,” said Simon. Austin, one of his vice presidents added, “He is a gifted leader. He could have run any organization.” He inspired and empowered many.

O’Brien, a vice president, described his leadership style in four ways. “He is entrepreneurial in that he takes advantages of emerging opportunities. He is a benevolent dictator. Ultimately, his decisions were his. He is a visionary as he is always seeking the next thing on the horizon. Finally, he is an inspirational leader. He could read the cafeteria menu and make it interesting. He has an amazing platform presence.”

Model the Way

As I walked through the entryway and down the hallway, I could not help but notice the “Legacies of Leadership” wall display. It was a gift provided by the 1991 graduating class and “displayed any trustee, administrator, faculty, or staff person who has given twenty five years or more of his life to service to Capernaum family.” I looked more closely at the wall and found about 70 women and men on the wall who had committed their lives to this university for at least 25 years.

It went on to say, “Someone has aptly said ‘Everything rises or falls on leadership.’ These leaders among us have been ‘patterns of good works.’ They, like David, the man after God’s own heart, have led Capernaum by the integrity of their hearts and guided us by the skillfulness of their hands (Ps. 78:72). These men and women will be remembered for their commitment, ‘For the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ,’ has left an indelible impact on the lives of the Capernaum University Family.” This wall would not only symbolize the legacy of leadership at the university but also the legacy that this president left behind as he modeled the way.

Modeling the way is an important leadership practice for a president. This begins first with the leader, with his or her values and guiding principles. As Kouzes and Posner suggest, “People first follow the person, then the plan” (p. 15). Leaders model the way by “setting the example through daily actions that demonstrate they are deeply committed to their belief” (p. 14). During this section, we will look at some examples of how Devitto modeled the way while he was president of Capernaum University.

A Leader's Prayer Life

Devitto would not consider himself to be a great prayer warrior. However, he said that “if you are going to lead, prayer has got to be a cornerstone of your life.” He kept a special diary which he called his “seven-star diary.” In it, he recorded his prayer requests and often would call people to encourage them or pray with them about a crisis going on in their lives. On the first day of each month he would pray through the entire prayer list. One of his long-time staff members, Rudlow said that “he has a time with the Lord each morning before he comes to campus. I know this from our conversations over the years as he prays specifically for university family needs by name.”

His emphasis on prayer came out in two special days of prayer that the university had for the entire campus community each year. All classes were cancelled from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and the focus was committed to praying for the needs of student, faculty and staff. For Devitto, he remembered a special and significant day of prayer. An Australian man came to Capernaum as a result of a team of students that visited his country. He became a Christian and his wife left him with his daughters. She disappeared when she left him. Finally, she was found with another man and this went on for seven years.

Devitto recalls, “On the day of prayer, we claimed his wife for God. This was a major thrust and focus of our prayers that day. A few days later this man received a call from his estranged wife. She told him that on this particular day of prayer (she did not know about this) she came to the conviction of her sin. She is now back with her husband and they are involved together in full-time ministry.”

An Evangelist's Heart

What began early on in his college career as Devitto's passion for evangelism continued on in his role as president. He took every opportunity to share the Gospel as he was "interested in the benefit of a soul," said DiCuirici. In every contact he would make his heart as an evangelist would come out. Blackwell said, "He could walk into any situation and connect with people and turn it into a Gospel connection." He simply could not stop being who he was. He was an evangelist first and college president second. Rudlow reflected, "There is not a man in the [area] that has not heard the Gospel from him. After he would meet someone he would send a Bible to them with their name on it."

Gaines commented that it doesn't matter who he is with, his faith and the Gospel is something he automatically expresses. In fact, several events were used first and foremost as an opportunity to bring people in to hear the Gospel. The annual golf tournament is an example of this event. While the golfers certainly had a great time playing the game, Devitto would always share the Gospel with them and talk to them about Christ. "He always had a strong connection with those who came and it was all wrapped up in his evangelistic appeal" (Gaines).

Another event that occurs annually at Capernaum is Grandparents Day. Initially the students talked about the idea for this day. Students would invite their grandparents for a special day on campus. They would spend time with their grandchild visiting them in their dorm, touring campus, and eating meals. However, according to Barto, the motivation that Devitto saw was for the opportunity to share the Gospel in chapel with them.

This driving passion would fuel his leadership at Capernaum. He never stopped preaching and sharing his heart and the God he served. He had a great platform presence and he “shined” in front of a crowd. He was gifted in being up in front of groups sharing with the crowds. Often, on the platform, he would use this time to share his values that would drive everything he did while president at Capernaum. He used his rhetoric as a way to model what he believed and the values that led him.

“The Only Explanation for Capernaum is God”

For twenty-five years Peter Devitto’s leadership focused on God at Capernaum University. Simon said, “He lived a holy lifestyle with a clear commitment to the Word of God. He lived what he believed and this gave him credibility. It is hard for me to separate Capernaum from Dr. Devitto.”

And it is difficult to separate what happened at Capernaum from God. In fact, Devitto used a statement over and over again. He said, “The only explanation for Capernaum is God.” He deflected the accomplishments of his leadership to God by giving God the glory, according to Schroeder. Reeves said, “Devitto had a strong understanding of who God is and his plan. It was because of his faith in God that he understood what happened here is because of God. And he was okay with that.”

Many reflected on this phrase during the interviews because it was a part of Devitto’s rhetoric and heart. Barto was in a unique situation as he saw Devitto as president from the student’s perspective and also from a staff perspective since he went to college and then worked there following graduation. “Devitto realized that it was not about him but it was about God. He always gave glory to God. Capernaum is all about

God.” Devitto was able to attribute what was happening at Capernaum to God rather than to his own leadership.

Ashman saw this as Devitto’s legacy. While he transformed the campus by raising over \$100 million for the university, Devitto knew that every gift came from God. Ashman said, “What we receive comes from God. Paul was the person here for the time.”

As I sat with Devitto, he thought about some of the things that were accomplished that could only be explained by God. He rattled off several things that came to mind. “In the world of fundraising there were tough times. Humanly speaking I wondered how we would get it done. I remember praying in the eleventh hour often and then I would get the call and the commitment we needed to reach our goal.”

“At other times there were changes at the last minute that took us in a new and better direction. This was because God was leading us. We were ahead of the curve on so many things, including technology. God led us to take these risks.” The only explanation for Capernaum was God, and perhaps, the leadership that Devitto modeled.

“Chapel is the heartbeat of any Christian College”

Another important part of Devitto’s rhetoric that he modeled focused on chapel. He is well remembered for saying that “Chapel is the heartbeat of any Christian College.” What he meant by this is that you could get an underlying sense of the spiritual focus of a Christian college by the tone set and spiritual focus established in chapel. Christian colleges vary on the frequency and requirements for chapel. For some colleges, chapel is not required. For others, chapel is a requirement for a couple of days a week. For

Capernaum, chapel attendance was required five days a week. The students met Monday through Friday morning from 10:00 a.m. to 10:50 a.m.

Devitto put his heart and soul into chapel. In fact, it was so important to him that he took responsibility for the chapel program out of his office. He planned the speakers, gave direction for the music and provided the overall leadership to the chapel program. This presidential involvement is unique to the Christian colleges as it most often resides in the student development division.

During a trip to a Bible Conference to speak, Devitto met a man who led the worship. Diciurci remembers talking to Devitto about a job opportunity to lead the music for the chapel program at Capernaum. “Devitto took out a table napkin and wrote out my resume on it. One thing led to another and it was the right job for the right time. He brought me here to be the minister of music. I remember him telling me that ‘chapel is the heartbeat of any Christian college’.”

“Devitto felt so strongly about chapel. He wanted to make sure that speakers were carefully selected. He wanted a quality experience for them” (Jones). Bacon believed that this came out of his evangelistic background. “Devitto spoke to the entire Capernaum family during the Monday chapel. He stressed the importance of community and family and would use this time to focus on student issues. The culture of Capernaum revolves around chapel. The spirit of chapel maintains the heart of the campus.”

“I saw him as the pastor here,” said Barto. “He was always the spiritual leader of Capernaum. He set the tone.” It this tone that he modeled week after week on the platform—He modeled his faith and his passion for God. He knew that many Christian colleges had moved away from their faith commitment. He wasn’t about to let it slip

away at Capernaum. Schroeder said, “So the chapel goes so goes your institution.” For Devitto, chapel became the vehicle by which he modeled a community-wide commitment to faith.

“Everything done in the name of Christ ought to have quality stamped all over it”

Devitto believed in quality. He believed that “everything done in the name of Christ ought to have quality stamped all over it.” Devitto’s pursuit of quality would permeate everything that he would do, whether it was his home, his car, or the university that he led. Some felt that this bordered on materialism, others believed that God expects excellence.

For Devitto, everything he purchased was of quality. His presented himself with fine material surroundings. His operational philosophy was that he would rather purchase something of quality and lasting value than to have something that was cheap. He took great pride and care in the building of his presidential home. Rosen said, “He laid out the house and walked through all the details. He had special marble tile laid in the foyer. The detail in his house is amazing. Yet he was not building a monument to himself.”

Yet, Schroeder, a faculty member questioned his expensive taste, especially with his choice to drive a Lexus. He asked, “How do you reconcile this with the need to reach the poor? I know we are not perfect and Devitto is not some kind of James Bacon nor is he selfish.” Rinker believed that at times his passion for excellence and quality things would “border on materialism.”

Some would view his focus on quality things as inappropriate for a Christian to be so consumed with “nice” things. Reeves said, “Peter was big on image. He believed that it was positive for the mission of the institution and was convinced that it was positive for the mission of the institution. However, this image was given inappropriate weight at the expense of other things.”

The irony was that he saved the renovation of his office to the end of his presidency. His office was in the oldest building on campus. Schroeder, a faculty member, said that “it was so old you could hear the floor creak. It was in need of a real face lift.” However, in contrast to his commitment to excellence and having the best things, he chose to focus his efforts on building the campus rather than renovating his office. He knew that he could not spend valuable resources for his own office. He also knew that this would be difficult for the next president to accomplish. So, he raised the money in the last year of his presidency and remodeled it for his successor.

For Devitto, he believes that this is the way God used him. He said, “I still have the original bedroom suite in our condo. When God created he said that it was good and excellent. To do something that is good and of quality is a testimony to God. Twenty five years ago I made the commitment to quality here at Capernaum. All of the professionals that came to campus that are unsaved are impressed with the students.” Any visitors to campus were certainly impressed by his commitment to quality and excellence.

It was his value for quality that pushed him to pursue excellence things at the college. For Devitto, he believed that God demands quality through his creation.

Therefore, Devitto pursued this throughout his entire presidential tenure. Now, as the campus stands, one can look back to this value that Devitto modeled.

Inspire a Shared Vision

Leaders inspire a shared vision. Kouzes and Posner suggest that “leaders envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities” (2004, p. 14). Not only do they communicate to others, they also get others onboard. Leaders are able to enlist others to share in the vision.

Devitto inspired a shared vision at Capernaum. He said that “God used him to be a visionary and to be a creative thinker. God blessed him this way to come up with ideas and to be more focused on the big picture.” Devitto certainly believed in God’s sovereignty and ultimately in His direction at Capernaum. Because of his walk with God, this gave him faith and insight as a business man.

Chapel was often the place where Devitto shared his vision and inspired the community. In fact, chapel itself was part of his vision. This is where his heart was at and where he evangelistic zeal to share with everyone. The chapel hour was so important that he pushed to have a building where all the students could gather for one hour a day. This time together set the tone for the campus and enabled the vision to be shared weekly. And yet, he would often close chapel with the song, “Christ is all I need.”

Mission and Vision

The vision is the future. It is a view of how the mission will be carried out. For Devitto, he focused annually on the mission of the university. Simon remembers

cleaning out some of his old files in his office. He found an outline that Devitto had used eight years earlier at a beginning of the year meeting with faculty and staff. The outline was the same. In fact, it was the same every year. He would use this time to review the mission and objectives of the university. Devitto would always keep this in front of the people. For Barto, who was used to seeing this for the past two decades, it was a surprise when the Devitto's successor did not do this.

Dockett, a faculty member, said that "most will remember him for his vision for the university. He was never satisfied with the status quo. God uses people to move a work to a higher level."

The mission was something that influenced the interview process for prospective employees. As each potential faculty and staff person would sit in Devitto's office, he would show them a plaque with the Capernaum mission on it according to Schroeder. He wanted them to be aware of and know the mission of the university. Everything would flow from and through this mission, including the vision for the university.

A Vision to Build

Devitto's legacy will be remembered in the amount of money that he raised to build the campus that exists today. This began early on in his presidency. In his first year as president, the enrollment experienced a drop. This would be the only time during his presidency that the enrollment would decrease. And yet, it was during this time, that his vision to build began. He asked the trustees to build a dorm and they followed him (Campbell). He must have inspired them to believe in the future since it is typically not prudent for a university to build a new dorm during a time when enrollment was down.

One staff member remembers this time in 1980-1981. O'Brien said that "Capernaum did not have a good line of credit and there was no money coming in. We needed money for the dorms as applications began to come in. Devitto shared his plan with the board and finally one member spoke up. The board then got behind him."

From this project, Devitto inspired the board to consider a campaign for a new library. Capernaum had never raised significant dollars and this would be the first major building and campaign that Devitto would tackle. The library, at a cost of \$5 million, would lay the foundation for future campaigns of \$8 million for the engineering/nursing building, \$15 million for the ministry center, \$21 million for the student center, and \$12.8 million for the fitness/recreation center.

Austin said, "He is the one with the faith that it can be done. Before he stuck a shovel in the ground, he was the one to say we could do this with God." During these 25 years of raising money for buildings, Devitto was always able to complete the campaign. He did not lead Capernaum to any type of financial crisis nor did the university acquire any long-term debt.

The ministry center was one of the most significant accomplishments for Devitto. The administration looked at several options since they had run out of room in the old chapel. Cobb remembers driving out-of-state on a trip when he received a call from the president. Devitto said that he had been praying for a new chapel and music building. In fact, Cobb was thinking about calling Devitto. One other vice president came to the same conclusion separate from this conversation. So, the three of them, in a 12-hour period, came to the same decision by looking at the same data. They would step out in faith to pursue the largest campaign to date for this signature building in the life of the university.

It is easy to see how Devitto inspired a shared vision. Devitto was a master fundraiser. He thrived in relationships with donors. Through these relationships he shared his vision for the future of Capernaum in a specific building. The donor then shared in this vision by giving to the university. Devitto never got discouraged about raising more money for more buildings. Austin said, "He always trusted God. He prayed hard and diligently about it. God always provided the piece of the campaign you did not know where it would come from." And now, over \$100 million dollars later, the campus enjoys many state-of-the art facilities that make Capernaum the university that it is today.

A Vision for Technology

The greatest risk that Devitto took was to anticipate the technological and computer wave. He began to ask the questions dealing with what information, storage and retrieval will look like in the future (Cobb). His vision quickly formulated to having a computer in all the dorm rooms on campus that would be wired to a network. A deal was reached with IBM to be a showcase campus for this computer network and innovation in education.

The faculty bought into this vision pretty easily. However, it was the students that had difficulty with this. The interesting thing about this is that Devitto did not initially sell the students on this concept. Rather, he let one of his vice presidents present this plan. Reeves, one of his vice presidents, remembered that this "wasn't very pretty" with the students. The administration had failed to involve the students in the process and it wasn't a shared vision.

Devitto was out of town when this took place. The students reacted strongly against this idea because it would add significant cost, at least to them, to their tuition bill. Rosen remembers an article in the school paper written by a student that played off of Devitto's statement that excellence and quality should be stamped all over it. Instead, the student said that the "computer network had excess written all over it." Some other students floated a sign in the campus lake that said "sell your lexus and get a network." Both of these were intentional "slams" against Devitto.

Upon his return to campus, Devitto took the next chapel opportunity to talk to the students about this uproar. He began by apologizing to them. Reeves said, "This helped to quell a lot of the heat. He would also say, 'I blew it' and was transparent with them." He then walked through with the students the reasons why this network would be good for them. He simply shared his vision and called on them to share in it with him. This is what he should have done first with them. Blackwell said that when Devitto stood up in chapel to deal with this issue, he talked about strategic planning and how this would prepare the students for the future.

At the end of this chapel presentation, Devitto had turned the tide. He had inspired the student body to share in his vision for this computer network. He received a standing ovation from them. Convincingly, the student outrage for paying an extra \$700 a year changed to focus on the technological benefit they would receive for their future. Devitto certainly learned his lesson. The irony is that he did not even know how to use a computer himself. And yet, he had the vision to lead the drive for technology at Capernaum. "He was willing to dream big for God and he did not hesitate to give God the credit," said Rinker.

Challenge the Process

Leaders typically face many types of challenges. Challenging the process, according to Kouzes and Posner, includes two components. First, the leader searches for “opportunities by seeking innovative ways to change, grow, and improve” (p. 17). Leaders are pioneers; they are out in front seeking new opportunities. Old processes and methods are challenged to bring in new ways of doing things. Secondly, the leader “experiments and takes risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from mistakes.” Leadership certainly involves risk-taking as one sees to move the vision of the organization forward.

At Capernaum University, Devitto was described as an entrepreneurial president by some. It is this idea and concept of entrepreneurial leadership that seems to best fit this principle whereby innovation takes place. Over the course of his tenure, there were a few significant events and innovations that describe how Devitto challenged the process. First, the most significant challenge that Devitto faced occurred early on in his presidency with a clash over leadership in the academic area. Secondly, as we have already seen in his vision for technology, this also demonstrated his willingness to challenge an old way of thinking. Third, his decision to move from the quarter system to semesters challenged yet another antiquated way of thinking and organizing the academic calendar. Finally, he sought innovation by reaching out to a new denominational group that would “ruffle the feathers” of those in their current church association.

Academic Leadership at a Crossroads

Within the first few years of his presidency, in 1982, Devitto faced a challenge that would set the direction and tone for his tenure. This challenge involved the faculty and the academic vice president. Interesting enough, most of those interviewed talked about this challenge.

As members of the faculty, there was a “dynamite couple” who were well-respected by their peers, according to Devitto. In order to help with some of the administrative load, she was promoted to an associate dean position by the vice president.

She was doing so well that she was moving past the academic vice president in ability and leadership. According to Devitto, the major mistake that was made by the vice president is that he did not do his homework to get everything ready for the transition. She was not given a specific job description or parameters of responsibility for her position. And she saw some of the weaknesses in the academic vice president. Anderson, a faculty member, recalls that “she assumed more authority than intended. She was evaluating the chairs.”

According to Devitto, the academic vice president “misjudged her personality. She wanted to fire two department chairs. She wanted a better title. She wanted to meet with the trustees. She was young and cutting edge and some faculty were drawn to her.” However, the problem was not the fault of this dynamic faculty member in this new leadership position; this was the problem of the academic vice president. Devitto’s perspective was that the academic vice president is to protect the president and not let it become a problem for the president. However, it soon became obvious that the academic vice president could not solve the problem and Devitto would need to intervene.

Rhode saw the main issue as an administrative one. From his perspective, the academic vice president hired the associate dean without a job description. She was told to make it up on her own. She then began to evaluate department chairs on performance and pushed for high standards. The academic vice president began to lose support for his newly chosen associate dean.

“Devitto was in a tough situation. He had to support his academic vice president,” according to Rhode. Jones, the academic vice president, appreciated Devitto’s support. “Devitto stood by me and he exonerated me. He took a stance that was unpopular.”

Devitto hired a friend and consultant to conduct a study of the situation. The results of this study took away some of her authority. However, the faculty wanted to vent during open meetings. What resulted was a divided faculty. Devitto knew that this was not good for the university however he was attempting to give his academic vice president the opportunity to solve the problem.

During one board meeting, a trustee asked Devitto, “Isn’t it time for us to get involved?” Devitto responded, “Absolutely not. You have to be confident that I can solve this.” Devitto knew that he had to be the one to be responsible for the issue and that he could not let the trustees get involved in an issue that did not involve policy or strategic planning.

At the next faculty meeting, Mr. Biddle’s husband, who was also a faculty member, attacked Devitto. Obviously, this was extremely frustrating to Devitto. He remembers going home and telling his wife that he had dealt with the uncertainty of this

issue and its lack of resolution from his academic vice president. Devitto told her, “It is over.”

The next Friday Devitto wore a black suit at the end of the school year to the faculty meeting. Schroeder remembers this as a “cold faculty meeting and a defensive young president.” Another faculty member, Rinker, recalled that this was where “Devitto drew a line in the sand and stopped the discussion on this issue.”

He told the faculty that the issue was over and that Mr. and Mrs. Bixby would not be returning to Capernaum. Rhode remembers Devitto telling them that “there are things that I can’t tell you about as an administrator. I understand your point of view but you have to trust me as an administrator.” He wasn’t going to go into the details for his decision. It was a top-down decision that Devitto made. He had given them one year’s leave of absence, thus paying them for a year. They had signed papers of separation from the college as a condition of their termination.

This challenging time took a toll on Devitto’s leadership, and especially for his wife. His wife was best friends with Mrs. Biddle. However, as Devitto remembers, “God gave me the strength to keep going. He gave me the faith and I saw the Lord in all of it. And, the faculty got the message that they weren’t going to lead.”

Anderson was disappointed in Devitto’s leadership during this time. “He did not see the faculty perspective. He formed a committee to discuss the issue for about a year. It did not resolve anything and ended up polarizing the faculty. At the end of the year Devitto said that he was tired of the tension. And he then went on to blame it on the faculty by saying we were drastically out of line. He told us that we should move on if we did not like his decision.” The disappointment came in the view that Devitto always

brought into the philosophy that everything rises or falls on leadership. To the conflict, his answer was a decree. For Anderson, it was not handled in a biblical way and more of a dictate from an autocratic spirit.

On the other hand, Reeves watched Devitto process this decision. He saw “the strength in his commitment to core values and his faith in operation. Devitto knew he had to act responsibly and that ultimately it was in God’s hands.” Goodman believed that Devitto “dealt with us as a spiritual matter. This decision was done fairly and he went the extra mile to make sure they were provided for.”

Other faculty believed that Devitto’s decision was vindicated. Rinker said, “Devitto was not afraid to make this decision. He was confident in the sovereignty of God. He was vindicated over and over again. Several individuals went back to him and said that he had made the right decision.” Dockett, another faculty member, said that this couple got a divorce within a year or so of leaving Capernaum. There were major issues in their lives and “their true medal was revealed.” No one mentioned whether or not their marital issues were already occurring during this time or if they may have resulted from this a difficult time of transition. For Bacon, it seems that this situation tarnished Devitto’s future relationships with the faculty. “After that time, Devitto was not willing to get close to a faculty member.”

This certainly was a significant challenge in Devitto’s early days as president. In some ways, the process of allowing faculty authority and the ability to lead was the ultimate challenge. Devitto’s style would not allow this. His decision to challenge the process resulted in a strong autocratic leader for the next two decades.

Innovation in Technology and Engineering

While the decision to bring in a computer network in the dorms inspired a shared vision, it is also an example of how Devitto challenged the process. O'Brien remembers that "it was a significant step for us promotionally and to better serve our students." For Devitto, it was a decision to be innovative and to be on the front-edge of the technology curve in education. It was certainly a risk but one that paid off. At that time, it was on the front-edge of the technology focus for colleges. In fact, IBM used them as a showcase school for their innovation in this area.

Not only was Devitto innovative in this decision, he also took the same risk with the nursing and engineering programs. During a time when many colleges were dropping their expensive nursing programs, Devitto pushed to add this program. Quickly it became one of the programs that attracted many new students to the university. This was certainly a risk for the college since nursing programs can be expensive programs to operate because of the resources needed. However, it was risk that helped to fuel Capernaum's growth.

He also brought in a new academic vice president to not only provide needed leadership but to also begin the engineering program. Walker said, "Devitto was looking at our market in Christian higher education and its reach. He wanted to see the Christian influence in engineering. He saw the need." There were only a couple of other Christian colleges that had an engineering program and neither one of them were located in the same region of the country as Capernaum. Devitto was willing to take the risk. He sought to be innovative and to be on the front-edge. What resulted were innovations in

programs that helped to put Capernaum University on the map. These programs fueled the continued growth and created momentum.

From the “Old” System to the “New”

Most colleges and universities are on the two semester system for the academic calendar. Not Capernaum University; they were on the “old” quarter system. Campbell recalls that in the 60’s the university went from semesters to quarters. In fact, most colleges in the state had the same quarter system. However, during the next 40 years, many colleges would change to many different structures. Capernaum held on their quarter system as one of only a few with this system.

Devitto did not want to put this critical change on the plate of the new president. As he anticipated his retirement, Devitto decided to move forward on this issue. He set up three different task teams that were involved in various aspect of a study to examine the pro’s and con’s of this change.

Some faculty did not want to make this change. However, Devitto knew that he had to challenge this familiar system and move ahead to be on par with other universities. Walker said that “he did not take a faculty vote and some felt that he should do this.” However, Devitto never allowed votes to be taken. He was the decision maker and the leader. He did not want to leave this decision for the new president and had sufficient information from the study to make the change. “He had to evaluate all of the programs and he did it well. There was a lot of work and questions. The faculty were split. The change impacted all aspects of the school,” said Campbell.

For some, this seemed to be a risk for Devitto. In some ways, it really wasn't innovative. It was one of those decisions that had to be made since there were only a few colleges that still had this academic calendar. The risk focused on the impact that it would have on faculty and the changes that would need to be made in the academic schedule. It would involve the expenditure of resources, both time and money, to make this change. Yet, it would result in little innovation for the university.

A Disgruntled Denomination and the Relationship with a New One

Since its early days, Capernaum had been associated with a conservative, fundamental church denominational group. While it did not call itself a denomination, it was more of an association of about 1,600 churches. In the early 1900s a group of churches separated from a mainline denomination because it felt that it was drifting toward liberalism and away from the fundamentals of the faith. This new association had about five colleges that were "approved" by the leadership. This approval gave Capernaum access to the association meetings and acted as an endorsement of the college.

Devitto was part of this association of churches. In fact, for many years, he served on their leadership council. He preached in their churches. Their pastors served on the Capernaum board and spoke in chapel. The university enrolled their students. It was a good relationship. Capernaum was looked upon as the "favored" liberal arts college in the association because of Devitto's relationship with them. For twenty-five years, this relationship thrived. That is, until the end of Devitto's tenure.

Toward the end of his presidency, Devitto began to develop a relationship with a mainline denomination that fit the conservative theological and lifestyle positions of the university. Two board of trustees were pastors in this denomination. Devitto began to discuss the potential relationship between the university and this denomination in a more formal way. In fact, they came to Capernaum asking how they could cooperate in a greater way with the university (Goodman). He believed that their endorsement would help to attract additional students to the university. This would be seen as a “win-win” for the university and the denomination since they did not have a college to recommend in this region of the country.

What Devitto did not realize that this would put his relationship with the sponsoring association in jeopardy. This became a significant issue at their annual conference. The Council had decided to vote Capernaum out. The reason for this was their new association with this other denomination. They believed in a rigid view of separation—a separation from all groups and churches that did not take this same stand. At the conference, this issue became personal to Devitto. He had poured his life into this association of churches. He was one of them. Yet, in a moment, they were moving to separate from him and the university he led.

O’Brien believed that Devitto “hurt because he did not have as much influence in the association as he thought he had. He invested time with the leader and thought that they would follow his lead. However, they did not click on this one. Perhaps this might have been a significant challenge to his faith. The relationship with the new denomination embraced him.” He further elaborated on this that Devitto had defended this association for twenty-five years and now the bottom line for this decision to oust

them from the association was jealousy. Devitto was definitely concerned by what result the cause of Christ would be damaged by this petty bickering. Devitto wanted Capernaum to withdraw from the association but his board would not allow him to do this. Instead, they decided to let the association make the decision which was better politically for the university.

Reflecting with Devitto who was still in the midst of this issue in his new role as chancellor, he felt that they “came unglued about this new relationship. The council chose to vote us out and it did not go well with the messengers from the churches at the annual conference. The messengers did not accept it.” It created quite a controversy that Devitto never expected or anticipated. However, it was a risk worth taking by moving from a close-minded dying association of churches to a thriving and leading denominational group.

Enable Others to Act

Enabling others to act is one of the five practices of exemplary leadership. Kouzes and Posner believe that is essential. Leaders do this in two ways. First, leaders foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust. In other words, collaboration is about a team working together to accomplish a shared goal. Secondly, the leader strengthens others by sharing power and discretion. It is not about “the” leader possessing all of the power but that it can be dispersed and shared throughout the organization.

For Devitto, he enabled others to act in several ways but he was always the clear decision maker. There was a feeling of ownership and shared power, however Devitto

held the ultimate authority and was not afraid to use it. He describes it this way, “Early on I was very precipitous; but over time I learned to get more input.”

In the case of the decision to move forward with the engineering program, for example, he utilized a committee to get faculty input on the program. This planning and study process took about 18 months. Although the committee took a straw vote, this was the closest they would come to making a decision. Ultimately, this was Devitto’s decision to make.

Rudlow summed up Devitto’s leadership in this way. “He leads, not by hiding information for the employees, but by sharing with them, for example, the budget process, the strategic plan, where we are going, what it’s going to cost, how we plan to get there, and what part they each play in the plan. He empowers people by letting them handle their own areas of oversight without micro-managing.” Through Devitto’s leadership, he enabled others to act in their area of responsibility.

Working with his Vice Presidents

One of the reasons why Capernaum has been so successful in its growth and development is the long-term commitment of the administrative team. During his twenty-five years as president, Devitto had a strong relationship with his vice presidents who reciprocated with many years of service in their respective positions. Devitto’s philosophy with them was, “if you invest your life at Capernaum then we will take care of you.” At least three of my interviews were with vice presidents who had served for more than 20 years and retired from this position. Devitto then cared for them by giving them a part-time position representing the college in some way.

The vice presidents knew his heart and his commitment to them. However, it wasn't always easy. One vice president remembers an administrative council meeting early on. He moved that we need to vote. However, according to Goodman, Devitto responded, "you don't vote, I make the decisions." This changed over the years especially when some of the pressures came. Devitto would say to them, "I need to know what to do. I value your insights."

Two of the vice presidents had close relationships with Devitto. The vice president for business and the vice president for advancement would talk to Devitto almost everyday. Perhaps it was because Devitto was so focused on numbers, budgets, and capital campaigns that he felt so closely connected to these two men. Austin said that Devitto "would say things to them that he would never say to others. We were able to see a more intimate side of him than the others."

The academic vice president seemed to have much more autonomy in his area. Devitto was not one who came up through the academic ranks to the position of president. He knew that leading the academic area was not his specialty. He allowed his vice president to lead in this area and he was free to manage the academic division. Through his leadership, the university added 35 new majors and 203 faculty over 16 years. The academic vice president had a good relationship with Devitto and always kept him informed. He never wanted Devitto to be surprised, always told him of potential problems, and gave him solutions.

Another vice president saw it somewhat differently. As a newer member of the administrative team, Rinker was not sure how to "read" Devitto at times. He felt that he was one step away from being fired if he messed up. However, he knew that Devitto's

“bark was much worse than his bite.” What helped him most to endure Devitto’s leadership was a close relationship he had with the other vice presidents. He could get their support and could “vent” to one another. Devitto enabled him to act in his areas but he felt that he felt on the edge if something went wrong. It seemed difficult at times to work for a president who expected perfection, especially since no one was perfect, not even Devitto.

One of his vice presidents had a close relationship with the president. Devitto enjoyed numbers and would check in with him every two weeks about the enrollment numbers. “He would stop in to talk about the numbers. He is a ‘big number’s guy’. This activates him.” O’Brien enjoyed this close relationship and this motivated him to act in his area. The trust was there between them. O’Brien had attended Capernaum for his undergraduate degree and then began working at Capernaum in the admissions office. He would continue to grow and take on additional responsibility. Devitto had confidence in him and eventually promoted him to vice president. For O’Brien, Devitto was one of three men who played a significant role in his life development. Even though the relationship was close, he was never able to confront him personally. There was always an interpersonal distance. “That was just him.” Over the years Devitto became more gracious, as O’Brien reflected, “We did not have to be so perfect anymore.”

Gaines, who was involved in the communication and radio production area, remembers that Devitto allowed him to do his job. Devitto did not have the expertise in radio so “didn’t look over his shoulder.” The former president had a great love for radio. Devitto allowed him the opportunity to grow in his situation and work in his area of expertise. One of the things Devitto did was to invest in additional resources to record

chapels. Since this was so important to him, Gaines was able to put the chapels on the radio for the listeners to enjoy.

Working with Faculty and Staff

The faculty and staff had a much more distanced relationship with Devitto. While he enabled them to do their job, he had high expectations for them. He usually did not get involved in their area unless someone wasn't living up to his expectations. For Campbell, he said that Devitto had a "knack for giving you a job and letting you do it." The job for Campbell was to develop a mission's program for the students.

Some faculty were critical of Devitto. Bacon, a faculty member, said that there was a "cadre that were critical of him and sometimes expressed this to students." However, this usually did not go well. In one situation, the professor responsible for the student newspaper differed with the president on its purpose. Devitto felt that the newspaper should be a "PR" piece. However, the professor believed in a journalistic approach for the students. Devitto won, and the faculty member stepped down from his position with the newspaper. In this case, the faculty member was not able to act in his area because of the expectations that Devitto had for this area. "Devitto said that this is the way it will be."

Other faculty felt that his style enabled the campus to grow and develop. Capernaum needed a strong leader to make things happen. However, several of the faculty were ready for a change in leadership at the announcement of Devitto's retirement. It seemed that the time for his strong, assertive, and often controlling

leadership helped to transform the campus. Now, a different kind of leader was needed to take the university forward.

For Fuller, she handled many of the special events that Devitto had with campus guests and donors. This was a position in which Devitto expected perfection. She knew what he wanted and knew that the unexpected always happened. She wasn't hampered by his demands and always tried to do the best that she could. At times she could sense his displeasure. She remembered spelling the name of a donor wrong on his name tag. This was the last time that she made this mistake.

Simon remembers being called to Devitto's office. He knew that he had really blown it bad and went with great fear and trembling. A woman had applied from the local town. The university had done business with her parent's company and Devitto felt a strong sense of connection. She was also getting connected to the church in town. Her mother had made it known that she was not happy since she had been denied admission to the university. Simon expected the worse. However, "Devitto was so gracious about the situation. He did not hammer me. He said that I had done a lot of good things and he let me off. He demonstrated a lot of grace, mercy, and forgiveness." What could have been a situation that could have destroyed an "up and coming" young professional, Simon walked away with a greater respect for and trust in Devitto.

One of his long-time staff members, Rudlow, summed it up this way: "Devitto is a leader who lives out his faith, models a godly life, is transparent about his own struggles, and thus, garners trust. People will more easily follow a leader they trust, especially when they cannot know all the reasons why he makes one decision or

another.” Devitto was certainly trusted and respected throughout his 25 years as president of Capernaum.

Encourage the Heart

“Encourage the Heart” is the last leadership practice that Kouzes and Posner discuss. They suggest that leaders encourage the heart by recognizing the contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence. They also suggest that the leader creates a spirit of community by celebrating the values and victories of the people and the organization.

Devitto believed that this was the most important aspect of his leadership legacy. He felt that it was more important than the growth and the dollars raised for the buildings. What was most important was for him to “honor God, students and faculty.” And what became most satisfying was his impact on students. The reason Devitto did what he did as president was for the students. This was what was most satisfying for Devitto. And now, as he reflects back, this is what he misses the most in his young retirement.

A Pastor of the People

“Jesus genuinely cared for His people.” As Devitto talked, he expressed that this was how he attempted to operate as president. He had the vision and inspiration of an evangelist. But he had the heart of a pastor for his people. He would minister one-on-one, visit, send notes, and give of himself to his people. Reeves believed that Devitto “took care of his people and this came out of his belief in biblical truth.”

To be a pastor of the people, Devitto cared for his people. A significant portion of his time was focused on developing relationships with donors and trustees. On Thanksgiving morning every year Devitto would call the major Capernaum donors and thank them for their gifts to Capernaum (Rosen). On his bookcase in his office, he had a picture from a bass fishing trip with a couple of trustees.

A faculty member commented on how much concern Devitto had for their children. On a road trip there were two situations that Devitto contacted adult children to minister in their lives. This happened to Campbell and his adult daughter. She was struggling with cancer. While Devitto drove to Florida, he would call her every 100 miles to find out how she was doing on a day of surgery.

Campbell reflected on this when one of Devitto's best friends was unfaithful with his wife. "He wept and then he got in his car to go and challenge this guy. He was an active participant in people's lives." In another similar situation, a faculty member was involved in an immoral relationship with a student. Devitto got involved and confronted the issue. He then became directly involved in trying to save the family and the marriage. He was a pastor to his people even when they failed. In this case, according to Rudlow, "Devitto would find a way and the marriage stayed together."

To show students he cared, Rosen said that "Devitto would visit every room from 6pm until midnight during the Christmas dorm open houses. He was PR focused and he wanted to let students know he cared." Students were a primary focus for Devitto even though it was more of a "platform" relationship than personal.

Not only did Devitto "pastor" the Capernaum family, he also reached out to others around him. At a local country club Devitto connected with a retired dentist with a bad

mouth. Through this relationship, as Rudlow recalled, this man became “enamored with Capernaum and he wrote a \$10,000 check to the university. They became fast friends and yet he did not know the Lord. In fact, he would even come to chapel every Monday.” Devitto reached out to anyone that crossed his path. On this man’s 80th birthday, Devitto gave him a “big” Bible. “He thinks Capernaum is the best and I know he has to see a difference here.”

Dealing with Death

Death can be a difficult tragedy to deal with, especially on a university campus. Devitto will be well remembered for how he used the death of a student, faculty, staff, or other person to honor people and encourage the heart. So many of those interviewed remembered times during his presidency when someone died.

Goodman remembered when a maintenance worker died. He initially was seriously injured in an accident on campus. Devitto called a day of prayer to focus on this man’s healing. He lived for thirteen days. When he passed away, Devitto led a memorial service that was “phenomenal.” Money poured in to help his surviving family. Devitto had the ability to step into a difficult situation and led the entire campus through the tragedy of death.

In the early 90s several students were lost to automobile accidents. Fuller remembered a special relationship that Devitto had with one of these students. He was an illustrator for the campus newspaper. He had drawn an illustration earlier that showed the brevity of life. The caption said, “Life is but a vapor.” Devitto used this at the

memorial service to encourage the hearts of students to make the most of everyday. “He had the unique gift of helping people sort through difficult issues.”

One of the toughest times for Devitto was dealing with the suicide of two faculty members at different times. During the memorial service he honored the families. With the students, he helped them understand suicide. He said, “Christians can get depressed and be in a state of carnality. Sometime it is a medical condition that affects a person’s desire to live. Through this Devitto helped people to heal and resolve the issue.” He reassured them that there was no reason not to believe that this professor is not in heaven. Anderson remembers him saying that “suicide is a selfish act and it brings about great grief. It is a dreadful thing to do but you shouldn’t judge this man.”

Not only did Devitto lead funerals for the Capernaum family, he would also be called on to lead the funeral of people in the community if there was a death in the family. His ministry with the poorest guy in town or the corporate guy enabled him to reach people during the most difficult days.

Through these crises moments Devitto “seemed to know the right thing to say. This speaks well of his leadership,” according to Anderson. It also speaks well of his ability to encourage the heart of the people around him.

Building up the Community in Chapel

One of the most significant legacies that Devitto will leave behind at Capernaum is his focus on chapel. Rudlow said that through “Dr. Devitto speaking in chapel every Monday morning, with a few exceptions, has been a great leadership tool. Faculty and

staff as well as students hear him preach, sense his heart, know his direction, receive common challenges which unite the university family.”

Jones and Blackwell remembered the “dandelion” message that Devitto would give every year. In this message, he would talk about the only time to that we should walk in the grass is to pick them. Devitto did not like them on campus. The dandelion represented sin. Essentially, just as we attempt to get rid of dandelions in the grass, we need to get rid of the sin in our lives. This visual reminder brought the community together in this setting as “chapel was a major contact point for him,” according to Blackwell.

Most will remember the closing song that Devitto often used, “Christ is all I need.” In a sense, this summarized his faith and brought the community together at Capernaum. Regardless of what anyone was going through or dealing with, Christ is the only one that they needed. This was his connecting point with the entire Capernaum community. Through this time, he “touched and changed lives” (Simon). He was a gifted man in front of the group as he encouraged the hearts of many students, faculty and staff.

“Call me Collect”

Devitto used to always tell the students to call him collect if they were in trouble or needed help. In fact, Devitto is known for this throughout his days at Capernaum. His heart commitment was for him to be accessible to the students in their time of need. On one occasion a student locked his keys in his car in a city that was about 45 minutes away. This student took Devitto up on his offer. He called him collect and Devitto

accepted the call. Devitto told him that he would send security to help him get his keys out of the car. On several other occasions throughout his years as president, he would have students call him. Each time, they took him up on his offer, their moment of need was met, and their heart was encouraged through Devitto's reassurance that he would help them.

Devitto was a president who encouraged the heart of the people at Capernaum University. This permeated his stage presence and flowed out into his personal interactions with the people. His words were more than just words, but they were the heart and soul of his leadership practice.

The Influence of Faith on Devitto's Leadership Practice

Devitto reflected on the difference that faith makes in leadership practice. He believes that non-Christians, or those with differing faith perspectives, are good at what they do. Another president can be just as successful in his or her leadership position as a president that has a Christian faith. However, as Devitto expressed, the difference is "driven by the mission." As a Christian university, Capernaum has a distinct Christian mission and thus requires a leader who is committed to this same faith.

For Devitto, there are several areas of his leadership practice that are influenced by his faith. First, Devitto was driven by his passion for evangelism. In fact, he saw this as most important in his presidency. He was an evangelist first, and president second. He utilized his position as the platform to share the Christian message to students and to the community. This emphasis is a result of his experiences prior to accepting the position of president.

Secondly, his emphasis on evangelism was closely connected to his role as a pastor to the university community. He was the spiritual leader and he demonstrated this daily at the university. By placing such an important on chapel and preaching once a week, he was viewed as the pastor to the people. He was gifted in his ability to communicate publicly and to draw people into a faith commitment. Also, in his pastoral role, he demonstrated great care and concern for the people. Through his presence at difficult times such as the death of a student, Devitto could carefully lead the grieving community through a tragedy and direct the people to his God. He also was willing to help people in times of need and he did anything he could to help those around him.

Third, Devitto was a leader that utilized his rhetoric to promote his spiritual values. He had several phrases that summarized his beliefs and also demonstrated his faith in God. It was from these value statements that he operated from and also rallied a university community towards.

Fourth, Devitto placed significance on the chapel program. While this was his platform to be the pastor of the students, this was also a place to measure the spiritual effectiveness of the university. And perhaps, it was also the place to measure the spiritual intensity of the university with its Christian mission.

Devitto was a man of faith and he sought to let this commitment influence his leadership practice. While some were critical of his style and his focus on nice things, he desired to build a university that would be pleasing to the God he served. His faith commitment led him to passionately pursue excellence in so many areas at Capernaum University. This will be his lasting legacy and future generations will enjoy the accomplishments he made during his presidency.

CHAPTER SIX

DR. NATHAN BUNTON – BETHSAIDA COLLEGE

Introduction

I remember visiting Bethsaida College when I was a college student. The university I attended played this college in athletics and I remember driving to Bethsaida to watch a basketball game with some friends. I don't remember much except that it was very dark, the year was 1988, the gym was small, and we lost.

This time around I arrived early on Monday morning in the Spring. It was a wonderful day in this early part of the new season for the Midwest. As I parked my car, I realized that this college been through significant growth and change. New buildings and freshly paved parking lots dotted the campus.

This campus is located in an urban area within an hour of one of the top five major population centers in the United States. In the shadows of a large and prestigious private university in the same area, Bethsaida College had climbed its way up from the brink of closure to the presence of a growing and thriving church-related institution. The heart and soul of this growth came from the leadership of the president during the past fifteen years, Dr. Nathan Bunton.

It would be a perfect time to spend three days on the campus. Bunton was reflective of his tenure as he was just two months away from retirement. The new president had been selected from a national search. The one chosen to succeed Bunton was his vice president for advancement, one who had served with him during his entire

tenure. The new president would be coming in to a much better situation than when Bunton came into the college 15 years ago.

Bethsaida College

Bethsaida College is one of two colleges originally associated with a small church denominational group. While the other college was a Bible College and ended up merging with another Christian university in the same state, Bethsaida College is the liberal arts educational arm of this church group. Its mission clearly states the affiliation of the college with this church group: "Bethsaida College is a Christian Community of scholars and learners dedicated to building lives of commitment for leadership in the church, the nation and the world. Bethsaida provides liberating academic programs to challenge the mind, to enlarge the vision and to equip the whole person for lifelong service."

The College was closely influenced by the church. The denomination was highly influenced by the Pietist and Holiness movements which found great meaning in camp and revival meetings. Specifically in this church movement, great emphasis was placed on a second crisis experience, sometime after salvation, in one's faith that brought one closer to God. Overseas missions were a driving motivation and evangelism was a way of preparing for the imminent return of Christ.

Founded in 1947, with only about 60 years in its brief history, Bethsaida College nearly faced closure in the mid-80's. Declining student enrollment and morale had brought the college to the brink of bankruptcy. In the mid-80s, the College President had been a pastor. Without much experience in business or managerial areas, he led this

college down this road of miss-management and created many issues for the college. The morale was bad and the admissions office was accepting anyone who had a pulse. In effect, the overall spiritual atmosphere of the College had declined so much that the Church viewed Bethsaida as a party school. Obviously, this was a negative view of a College that is supposed to train the young people from its churches.

On the edge of shutting its doors, the Board made a decision to move in a different direction with the leadership. As the Board moved through the search process, it decided upon a man who had been at the College several years earlier as the Dean of Students. He had seen the College in its better days and they believed that he would be the one to “right the ship.” And “With Christ at the helm,” as their college motto, Bethsaida would experience a significant turnaround and transformation through the leadership of Dr. Nathan Bunton.

The Formative Years of Nathan Bunton

Born in the upper Midwest in the late 30s without indoor plumbing in his home, Bunton remembers moving all over his home state. His father was a pastor and he ministered in several churches throughout the state. One particular move was tough on him. He remembers being mean to his parents when they moved between his eighth and ninth grade years. It was a difficult time for him leaving his friends and moving to a new area. Bunton said, “I was a very angry young man for two years.” His anger was directed at his parents for moving at such a critical time in his adolescence.

In his senior year of high school he recalls this as two or three significant times where God dealt with his heart. He knew that he had to let go of his anger if he was

going to move on so that God could use him. This was a definitive time for him spiritually.

During his upbringing, Bunton attended the denominational camp of his church. This was an important time for him spiritually and socially. They brought in speakers from all over the country. He was there every summer from the time when he was a child. The camp and its leaders influenced him in his college decision. He had received a full scholarship to stay in his home state. However, he gave this up so that he could go to Bethsaida College. Little did he know that he would actually return to his alma mater as president several years later after God had prepared him for the challenges that lay ahead.

Toward the end of his college years, he married a young woman who was also enrolled as a student at Bethsaida. They both were trained as English teachers and taught in a public school in his home state after graduation. A few years later they relocated across the state in order for him to pursue his Master's and Ph.D. degrees in higher education.

After completing his Ph.D., he was on his way to interview at another Christian university when he decided to stop back at Bethsaida College. Ironically enough, they were searching for a Dean of Students. He decided to pursue this position and was offered the job. He returned Bethsaida the first time as Dean of Students where he served for five years and then two years as Vice President for Administration. He then decided to teach history and psychology. This helped him to learn to look at things from the faculty perspective.

Leaving Bethsaida and Going to a Bible College

Bunton had a friend who worked at another Bible College. He had asked him twice to come out for a visit, to encourage him to consider coming out to the college to work. Then, when he was on vacation, the chairman of the board called and asked him if he would consider being a candidate for president. His wife believed that they should do this. As he went through the search process and ultimately accepted the position, he knew that he would give up friends and the comfortableness they had with this familiar area. Instead, they would move out to the wilderness to a college that was 65 miles from the nearest McDonalds. Now, that's what one calls sacrifice.

“My first year out there was the most difficult. The college had tied up all of its resources in a bond and there was no cash. No one really knew that this was a problem. I remember going to the bankers thinking that the Lord that brought me out here to be a failure.” However, Bunton knew that while the situation might be difficult, God had brought him out there for a purpose. “God led us here and I was determined to serve him.”

And then, the miraculous began to happen for the college's finances. “I can't tell you where the money came from but people just started to come in with it. There was an old family connected to the college without a penny to their name. The husband came in with a check for \$10,000.” In another example, he remembers a widow who found oil on her family property. Other people mortgaged their houses to help the college. An elderly couple with an error in their books received \$1,000 that they gave to the college.

While I sat in his office, Bunton was visibly and emotionally moved remembering these difficult yet amazing days. “Going through that brokenness and seeing God work

changed me in a powerful way. That little college should have never succeeded.” Yet, God had brought him there for a reason—to see that God could restore a college on the brink of closure.

Bunton spent nine years as president of this Bible College. After growing weary in his last few years with the college as they continued to “hang on by their teeth,” he decided to leave. He was involved in two presidential searches with other colleges but was not offered either position.

One event precipitated his leaving this college, according to Bunton. “There was a young man from Kenya at the college. At the end of his first year he had a bad cough. We took him to a doctor and had a biopsy done. The cancer was malignant. We then made arrangements to get him home. A nurse went with him. He arrived at 7:00 a.m. and then died at 8:00 p.m. the same day. This death impacted me since there was another man in town who got cancer. He was a real rascal and he got well. For the better part of a year I found it difficult to pray.” Bunton struggled with God’s fairness and this brought confusion to his faith.

Just before he made the decision to leave, he felt the need to pray again. He began praying the Lord’s Prayer. It was also at this time that he read, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. What was the significance in all of this for him? “I saw the need to go on when you don’t see the light—to walk with faith when you don’t know.” God then led him from this Bible College. Instead of finding a presidency, he took a position as Vice President for Advancement at another Christian college. This position gave him the experience he needed in the fundraising area that would help fuel his final and ultimate leadership opportunity.

Back to His Alma Mater

A few years later while he was serving as vice president of advancement, the position of president opened at Bethsaida College and another college similar in doctrine and his church background. He did not think that the board would want to invite him back to his alma mater for the second time. However, he interviewed on campus and during this time he recalled what Bethsaida used to be like—the vibrancy, the life, and the hope of a strong future. He even had a house still in the area. Bunton was asked to come back, this time, as president. In Bunton words, “God had opened a door to come back.” Through his previous challenges and experiences, he would be prepared to lead Bethsaida to great renewal and turnaround.

However, it would not be easy. The previous president had not managed the college very well. Bunton recalls that the college was in trouble, “They had lost the dorms and there were only 80 students on campus.” The spiritual atmosphere of the college that he remembered as Dean of Students was gone and the college was in danger of closing. Spellman, one of the current vice presidents, who went to Bethsaida as a student during this time said, “As a student I did not know that it was the dark days.” Yet, for those “in the know,” this was the darkest of days for Bethsaida. Bunton’s struggles as president at the Bible College would provide him the experience and the preparation he needed for the challenges he would face at Bethsaida.

Prior to Bunton coming to Bethsaida, Elliot had been given the position of senior vice president and Coyle as the Vice President of Advancement. These were two key personnel decisions made by the previous leadership that would help prepare the way for Bunton’s presidency. These two vice presidents would become part of the team that

would shape Bethsaida College into the thriving institution that it is today. Ironically, Elliot was a candidate to the presidency. According to a former student involved in the student search committee, Spellman said “the students thought that Dennis should have gotten the position.” Although, in retrospect, it seems that the decision to hire Bunton was the correct decision because of the turnaround the college experienced.

The College lacked strong leadership, however, prior to the arrival of Bunton. Like a ship without a rudder, the college had little or no direction. Wagner said, “When Bunton came to the college it was about to go under. He had to take forceful leadership in every situation by necessity.” Young, another administrator, said, “Bunton was exactly what the college needed in 1989 because the college was ready to close down. The downside is that I had to get approval for the color to paint the rooms or tree trimming on campus.” His biggest fault is that he has to be involved in even the little decisions (Slanski).

Bunton came in with a leadership style that put him in charge of all decisions at Bethsaida. In fact, for the first year and a half, he signed all of the checks (Cornwell). Frank said, “Bunton wants to know everything going on. He kept his thumb on everything.” Some viewed this micro-managing as good for the particular time and context of the College. Apparently, this leadership style was what was needed for this college to turn around.

His micro-managing style did not impact everyone. Samon said, “I frequently hear that he micro-manages. From my experience, this is not the case. He trusts people to do their job and really counts on them doing their work.” As Bunton had confidence in one’s particular role and responsibility, he loosened the grip of his control although he

always liked to be informed. Emerson said, “If he has confidence in you, he will give you a great deal of scope and freedom. He has a functional trust in people.”

Nothing was too small for him as he was a servant to the college and to his responsibilities to the people. Bunton takes a personal interest in every little thing. For example, according to Graves, when the Fine Arts building opened, he went out to buy a rope to rope off the dignitaries. He was willing to serve the institution in any way possible.

With his involvement in every decision, Bunton focused on stewardship. From his days as president at the Bible College, he had to count on all resources as important. Harrington said, “Bunton understands the value of every dollar and the wonderful sacrificial gift. This makes him a wise and careful of the resources of the college. He has never taken for granted that Bethsaida is in better shape financially than it has ever been.” Coming into the financial challenges at the Bible College had given him the preparation he now needed the second time around at Bethsaida.

Quiet Man of Faith

As a man small in stature, Bunton carried himself in a quiet and humble way. His presence was not overpowering or intimidating. However, he certainly had the confidence in who he was and the responsibility he had. Bunton had the respect of the people. They knew he was a man of faith even though he didn’t “wear it on his sleeve or have a ‘billboard’ faith” (Samon). He consistently lived out his faith in God by how he dealt with people. Based on his upbringing in a pastor’s home, Bunton had the heart of a pastor as he demonstrated his care and concern with the people. His faith was

demonstrated over and over for how he treated people and often gave second chances when others may have given up.

Bunton was never the kind of leader who needed the spotlight or the limelight. While he attended chapel, he rarely spoke. While he always led and was the gate keeper for most institutional decisions, he was not flashy or charismatic in his personality. He had an abiding faith in God that drove his passion for Bethsaida College. He wanted to see his alma mater thrive and succeed rather than close its doors. For the next fifteen years, this man of faith would pour his heart and soul back into Bethsaida College leading it to become one of the fastest growing Christian colleges in the nation.

Bunton would face several leadership challenges during his tenure as president. First and foremost, Bunton faced the challenge of turning around the college to get it on a healthy path of growth. In order to grow, he had to deal with the spiritual condition and morale of the college. Bunton believed that this focus would lead to a total turnaround in the college. Enrollment growth, donations, and new buildings would all follow.

Later on in his tenure, Bunton faced another significant challenge. A one million dollar mistake had been made in the books and this shortfall would impact the budget. These types of financial crises can deliver difficult “blows” to small Christian colleges. Even with the remarkable growth and momentum, this challenge loomed as a potential morale buster. Bunton faced this challenge “head-on” and led the college away from this miscalculation and its resultant financial impact to renewed strength.

During these challenges and throughout his presidency, Bunton would turn to the God he served. His faith in God kept him motivated and focused on the challenges that

were before him as he knew that ultimately this was God's college, not his. He was just a faithful servant who God was choosing to use to lead this College.

Model the Way

According to Kouzes and Posner, the first principle of an exemplary leader is to "model the way." This modeling first begins as the leader understands who he is in an attempt to clarify one's personal values. The leader has to be willing to be involved in self-examination and self-reflection. Then, the leader sets the example by aligning these actions with these values.

As a leader, Bunton's modeled the way during this tenure in several ways. First, he sought to not only focus on his own faith but to model this to the entire college community by promoting a spiritual agenda early on in his presidency. Secondly, Bunton valued other people. He had great care and concern for people because of his upbringing in a pastor's home and he reached out to others in a redemptive nature. Third, he modeled the way when he dealt with the adverse financial challenge of the one million dollar mistake. He accepted responsibility for this oversight, even though he could have blamed someone else, and offered to resign. Finally, in the hiring process, he modeled his commitment to the future of the institution by being involved in every interview as the protector of the mission and the faith-centered values of the college.

A Spiritual Agenda

When he arrived, Bunton knew that the challenge would be great. However, he knew that God had led him there for the purpose of leading this college. Bunton told

God, “There have been a lot of other people who have asked for your help. And God, you know I need your help. I knew that I was not ultimately responsible for the college. I simply did the best that I could. You know, it is kind of freaky to know that it is God’s project and not yours.” Because of this, Bunton brought a spiritual agenda that he modeled in his own personal life.

Bunton was not the charismatic or extroverted Christian leader that one might typically see in a Christian college—the type of leader who is able to “woo the crowds” with his eloquent words. However, while Bunton’s faith was not externally oriented, it was internally motivated. This is what the faculty and staff of Bethsaida College witnessed for fifteen years.

For Emerson, he had a close relationship with Bunton over the years. He knew that Bunton had a genuine personal devotional life. Bunton learned to read widely and to apply it to his devotional life. Yet, this personal devotional life was kept private (Reuter). During this time he would build his faith and trust in God. The experiences that he had walked through before also helped to shape his faith in God and his resultant leadership. God was faithful to him and He blessed him. Pyles said, “Faith isn’t something that he just puts on for the crowd; it is who he is.”

Graves said, “It is hard to separate his faith from his leadership. It is just there. He lives out his faith 24 hours a day as he is always a man of faith.” Not only is his faith there, but it shows through in everything he does (Morgan). He leads by example and he has confidence in his faith. In fact, Aristolli said that “you get the sense that his underlying confidence is rooted in his faith and in his God, rather than in himself. This

attitude permeates the institution. We know that God is in control and we rely upon Him for everything.”

Bunton’s faith was certainly noticed by the faculty and staff at Bethsaida. Because of this commitment, he came in with a spiritual agenda for the college. Bunton believed that if the College was going to turnaround, then it had to begin with the spiritual environment.

His spiritual agenda focused on the chapel program. While many Christian colleges were de-emphasizing the emphasis on chapel, Bunton placed his focus on this program. However, Bunton did not assume the platform. He did not attempt to use gifts that were not his own. Instead, he relied upon the charisma of his vice president for student development to provide the “up-front” presence in chapel. While Dennis provided the spiritual energy in front of the student body, Bunton provided the overall support and leadership for this critical part of the Bethsaida community.

This became his first point of emphasis at Bethsaida. Frank said, “Bunton gave life a freshness that we needed. It was a dead campus in the 80’s and he knew that the spiritual aspect must be cared for. He made chapel something about our spiritual lives and it became relevant to the students as an 18-19 year old event.”

Bunton was always at chapel even though he hardly spoke to the group. He would, however, use the first and last chapels of the year to speak. Cornwell said that “when he speaks in chapel, you can sense the seriousness and extent and depth of his faith.” He just wasn’t the pastor type to captivate a crowd. “He would pull up a stool and tell stories. It wasn’t really a sermon but more of a dialogue. And he always kept it short” (Moon). Reuter wished that Bunton would have had a stronger presence on the

chapel platform because he believed the president excels in that image. Sometimes, it is less in the words that one uses in front of the group to express one's faith, but it is the ongoing consistency that the Bethsaida community saw as Bunton modeled the way by setting this spiritual agenda.

Modeling Redemption and the Gift of Second Chances

Growing up in a pastor's home influenced Bunton's compassion for people. He always wanted to help people. One of the values that Bunton lives by is his willingness to give people second chances. Recently, he gave one faculty member another chance. This faculty member decided to take a student into his home to try to parent her. Bunton warned him that this wasn't wise yet he chose to do it anyway. Two years later, after the female student moved out, she filed claim against him for a dual relationship. A dual relationship is when a counselor crosses the boundary and also becomes personally involved. She sued him and the college.

Bunton and the vice president for student development reviewed this situation. They felt like he made a bad decision to allow her to move into his home for this period of time. However, according to Bunton, "he had not done anything that would rise to the level of ruining his life. We gave him a letter of reprimand and placed him on three years of probation." Bunton could have fired him for placing the college in a vulnerable position, yet he chose to give him a second chance.

He is a believer in second chances. According to Slanski, "He is fatherly and looks after people. He is reluctant to fire and always tries to restore. This is very 'Christian' of him." Some would say that he gave people more chances than they

deserved (Emerson). However, this is the pastoral approach coming out of Bunton's faith and how he seeks to model the way. Foster said, "It's an expression of his faith and the understanding of the redemptive nature of grace." While situations were kept confidential, this made him vulnerable to attack from others as he appeared to apply too much grace to people.

Twelve years ago a long term staff member deserved a second chance from Bunton. He set up an appointment with him every week. Essentially, this changed his life. And there were others to whom he gave second chances. His philosophy is to always extend grace. The first time an issue comes up the decision revolves around what is best for the individual. The second time, it is focused on what is best for the students. "Bunton gave people second chances and allowed them to rebuild careers and lives," according to Coyle.

Accepting Responsibility for Mistakes

With the growth and success that Bethsaida experienced during his tenure, one would think that pride would become an issue. However, for Bunton, he was driven by an attitude of humility. Bunton said, "We can line up all the things we did but we were blessed greater than the efforts we put in."

Sometimes things did not go as well as Aristolli. In one instance, a significant mistake was made in the budget which resulted in a one million dollar error. Typically, someone will lose their job for a mistake of this size. Instead of pointing the finger at someone else, Bunton chose to take responsibility himself. He was quick to come to the faculty and inform them by being open and honest with them (Clark).

Bunton submitted his resignation to the board of trustees. He was willing to acknowledge that ultimately this was his responsibility. While he could have blamed someone else for this mistake, his value for humility guided him. The faculty and staff remembered that he was willing to take the responsibility himself for this mistake. This occurred after he had great success in building the college. The trustees, faculty and staff valued his integrity and the detachment from the pride in his position to the humility expressed that he was ultimately responsible for this situation.

Protecting the Mission and Values of the College

One faculty candidate remembered his interview at Bethsaida. Bunton was actively involved in the process. Pyles said, “Bunton asked me if I understood the change in culture if I came to Bethsaida? He then focused on the Christian aspect of the college and why it is a Christian college. He asked me about my faith. This was an attractive interview process and it said lot to me about the culture of the school.” It also indicated the faith commitment of the president.

Bunton is involved in every hire at Bethsaida. Because of his value for the people who make up the culture of the college and those who will shape the lives of students, he is committed to protecting the mission of the College. Eschelman said, “When he interviews people, he asks about their faith.” Emerson expanded on this by saying that “he is a quick study on human character.”

Wagner, another faculty member, said, “Bunton is able to come up with things in the interview process that everyone else misses and he is able to put his finger on spiritual issues that are not obvious. Each step of the interview process has to go through him.

One time I presented him with an attractive candidate to invite to campus for an interview. He reviewed the resume and saw a reference that he believed had been written by the candidate.” Through his discernment, this candidate never made it to campus.

One faculty member, Spellman, had an interview with Bunton on the phone since he could not connect with him while he was on campus. “He was concerned about my testimony and my expression of faith. He wanted to make sure I was a good fit spiritually with Bethsaida.” For Bunton, the hiring process was critical to the success and the future of the college. He was able to protect the mission of the College by hiring people with excellent credentials, but even more importantly a commitment to living out their faith. This was a value that Bunton both modeled and protected in his role as president.

Inspire a Shared Vision

A leader inspires a shared vision by envisioning the future with all of its exciting possibilities. Even when the challenge looks difficult, the leader must look ahead to the future and dream of what could be possible. This vision then becomes the inspiration for the people. The leader believes in and sees the possibilities. A leader is the one to promote a potential future.

For Bunton, he inspired a shared vision at Bethsaida College during his presidency in two main areas. First, he had a vision for the spiritual and the potential renewal that this could bring to the campus. With his pastor’s heart and passion for his own faith, Bunton inspired people to this vision. Secondly, Bunton also inspired the College community toward a vision of becoming a growing and thriving Christian

college rather than one that seemed to be at death's door. This would take a significant transformation, but Bunton believed it was possible as he envisioned the future of Bethsaida College. These two visions proved in the end to be the legacy for which Bunton will be best remembered.

A Vision for the Spiritual and Revival

Bunton modeled his faith commitment in his own life. Yet, it was this value that propelled his vision for the Bethsaida community. He knew that the campus had been adrift spiritually. Morgan said that “no one paid attention to what was going on here. The last couple of administrations had started the drift. The churches did not even send their kids here and the dorms were going wild. There was no strong moral leadership here from the top down in this area.”

Spellman, a student at the time, remembers that chapel was bad. “We had chapel in the gym and guys would bring portable TV’s under their coats because it was so out-of-touch.” Chapel was not a spiritual connecting point for the student body. It was an environment that reflected the spiritually dead campus.

It was critical for Bethsaida College to be a Christian institution first. According to Cornwell, Bunton believed that if they built the spiritual building first, then the students would come and the campus would be transformed.

The vision for spiritual renewal actually began prior to Bunton’s presidency. Two faculty members had been praying for spiritual revival every week for several years. Revival is simply an event where the Spirit of God is poured out in a community in a way that brings people to the reality of their sin and their need for a closer relationship with

God. These two faculty members had been faithfully committed to praying for this change and knew that “revival” be an impetus to a vibrant spiritual community.

Then, after Bunton arrived, he began to pour new life and energy back into chapel. Through the leadership of his vice president, he moved chapel to a better environment and encouraged new praise music to better reach the students. Spellman said, “When Bunton came, the chapel developed and matured.”

A special spiritual emphasis week took place in chapel during the fall semester. While this would be typically be a part of the annual calendar, this special time would be anything but typical this year. Significant strides had been made beforehand; however this week would propel the college forward.

During that week of spiritual emphasis, an evangelist and storyteller shared about the Asbury revival. This was a revival that transformed the campus of Asbury College several years earlier. Elliot remembers saying to Bunton, “Hang on brother, we are going to talk about revival. He told the story and the same thing happened.”

Bunton was sitting in back of chapel and he remembers “the Lord melted my heart as students streamed forward.” An altar call had been given for the student body to respond. According to Elliot, it was an “unprecedented, spontaneous response to the message as the Holy Spirit just descended on the college campus.” When the Holy Spirit descended, the students responded much students at other colleges responded.

The chapel had begun at 10:00 a.m. that morning and actually continued well into the evening. Students, faculty and staff were confessing their sins to God and getting their hearts right with Him. Students went to the phones and called their parents and pastors. At 4:30 p.m. that afternoon, the student body decided to come back that night.

Individuals all over campus were dealing with issues in their lives. Elliot remembers Bunton telling him, “It is pretty obvious that God has done something special here.”

This revival and spiritual renewal was the catalyst that the campus needed to begin significant transformation. Bunton knew and believed that it must begin with the spiritual. He had the vision to commit to this priority first for the community. From this experience, the students went out to their churches and shared the story of the revival on Bethsaida’s campus. The helped to re-establish the reputation that Bethsaida College held spiritual values as a priority. It changed the college, the faculty and the student body. And it changed Bethsaida College.

A Vision for Transformation and Growth

Bunton certainly could have been discouraged with the condition of the college when he came. In fact, this may have kept another potential candidate from coming to Bethsaida. However, as he reflected back, he saw great hope and potential. He wasn’t discouraged as others were. He saw the possibilities and envisioned the future. Emerson said, “Someone once characterized him as being a funny little man with big ideas.” Foster said that Bunton had “extraordinary vision and leade school when it was close to shutting down.”

Bunton immediately came in with a list of 15 things to accomplish when he arrived. He said, “We went after every one of those things and after five years we felt we had hit them. So, we created a new list.” Some of these things included restoring pride, restoring a sound financial footing, and establishing good working relationships among the faculty and staff.

When Bunton came, he was interviewed by a reporter for the city newspaper. In this article he talked about his vision for Bethsaida College. Ten years later the same reporter interviewed him again. Bunton had done everything he had set out to accomplish (Emerson). Spellman reflected that “most will remember him for the explosive growth physically, spiritually and academically. God’s hand had to be here and this coincided with his administration. Bunton is responsible for moving Bethsaida out of a Bible ‘schoolish’ institution into a Christian liberal arts college that has respect.”

As an entrepreneur, Bunton did not lay out a specific strategic plan for how to accomplish his vision. Hewitt said that “he doesn’t like to be restricted with a ten year plan. I remember him saying that there are a lot of ways to get here from Chicago.” Bunton reflected on this in his office as he believes that colleges place too much value on long range planning. “I am not convinced they work. Essentially you have to have the tactical ability” to make the ideas work.

Young added, “Bunton claimed he had a vision for the campus but he did not always express it. He kept things pretty close and he went after it. The Lord blessed it a lot and has made Bethsaida a permanent fixture.”

The college experienced growth fifteen years in a row, increasing from around 500 students to over 1850 during his tenure. This was unprecedented growth as compared to other Christian colleges during this time. Bunton was able to lead “during the college’s renaissance” (Elliot). His vision of growth led to essentially tripling the size of the college.

This growth created the inspiration for a new campus infrastructure. The College has been in a constant building program and large-scale renovation to accommodate the

growth. New buildings for chapel and fine arts, an athletic center, dorms, an academic center, science additions, and other projects have helped to transform the campus landscape.

Aristolli said that “his legacy will be the turnaround of Bethsaida College. This was predicated on him casting a vision for the institution. He gave Bethsaida a positive self-image of what we could become. He inspired us that we could be a growing institution with a substantial budget. He got us to look away from our problems and onto our potential.”

Furthermore, he committed his vision to prayer. “He believes that Bethsaida is God’s institution. We could do everything possible but God had to take over” (Aristolli). Morgan remembers, “Ten years ago we had grand plans. Things happened along the way that God has been in it. God finds a way to make things happen.”

During the past fifteen years, the College community had rallied around the vision of this president. His vision was one of hope that this College could become something—that it could be a thriving college. They been inspired to dream and that “had the privilege of rubbing shoulders with a miracle witnessing the most dramatic institutional turnaround,” said Aristolli. Bunton never took credit for what happened. Instead he gave the credit to God believing that God has blessed their efforts and ultimately transformed the college (Slanski). Coyle said, “We have become everything we always said we were. Bunton will be known as Bethsaida’s greatest president.”

Challenge the Process

Leaders face challenges and they also challenge the process. Challenging the process, according to Kouzes and Posner, includes two components. First, the leader searches for innovative ways to change, grow, and improve. It is the innovative leader who thinks outside of the box and seeks new ways to do the familiar. Old processes and methods are challenged to bring in new ways of doing things. Secondly, the leader is a risk-taker and generates small wins along the way learning from his mistakes. An exemplary leader takes risks in order to move the vision of the organization forward.

During the interviews with some faculty and administration, there were three major challenges that Bunton faced along the way. The first challenge has already been discussed in detail in the preceding sections when Bunton faced the immediate challenge of rebuilding the college. Because of the previous discussion, this challenge will not be highlighted here. Secondly, toward the end of his tenure, Bunton was confronted with a significant mistake in the budget. A one million dollar mistake had been made and Bunton had to decide how to deal with this shortfall. Finally, Bunton had to deal with the challenge of working with the church denomination associated with the college. While the previous college leadership had neglected this relationship, Bunton decided to re-establish the connection in a much stronger way. Finally, Bunton was challenged by the performance of his academic vice president. Bunton had to work through this issue and make the best decision for the college.

Bunton would not be described as a “risk-taker” by his colleagues. While he certainly took a risk in coming to Bethsaida College, his main innovations involved the decisions to move the institution forward. While some could point to his decision to

focus on the spiritual environment and chapel program as innovative, there seemed to be little risk in this decision since this is part of the mission of the College. One expects the president to focus on this area, especially a Christian college.

“Bloody Monday”

Before Bunton came to Bethsaida, an interim president began to put the pieces in place for his success. The previous president had been asked to resign because of the bad situation he had placed the college in. During the tenure of the former president, he worked with Elliot and Coyle. Elliot said, “We went out to the faculty and staff to try to find support for the leadership. We found that it was unlikely that the college would move ahead. So, the president made a decision to resign.” Dennis remembers spending much time in prayer with Steve during this time.

One faculty member remembers the situation well. The word out in the community and in the churches was that Bethsaida was closing. Emerson remembers that “people said that they would never send anyone to that college. At the low point in 1986-1987, there were 89 resident students. Dennis and Steve worked night and day as the school was in financial and spiritual bankruptcy.” The same was happening to their sister school in the denomination. “Both schools had their own problems and were self-destructing.”

Just before Bunton arrived, they knew that there would be changes. They were under the assumption that the college would move ahead. In order to prepare the way for Bunton and to deal with some financial issues, the Board made a decision not to renew twelve to thirteen faculty and staff contracts. These came from the recommendation of

the interim president as well as the full support of Bunton. Bunton had told the board that they needed to remove the “dead wood” in order for changes to be made. Steve and Dennis, on “bloody Monday,” told these employees that they no longer had a job at Bethsaida.

This was certainly a difficult day for Bethsaida College. However, even though Bunton was not on campus in his role, his support and direction guided the actions of two key administrators. This would help to alleviate the financial crisis the college faced and would eliminate some of the under-performers at the college to prepare the way for Bunton’s presidency.

Money Issues and a \$1,000,000 Mistake

In the early years of his presidency, Bunton helped to acquire a \$5,000,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment to fund the academic center on the campus. This was a great encouragement for a financially challenged institution. However, the total campaign was for \$8.5 million and Bunton thought they had money from a wealthy and capable man in California. When both he and his wife died, they essentially lost this donor. Bunton took the risk anyways and built the building. They had to use one million dollars from the college’s savings; however, this turned out to be a great investment and risk for Bethsaida to move forward.

Toward the later years of his presidency, Bunton faced one of his biggest challenges of his tenure. Apparently there was a one million dollar accounting mistake in the budget. Foster said, “The college was struggling with some money deficit and coming up short financially. There was a transpositional error of \$1 Million dollars.”

Bunton called a faculty meeting to acknowledge the problem. “From discovery time to meeting with the faculty it was less than a week. He accepted complete responsibility for the error. He apologized that he had put the institution at risk,” according to Samon. Samon went on to say that he “suspected someone else was responsible for this mistake.”

However, Bunton took complete responsibility for the mistake and offered to resign. Foster said, “He took the issue to the Board and voluntarily offered his resignation. Instead of accepting it, they extended him grace and mercy. He kept going and worked hard. I have seen him extend grace and receive grace. This did not appear to hamper him or overcome him.”

Slanski remembers Bunton’s attitude during this time as, “Let’s not blame anyone. Let’s fix it and go on.” And that is exactly what he did. He could have chosen a scapegoat within the institution to place the blame for this mistake. However, he chose humility and accepted responsibility even for something that was someone else’s mistake. This was a calculated risk on his part. Yet, it was one he had to take that was consistent with his character.

Even though he accepted responsibility, this still placed the college in difficult times. Wagner said, “He let us know that we would get minimal raises. The workloads became extreme. We understood, but the faculty were frustrated.” While frustrations were there, Harrington remembers that “the whole faculty worked together in prayer. This brought them closer together.”

The Health of a Trusted Vice President

One of the most difficult times that Bunton faced in his presidency was in the last few years with his academic vice president. He was a close friend with Bunton and served with him throughout his tenure. They had a high level of trust for each other. However, because of a combination of severe depression and his tendency toward obsessive compulsive behavior, his health deteriorated in the end. He took on too many things including care for his father and then building a house. He then took a three week trip to Israel. Bunton described him as an “emotional wreck when he came back. His psychiatrist said that his nerves were not making the proper connection. His judgment was gone and I could see the deterioration.”

Still, Bunton hung on for quite some time hoping and praying that he would get better. This was certainly a risk for him in a negative way because the academic leadership suffered. However, Bunton prayed that God would bring healing. Bunton said, “When you see a Godly man have terrible difficulties, you can never get away from the responsibility of treating him well.”

Some believed that he should have moved forward to make a decision sooner rather than later. However, Bunton hung on for a couple of years. In the end, a “rising star” among the faculty surfaced and was selected as academic vice president.

Enable Others to Act

An exemplary leader is one who enables others within the organization to act. The leader stimulates collaboration among the people toward goals that are shared. Through this process, the leader is able to build trust. Also, the leader shares power with

those in the organization. There is an openness and a willingness among the people to move the organization forward through empowerment from the leader.

Bunton is described as a president who is involved in every aspect of the College. While he would often hold the ultimate decision for him to make, his leadership did not stifle the willingness of the faculty and staff to act. Bunton willingly shared his power with those he had confidence in and enabled them to move their particular area of the institution forward. In some cases, he knew that others were better gifted to make an impact in a particular area.

Establishing a Team

One of things that Bunton did early on in his presidency was to establish a working and unified team. In many cases, a President will assemble his team after he has been in the position and has had an opportunity to evaluate those around him. Prior to his arrival, Bunton already had great confidence in the leadership abilities of the Vice President for Student Development and the Vice President for Advancement. Both of these men were involved in laying the foundation for Bunton arrival on campus. These two men would serve throughout Bunton entire presidency and helped to establish a solid team.

In addition, Bunton selected a Vice President for Academics early that served until the last year of his presidency. Had it not been on health issues, he would have continued in this position. Also, he hired a vice president for business in the third year of his presidency. This man came from a banking background and provided needed connection and understanding to this community in a difficult time.

Bunton believed in his team. He trusted them and they trusted him. None of them felt micro-managed or stifled in their areas of responsibility. Bunton said, “We had a tight administrative staff. We would take retreats together and got to know one another spiritually.” They became a close-knit group of leaders who were on the same page and were able to move the College forward.

Emerson, from the perspective of a faculty member, said that “He doesn’t try to do everything. He works with a team of people like Jesus did with his disciples. He cultivated extraordinary relationship and kept the core of his team intact.”

In some ways, the success of Bethsaida College can be attributed not to one person, but to this group of administrative leaders who led in unity. Just as Bunton enabled them to act, they in turn enabled those within their areas to make a difference.

Enabling Leadership

One of the things Bunton recognized early on was the type of person he is and how he is wired. Bunton is not the type of leader who rallies the crowd from the platform. He is more of a steady and consistent leader who leads from his strength rather than attempting to be someone he is not.

An example of this is Bunton’s empowerment of Elliot to lead chapel. While Bunton would speak at the beginning and end of the year in chapel, he would let him be in charge (Clark). He was the man who had the passion and the charisma to lead from the platform. Bunton knew and understood that this was not his strength. “Bunton doesn’t think of himself as a preacher,” said Reuter. Nor did he did not allow pride to

interfere with his spiritual agenda. He allowed Dennis to carry it out while he participated from a distance.

Because of this, as Emerson describes, “chapel is the center piece of campus. In a recent study among Christian Colleges, students chose chapel as the number one positive thing about Bethsaida. This College fosters a climate where there is an expressive chapel-centered campus. Students come to chapel to rock.”

In the academic area, Bunton also enabled his Vice President for Academics to provide spiritual leadership to the faculty. Moon said, “Bunton was not the front leader in academics. He gave the Vice President free reign and he drove faculty to spiritual concerns. Bunton knew this was needed and empowered him to get the job done.

Spellman was recently promoted to the position of Vice President for Academics. On his first day on the job, he asked Bunton, “Well what do I do?” Bunton answered, “Well, what are your questions?” For Spellman, Bunton was exactly what Bethsaida needed. He would have been willing to work for him the rest of his life. It was this type of mentoring relationship and empowerment that promoted a successful working environment for many at Bethsaida College under Bunton’s leadership.

Trusted by the People

For those who worked close with Bunton on the administrative team, they have a much more intimate relationship with him. However, those faculty and staff interviewed that do not report directly to Bunton have a trust in and respect for him. In some ways, Bunton can be seen as a “father” type figure in his role as president. Moon remembers early on when he did not complete a project on time. “Bunton scolded me pretty good.

Sometimes he likes to send a message but he has been supportive. He can be stern but he keeps it enough like a family. A little family is good.”

Clark was impressed with “his ability to be one of us. He communicates with all levels in the institution and he is always approachable.” This communication helps to increase the level of trust among the faculty and staff of the College. Bunton’s leadership style was one of honesty and integrity. His goal was always to let the people know what was going on.

Samon appreciated his leadership at Bethsaida. “You can do just about anything you want as long as you don’t expect money. One just has to prove that something is worthwhile and it will be fed. We are free to be creative and this is a great place to work.” Spellman felt the same way as he has learned so much from Bunton. “This year working for him has been tremendous. I have a new respect for him. I am also humbled by the amount of trust and confidence he has in me for this job.”

Hewitt said that there are days “when she could kill him.” She told him that in a search committee meeting one day. Bunton said to her, “What did I do?” Apparently, from her perspective, the meeting was supposed to bring some definitive answers to the issue in which she needed direction and closure. However, as she said, “He likes to let the door stay open to be entrepreneurial and I wish he could share the larger picture sometimes. Yet he trusts me to do the job” (Hewitt). His trust in her gives her the ability to get the job done even when she may be frustrated with him in a meeting.

At the time of the interviews, Bunton was just two months away from his retirement. As mentioned earlier, the decision to hire his Vice President for Advancement as the next president thrilled him. He said, “I have great confidence in him

to do the job.” Yet, as he moved through his final days, he was no “lame duck.” Reuter said that he has been “pleased with the way he has handled the transition. He is gracefully turning over it to Dr. Coyle. His years of experience help and he is giving him his space.” Bunton trusts Coyle to do the job as the next president, and thus he will be enabled to act. From Bunton’s perspective, “He will take Bethsaida to new heights.”

Encourage the Heart

Everyone needs encouragement in some way from some one. An exemplary leader makes it his focus to encourage the hearts of those within the organization. Kouzes and Posner suggest that there are two ways for a leader to do this. First, a leader recognizes contributions of the employees by showing appreciation for their excellence and achievement within the organization. Secondly, a leader creates a spirit of community by celebrating the values and victories within the organization. These celebrations act to encourage the hearts of the people.

As Bunton reflected back over his career, he said that “buildings are nice but they don’t make the college. It is the people. The most important thing to me in my career is that I treated people well.” Bunton had a great report with the people at Bethsaida. They were encouraged by his leadership because he took the time to show care and concern for them. He did this in several ways. First, Bunton demonstrated the passion of his heart through prayer. Secondly, Bunton encouragement to the people came through his pastor’s heart. He expressed a genuine care and concern for the faculty, staff, and students at the college.

A Praying Leader

For Bunton, his relationship with God is a lot like his relationship with his wife. He said, "Everything I do and say is colored by a strong relationship with my wife. I would act differently if this relationship wasn't there." The same is true for his relationship with God. Just as he talks to his wife in this relationship, his relationship with God is rooted in prayer. Bunton is a "man of prayer" (Morgan).

At the beginning of the school year, the faculty and staff get together for a retreat. Eschelman said, "Bunton does not lead but he has real input and he actively participates. The highlight is when we have communion together on the last night. He is in the background" but you definitely know his presence and his encouragement. This retreat was always a significant time of encouragement and prayer for the faculty and staff of the College.

On other occasions he will pray for people whether it is one-on-one or in a meeting. Samon said, "It is a reflection of his spirituality and he is authentic in this way. He will pray for faculty members who are sick or those who just need prayer." It is part of his nature to turn to God to thank Him for what has happened or to ask Him for guidance and direction.

When Bunton came, the college was in serious trouble. As Morgan said, "This made for some tense financial times. We spent a lot of time in prayer asking for God's wisdom. We met weekly on Mondays. One time we borrowed a church sanctuary and spent about one and a half hours in prayer." Frank, another faculty member said, "There were weeks when we didn't know if we could make payroll. We spent time together in

prayer and God touched this campus. Norman is the pastor and shepherd of this college. God doesn't bless when the personal house is not in order."

Bunton's background as a pastor's kid enabled him to grow up watching his father. Even though Bunton did not become a pastor of a church, the heart of a pastor was ingrained in him. Instead of his "flock" being the church, he became the shepherd of the faculty, staff, and students.

Prayer was such a key thing that the administrative team would spend significant time focused on this. Elliot recalled that "there were several times that we would pull together for prayer. We would have full day retreats where we could read Scripture, pray, lay hands, and anoint one another. Bunton grew up in a pastor's house and knew the importance of integrating his faith and his leadership."

His focus on prayer was also manifested in faculty meetings. Moon remembers "the faculty meetings we had early on in his presidency. He would have a significant time of the meeting devoted to praying for the College and the Church. Bunton really facilitated the emphasis on prayer." This was a time of encouragement for the people; a time when they could see the heart of the president.

While Bunton was not the most charismatic of leaders, his heart demonstrated a commitment to and dependence upon God. This was evidenced through his prayers for the College, the Church and the people who were part of it.

A Pastor's Heart

Bunton has a pastor's heart. As he has worked with many people at Bethsaida, whether it was someone with a chemical imbalance, a difficulty in marriage, or whatever

the issue, he would extend care and compassion to them. He would provide emotional, financial, or spiritual support. He has even worked with people that he probably should have released (Elliot). Samon said it well, "Bunton is interested in restoration more than punishment."

Graves began to cry as he talked about Bunton's presidency. "It will be hard to see him go. His personality and dreams infuse everything here. I know that with him if I have a concern or a problem, I will be heard. If I call him, he calls back immediately and I can say whatever I want. Through him, we have been able to create a place where we are trying to walk the world of faith in Christ in everything." For Graves, Bunton had encouraged her heart.

"Some presidents express faith verbally. For Bunton, he has a quiet practical faith," according to Hewitt. Last year Hewitt was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She remembers that impact and encouragement that Bunton had on her. "It was hard for me but he had a tremendous compassionate heart. He always asked me how I was doing. He genuinely cares for people. He loves this place and the people."

Bunton is an advocate for his people. Moon said that "he does a great job of sustaining relationships. One faculty member has been gone for two and a half years and Bunton still visits him. He helped him see that he needed to leave Bethsaida and he worked through a process. He doesn't seem to be quick with the trigger and some would say that he would wait too long. However, he is gracious and errs on the side of caring for people" (Moon).

Whenever one works with people, there will always be personal issues. Morgan recalled a faculty member who went through a divorce about eight years ago. This

faculty person came with high promise from the same church background as the college. He had marital problems, went through a difficult time, and ended up in divorce. The faculty member stayed at Bethsaida after the divorce, however, he was not as productive. Dr. Bunton spent a lot of time with him encouraging him and counseling him from a Christian perspective. The faculty member ended up moving to another Christian college but Bunton was able to provide some needed encouragement during a difficult time.

Another faculty member also went through a divorce. He had been married for 25 years and his wife decided to divorce him. He was the leading professor on campus. At some Christian colleges, he would have been let go because of policies against being divorced and employment. In fact, everyone at Bethsaida wondered if he was going to get fired. However, Bunton asked him to speak in chapel. Bunton sent him a note of support and gave him a check for \$1,000 to help him out on the first payment of a loan (Cornwell).

Bunton was always giving in his actions. This was the heart of the man and this president. Frank said, "He would give you his last dime if you needed it." In fact, one lady in the adult program needed some help. Foster remembers Bunton pulling out \$100 to help her. He was gracious financially to others when they needed help.

Sometimes his encouragement was evidenced in words or just his personal presence. Elliot said, "He is encouraging. He believes that every faculty and staff member is a chaplain. I remember when I had to suspend an entire athletic team. He was encouraging to me in this process. He also knows when I am exhausted and tired and he has a way of just encouraging me." For the president to be there, supporting him along the way must have been a great encouragement to this administrator.

For Bunton, it doesn't matter whether you work directly for him as a Vice President or if you work in maintenance, his compassion and encourage is consistent. Young remembers when he got his hand smashed working maintenance at Bethsaida. Bunton came to the emergency room to check on him. Young said, "Bunton even knows the maintenance staff."

As a president, however, it is difficult to please or to be liked by everyone. Some faculty were concerned and unhappy with Bunton's leadership. Harrington said, "They were concerned that his leadership was top down and that their voices weren't being heard. He pulled us all together and hit the concern head on. He intentionally faces problems head on." Through this, he builds a spirit of community even when there is dissatisfaction with his leadership. For Pyles, he never felt like Bunton was intimidating or unavailable. He had the time for faculty and staff. "He cares about us as people and is concerned about us personally."

Bunton will be longed remembered as the president who turned around Bethsaida College. However, perhaps more than that, he will be remembered as a man who cared for the people of the College. Reuter said, "I plan to write a letter to him after he is gone. I want to say to him that I have appreciated the opportunity you gave me to work, for my three sons to graduate tuition free, for your support allowing me to achieve my goals, and for being a personal mentor to me. We were a team! Bunton is a real man of God." And, Bunton was certainly a personal encouragement to him.

The Influence of Bunton's Faith on His Leadership Practice

“There is no question that his legacy will be as the president whose leadership brought the college back from the brink of collapse,” reflected Moon. Yet, the foundation for Bunton’s legacy of leadership is found in his faith. Bunton had an unwavering and abiding faith in God that shaped his presidency. While he certainly was far from perfect, his faith influenced his leadership practice in several key ways.

First, as many described him, Bunton demonstrated the heart of a pastor in his leadership practice. A pastor is one who leads a group of people in a church to pursue God. The pastor acts as the shepherd over the people by caring for the sheep of his congregation and reaching out to them on a spiritual level. Through his care and concern for the Bethsaida College community, Bunton provided the spiritual leadership as a pastor to the campus. His heart was mostly expressed in his one-on-one relationships rather than what one would expect from the pastor who regularly speaks in front of a group. As a pastor cares for his people, Bunton cared for the faculty, staff, and students. He pastored them by providing the spiritual leadership, direction, and emphasis they needed to thrive as a Christian community committed in their own faith. One of the things that came out clearly from Bunton was his emphasis on grace and second chances with those around him. He did not easily give up on someone or cast them aside. He saw great value in working with individuals to move them down the road of restoration and growth rather than casting them alongside in order to move things to another level. Through this he modeled redemption, the redemption that he had received from his faith and the redemption that pastors freely offer.

Secondly, his heart as a pastor carried over to his spiritual agenda and emphasis on the chapel. This value had direct influence over his leadership practice. Bunton made this his primary agenda early on in his presidency. It was his emphasis with his administrative team and the result was a significant spiritual turnaround among the students. Bunton said repeatedly that God would bless if the spiritual house was in order. He laid this foundation to provide the impetus for additional growth. Although, Bunton also said that he could not equate faith with blessing. Just because he had faith and promoted a spiritual agenda, did not mean that God would necessarily bless his leadership or the College.

Third, Bunton's leadership practice was largely shaped by his personal prayers with God. For Bunton, his prayer life was part of his personal devotional time with God. This is when he would have conversations with God. He would go to God with his needs and concerns, asking Him for direction and guidance. His focus on prayer would also serve as an encouragement to others and provide a united focal point for the administrative team.

Bunton's leadership made an impact on the Bethsaida College community and campus. His 15 year legacy will long be remembered as one who provided the leadership that led to the transformation and turnaround of the College. However, even more importantly, Bunton will be remembered as a leader committed to his faith and its influence throughout his tenure as president.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A PORTRAIT OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICE INFLUENCED BY FAITH

Three Christian College Presidents

This picture is about three presidents of Christian colleges who attempt to live out their faith in their leadership practice. For each president, an individual portrait has been painted of their leadership practice influenced by faith—a faith that is based on the Christian belief in the God of the Bible. Through time with key personnel who have worked closely with these leaders, as well as one-on-one time with each president, the three voices have formed separate portraits. Yet, we now move forward to merge the separate paintings to form one portrait that seeks to answer the question at hand, “In what ways does faith influence the leadership practice of selected Presidents in Christian higher education?”

Each of these three presidents are equally devoted and committed to their faith. With similar backgrounds, they grew up in Christian families who provided the spiritual example for them. Because of this spiritual commitment, they were brought up in the church. These church backgrounds were parallel in that they focused on growing in their faith relationship with God. All three men also made a commitment to follow God’s leading in their lives to pursue ministry—whether in the church or in the academy. Belding initially pursued a pastoral role; Devitto pursued his passion for evangelism through preaching; and Bunton pursued his burden for students through teaching and then administration. These different paths brought them to the same goal—the presidency at a

Christian college. All three presidents assumed the role of spiritual director as they led their respective colleges from this perspective (Dagley, 1988).

Two of the presidents were at the end of their tenure and were able to look back and reflect on their many years of leadership practice. The other had just begun his career and was at the initial stages of implementing his vision for the future. In each of these cases, these leaders passionately pursued their calling to advance the colleges they served through their faith commitment.

The context of the colleges they served were similar. All three colleges fit the systematic model of a Christian college (Litfin, 2004). The systematic model suggests that the college is committed to a faith-based mission and hires faculty and staff of like-faith. While students represent different denominational groups, the faith message is consistently taught from the college's foundational commitments to which they ascribe.

When each of them began their presidency, these Christian colleges needed strong leadership to move the institution forward. In one case, Bethsaida College was on the edge of closing. For Galilee and Capernaum, they needed presidents to invigorate the constituencies and lead the college ahead to better days. All three leaders seemed to fit the model of the transformational leader as described by Bass (1985), and Bennis and Nanus (1985), who appeared on the scene when a strong, bold, and visionary leader was needed to move the institution ahead to better days.

All three presidents faced significant leadership challenges along the way. Two of the presidents faced difficult financial challenges while the other dealt with a power struggle within the faculty leadership. The common thread that is woven throughout these challenges is their constant faith. While they certainly did not do everything right,

they knew that the God they served had given them the responsibility to lead to the best of their ability. They also knew that their faith in God would guide them along the way. They were being used as leaders to move people along to God's agenda (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001).

So now we move from their individual leadership practices to the assimilation of one voice—one portrait that paints the picture of the influence of faith on leadership practice for the Christian college president. As these leaders demonstrated exemplary leadership practices as described by Kouzes and Posner, several themes emerged. These themes begin to paint the portrait of the ways one's leadership practice is influenced by Christian faith.

Toward a Portrait of The Influence of Faith on Leadership Practice

Like a painting on a canvas, the stories of these three Christian college presidents have been merged together to form one portrait depicting the ways that faith influences their leadership practice (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Utilizing the framework from Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership, the stories have been assimilated together to discuss the themes that emerged from the research.

In order to discuss the ways in which faith influences the leadership practice of three Christian college presidents, there are two overarching areas that we will initially discuss. First, the presidents lived out their faith and their leadership practice in partnership with God. Secondly, the five practices discussed by Kouzes and Posner seemed to identify three primary ones that showed the most evidence of the influence of

their faith. These two themes will then lead us to a discussion with reflects more specific themes that emerged in the research.

Faith-Based Leadership as a Partnership with God

An underlying theme that was evident through the stories of leadership practice was the partnership between these Christian college presidents and God. Instead of acting on their own, they believed that they were partnered with God in their leadership practice. They displayed a reliance on God for His guidance in the decisions they faced and the directions they proposed.

For the heroic leader or the transformational leader, their experience can often be a solo act. However, these presidents demonstrated that the college was less about them and more about the God they served even though they demonstrated a transformational style. While ego was apparent along the way for these leaders, it was tempered by their humility before God knowing that ultimately He could chose to do what He desired at each of these colleges. This reality motivated them to serve God first rather than their own leadership agendas. Instead of them acting on their own, they acted on the confidence that God would be there to help them through whatever challenges or obstacles came their way.

As an expression of this partnership, their leadership practice represented a more symbolic perspective (Estela Bensimon et al., 1989). These presidents provided meaning to the events and challenges at the college through a spiritual grid in their leadership practice. This partnership with God became a primary emphasis in their leadership role as president. By publicly giving God credit for the blessings at the college and the

focusing on God's role in guiding the college, these leaders expressed this symbolism through their rhetoric and actions. This "God-talk" and spiritualized rhetoric provided the rallying points for this faith-based community.

The faith-based president is certainly free to talk about his faith and the Christian mission in the Christian college. It's expected and acknowledged. It is part of the role of the president in the Christian college which differs significantly from the president in non-faith based institution. However, in the case of these three leaders, this partnership with God and its expression through their leadership practice came from their heart. They sought to live their lives in partnership with God and this inward commitment flowed out into their leadership practice as president.

The Five Leadership Practices

Kouzes and Posner present five leadership practices in their writing. While all of these were evident among the three Christian college presidents, it appeared that three of these practices surfaced more in relationship to their faith influence than the other two in my research. In other words, this is where their faith influence appeared the most. As leaders committed in their faith, the stories that were told which expressed the influence of their faith focused on modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, and encouraging the heart. As we briefly examine each leadership practice, we will see the influence of their faith in this brief overview before moving on to discuss the major findings and implications from the research.

Model the Way. Modeling is an important belief for the Christian. These Christian college presidents modeled the way through their own personal faith

commitment. They were committed to developing their faith through their own Bible reading and prayer. This was the basis of their faith and in order for them to publicly model this to the college community it had to be practiced privately. In their view, their public faith had to match their private practice. This alignment of values was critical to their success in a faith-based institution. It was part of their job expectation and one of the reasons why they were hired by their board.

For each of these men, the focus on the mission was a driving value for them in their role as president. In step with Kouzes and Posner, this was a personal value that was clarified in each of their leadership experiences. They each sought to preserve and protect the mission of the college as they did not want it to depart from their faith commitment during their watch as Marsen (1994) has written about. This was one of the highest values that they personalized which manifested itself in many ways throughout their leadership practice. Because of their commitment to this Christian mission, they each sought to implement a spiritual agenda at the colleges they served.

There is certainly a strong emphasis on symbolic leadership as discussed by Bolman and Deal (2001) in this leadership practice. Their rhetoric and action in modeling the way focused on this mission. Even in the symbolism of referring to the mission statement in the interview became important for these presidents. However, what drove them in their symbolic approach was the desire to wrap their personal and institutional faith commitment around everything that they did in their leadership practice.

Inspire a Shared Vision. “Where there is no vision the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). These Christian presidents practiced this Biblical principle by inspiring a shared

vision at their respective colleges. They believed that their vision was in fact ordained or endorsed by God. Through their faith in God, they believed that they were led by God to lead the college they served in the way that God directed. While God did not author the vision through some divine means, these visions were ordained or endorsed by Him.

Unique for the president in higher education at large, these Christian leaders focused their visions first on the spiritual. Since this was rooted in the mission of the Christian college and in their own modeling, this vision became paramount to fuel growth in campus buildings and student enrollment. The inspiration they provided was centered in spiritualized rhetoric which was part of their symbolic leadership. Each of them desired for these Christian colleges to be a place of significance for God's kingdom in this world. In addition to their focus on symbolic leadership, they also demonstrated practices of a transformational leader. It is interesting to consider their faith is closely linked to a personal transformation process. As a Christian, the believer's life is to be constantly transforming to become more like the example of Jesus Christ. The Christian leader is always reaching higher in his or her personal life and this is carried over to their push for excellence and continual improvement in the Christian colleges they serve.

Challenge the Process. While these leaders certainly faced challenges along the way in their leadership, they did not seem to overtly challenge the process. In these situations, much time was spent in prayer with God. They believed that God could give them the direction to handle what seemed to be a tough situation whether it was with the board, a faculty member, or some other situation.

These presidents were innovative and took risks in their leadership. The influence of their faith in this area was most evident in this area. They believed that this direction

taken was in partnership with God—that they were being guided by God to bring new life and energy to the college.

Each of these presidents had an entrepreneurial bent to them in their leadership practice as described in the literature (Fisher & Koch, 2004). This sense of entrepreneurialism aptly depicts how they were always pushing forward for enrollment growth, new “state-of-the-art” buildings, and additional programs. Yet, this is perhaps more how they were “wired” as leaders rather than the influence of their faith. Their faith influenced them to pursue growth for the advancement of God’s agenda in their sphere of influence—the Christian college. Through additional students who were attracted by new buildings and innovative programs, these Christian colleges would have opportunities to move more young people towards God’s agenda.

Enable Others to Act. These three presidents utilized teams and enabled others to act as described by Bensimon and Neumann (1993). They believed in getting others involved and empowering them to accomplish their goals. However, it did not seem like faith had a strong influence over this leadership practice. They enabled others to act because there was a job to be done and a vision to be reached.

They did, however, attempt to emulate the example of Jesus Christ in their relationships with others. In fact, their leadership practice was person-centered as described by Rost (1993). While two of the presidents were very strong and at time autocratic in their styles, they still believed in empowering others to do their job.

Encourage the Heart. These three Christian college presidents spent considerable time encouraging the hearts of the people. This value for people was represented in their belief for how Jesus encouraged and ministered to those around him

as he exemplified in the Biblical accounts. Jesus was always reaching out to those as He ministered.

These presidents often assumed a pastoral role which contributed to the spiritual model of community. Through their prayers and their genuine concern for the people of the Christian college, they demonstrated a heart of a pastor. They cared for the needs of those in the community and reached out to those around them. They were never too concerned about their position that they could not stop to help someone in need. This attitude and approach made their presidencies seem more pastoral in nature than strictly presidential. They had a deep care and concern for students, faculty, staff, and people in the community. Whenever there was a need, they seemed to reach out beyond their presidential role.

This pastoral role, as will be discussed later, also led them to lead the college community in a spiritual direction. They were committed to the faith of the college and sought to promote this integration into all of college life. This leadership was highly symbolic and was evidenced in their commitment to chapel, the promotion of a spiritual agenda, and the mission of the college.

Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge

In 2004, Kouzes and Posner edited a new book on their five leadership practices . This time, they attempted to provide Christian reflections on these practices. This work came as a result of John Maxwell's request, a prominent Christian writer on the subject of leadership. His desire was to use the five practices as the framework to organize a leadership conference. Then, as a response to the conference, he "offered to compile a

book that would make The Five Practices leadership framework speak more directly to Christian leaders, weaving together faith and leadership” (p. 3).

Kouzes and Posner suggest that five themes “give us a deeper appreciation for how faith informs and supports leadership, no matter the context” (p. 119). They took a much broader approach by looking at Christian leaders in any context. The five themes they discovered are as follows:

1. Credibility is the foundation of leadership
2. Leadership is personal
3. Leaders serve
4. Leaders sacrifice
5. Leaders keep hope alive

These themes form the conclusion to this brief work. While they do not significantly expound on any of these themes, they do provide a short description of each.

First, credibility is the belief in the leader (see also Kouzes & Posner, 1993). It is a belief that what he or she says or does is true. It is the belief, first of all, in the person. For the Christian leader, the people led must believe that the person is who he or she says he is. The leader’s actions need to match the words that the leader uses in his or her rhetoric. Although they label this as one of the themes here in their Christian Reflections, there is no difference between a leader of faith and one without it. All leaders need to be credible in order for them to lead effectively. Otherwise, at some point along the way, their leadership will fail.

Secondly, leadership is personal. Essentially, Kouzes and Posner argue that the leader has to take leadership personally. This means that the leader must be involved in personal relationships with those in the organization which begins with oneself and then move outs to others around the leader. In their words, “It’s about leading out of what is

already in your soul” (p. 122). Again, this is not so much distinguished from the leader who is without a Christian faith. It could be argued that leadership is personal whether one is of a particular Christian faith or not. Using the term and concept of a pastor seems to be a better description of this theme as it relates to faith.

The third observation they make about Christian leaders is that they serve. Leadership is not about position or power; it is about the practice of serving the people and the organization. They suggest that “the message of leader-as-servant is clearly one that speaks to the heart of every Christian” (p. 123). Furthermore, they argue that one must be a servant first before one can be a Christian leader.

Fourth, Christian leaders sacrifice in a way that is similar to the example of Jesus Christ. He sacrificed his life for His cause. Christian leaders place the cause they are serving above their own agendas and comforts as a way of sacrificing themselves for the organization. And finally, Christian leaders focus on the hope of the future. Even when times are difficult, the Christian leaders know that God is ultimately in control.

What I found in my study was different from what Kouzes and Posner (2004) observed in their study about Christian leaders and their leadership practice. The portrait of leadership practice influenced by faith among three presidents of Christian colleges includes several areas that emerged from the interviews.

First, there was a commitment to maintaining, preserving and promoting the mission of the institution. The leadership action that the president took to ensure this occurred as each president was involved in the interview process with all potential hires. Secondly, these presidents conversed with God in their leadership practice. These conversations occurred in their prayers to God. Third, their leadership practices were

shaped by pastoral action and demonstrated a heart of a pastor. Their presidencies could be best described as a “president-as-pastor” leadership model. Fourth, their leadership rhetoric featured “God-talk” in their conversations with people and with groups. They often included spiritualized talk and acknowledged God and His work with others. Fifth, their vision was seen as a joint vision between them and God and focused on the growth of the college. While not God-given, their visions were ordained by Him. Finally, their leadership practice promoted a spiritual agenda which was rooted in their commitment to chapel. This emphasis was of primary importance at these Christian colleges. Let’s take a look at each of these themes in more detail.

A Faith-Based Mission

Mission statements provide the guiding framework for how colleges operate. It is their unique purpose statement in which everything is filtered through at the institution. For Christian and church-related colleges, this mission statement is typically written from a faith-based perspective with the focus on the integration of faith and learning (Holmes, 1987; Litfin, 2004).

Based on this study of three Christian college leaders, the president plays a central role in maintaining, preserving, and promoting the mission of the College to both internal and external constituencies (Moseley, 1988). All three of the Christian colleges reviewed have a distinct mission statement that places emphasis on the pursuit of a faith-based education. Galilee University’s mission “is a community of learners distinguished by our lifelong involvement in the study and application of the liberal arts, total commitment to Jesus Christ as the perspective for learning and critical participation in the contemporary

world.” The mission of Capernaum University is “to offer an education consistent to biblical truth.” Finally, Bethsaida College “is a Christian community of scholars and learners dedicated to building lives of commitment for leadership in the church, the nation and the world. Bethsaida provides liberating academic programs to challenge the mind, to enlarge the vision and to equip the whole person for lifelong service.”

While written differently, each mission statement of these three Christian colleges is focused on their faith-based commitment to integrate spiritual principles with learning. For Belding, Devitto, and Bunton, their institutional mission statements became paramount in their role as president. Flowing out of this, they had a profound emphasis on the spiritual life and faith development of the student as an outworking of the mission statement. This focus came partially their professional careers to Christian ministry. Whether it was Belding coming more from a pastoral and academic background, to Devitto as a traveling evangelist, or Bunton from his administrative roles in Christian colleges, they focused on the advancement of God’s work.

Initially, it was the critical reason why they sought the position of president at their respective colleges. Belding, as the most recent one to enter the presidency, felt compelled to consider the opportunity at Galilee because of the emphasis the university had placed on this mission statement. It was the reason why he was attracted to the university. For Devitto, his desire was to have the opportunity to lead young people in their faith development. This is essentially what he preached in churches and chapel services. While Bunton did not express this as overtly as the others, he operated from this commitment as he put forth a spiritual agenda throughout his presidency.

What distinguishes these leaders is their focus on protecting the faith-based mission of the college. All three leaders placed significant importance on the hires of new employees so much so that they were involved in the interview process. Even for the hire of lower level staff positions, these presidents wanted to interview them. It was interesting to see that these interviews focused not on their abilities or credentials. Rather, these three presidents spent time understanding their faith journey and their commitment to God. In regards to Belding, Jamison said that “he meets with most new hires to get an understanding of their passion for the Lord, school and students.” Pyles said that during his interview with Bunton, “He asked me about my faith. This was an attractive interview process and it said a lot to me about the culture of the school.”

Knowing that these potential employees may become the future of the college, led each president to carefully interview all hires. As protector of this mission and the faith commitment of the institution, they knew that the faculty and staff will in one way or another fulfill its mission. It was critical that these future employees be on the same page spiritually in their faith as that of the institution.

From the interviews with Devitto in his office, he always pointed out the plaque on his wall with the mission of the university to the questioning of their faith journey. Whether a plaque was used to identify the mission or a direct question was asked to the candidate, the focus was on the mission of the institution and the faith commitment of the person being interviewed. In one case, Belding took special consideration of a critical upper level administrative hire when he selected a leader from the Catholic tradition. To some this could have been seen as a step down the road of compromise; however, he sought counsel from others and probed her faith in the interview process. Finding that

the alignment was there, he made the decision to hire her. These actions were symbolic in their leadership practice.

This is traditionally where the drift has taken place in faith-based institutions (Marsden, 1994). Faculty and staff are the ones who carry out the mission and its faith commitment. At each point where this varies, the mission loses its consistency. For most, it is usually a gradual deportation from its faith-centered mission. Until one day, the institution has departed completely from its historical commitment.

For two of these presidents, Devitto and Bunton, they led their respective colleges for many years, Devitto for 25 and Bunton for 15. Throughout their tenures they protected the mission of their institutions. While Belding had only been at Galilee for four years as president, he said that under his leadership the university would remain committed to the integration of faith and learning. In order to accomplish this mission, he knew that he had to hire faculty and staff of like-faith and who were striving to grow in their relationship with God.

Certainly, this focus on mission and protecting the institution from a spiritual drift, is an example of value alignment. The faith values of the president must be aligned with the college. For Devitto, at the beginning of every school year, he brought everyone back to the mission of the university. Just as the president protects the mission of the institution, so does the board in the presidential search and hire.

This theme can be part of each of the five exemplary practices that Kouzes and Posner present. Presidents “model the way” in their own leadership practice by maintaining, protecting and promoting the faith-based mission of the institution. They also “inspire a shared vision” by reminding the faculty and staff why they serve in the

Christian College. The process can be challenged as they align everything at the institution up against the faith-based mission. This mission enables everyone to act in their respective areas of influence towards a common cause and approach through a unified faith commitment among the employees of the institution. Finally, the emphasis on encouraging the hearts of the people is through the commitment to remain authentic to the faith-focused mission of the Christian college.

Conversations with God through Prayer

For each president, their commitment to their faith was rooted in their family and church upbringing. All three presidents grew up in homes where both parents were committed in their faith. They were involved in their respective churches and discovered what it meant to develop a relationship with God.

The basis of this relationship is centered in prayer. Prayer is the medium through which their conversations with God takes place. It begins in their own one-on-one time with God and then is seen in their relationships with individuals or in groups.

These conversations with God began in private for each of the presidents. Belding began every morning at 5:00 a.m. by reading his Bible and praying. During this time in his conversations with God, he would pray specifically for his family, administrative team, and those at the university with needs. Even though Devitto would not call himself a great “prayer warrior,” he kept a special diary that he would pray through those on his “prayer list” every day. Bunton was described as a “man of prayer” and would spend time praying to God by pouring out his requests and concerns.

From these personal times of prayer, the leaders modeled the way and encouraged the hearts of those around them. Prayer was not just something that was part of their private experience. It was also part of their public relationships with people and exemplified their symbolic approach to leadership (Estela Bensimon et al., 1989; Bolman & Deal, 1997). During one-on-one times and in group meetings, these leaders would pray for the person's needs or the agenda of the meeting. These leaders modeled the practice of prayer to their constituencies and established events geared around modeling this practice to them.

Prayers of the leaders also were manifested during difficult and challenging times. These leaders were involved in some significant challenges, especially early on in their presidencies. During 9/11, Belding called the campus community together to pray for this tragic situation. Bunton, when going through some difficult financial challenges, called the administrative team together for a special prayer retreat. They went to a church sanctuary and spent time praying together and pouring out their hearts before God. Devitto would regularly lead the campus community through the special day of prayer each academic semester.

Praying with others was a natural outflow of their faith commitment as leaders. Because of the faith alignment within the institution, the prayers of the presidents brought encouragement to the people. Williams said that "Clearly [Belding] is a man of prayer." They were able to see first-hand the faith commitment of the president and this verified the authenticity of the leader's heart and passion for God.

Prayer certainly overlaps throughout the exemplary leadership practices. However, it is mainly manifested as the president's "model the way" and "encourage the

heart.” Each of the presidents valued their relationship with God and spent personal time in prayer. As an outflow from their personal lives, they encouraged the hearts of the people by praying for the people, their needs, and the institution. Prayer became a way for these leaders to give everything over to God and to ask for His divine guidance and direction.

The Heart and Action of a Pastor

Although the mission is different, the Christian college is similar in some ways to the church. Both exist for spiritual purposes. The church is interested in saving souls and transforming lives to be more Christ-like. While the Christian college is interested in these things, its mission is focused on the applying faith to learning—the integration of education with Biblical truth.

At times, the Christian college appears like the church. Chapel sessions resemble church services and small group Bible studies among students are similar to Sunday school classes. As we know, the church is originally seen as the sponsoring organization to the Christian college. It is from the desire of the Church leaders to make sure their youth were educated from the same Biblical and faith basis, that the Christian college was formed. Because of this, the early model for leadership in the Christian college presidency was the pastor. While some Christian colleges have moved away from this early model as “pastor-as-president,” it was evidenced in these three presidents.

In the examples of the three Christian college presidents studied, each one expressed the heart and action of a pastor in his leadership practice, thus the description as “president-as-pastor.” All three backgrounds of these presidents were different, yet

they were brought up in committed Christian homes and pursued ministries. Belding was the only one of the three who actually served as a pastor in a church. He provided leadership to the adults in a large church. Devitto, while not a pastor, served some pastoral functions as a traveling evangelist. Bunton was the only leader to work solely in educational settings prior to his presidency. Yet, his close connection to and upbringing in the church, as well as the example of his father, provided him with an effective model of pastoral leadership. All of these prior experiences conditioned these presidents to lead with the heart and action of a pastor.

Let's take a look at some of the "pastor-like" leadership practices of these three Christian college presidents—these themes reflect the model of "president-as-pastor." There are several that emerged as themes: Commitment to spiritual development; Spiritual gathering of the community; Prayer; Ministering in times of need; Spiritual direction; Care for the flock; and VP's as disciples.

Commitment to Spiritual Development. A pastor is the leader of a group of people in their spiritual lives and is concerned about their faith development. All three presidents expressed deep concern and demonstrated a commitment towards this same spiritual development in the lives of the students, faculty, and staff at their respective colleges. Bunton led throughout his presidency with a spiritual agenda. He believed that if the spiritual environment on the campus could be changed, then the college could move forward and thrive. Devitto's focal point was through the daily chapels as he believed that this time was critical to the spiritual development of the campus community. Thus, he committed his time and resources to this daily hour. Belding focused his spiritual agenda on the mission of the university to integrate faith with all of learning. He was

interested in the spiritual application to all of life for the student. As these presidents led their respective institutions, their leadership practice demonstrated a commitment to the spiritual development of the people which emulated a pastoral role in the Christian college.

Spiritual Gathering of the Community. A pastor preaches to the people every weekend in a church service. These three presidents took varying opportunities to preach to the students in chapel. Devitto more closely resembled the pastoral model in this area as he spoke weekly to the students in chapel. Perhaps the only difference from this service as compared to a regular church service was that the “congregation” was made up of 18-22 year olds instead of spanning all the age groups. Devitto was wired in such a way that he thrived in front of a group whereas Belding and Bunton did not place an emphasis on their platform presence in chapel. However, they were just as committed to this spiritual gathering and empowered others who were gifted in this area to lead this important part of college life.

Prayer. A pastor prays for his people. All three presidents prayed privately and publicly for their people—the students, faculty and staff of the colleges they served. Pastors typically spend personal time reading their Bibles and praying. Each of the presidents spent time developing their own personal relationship with God. Through an outflow of this private experience, they often provided public prayers. Whether in a one-on-one meeting or time with their administrative teams, each president would offer public prayers for the needs of the person, group or college.

During challenging times, these presidents called the administrative team or the entire community together and led them in corporate prayers. A pastor prays for his

congregation in public, and so did these Christian college presidents. Prayer is a foundational practice for one committed in their faith. As demonstrated by these presidents, it was also foundational to their leadership practice.

Care for the Flock in Times of Need. A pastor values and cares deeply for the people of the church just as a shepherd watches over his flock. The Bible describes the pastor as being a shepherd to the church. In similar ways, all three presidents acted as shepherds to the campuses they served. They brought “lost sheep” back into the fold and gave them second chances. This was especially apparent in Bridge’s presidency. They were willing to work with their people and to treat them well. Devitto and Bunton were committed to their administrative vice presidents and took great care of them.

A pastor helps people in their times of need. All three presidents helped those around them in their times of need. These times of need manifested themselves in different ways as these presidents seemed to be available and ready to help anyone around them when they were facing difficult and challenging times.

Throughout his presidency, Devitto told the students to “call me collect” if they were in a time of need. Some students took him up on this offer and Devitto provided the help they needed. Devitto also called others when they were facing a difficult time. Whether it was a faculty member with a daughter going through cancer treatments or a friend who had made some bad choices and jeopardized a marriage, Devitto proactively reached out to those around him. Belding stopped a student on the sidewalk and prayed for her and her dying mother. He also took time out of his busy schedule to help a vice president look for his runaway daughter and to pray for God to bring her back home.

Bunton helped a student in need by giving her \$100 and he also helped a faculty member going through a divorce by giving him \$1,000 to pay for his first loan payment.

One of the most difficult times of need that a community faces is death. The loss of a loved one is a significant time of grieving. The pastor is the one called on to reach out to the family. Devitto was often called on to lead funerals and memorial students for students, faculty members, and people from the community.

Another significant time of need in a person's life is through some type of a crisis event. In many cases, these presidents acted as counselors as they listened to the problems of the people. In fact, during Belding's first year at Galilee, he spent a lot of his time listening to those who had been hurt by the previous leadership. In his pastoral role, Belding was approachable and willing to listen.

In other situations, these presidents called faculty and staff who were going through difficult times. One faculty member commented that Belding was the first one to call him to see how he was doing. Devitto called a faculty member every 100 miles as he drove to check in with him to see how his daughter was doing with her fight against cancer. Bunton reached out to a faculty member who was going through ovarian cancer to see how she was doing. Pyles said of Bunton, "He cares about us as people and is concerned about us personally." In many ways, through their care and concern for individuals connected with the college, these presidents became a pastor to them. There were able to help the people of the college in their times of need, just as a pastor helps the people within the church.

Spiritual Direction. A pastor delivers spiritual truth and provides spiritual direction to the people of the church. In different ways, each of the three presidents gave

spiritual truth and direction to the college community. All three presidents sought God for spiritual direction in leading their respective institution. They read their Bibles in search of what God had to say to them and the college community. In turn, they imparted spiritual direction to the faculty, staff, and students.

Devitto used the platform of chapel to deliver this spiritual direction while Bunton and Belding relied on small group and individual meetings to share spiritual direction with others. These presidents were not only expected to provide the vision for the college, the people also anticipated spiritual direction from them. It was expected from them in their role as president of a Christian college.

VP's as Disciples. All three presidents worked to assemble a team of vice presidents to help lead the college. These leadership teams, especially in the long-term tenures of Devitto and Bunton, worked closely together throughout their presidencies. For Belding, he had just finished assimilating his team as he was early on in his presidency. In their “president-as-pastor” role, these presidents treated their leadership team as a group of close-knit disciples similar to the approach that Jesus took in his New Testament ministry. As the ultimate shepherd to the church, Jesus relied upon the leadership of a few to lead the people and propagate his mission. These presidents did the same in their leadership practice.

Through all of these pastoral actions, these presidents demonstrated the heart of a pastor in their presidencies. While the mission of the organizations were certainly different, it is amazing to see the parallels between the pastor's leadership of the church and the president's leadership of a Christian college. As these leaders were influenced by

their upbringing in the church and their previous ministries, the “president-as-pastor” model worked well for these Christian colleges.

This model fits best under Kouzes and Posner’s exemplary practice of “encourage the heart.” The pastor is in a position to provide great encouragement to the people of the church. The president, in a similar way, as the actions manifests themselves in pastoral ways, encourage the students, faculty, staff and other constituent groups connected to the Christian college.

“God-Talk”

One of the primary functions of a leader is his or her speech. A leader talks about the organization and its future. This rhetoric provides hope and motivation for the people to rally around the mission and impact of the organization. It is the focus of both the spiritual and symbolic leaders.

For these three Christian college presidents, their leadership rhetoric centered around “God-talk.” Simply stated, “God-talk” is the verbal integration of the spiritual and faith-based beliefs with the topic at hand. It is a way of consciously using spiritualized talk in personal or group conversations. These presidents demonstrated this “God-talk” in several ways.

First, these Christian leaders talked about God in their natural conversations. This flowed out of their personal relationships with God through prayer and Bible study. They talked about what God was doing in their lives, what they were praying for God to do, and how all that happened around them was from God.

Secondly, in their communication, they gave credit to God for his blessing. Devitto often used the phrase, “The only explanation for Capernaum is God.” The campus had experienced significant growth in enrollment and facilities during his presidency in which he gave God the credit. Even when difficult times hit, the president would often spiritualize the conversation. Belding said, when faced with difficult financial aid issues, “If we are honoring God it will out as long as we work at it.” Bunton also gave credit to God by saying that the college was “God’s project” and not his.

Third, as each of these leaders looked to the future of their respective colleges they talked about following God’s will and direction. Bunton knew that no matter how good he was as a leader, Bethsaida College was ultimately God’s. Therefore, God could choose to do what he wanted. For Devitto, one of the phrases that he often used, focused on his emphasis on quality. He said, “Everything done in the name of Christ ought to have quality stamped all over it.” He equated his passion for excellence as something that God desired which justified his decisions for quality in even the little things. Beste said it well, “He always gave glory to God. Capernaum is all about God.”

Fourth, the mission was often discussed with others, which was a main focus of their spiritual rhetoric as president. Belding was most notable for using the mission as a speaking point. He talked about it and wrote about it. He even had a special workshop for faculty and staff to work through the mission in relation to their specific job. Devitto always reviewed the mission at the beginning of the school year and emphasized their spiritual focus.

Without knowing the heart motivation of each of these presidents, it is difficult to know if this “God-talk” was a result of their Christianized experiences and conditioning

or if it was truly an expression of their internal commitment. Certainly, we would like to think that it came from within. The important thing is that each of these presidents demonstrated their internal faith commitment to God and it was expressed verbally in “God-talk”—the spiritual rhetoric of their leadership practices.

God’s Vision and an Emphasis on Growth

Vision is critical to the future of an organization. It is the forward-looking and forward-thinking that a leader or group of leaders is involved in to make the organization a better place. It is where innovation, change and growth comes from. All three presidents placed significant emphasis on their vision for their respective institutions. Each vision centered around an emphasis on growth—growth in enrollment, facilities, programs as well the spiritual growth of the students. In all three cases, their vision was connected to an optimism that there would be a better day for the institutions.

It seems that the vision of these three presidents was discovered in partnership with God. Through their personal prayers and conversations with God they felt led to put forth an agenda for the future of their institutions. Belding came in with his vision for Galilee. He wanted to see a continued commitment to the integration of faith and learning, significant enrollment growth, and improvement in academic quality. Jamison said, “He has God’s calling on his life to be here. He has been given a vision for this university.” Throughout all of this, he believes Galilee will become a “place of significance” in Christian higher education.

For Bunton, his vision was centered around a spiritual agenda. He knew the context of the student body and that he needed to begin with a renovation of the hearts

rather than a focus on numbers and facilities. This would come but it had to result after the spiritual foundation and turnaround. He did not believe in strategic plans, at least those on paper, although he had a vision mapped out in his head of where he wanted Bethsaida College to go in the future.

Devitto's vision focused on the transformation of the campus through enrollment growth and building expansion. Austin said, "He always trusted God. He prayed hard and diligently about it. God always provided the piece of the campaign you did not know where it would come from." One hundred million dollars and many new buildings later, Devitto can look back. Rudlow said, "He was willing to dream big for God and he did not hesitate to give God the credit."

In none of these three leaders did they say that their vision for the growth and expansion came directly from God. It seemed to be more of a joint process of pursuing God's will and direction on a daily basis that they were led to move these institutions forward. Jette said it well of Belding, which could be represented of all three presidents, their visions were "not God-given, but God-ordained." These men demonstrated a leadership practice in which their visions were endorsed by God.

A Spiritual Agenda and an Emphasis on Chapel

Each president promoted a spiritual agenda and placed a significant emphasis on chapel as a time focused on the faith development of the student body. Belding's focus at Galilee centered around his commitment to the integration of faith throughout all learning. His spiritual agenda was more academically focused.

For Bunton and Devitto, their spiritual agenda manifested itself in the chapel program. Bunton empowered his vice president for student development to transform the chapel program and to gear it to the spiritual needs of the students. This vice president provided the platform presence and charismatic style to spiritually challenge the students. What resulted was a special time of spiritual emphasis in which an evangelist was used to bring revival to the students. This resulted in a spiritual turnaround among the campus community that transformed Bethsaida College and ignited its growth. Throughout this entire time, Bunton provided the support and overall direction for this spiritual agenda while infrequently using the platform of chapel to speak to the students.

Devitto had a similar spiritual agenda for the student body and also placed significant emphasis on the chapel program. The difference is that he was directly involved chapel. He continually said that, "Chapel is the heartbeat of any Christian College." Because he was passionate about this program, he led the chapel program for 25 years out of his office. While most Christian college presidents delegate this assignment to another leader, Devitto kept this under his direct oversight. He also operated the chapel program much like a church service as he sat on the platform, introduced the speakers, and spoke weekly. For him, the Capernaum student body was his church and he used this environment to promote a spiritual agenda.

While demonstrated in different ways, these presidents placed an importance on the spiritual agenda at their institutions. To them, this was as important as the desire to grow in enrollment, facilities, or academic quality. Without this spiritual agenda and emphasis, they believed that their colleges would no longer remain true to their mission

as Christian and faith-based colleges. And to them, chapel becomes the measuring rod for gauging the spiritual pulse of the campus.

This spiritual agenda and the emphasis on the chapel program is most closely aligned with the leadership practice of “modeling the way” and “inspiring a shared vision.” The president models this commitment to the spiritual by aligning his personal values with that of the institution. This commitment then manifests itself in a shared vision for the college. Because of the central focus of the chapel program and the requirement for everyone to attend, this vision could be promoted and lived among this faith-based community.

Symbolic Leadership and The Future of the Christian College President

With the growth and resurgence of Christian colleges in the last two decades, it is critical for these faith-based institutions of higher learning to remain committed to their historic mission. The Christian College president will continue to play a critical leadership role in preserving and protecting this mission. With vigor and determination the president should make every effort to build the faith within his or her personal life. In turn, this will flow throughout the Christian college.

Just as Riley (2005) suggests in her book, *The Missionary Generation*, the future of Christian colleges are rooted in their continued commitment to integrate faith with learning. Related to this integration, symbolic leadership seems to be an important consideration for presidents. The use of symbolic leadership becomes paramount for the Christian College president as he or she seeks to maintain this historic commitment instead of falling away to the unbelief that Marsden (1994) has so well traced in the

literature. This faith-based symbolism will inspire the Christian college community to rally around this commitment. The Christian college president should make every effort to use faith-based symbols in his or her leadership rhetoric and practice to guide and direct the institution in this continued mission. These include the symbols described early in the “president-as-pastor” model.

Based on the interviews and observations of the presidents, the use of Christian symbols did not appear to be a utilitarian leadership tool. Rather, because of the congruence between faith and action in the leader’s practice, the use of Christian symbols were an outflow of the symbolic leadership styles of these three presidents. It flowed naturally from the inner faith commitment of each president and resulted in symbolic leadership practices that were faith-based. These symbolic actions did not appear to be a means to an end or merely what was expected from the constituency. This symbolism displayed, rather, was the congruence of their faith and practice.

Therefore, symbolic leadership, for these three presidents, was an identity-based leadership practice. It came from who they were, rather than from what they were expected to say or do. As symbolic leaders, they used symbols to capture attention, tell stories, frame experience, and discover and communicate a vision—all of which was congruent with their faith.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

With the emergence of a discussion of the spiritual and symbolic leader in the literature, it is important to continue this research quest. This study has examined a selective sample of Christian leaders serving in the role of Christian college president to

discover the ways in which their faith influences their leadership practice. This thick description, which is based on stories told by these presidents and others within the college, has given us the depth of understanding and insight to paint this portrait.

However, this painting should be considered as just one in a series for it is only representative of three Christian college presidents and cannot be generalized to the leadership universe. Rather, it can be used as a launching pad to spur the discussion and additional research in this critical area.

Limitations of Research

There are several limitations to this study. First, as a researcher, my own bias is present. With the same evangelical Christian background as those studied, it is possible that this influenced what I saw, heard and experienced. My comfort and familiarity with this belief system may have resulted in quickly accepting what I heard as the influence of faith. In other words, it is possible that that as the researcher, I found what I wanted to find.

Secondly, the use of interviews can be considered a limitation. This “one-time” period of questioning does not allow for a longitudinal perspective involving multiple interactions with the interview subjects. It gives a snapshot at one point in time based on the response of those interviewed. Greater insight could be gained for a study that closely examines this issue over a period of time and allows for continual interaction.

Third, this study is limited because it utilized one conceptual framework. It would be interesting to conduct the same research using the same subjects but examining them through a different or multiple frameworks. For example, would the themes have

been the same if Bolman and Deal's four frames were used as the conceptual framework? Other frameworks should be considered and utilized to research this important question.

Fourth, because of the small sample size of three presidents, generalization is only possible to these three subjects. The findings cannot be generalized to other leaders in Christian higher education or the larger higher educational context. Generalization is sacrificed for a more detailed and thick description of the subjects studied. It can, however, be used to attempt to replicate the study and discover similar or dissimilar findings in other leaders.

Fifth, the subjects were relegated to one specific religious segment of Christian higher education. This study does not include leaders from a more liberal theological bent nor does it include leaders of other faith perspectives. To widen the scope of this project, consideration could be made for leaders of other faiths including, but not limited to, Jewish, Catholic, or Muslim populations.

Sixth, the interview subjects were chosen because of their long-term working relationship with the president. By interviewing additional people who have left the institution, this may provide differing views of the leader and his or her faith influence on leadership practice. These interview subjects seemed to be supportive of the president and his leadership. Including those who are disgruntled in the study would provide a broader perspective on the issue.

Seventh, the study focused on three very similar institutions with communication that is conditioned by Christian rhetoric. The use of Christian "lingo" is expected for those who work in a Christian university. It is part of the fabric of the institution and is normative for all the employees. These norms may have conditioned people to "talk-the-

talk” while their practice may have been completely different. By studying the president of the university, some personnel may have been hesitant to share negative views of their person capable of terminating their position even though the research was conducted anonymously.

Eight, this study was limited to three leaders serving in the position of president. The academy is made up of many leaders who serve in a variety of positions. Additional research should be conducted to examine this question at all levels throughout the institution.

Finally, this study did not consider leaders or presidents who are Christian in their faith commitment but serve in a university that is not faith-based or church-related. It would be interesting to consider how their faith expression is filtered or enabled based on the college context. For example, in what ways does the organizational context condition the faith influence on leadership practice? These limitations lead us to consider the implications for future research.

Lack of Incongruence Expressed

One of the things that surprised me in the research was the lack of incongruence expressed between the faith of these presidents and their leadership practice. From my experience, even as a direct report to the president I served, it was extremely easy to be critical of his leadership practice. Most of all that was discussed was positive about the leadership practice of these presidents. The only thing that stood out was the materialistic focus, as expressed by those interviewed, of Devitto in his desire for things of quality.

Every opportunity was given to allow those interviewed to express this incongruence from the anonymity of the interviews to the repeated questioning. A reason that may be suggested for this is the long-term employment of these individuals. Most of those interviewed had worked over ten years for their president and had a deep appreciation and value for their leader. It would be interesting to consider a more random sampling of those employed at the institutions to gain a comprehensive portrait of the president. However, for those who were interviewed, their stories were triangulated among the others which supported my findings.

Implications for Future Research

As this research quest continues, there are several implications to consider. First, It will be important to consider this same question as it relates to other leaders throughout higher education as well as the not-for-profit and for-profit organizational world. This research focused only on higher education and in particular, the Christian college. Leaders can be found at all levels throughout an organization, whether in higher education or in the business world.

In addition, this study should be expanded to consider leaders at all levels. The influence of faith on leadership practice is not relegated to the presidency. Rather, it is expressed by leaders at all levels. It would be interesting to study one institution and to examine multiple levels of leadership to determine if this influence of faith on leadership practice is expressed differently. For example, how is the influence of faith on the leadership practice of leaders expressed in personnel who have a “behind-the-scenes” responsibility rather than being in the public spotlight?

Secondly, it will also be important to consider leaders of other faith perspectives. It would be interesting to see if the type of faith commitment and belief system produces a similar or different influence on leadership practice. For example, what does a non-Evangelical faith commitment look like in its influence on leadership practice? At the same time, a researcher should consider studying leaders of a different faith perspective than his or her own.

Third, it will be interesting to examine the organizational context for his or her leadership practice in light of his or her faith. For example, would the influence of faith on the leadership practice of a president of a public university look different from that of a leader of a Christian college? How does the openness to which the organization values faith expression (Christian versus non-Christian organization) affect how the leader can allow for his or her faith to influence leadership practice?

Fourth, additional conceptual frameworks should be utilized for studying the influence of faith on leadership practice. This will allow for the research to be dissected from multiple vantage points and disciplines.

Finally, it would be prudent for future research to consider the influence of faith on specific leadership practices. For example, a researcher could examine the leader's faith in God and this influence on his or her rhetoric and vision. The researcher could also study the role of prayer in the leadership practice of the president. Another example would be to identify how a faith-based leader makes decisions. How does faith influence these decisions? These are just some of the questions that could be considered in additional research.

Not only should this quest continue in the literature and research, it is my own life journey to discover and understand how faith should influence my leadership practice. The final section will provide some personal reflections on my own leadership journey in the last few years and explain how this study has informed the influence of my faith in my own leadership practice.

Personal Reflections on Faith and My Leadership Journey

I began with a story about my own leadership journey and the perceived inconsistencies between faith and leadership practice. This journey has been one of significance for me as I have been able to take an introspective look at my own leadership practice while looking through the lens of these three Christian college presidents. I am able to see my own inconsistencies yet understand how I am attempting to grow and develop.

My Leadership Journey

Four years ago my career path changed suddenly because of the decision of another leader. At this time in my life, this was the most difficult thing that I had ever faced—the loss of a job. It was difficult to swallow the decision that someone else had made that impacted my job, career, and family. Yet, for me personally, this was time of growth in my own faith. It would be the first significant loss in my experiences and it was during this time that my faith was stretched and strengthened. I learned what it meant to depend upon God in my own personal journey to lead me the next step of the way.

While I was cleaning out my office, I was called by a reporter from the local newspaper. I began to talk with him in fear and trepidation realizing that he wanted to report the news and stories of what had occurred. He was looking for the details that would sensationalize the story. I knew that this would be an opportunity for me to model the way as I left the college. The reporter asked me how this could happen to me. I said, “While this has been difficult, I know that God has a plan for me and my family. This is part of the plan. God is good.” I could have “slammed” the college and the president. However, I realized that what I said would be read by the entire community and it was important for me to model my faith commitment.

Ironically, my response in this situation encouraged the hearts of others along the way. I received calls from people I did not know who wanted to help me. Just recently, I visited my alma mater and a couple of former colleagues talked about the testimony I had when I left the college in this difficult time.

I also learned to never burn any bridges. While I certainly disagreed with the president’s decision, I realized that he was being led to make decisions for the best interest of the university. He was the leader who had the responsibility and the power to make decisions, whether I viewed them as right or wrong. Looking back, I can’t actually say that his decision to terminate my position was right or wrong. It simply was what it was—a decision. I may have disagreed with him because it impacted me. However, it happened and I survived.

In some ways, this was a freeing experience. It gave me the opportunity to look at the world from a new vantage point. Sure, I would rather have looked at it from an

employed perspective. However, at least I had four months of severance pay to ease the transition to my next leadership opportunity.

I remember one meeting with this president a couple of months after my position had been terminated. Since I had not heard from him and had some unresolved questions, I decided to take the initiative to meet with him to essentially challenge his process. What I had hoped for and expected I never received. All I wanted from this leader was for him to acknowledge that he was sorry that he had to make this decision and its impact on me and my family. Perhaps this is where the greatest incongruence was apparent to me—the realization for a leader to apologize for the hurt and pain caused to me and my family. As a man of faith, I had hoped that he would have expressed value for me in this way through an apology. To hear the words, “I’m sorry that I placed the university in a position where I had to make this decision,” would have made significant strides towards my understanding of what had happened.

However, the irony in this situation is that my relationship with this leader has continued and been rebuilt. I had to come to the conclusion in my own faith journey that God had a plan for me and that, perhaps, this decision was part of his plan. I believe in the sovereignty of God which means that He uses the events and decisions, whether right or wrong, to guide my journey in life. Even when people mess up and make mistakes, God uses this to shape our steps. I am not in a position to judge whether or not this decision was incorrect or a mistake. I did not have the information he had nor could I see it from his vantage point as a leader. As I have learned, it is so easy to be critical of the leader.

Personal Leadership Challenges

My journey from this university took me to an administrative leadership position in a private K-12 school. Now, this time around, I was the one “calling the shots” and leading the faculty and staff. It sure looked different on this side of the leadership equation. In fact, it’s never as easy as it looks.

I had been through some difficult leadership challenges—challenges that included extreme financial pressures, eliminating positions, organizational restructuring, and difficult parent and student issues. One of the most difficult times for me, and there were many, was working through the position restructuring of two long-term administrative leaders at the school. Through many conversations with the senior pastor, the school board, and the church leadership, I decided to move a 20-year athletic director out of his position to another area of responsibility I created for him within the school. I believed that his giftedness and strengths as a leader were found more in the position of a coach and teacher rather than as an administrator.

This decision was questioned by many but I knew in my heart as I looked at all of the issues that this was the right decision. Because I valued him and his commitment to the school, I gave him a position with less responsibility with the same pay that enabled him to concentrate on the areas of his strength. This is where I sought to encourage the heart in a difficult time. For me, the most stressful and difficult issue to deal with was when I faced 60 angry and concerned parents. My faith was questioned as a leader. Questions like: How could I do this to a Godly man? Isn’t it better to have a strong Christian in this position even if he doesn’t do a great job in his administrative abilities?

I thought, “How could they question my faith?” Did they not see that I valued him as a person and an employee and that I was trying to do what seemed best for the school? Yet, to them, my faith seemed incongruent with my leadership practice and decisions. Based on what I had been through, what I was hearing sounded all too familiar to me. This time, I was the one being questioned about my faith and leadership practice.

Part of the stress of this situation and the other leadership challenges I faced led me to lose sight of my faith. This took me down a road which would ultimately result in more loss and another transition.

More Loss and Another Transition

Toward the end of these two years into my experience as leader of this school my career path again changed suddenly. This time the change came as a result of my own decision. Personally, I made some bad choices in my own life and began to drift in my own faith commitment. It wasn't that I didn't believe anymore. Actually, I still believed strongly in God and everything I was ever taught or learned. The leadership challenges brought significant stress to my personal life. Instead of turning to God and depending on Him, I neglected my relationship with God because of issues going on in my life. What I said publicly did not match who I was in private.

God allowed me to drift for some time until I hit “rock-bottom” in my own spiritual journey. My whole world came crashing down around me. The position of leadership I held became insignificant to me. I had to put my life back in order. This began by re-centering my life on a relationship with God. Because of the events surrounding my life at the time, I decided to step away from my leadership

responsibilities. I needed time to rebuild my life and my spiritual focus on God. I made a commitment to make right decisions, and through the counsel of others around me, I experienced the loss of a position once again.

This loss, although different from the first experience, brought great learning to my life and my own leadership experience. I realized that one who leads a Christian organization and who professes to lead by faith must live this out consistently. This begins with my own personal relationship with God. If this isn't in order, then leadership can come crashing down. The faith based mission of the organization must be lived out in the life of the leader and those who make up the organization. Otherwise, there is significant incongruence. In other words, for the Christian organization, it is important for the leader to have the same belief structure and faith.

One ironic twist occurred during this time. The leader that eliminated my position actually reached out to me. The president who had eliminated my position, called me during this difficult time. He became a supportive and listening friend. He offered grace to me and a willingness to help during my transition. He shared his own faith journey during his leadership challenges where he sought God through the Psalms. Interestingly, this is the one book of the Bible I studied and felt comforted by as I rebuilt my spiritual and professional life.

Closing Reflections at this Point in my Leadership Journey

I almost titled this section "final reflections." Yet, I then realized that this faith and leadership journey is not over. This leadership journey has been a personal one for me as I have attempted to better understand the influence of my own faith on my leadership practice. So what have I learned about my own journey?

First of all, for the Christian leader, it is important for the personal life to match the public practice. This was so clearly evidenced in the practice of the three Christian college presidents. While I did not know the deepest most personal struggles they faced, I was able to gain a glimpse of their heart and their desire to live out their faith. For me, this takes a daily commitment to grow in my relationship with God. If this is what I say I believe, then I need to make sure it is practiced.

For me, the leadership practice of modeling the way is paramount to my Christian leadership experience. If my values that I promote do not correspond with my practice, then the other leadership practices will be discounted. As the New Testament book of James so aptly suggests:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does (James 1:22-25).

It is the listening and believing that must match the doing. As a Christian leader, it must begin here. This is where the integrity of the leader is discovered. This is where I will either succeed or fail as a future leader.

Secondly, I have seen the importance of the pastor role as Christian leader. While I may never lead a church, I will have the opportunity to be a pastoral example to others. This example and the evidence from the research has given me reason to consider my own leadership practice. This pastoral role is connected to the practice of encouraging the hearts of others. Throughout the years, I have not been the best example of one to encourage others. However, as my commitment to my faith grows, I must seek to practice this in greater ways.

To me, as I look at the stories of these Christian college presidents, I admire their commitments to modeling the way and encouraging the heart in their leadership practice. Their examples, as well as the others I will come across in my life, will continue to impact my life, my faith and my leadership practice. I have listened to their stories from the leaders themselves. I have heard how their faith influences their leadership practice from those closely around them. From this, my quest continues to create a portrait of leadership practice influenced by Christian faith in my own life and practice.

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