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Pentecostal Spirituality Paper

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Pentecostal Leadership: An Overview of the Effects of Pentecostalism on Personal and
Organizational Leadership

“A Christian leader is someone who is called by God to lead; leads with and through Christ-like character; and demonstrates the functional competencies that permit effective leadership to take place,” notes George Barna (as cited in Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011, p. 32). Leadership is most often regarded as influence. However, as Barna reveals, Christians have distinct differences in terms of their own areas of influence, or leadership. Call and character are essential factors of Christian leadership, within which many other Christian distinctions should arise. Christ calls his followers that choose a path of leadership to live above reproach and serve others above all else. In many ways, Christian leadership, in itself, has distinctions that set it apart from secular forms of leadership. While these create the base of anyone in leadership that professes the Christian faith, we can begin to draw even more characteristics that are distinct to Pentecostal leaders.

Pentecostal spirituality denotes leading through the influence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with a sensitivity to the spiritual gifts, and through the usage of the tongues. While much of what may be seen from the public eye seems as though one is simply exercising Christian leadership, if one chooses to exercise their Pentecostalism in their leadership position, some subtle, yet powerful, differences can be found. The remainder of this paper will seek to explore the areas in which one may note differences when including the Holy Spirit in their leadership. These subtleties should be evidenced in one’s draw toward unity, missional empowerment, and self-awareness. A discussion on living a spirit-led life in the marketplace will also be included. Pentecostal leadership holds unique opportunities of empowering and influencing others.

Unity

Romans 15:5-6 (New International Version) states that, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul’s words remind the reader that a spirit of unity was God’s intent for his church. The church was called to unite around bringing glory to God the Father, and as observed in verse five, this spirit of unity comes from God himself. While this mandate is not distinct to Pentecostal leaders, there is evidence to believe that the early evidences of unity was inherently an act of the spirit. In our own humanness, we are unlikely to pursue unity as a vision of leadership. Secular leadership is likely to pursue one’s own motives and vision, elevate oneself, and create clear boundaries on the authority one exercises.

On the day of Pentecost, within the first four verses of Acts 2, readers are made aware of the unity of the believers and their experience with the power of God. People of all ages, genders, and ethnicities were gathered together and *all* were filled with the spirit and began speaking in tongues. This event is the definitive moment in which the Pentecostal movement was born. God sent his spirit to fall upon the early church and begin the days in which Jesus said, “whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these” (John 14:12, New International Version). As the events of Pentecost continued to unfold, Peter reminds the crowds of Joel’s prophecy and acknowledges its fulfillment in that moment. Acts 2:17a (New International Version) states, ““In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.” “All people” reveals that this moment of baptism in spirit begins the cultural modifications that came with Pentecostalism. Cultural barriers no longer could hold influence over those that the spirit chose to begin the first century church. In addition, in Acts 10,

during the baptism of the spirit that occurred at Cornelius' house, we discover circumcised believers astonished that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on Gentiles, as well. Thus, the baptism of the spirit brought new revelations regarding the unity of the church.

Furthermore, Pentecostalism is defined by the awareness and operation of the spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:7 reminds the reader that the gifts of the Spirit are distributed for *common* good. The purpose of the manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit remains for the edification of the church and the unity of the body. 1 Corinthians 12:13-14 (New International Version) states that, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many." Pentecostal leadership, thus, should be marked by the spiritual power that comes from the operation of the spiritual gifts with the ultimate goal being the unity of the body of Christ. Pentecostal leaders should be compelled by the spirit to create unity in any type of organization in which one is a part of. In his discourse on Pentecostal Leadership John F. Carter (2009) comments that, "From the standpoint of Pentecostal leadership, expert power includes one's knowledge of God, exercise of spiritual gifts and the ability to communicate spiritual truths to others in ways that enhance their spiritual development" (p. 190).

Empowerment

Carter's comment reminds readers that the Pentecostal distinctive remains the operation of the spiritual gifts and a keen sensitivity to the Holy Spirit in regard to communicating biblical principles such that lives are transformed and empowered for the work of the Lord. Pentecostal leaders should ultimately pursue a style of leadership in which their own servanthood empowers others. Dominant preaching themes should revolve around cultivating other believer's sense of purpose, potential, and autonomy in their own walk with God. Carter (2009) notes that, "To

apply this to a Pentecostal context, we might say that servant leadership is assisting others to discover and realize their greatest potential as children and servants of God, and experience the fullness of the Spirit in their lives” (p. 195).

There is scriptural basis to believe that, while not the primary purpose of the gift, spirit baptism empowers believers to be witnesses and operate with a divine power wherever they may go. As leaders, one’s life should be marked by the positive influence of others in which ultimately inspires and betters those that they lead. Pentecostal leaders should be empowered to operate in the gifts of the spirit and teach people how to pursue the same gifts in their own lives. If Christian leadership is marked by service, Pentecostal leadership should be marked by service that empowers others in their own God-given purposes.

Additionally, leaders should pursue a God-given, shared purpose for their organizations. This missional pursuit of a leader should be followed with the same faith and power as that of one pursuing God’s commandments to all followers to “make disciples.” Organizational vision, mission, and values can be inspired and birthed from the intimate relationship one has with God through the spirit and their personal prayer language. As the spirit is allowed to illuminate scriptures, make intercession, and edify, one should be empowered and equipped with a purpose that God has breathed life into. The leader’s responsibility then is to remain humble and surrendered to the process God takes them in the fulfillment of such endeavors.

Self-Awareness

Often such surrender to the spirit’s work in one’s life leads to some form of emotional intelligence that ultimately remains an essential element of leadership. While many of the succeeding statements I may not have understood their source prior to this degree program, I now have full reason to believe that an individual’s sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, renewal of their

mind through the work of the Holy Spirit, and personal time spent in their prayer language to edify and intercede have tremendous effects on their own well-being as a Christian leader. The Holy Spirit's work in our lives should increase our awareness of our own areas of growth and teach us ways in which we can interact with others. Self-awareness is essential for leaders, especially in the 21st Century. Leaders must be able to work within many different settings with all kinds of people. Without a certain degree of self-awareness, they will struggle to maintain their influence and ultimately their own sanity. Self-awareness not only allows people to better relate to others, but it also creates opportunity for one to set healthy boundaries needed to be a successful and God-honoring leader. Pentecostal leaders have the opportunity to lead with such a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's work in their own lives that other people are inspired to do the same.

Living a Spirit-led Life in the Marketplace

Finally, I would like to propose some of my own personal experiences on Pentecostal leadership, especially in regard to the effects of one's Pentecostal beliefs in a non-Christian marketplace. Throughout the majority of this degree program, I have worked in a large inner-city public high school. I worked at a church prior to this position, so I have had the opportunity to experience living out my faith in both settings. However, it has not been simply living out my faith that has impacted me most, but also, I have learned how to be a Pentecostal leader when I have not carried a title or position of influence. Some of the greatest lessons learned were looking back at the end of the day and reflecting on how God interceded on my behalf in any given moment.

Being characteristically Pentecostal, one has the opportunity to involve the Holy Spirit in their day in a distinct and memorable way. While I have embarked on new journeys throughout

this degree, I have learned the beauty of surrendering each day to the Lord and covering my day in the power of God unleashed as I have prayed in tongues over my classroom, my team, my students, and each day. Numerous times, I can only contribute my explanation of a particular algebra topic, in such a way that the students understood, to the instantaneous inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, there have been numerous moments that I have had to deal with heavy or challenging circumstances, some student situations and other work related, but in every moment that I did not know how to respond, I could rely on a quick prayer in my own spirit language to unleash the very needed outcome. While much of my influence has stemmed from inherent Christian leadership principles, I am thankful for the gifts of the spirit and how they distinctly operate even in areas that they may not be openly welcomed.

Conclusion

As a Christian leader, one carries a mantle marked with servanthood toward others and surrender to God. While some secular leadership literature is beginning to reflect principles of service, these concepts remain contrary to the majority of secular motives of leadership. The world tells leaders to pursue their own goals and create success for themselves. However, in scripture, Jesus painted a very different picture of leadership for His followers. He rebuked the Pharisees way of influence and released a timeless pursuit of loving God and loving others into the field of leadership studies. While Christian leadership as a whole can be marked and distinguished apart from secular models, it can also be analyzed for characteristic distinctions in how one expresses their Christianity. Pentecostal leaders, while maintaining Christian leadership distinctions, also have a unique opportunity to express their own spirit-inspired differences and allow God to impact their organization in unique and refreshing ways. Pentecostal leaders can lead the way in the unification of the body of Christ, the empowerment of oneself and others,

self-awareness and how this impacts one's leadership, and in displaying a radically different lifestyle in the marketplace.

Resources

Blackaby, H. T., & Blackaby, R. (2011). *Spiritual Leadership: moving people on to Gods agenda*. Nashville, TN: B & H Pub. Group.

Carter, J. F. (2009). Power and authority in Pentecostal leadership. *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 12(2), 185–207. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.sagu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001827613&site=ehost-live&scope=site>