

JESUS ON LEADERSHIP-A BOOK REVIEW

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Traditional management leadership styles were examined from the perspectives of team or participative; laissez-faire; charismatic; democratic; paternalistic; autocratic; transactional, and transformation methods or approaches (Erben and Guneser, 2008; Foster, 2002; Goleman, 2000; Liu, et al, 2011; Matindale, 2011; Schultz and Schultz, 2010; Thamhain, 2004; Woods, 2010). Robert Greenleaf (1977) is considered to be the pioneer of servant leadership and since his introduction of this phenomenon, it has blossomed into a rival alternative leadership method. Pastor C. Gene Wilkes (1998) is among scholars whom have entered the servant-leadership discourse and brought wider understanding of the matter. Like Greenleaf, Pastor Wilkes contends that Jesus' leadership is an exemplar one that can be effectively use to empower people, change paradigms, modify behaviour and brings out peoples' creativity (Wilkes, 1998, p. ix). In the book entitled *Jesus on Leadership*, Wilkes, the author, uses personal histories, narratives, Scriptures from the Bible, and anecdotal information that can be used to guide a transformation human. The book is written from a metaphysical perspective that GOD and His expressed image, Son of GOD-Jesus, are truths and so issues can be measured up against Him, Jesus of Nazareth, to determine shortfall, and how Jesus' lifestyle, teachings and paradigm can be used to align faults, weaknesses, inadequacies, inexperience, deficiencies, and wayward paths. *Jesus on Leadership* comprises of eight chapters, of which seven of them addressed principles exhibited by Jesus while he sojourned on this

earth. The title of the book expressed a religious paradigm, rightfully so, but the matter as secular relevance and is a must read for scholars, those in secular education, leadership aspirants, and critiques of Christianity as well as young people as it provides invaluable information for principles practices by Jesus of Nazareth can be use to lead at an higher level.

Jesus of Nazareth washes his disciples' feet and this was a sign of humanity, servitude, reverse to other, serving a mission and a recognition a service-heart (pp. 3-29). Wilkes believes that servant leadership is modeled by most effectively by Jesus of Nazareth. He notes that "For even the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45" (in Wilkes, 1998, p. 10). Wilkes argues that Jesus was a servant to his mission and that he was a servant at heart (p. 11). Having perused the life and practices of Jesus, the author opines that he identifies seven principles that governed the how Jesus' led. They are as follows: 1) humility; 2) following a vision that is spiritual or first be a follower; 3) servant first as like a slave or greatness in serve; 4) serving other in keeping with the will of GOD to taking risk; 5) leaving the head table and sit with the lower class or taking up the towel; 6) shared responsibility and authority with those whom you lead, and 7) building a team and aligning the team to a worldview or a vision (pp. 11-12; pp. 23-27). In clarifying the depth of Jesus' Model of Leadership, Wilkes forwards that lofty heart and a proud countenance are a part of a 'head-table mentality that is not in keeping with the

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humility that Jesus wants us to live by (p. 13). He points out the challenge of the ‘head-table mentality’ in humans, including some in Christendom, and warns people against lofty issue arising from status-and-positional orientations in society-the self-conceited and self-centered personality (p. 14).

The servant-centered leadership paradigm is one in which the servant and the leader coalesce for the benefit of the group. This paradigm offers a perspective that the leader, firstly begins as a follower and that his/her is to service others at all times (p. 17). The servant leadership approach is not similar to the other conventional leadership methods and should not be contrasted with those. Firstly, servant leadership commences with a deep mission or purpose that goes to the core of the human heart. The individual is so moved by the mission

or purpose that status-role or positional-power has little bearing on the how the person acts. The author believes that this consuming mission or purpose that entraps the human heart is of God (p. 19) and that this was the same controlling force that engulfs Jesus’ being (p. 20). Hence, when the person begins to act, he/she is acting on the zeal of the mission or vision, and this makes other issues such as status-power of less significance. Wilkes believe that the disparity between our style of leadership paradigm and that of Jesus is wrapped in spirituality (p. 22). As such, he forwards that Jesus’ model of leadership was a spiritual one and this makes the difference and account for our human fallacies. Wilkes, then, compares spiritual leadership with human leadership and this is expressed in Table 1, below (p. 22).

Table 1.Spiritual and Human or Earthly Leadership

Human or Earthly Leadership	Spiritual or Heavenly Leadership
Self-confident	Confident in God
Knows men	Knows God
Makes own decisions	Seeks to find God’s will
Ambitious	Self-effacing
Originates own methods	Finds and follows God’s methods
Enjoys commanding others	Delight to obey God
Motivated by personal considerations	Motivated by love for God and man
Independent	God-dependent

Based on Wilkes’perspective presented in Table 1, it is evident that those who are spirit-lead are driven my motives outside of them, especially in keeping with God’s will, compared to the personal self-driven approach by humanistic management approach (p. 22). Wilkes contend that before one is able to become a servant leader, he/ she must first serve his/her leader. He uses Jesus’ words, recorded in the scriptures-Matthew 16: 24, how servant leadership works, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (p. 23), which speaks to self-denial and the reliance on God for wisdom,

behaviour and actions. This he simplifies as “If you desire to lead as Jesus lead, you must desire first to follow Jesus; this is how leadership training among God’s people begins”(Whiles, 1998, p. 23). Unlike other scholars such as Stephen Covey (1989; 1991) and Maxwell (2007), Wilkes believes that leader is neither taught or innate or it is actually given to you by others (p. 27). It can be extrapolated that if there is followership, there is leadership and as such the leadership is because there is followership, given to you by constituents. With this said, Wilkes takes that the leader’s greatness are based on 1) he lives with

compromise and is called to a mission; 2) empowerment of others, and 3) having a mission that is people-centered. (p. 28).

Principle 1, chapter 2, deals with humility or humble your heart, which comprise of humility-the living example and learning to be humble as well as learning to way (pp. 31-45). The author contends that Jesus' entire life from birth totally exhibits humble-from being born in a manger to lowly among the greater. He notes that this was not in keeping with the status-positional power of elites at the time, the Pharisees (p. 35, 38). This he notes is a clear example of our value-orientation society that places a prominence based on status-role and perceived power. It is, simply, a culture of perception, image, fallacies and human standards (pp. 36-38). From his early place of birth, parents, disciplines he choose, people he associate with, Jesus is truly an exemplar of humility. One passage of scripture reads "[He] did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but mad himself nothing (Phil. 2:6-7)"-p. 39. Wilkes takes the discussion into a simple comparison between pride and confidence. Confidence is a source from God to those who trust Him and otherwise. Whereas ego produces pride and that it is the opposite of humility (pp. 43-45).

Wilkes provides a section that deals with learning to be humble and that we should eschew the very presence of pride-"the Lord detests all the proud of heart', Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall', and 'better to be lowly in spirit among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud"(p. 45). It was noted by Wilkes that humility is synonymous with service and that it is a character trait (p. 47). On the other hand, he notes that a vision must be tempered as arrogance can destroy a mission as well as distort God's plan (p. 46). The example that Wilkes brings out here is with Joseph. He

believes that character is the what is needed to control giftedness or balance it (p. 46). Wilkes writes, "Joseph had everything a person needs to become a leader: a parent's blessing at age seventeen, a vision for the future [based on prophesy], and recognized physical gifts"(p. 46). Among Joseph's physical attributes is physical attraction as Genesis 39:6 has that he was "well-built and handsome" and Wilkes indicates that those attributes had made Joseph an arrogant individual. The author opines that "Joseph's life got harder before it got easier. It was not until Joseph's pride was based upon the work of God rather than his personal abilities and dreams that God elevated him to a place where he could see those dreams fulfilled"(p. 47), suggesting that greatness or effective leadership is not solely based on physical attributes or vision, one's character, attitude to work and people are among other things need to transform a vision to reality.

One may ask the question, can you find greatness in service? The answer to this question was addressed by the author in Principle three-find greatness in service (p. 89). "Leaders define what actions and attitude will be rewarded and recognized among their followers. When followers try to define new values, the leaders' responsibility is to restate the core values of the group" Wilkes says (Wilkes, 1998, p. 93). Quoting from the gospel of Mark in the New Testament, the Bible, Wilkes writes:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servants, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man [Jesus of Nazareth] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45)- (Wilkes, 1998, p. 87)

The writings of Mark are the spoken words of Jesus of Nazareth to his disciples and embedded therein is the philosophy of Jesus' Leadership model. In it is guideline for Spiritual Leadership, serving those who one intends to lead. Such a leadership model as at its core values, humility, character ethic, a vision, and that leadership is not about status-role or power, it is servanthood (pp. 89-106). To summarize the leadership approach that is in keeping with the desired servant model, Wilkes believes that can be likened to parents and shepherdship (p. 91). He opines, "Parent leader fits the biblical model of shepherd leader. The shepherd is the biblical model for God's relationship with his people (Ps. 23:1) [i.e. Psalm]" (p. 91). Wilkes continues "Jesus adopted the shepherd as his model of leadership when he said, 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep'(John 10:11)"(p. 91), suggesting that servant leadership transcends self to that of a vision and the group's well-being as well as depth of sacrifice that this leadership-management approach requires of the leader. An example here that is given of Wilkes is Mother Teresa (p. 111).

The servant-leader must possess the skills and competence aligned with character, a vision, and that the core values must be the platform for acts and not personality (p.p. 102-118). So, Wilkes writes "Leaders define what actions and attitudes will be rewarded and recognized among their followers. When followers try to define new values, the leader's responsibility is to restate the core values of the group"(p. 93). It should be understood here that a focused servant-leader is led by the vision and his/her attitude and actions in the process of carrying-out this vision should alienate but build the inner vision in the followership and this is done by way of coaching as was exhibited by Jesus. As a result, restating the core values for the group, the servant leader navigates his/her

perspective in alignment with the mission and that this is done in a harmonious and reassuring to his/her followership. In this leadership approach, there are paradoxical situations such as was observed in the life of Jesus. Wilkes notes that these are as follows: "He was gentle as a lamb yet courageous as a lion; he was yielding yet aggressive when cornered by injustice; he was gregarious but spent much time alone; he was meek yet in control at all times; he never had a formal education, yet he taught with great authority; he was a conformist yet an iconoclast, and he was a friend to the outcast yet dine with insiders"(p. 96). The aforementioned paradoxes Highlands the contradictory issues that may arise during the servant-leader trajectory and these must be effectively managed in such a way that followers are brought into the learning messages, while guiding the followers through the change.

Jesus prepares his followers for the difficulty that may arise because change is a difficult reality for people. He uses the analogy of the difficulty to pour new wine in old vessels, which was taken from Matthew 9:16-17. Wilkes forwards that the difficulty of change is not only an issue for non-believers as even among those in Christendom, the matter of change is equally the same kind of challenge (p. 99). An effective servant leader is a tour guide, navigating the difficult human experience of resistance to change and stewardship governs the leaders' behaviour by empowering his/her followers to reality of the change and its reasons. Because the leader is a steward, coaching of the followers play a pivotal role in helping them to create a new paradigm and this is time consume as well as takes much time before it becomes a reality. Using a quotation from Max DePree, Wilkes writes:

Try to think about a leader, in the words of the gospel write Luke, as 'one who serves'. Leadership is a concept of owing certain things

to the institution. It is a way of thinking about institutional heirs, a way of thinking about stewardship as contrasted with ownership...The art of leadership requires us to think about the leader-as-steward in terms of relationships: of assets and legacy, of momentum and effectiveness, of civility and values [DePree, 1989, p. 10] (in Wilkes, 1998, p. 108)

DePree's perspective was one in which the leader owes himself accountable to his/her followers and his/her servant-heart guide actions, choices, and the leader-being-a-steward creates an atmosphere of civility, respect, humility, worth, and this is accomplished by way of empowerment (in Wilkes, 1998, p. 108). Because the steward-leader has given to an heart of service, he/she is not given into pride, boastfulness, arrogance, loftiness and no status-role is sought because service to other is the model that drives behaviour and not personality issues (p. 110). Hence, Wilkes laments those in Christendom's loftiness and warn against this thinking. In examining the issue of a service-heart in Christendom, Wilkes writes:

I led a church leadership conference a year or two ago in southern state. When I came into the place where the meal was served, I noticed two tables with sign: "Reserved for Servers." Both tables were empty, while the other tables were full. People were filled. When I got up to speak, I wondered out loud if it was their respect for the "reserved" sign or their fear of being known as "servers" that kept people from sitting at those tables! ...I told the group that under Jesus' model of leadership, on of those "Reserved for Servers" signs should have been on every table (p. 111)

The author reiterates the perspective that stewardship or servanthood is the hallmark for Jesus' model and that his follower must understand and practice his approach to leader. Jesus teaches that the least in the kingdom or

social environment shall be the greatness and that greatness is measured by servitude or "sacrifice so that other could benefit" (Wilkes, 1998, p. 118), which is exemplified in Mother Teresa devotion and service to humanity. The reality according to Wilkes, servanthood goes beyond self and if it takes sacrifice of life to accomplish the mission it must be done so as long as it is in keeping with the will and principles of God (pp. 125-150). The display of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross is the ultimate show of servant leadership (p. 125) and that taking risk within the will of God means more to the servant-heart than unwillingness to accomplish the mission, being alive. Put another way, Wilkes uses Kouzes and Posner's view that "Leaders are pioneers-people who are willing to step out into the unknown. They are people who are willing to take risks, to innovate and experiment in order to find new and better ways of doing things" (in Wilkes, 1998, p. 126). The same thought was expressed another way by Wilkes, "Servant leaders can risk serving others when they trust that God is in control of their lives" (p. 131), suggesting that fear is secondary to the mission for other given into the servant-heart.

Recognizing the uneasy with which this paradigm may be challenge for people, Wilkes provides a guideline for how one can take the risk as a servant-hearted leader. He notes that "Your fear to risk that place for the mission of God points to your lack of trust in God who got you there" (p. 134), encapsulating how self must be sacrifice for a great trust and belief in the will of God and that the threat of death should not cease the mission. Wilkes argues that God will empower the servant-leader with spiritual gifts, boldness of spirit (pp. 137-151). So Wilkes summarizes the servant leadership life and thinking on three premises:

1. Trust in God: "You trust that in your relationship with Christ you have all power to carry out God's call on your life" (p. 150);

2. Trusting in the promises of God: "You trust that you have come from God. God is the source of life for you. Among other things God has gifted you for service among his people and allowed experiences to mold you. He is using your vocational skills and motivating you through natural enthusiasm for God's purposes and plans"(p. 150), and
3. Acceptance of Life as a mission: "You trust that at the end of this life you will return to the God who created you and that you will receive the inheritance of eternal life he has promised you. This trust allows you to risk anything earthly for everything eternal"(p.151)

Having engaged in an extensive discourse of servant leadership, servant-heart, Wilkes had set a framework for the philosophical practices and display of Jesus of Nazareth. The author believes that all the other secular management-leadership styles so far have by enlarged failed and so a new paradigm is sought my many. As a result, Wilkes discusses the matter in a chapter in order for people to grasp this paradigm and how Jesus of Nazareth was able to show this leadership approaches (pp. 181-188). He contends that this leadership approach is effective and its effectiveness can be assessed by way of the number of people who are followers of Jesus. Many scholars such as Stephen Covey and John Maxwell indicate that leadership is about followership/ constituents. Within the context of aforementioned perspective, Jesus of Nazareth has followers/ constituents and so his approach is undoubtedly an effective one based on the number of followers.

Wilkes postulates, "When Jesus called the disciples to himself on the side of the a hill and commissioned them to continue that mission, he was not abdicating his own responsibility for it-he was sharing that responsibility. Servant leaders remain responsible for the mission even when they recruit other to complete it (p. 181).

A deduction that can be made from Wilkes' perspective is that Jesus was a coach of the disciples into understanding his vision/mission, he was making them honing this mission and making them own this mission, which is empowering them with a responsibility and providing them with the authority. Interestingly, in giving them the responsibility and empowering his constituents/followers, Jesus made them aware that they must pray to God and await his empowerment through the spirit as this would provide the authority for the mission (pp. 181-183). Wilkes notes that "Leaders who send other without authority to make decisions send powerless followers to defeat" (p. 182). Jesus' disciples were able to conduct miracles in his name and they were able to display greatness in many instances. So Jesus shares the responsibility of his mission to his disciples and gave them to authority to act on his behalf, which must be practiced by servant leaders-empowerment, responsibility, authority, coaching and being a person of high character (p. 183). Like Jesus of Nazareth, the servant leader should never be concerned about personality ethic-image; but a wholesome character.

Wilkes provides another interpretation of disquietness, grumblings, and criticisms that was fascinating and different that could assist contemporary leadership in understanding their role and being held accountable for their action. He believes that those issues are indicators of leaders' inability and failure to meet the needs of his/her constituents/ followers (pp. 184-187). Hence, disquietness, grumblings, and criticisms by constituents of the leader should be interpret as leader having failed his followers and therefore, he/she should re-evaluate his/her role and why the failure has occurred under his stewardship. So, delegation, responsibility-sharing and authority -sharing are gifts that can be employed by the servant leader to fulfill the needs of his/her

constituents/followers-this is the hallmark of a good leader. The author shows how Jesus of Nazareth both filled the physical as well as spiritual needs of his disciples, while coaching them for the mission ahead and empowerment them to do so-providing human relation skills and having a servant-heart.

In retrospect, servant leadership as provided by Jesus of Nazareth surrounds encouragement of other to serve-quality them to serve by training and development; knowledge of the mission and understanding it; instruct them with the servant-heart, and praying to God of eternal authority for the mission (pp. 189-202). Those are five elements for servant leadership and that it should be noted that they are built around a team, group (p. 209). Wilkes points out that a team is not a committee and that this is critical and must be understood by leaders. He defined a team as "...a small group of people bound together by a commitment to reach a shared goal" (p. 215), which is totally different than that of a committee. A committee is "...a group of people who meet and make decisions for others" (p. 216), which implies the power to control and dictate an agenda. It can be inferred from the two definitions that a team is a collective unit with shared status-power, whilst a committee has the power and control to determine an agenda and this is dictated by the committee as against empowerment of the constituents. A leader is a team member and not a committee agent, which is the reason why Wilkes brings this into focus because he wants readers to understand the role of a leader.

Wilkes uses Greenleaf's perspective on a leader to broaden the scope of his work and contextual it within a scholastic realm. Greenleaf says that a leader is "whoever in the counsel has the greatest team-building ability" (in Wilkes, 1998, p. 215). This means that "leadership of a team is the highest expression of servant leadership" (p. 217). Clearly,

leadership is not synonymous power, control, and image of the one in charge. Instead, it is a balance between understanding a mission and empowering other to own this mission and participate in order to accomplish this mandate (p. 223). Leadership is a shared responsibility and it is aligned with authority, which is manipulated by the leader and not power-over the constituents (p. 223).

This book is written from the perspective of servant leadership and leadership being the unit of analysis. Such an approach is in keeping with a Cartesian thinking. It is, therefore, framed around a social system as a culture and explain why the life of Jesus aptly fits into the general interactivity among other social actors. Jesus of Nazareth ideology extends beyond Western thinking that there is absolute truth, objectivism. Jesus shows that much of what were believed in are not for the effective functioning of human existence and that some of them are abusive, retaliatory, oppressive and discriminatory, particularly the styles of leadership-management approaches. In fact, Wilkes provides ample evidence that Jesus' perspective was that human interact with their physical, spiritual and social world. Western-epistemology is about idealism/objectivism and this excludes spiritual thinking and that Jesus' approach employs spirituality, which is considered by Western scholars as subjective and not in keeping with empirical truths.

In concluding, some may argue that this book is subjective and defies idealism as though objectivism is not a set of constructions around a set of agreed perspectives and so it is subjectively-objective, which many fail to accept in the academy. Ludwig Von Bertalanffy's theory of a general system theory, the interactivity of many sub-systems that collectively work is like a living biological organisms, which is in support of Jesus' perspective that man is internal (psychological), and external (social, spiritual, and natural), and

that omitted an aspect of life cannot be truth; but it is reality truth as is the case with this Western cosmology. Using case history, narratives, historical analyses, illustrations from the life and practices of Jesus of Nazareth, Wilkes is able to provide a different paradigm to leadership. It should not be sidelined or discounted totally on the premise of its subjectivity as idealism/objective is not the only way of knowledge or epistemology of obtaining truths. Wilkes believes that the dysfunctional state of man is the exclusion of spirituality, that man's practices are absent of this expanded reality and that the inclusion of spirituality, especially how we relate to each other, must take a focus as illustrated by Jesus of Nazareth in order to restore the balance in human relations. Wilkes thinks that the conventional leadership-management approaches are wanting and that an alternative style, servant leadership, is the way forward.

The book offers the view of another paradigm which is outside of the current human system and one that can restore greatness among people. The difficulty of many scholars to avoid examining spirituality in leadership, because of its subjectivity, is a bias as knowledge can either be subjective, objective or subjective-objective. In fact, Nichols and Schwartz (2001) put it this way:

There are no facts flying around in nature as if they are butterflies that you put into a nice orderly collection. Our cognition is not a mirroring of ultimate reality but rather is an active process, in which we create models of the world. These models direct what we actually see, what we consider as facts (p. 116)

Nichols and Schwartz (2001) summarize the validity of this book and while it is not in the idealism paradigm, this does not mitigate against its truths and knowledge attained by this epidemiological viewpoint. It is from perspective, I implore educators and scholars to

examine this book from another paradigm and evaluate its context with the given paradigm. Wilkes' book is to provide an alternative thinking to leadership and must be understood and interpreted within the given paradigm and not outside of this approach.

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