

Impact of Scriptural Team Building Actions
on
Forming Multicultural Ministry Teams
of
Committed Followers

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

This paper sought to identify the requirements to develop a multi-cultural team of committed followers. I researched multiple sources, including scholarly journals and books written by multiple authors. First, I wanted to understand the barriers to building a unified community. From this perspective, I researched the areas influencing a current decline in the church community. Then, I researched the areas of leadership and training that positively impact the growth of the church body. In conducting my research, I discovered a requirement for servant leaders with desired character traits (humility, trust, compassion) in an appropriate training environment for Spiritual transformation. I learned that spiritually transforming training maintained a primary focus on a relationship with God in an inclusive and respectful environment, providing a sense of belonging. Additionally, the servant leader needed a plan consisting of a gradual Spiritual transformation path. For the plan, I considered the life of Jesus and a potential plan that he used for uniting diverse individuals into a community of committed followers, disciples. From my readings and perspectives, Jesus reached out to each disciple, bringing them into a community for teaching. Once the disciples received all the necessary instructions, they were sent out under their own power to repeat the reach, teach, send process, and grow the community of believers. At the end of the research, I concluded that servant leaders emulating the traits and actions of Jesus Christ can train and spiritually transform individuals from a multitude of cultures into a unified body of committed followers.

Keywords: leadership, commitment, multicultural, team building, followers, transform

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The paper focuses on scriptural team-building actions of a leader to establish a consistent biblical worldview in a multicultural environment. Leaders in a multicultural environment encounter multiple areas of bias tension, conscious and unconscious. While trying to overcome these barriers, Christian leaders insert another tension: a desire to weave biblical principles into their leadership style to create spiritually formed teams. This paper initially identifies some of the related barriers encountered, including the contextual structure of a culture. The next sections of the paper address collective and individual traits for overcoming these barriers. The final section of the paper seeks to identify a leader's action with a gradual Spiritual formation path to assimilate multiple individuals of a diverse culture into a collective, unified body of committed followers working tasks to glorify God as a primary goal, with the secondary goal of completing the task as a team. The following research paper investigates whether consistent Spiritual formation supported by team-building actions with a scriptural foundation increases the likelihood of multicultural team members becoming committed followers of leaders.

Barriers

Past and Present

Bracken et al. (2018) note that Spiritual formation is a lifelong journey influenced by memories, environment, and other people, as well as an inward journey partnered with God's Spirit. Today, there is a decline in Spiritual formation due to competing priorities and accountability. The author indicated that newer generations are not being raised in Christian

environments. Thus, future generations are passing, with less church involvement and attendance.

And, for those individuals who do attend church, they struggle in the current cultural war to lead two separate lives, sacred and secular. According to Pearcey (2005), today's culture is filled with members who have individualized their roles and responsibilities, separating themselves from other community members and the objective truth of scripture. This separation stills and kills Agape love, a sacrificial giving, joyful, empowering, and unconditional love focused on the well-being of others, friends, and enemies (Hiebert, 2008, P. 292) because more life hours are devoted to individual needs rather than God and others, causing an erosion of relationships and negatively impacting worldviews, which includes social life, politics, and cultural practices (Khafiz et al., 2025).

Influences

According to research on the transformation of religious worldviews conducted by Khafiz et al. (2025), the authors' research identified globalization as exerting a multifaceted influence on truth in various areas of social and public life. The increasing influence of post-truth narratives in online networks propagated through political forums is distorting and misrepresenting truth and facts. While these networks support a venue for what a person already accepts, they are a vital gateway for influencing individual understanding of the world and its surroundings, grounded in foundational beliefs and values. For this reason, individuals' adaptive functions as a result of their religious beliefs are impacted at the biological, social, or psychological levels. Thus, the spirituality and moral shaping of individual functional areas into a unified national and social community greatly affects the future role of religion (Khafiz et al., 2025).

Howard (2002) defined spirituality as a “hidden yearning” driving a person's life through numerous emotional resources (joy, truth, joy, peace, wholeness, love) and their connectedness to the World. Spirituality (an individual and universal entity) fulfills this human desire, driving a person to find their purpose in life and identity through self-awareness. For this reason, these driving factors support an individual’s ability to become unified with others in the world by combining individual philosophy on life, values, and behavior to obtain a sense of belonging in the world (Howard, 2002). Therefore, an individual can develop a spiritual foundation within a church community while focusing on key influential areas: connection, meaning, purpose, identity, community, communication, behavior, and moral leadership (Howard, 2002).

Church Community

For this reason, churches will continue missing opportunities to build relationships until the church moves away from age-specific programs and towards the promotion of intergenerational faith programs extending beyond ethnic boundaries and into various ages for the building of relationships. This integrated approach promotes engagement, encouragement, and embodiment of all generations simultaneously, strengthening all cultural members of the church body (infants to seniors) and contributing to communal spiritual formation within churches. (Roberto, 2012).

Finally, a requirement exists for the development and sustainment of an emotionally healthy church to foster a mission-ready attitude. Churches need to reach into the lives of others through the development of outreach ministries for discipleship (Scazzero, 2010). According to Scazzero (2010), the life of most people contains many unseen layers, like an iceberg. And, a person comprised of many unseen identity layers causes conflict in building a diverse, multicultural community. These unseen layers cause people to grieve life in a state of brokenness

and vulnerability. This state prohibits individuals from stepping forward and embracing change by living into the grief and hurt rather than hiding from it (Scazzero, 2010). Scazzero (2010) notes that embracement of this step is an important beginning of a healthy relationship with God and within the church by grieving like God for his people and embracing life by loving and leading well like Jesus without compromising the gospel.

Community Building

Servant Leadership

Bracken et al. (2018) discuss leadership factors for overcoming barriers to Spiritual formation. Some of the factors included leaders modeling the way and growing themselves by establishing trust-building protocols with respected boundaries, communication, and engaging the head, heart, and hands of individuals (Bracken et al., 2018). Collected research data involving many churches of multiple denominations identified methods for developing effective and obedient servants of God and Christian leaders (du Plessis et al., 2020). Researchers identified the requirements for servant leaders to influence followers by comparing their data with the servant leadership of Jesus Christ, Moses, Paul, and David. According to the authors, Plessis et al. (2020) concluded that servant leadership contributed to the training, spiritual formation, and empowerment of followers to minister the Word of God.

Christian Servant leaders have a significant role in the training and commitment of individuals. According to McConnell (2018), Christian leaders have a sacred duty to accept responsibility of a Christian organization and to continuously learn, especially from one's mistakes. Leaders should learn to embrace their mistakes, learn from them, and chart a path for performing better the next time. Additionally, this learning should occur in a communal environment, allowing individuals to learn from one another (McConnell, 2018).

A leader's actions are even more enhanced when fulfilling the character and competencies required of servant leaders in the broadening and deepening of a person's spiritual formation. Servant leaders lead by a vision established by God based on the Word of God, first. Because without a vision, people perish (New International Version, 2011, Proverbs 29:18). Second, these leaders seek to serve people rather than a higher position (du Plessis et al., 2020). Third, servant leaders do not wait for instructions. Servant leaders take initiative and risk while assuming ownership for any failure. And, finally, these leaders sought to listen to and understand their followers' points of view and behavior without being judgmental (du Plessis et al., 2020).

Leaders must provide spiritual encouragement by leading like Christ, humbly remaining in scripture, prayer, and God, allowing them to accept the hard-to-fill and less fulfilling tasks of life (Pearcey, 2005), incorporating increasing cultural influences in a globalized world with the importance of learning about cultures, implications, and spiritual impact (McConnell, 2018). A Christian leader must approach culture change with multiple lenses.

McConnell (2018) placed these four areas (Scripture, theology, history, and anthropology) on a quad chart with a vertical axis representing God's divine revelation in relation to human particularities. The author provided a horizontal line to represent various time elements (physical, social, cultural, spiritual, biographical, historical) of life. McConnell (2018) reminds his readers to view culture beyond a group text down to the individual uniqueness, all created in the image of God, making human nature and culture inseparable (McConnell, 2018). As a leader establishes spiritual communion, vertically and horizontally, the body of Christ evolves into a great community with an abundance of fellowship in a common life from all over the World (Bridges, 2012).

A servant leader not only has the opportunity to train and transform individual household members, roles, and responsibilities, but all community members regardless of cultural boundaries (race, religion, sex, ethnicity, age, social status). A leader's action can be the solution to overcoming community issues experienced today and restoring communities to a professional, communal environment when implemented appropriately in serving others, as in the days of past generations (Pearcey, 2005). A leader can make an impact in which every role is known by every other member of a community. Thus, any member role could be filled in the absence of a member (Pearcey, 2005).

Cultural Training

However, for transformation to occur, cultural proficiency “allowing individuals to adapt their motivations, work ethic, and communication styles while learning from the different value perspectives to create better solutions” (Livermore, 2016) must exist to establish a professional environment and relationships. A culture of professionalism is built on the handling of responsibilities and challenging circumstances. Through the handling of responsibilities and challenging circumstances, leaders have an opportunity to build and influence cultures of professionalism by engaging in a lifelong spiritual journey and modeling professional behavior in working relationships (Craigie, 2018). Davis et al. (2024) noted that successful training and transformation occurred in students committed to training with intentionality and working alongside and within a community.

Establishing proficiency requires a training program and environment to transform individuals into professionals within multicultural competencies (Davis et al., 2024). In the appropriate Spiritual formation training program, individuals receive multicultural training in emotional, empathetic, and spiritual that provides information on engagement with others

through cultural immersion to increase and improve their multicultural awareness and knowledge. Cultural immersion allows individuals to encounter an unfamiliar culture, increasing an individual's multicultural competence with cultural humility to create positive relationships and mutual respect between individuals and members of the community, and explore the beliefs, values, and perspectives of others while strengthening multiple personal areas (Davis et al., 2024).

These personal areas included the following: awareness of one's own beliefs, assumptions, biases, attitudes towards culturally different persons; understanding another's worldview; and employing culturally sensitive training techniques integrated with spirituality (Davis et al., 2024). Additionally, leaders relied on the input of the participants from multiple generations to include newer generations who brought their own perspectives and experiences of the world (Davis et al., 2024). According to Davis et al. (2024), individuals trained in cultural sensitivity and spirituality as a foundational resource for decision-making using faith as a life-coping technique. The individual results included an increased desire to serve others, giving life meaning and purpose (Davis et al., 2024). Building these connections is essential for building a faithful, covenantal, church community of trust (Lingenfelter, 2008).

The Church Body

Roberto (2012) provided an inclusive insight into intergenerational churches, considering that most churches have approximately five generations to create communal, intergenerational churches. These churches support God's intent to create an integral community of all ages for sharing faith, affirming individual value, fostering a support system for caring concerns of others, and providing a sense of individual identity with respect and value. Belonging to a community of faith, an intergenerational church strengthens spiritual formation through

encouragement of faith and leadership of all ages by incorporating the wisdom, experience, knowledge, and talents of all generations as well as professionalism (Roberto, 2012).

Leaders must understand the meaning of professionalism, what it is, and what it is not, to build intergenerational, communal churches (Roberto, 2012). According to Craigie (2018), professionalism includes recognizing that all individuals have worth and require treatment with dignity. Craigie (2018) identifies professionalism as a social contract entitling individuals to a professional relationship with a leader or caretaker who promotes commitment to professional competence, honesty, confidentiality, trust, ethical care, and personal welfare. Additional factors contributing to professionalism include character, virtue, respect, generosity, compassion, accountability, and a regard for others, along with Spiritual factors of prayer, meditation, and daily reflection (Craigie, 2018).

However, a church's identity is not completely framed by internal congregational factors. According to Unruh et al. (2005), church actions that reach beyond the congregation frames a church's identity as well. The authors discuss the relationship between social ministry and evangelism. Church missions, unlike public organizations, address more than the material needs (Unruh et al., 2005). The church provides a means for moral development and spiritual growth by placing primary importance on evangelizing outside the church body, seeking social change or reform (Unruh et al., 2005)..

However, in discussing evangelizing that incorporates social interaction, negative connotation are encountered (Unruh et al., 2005). According to Unruh et al. (2005), social ministry and evangelism can become complementary or tension-provoking actions. For example, some evangelistic churches described as “preachy” and “pushy” cause individuals to turn away

from proselytizing. These churches did not want others to see them as pushing their beliefs (Unruh et al., 2005).

Other churches have learned from these negative remarks and expressed spiritual care in an appropriate manner, allowing one's faith to be transparent and appealing, thus inviting others to join them in doing God's work (Unruh et al., 2005). This type of complementary expression increases the odds for reforming a person or community and building a deeper relationship with God. And, while seeking and building this deeper relationship with God, individuals break their current deeper relationship with their addictive behavior. And, once a consistent and honest relationship is established with God, a change of heart occurs (McHale et al., 2018).

McHale et al. (2018) discuss a residential communal ministry seeking to heal individuals through a Christ-centered focus on spiritual formation. According to the authors, most residents, upon arrival, were self-absorbed with a destroyed soul from addiction. Their new resident provided an environment of love for God and for others. Through research, Mchale et al. (2018) determined that residents transition from a lifestyle of self-centeredness to one motivated by Love for God and others, with a commitment to others to know God and be freed from their painful situation (McHale et al., 2018). With this transition, Spiritual formation occurred, moving a person from self-serving to committed unity within a community, fulfilling the human need for belonging. According to Mchale et al. (2018), individuals will change to seek a higher good for others when living a spiritually formed life consisting of a relationship with God and a change of heart.

However, this church extension to bring others into a relationship with God is not to remain confined to a local area. The church extension must continue extending and reaching beyond its local boundaries to a global realm fulfilling the words in the Book of Acts by

invoking the power of the Holy Spirit in being a witness for God in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Schnabel, 2012). This additional extension occurs by incorporating a common, global vision for life rather than a unique, local identity in a multicultural church while maintaining a connection to a host society while remaining globally connected and viewing each member as a gift rather than a threat (Calvert,2005).

Calvert (2005) reviewed various Christian communities across multiple continents to understand the challenges community members encounter in relating to another's life and spirituality. The author explored various biblical multicultural communities to identify a potential leadership model (Calvert,2005). In Calvert's (2005) study, the Antioch church (a heterogeneous and international biblical model) was referenced as a leadership model that demonstrated multiethnic groups embracing one another spiritually. This Antioch church consisted of 5 pastors (Barnabus, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, Saul) from 3 different continents, comprised of different ethnic groups. The Antioch church became known as an international and multilingual church over a 19-year period, more than a generation, before the church accepted its new identity at the Council of Jerusalem (Calvert, 2005).

Diverse Spiritual Formation

Disciplemaking

For this reason, a church body must exhibit patience as the Antioch Church, thinking in the long-term rather than short-term, such as the 6-week period from Jesus' resurrection to Pentecost. Thus, according to Porter et al. (2015), followers of Christ are to remain in constant and continuous commitment, a part of discipling. And, just as Jesus modeled and demonstrated Spiritual disciplines with his disciples, Christian leaders should consistently practice with small groups in the same manner (Erbe, 2024).

Donahue et al. (2014) conducted research to determine the true effect of groups on the disciple-making process. The authors recognized Jesus' use of small group ministries. Jesus encountered the individuals of the small group and invested his time in multiple small group settings: time alone, with three (Peter, James, John), time with twelve, and larger crowds. Donahue et al. (2014) continue their research addressing the effect of the small group movement and its biblical foundation for spiritual community.

These small groups with positive social factors impacted cultural change. Also, Porter et al. (2015) acknowledged the need to understand social factors influencing a committed mindset for impacting cultural change. The authors discussed a renewed commitment to social action, “the social justice turn” among Christian followers. Christian should not make social justice an extracurricular activity to follow a current secular trend with a focus on a particular issue.

Porter et al. (2015) offered a biblical, sacrificial, motivational structure grounded in social action and energized by the presence of Christ within a follower. According to the authors, this type of biblical motivational structure offers a rich and sustainable commitment to social justice. Also, Porter et al. (2015) identify psychological factors (morals, beliefs, reasons, values, desires, character traits, spiritual emptiness) that trigger and shape an individual’s motivation.

Additionally, certain psychological needs must be met to increase intrinsic motivation. The psychological needs included purpose, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, an individual moves towards a life goal. For this reason, a secular and motivational structure should focus on the motivation and behavior of Jesus when instructing the spiritual disciplines required of Christian leaders who educate, motivate and spiritually form students while keeping the law of God in mind (Erbe, 2024). With the law of God, focused spiritual formation, and embodiment of spiritual disciplines, leaders can create a motivational

structure changing an individual's inward life, complemented by visible outward actions, a positive attitude, and a change in nature or character (Erbe, 2024).

However, this secular motivational structure leads towards work for social justice but lacks quality and sustainability causing tension between the demand for an immediate response for those in dire need and slow progression of a spiritually forming relationship (Porter et al., 2015). For this reason, a leader's action must model Jesus Christ with a vision and have a gradual Spiritual formation path to assimilate multiple individuals of diverse cultures into a collective, unified body of committed followers working tasks to glorify God as a primary goal, with the secondary goal of completing the task as a team (Porter et al., 2015).

In reading the book of Mark, an individual can uncover a discipling process used by Jesus consisting of several stages. First, Jesus identified his disciples and allowed for an inquiry process to occur while they followed Jesus and he set the example. As the relationships grew among the body, Jesus began teaching and coaching his disciples allowing the disciples to assist him. And, finally, Jesus delegated his authority to the disciples empowering them with the Holy Spirit sending them in two by two giving them power over unclean spirits (Strauss, 2014).

Reach

To build relationships, a leader must first meet a person where they are at. By encountering a person and desiring to understand their background, a leader can start building an Agape relationship by showing God's love, grace, and mercy. Bracken's et al. (2018) article reviews contextual factors and professionals in a networked environment supporting spiritual formation. The authors emphasize the need for Christian educators to engage individuals with spiritual maturity grounded in a holistic, heart-filled Christian life rather than solely knowledge (Bracken et al., 2018).

Through engagement, a leader must assess whether a culture responds better to authoritarian leadership or democratic leadership (Plueddemann, 2009) while remembering the definition of leadership and the goals of a leader. According to Plueddemann (2009), a leader motivates people to work collaboratively with three goals. These goals included setting direction, building a shared sense of purpose, achieving results that exceed expectations, having a positive social impact, and instilling inspiration in others to lead, thus cultivating cultural growth (Plueddemann, 2009).

Additionally, through proper engagement, leaders learn whether cultural members view environments in a high or low-power context, such as whether a culture responds to communication and ideas more implicitly (voice tones, facial expressions) or explicitly (precise words) (Plueddemann, 2009). With this understanding, a leader can assist a person in identifying their true gifts and talents, providing a sense of purpose. By providing a sense of purpose, a leader instills motivation and inspiration within a ministry team.

However, to build collaborative, motivated groups, leaders must exhibit certain leadership factors which include but are not limited to the following: cultural values, power, individualism/collectivism, and ambiguity (Plueddemann, 2009). And, leaders must willingly consider all feedback with humility, including critical discouragement. All feedback presents a learning opportunity to alleviate tension.

According to Plueddemann (2009), the biggest multicultural leadership tension is between values and styles. The author discussed multicultural leadership and the tensions associated with the globalization of the world church. The author attributes tension to using incorrect leadership skills. Therefore, leadership needs to forego some skills and attributes that

are not suitable for being an effective multicultural leader such as power within a culture (Plueddemann, 2009), to establish an appropriate transforming, learning environment.

Teach

As relationships are built, a leader has an opportunity to encourage and teach team members about moving beyond or resolving any life or work obstacles in a relationship. Also, a leader can offer support that encompasses caring, empathy, and accountability. Ghanbari-Afra et al. (2022) researched the power of human caring and concern. The authors identified multiple attributes obtained from research focusing on perspectives from nursing environments. These attributes included communication, presence, empathy, kindness, love, respect, fostering well-being, providing, and creativity (Ghanbari-Afra et al., 2022).

Additionally, Ghanbari-Afra et al. (2022) researched the areas of life supported when the attributes were applied properly. The identified life areas included spiritual, physical, psychological, emotional, and social needs of not only those being cared for but also those providing the care in a friendly environment. The author's research acknowledged a holistic (mind, spirit, body) improvement resulting from human care, encouragement, and respect for a person's dignity, uniqueness, individuality, humanity, autonomy, and empowerment in the caring process. Ghanbari-Afra et al.'s (2022) research demonstrates the effect of a leader on influencing others and building relationships.

With the proper learning environment and instruction methods, leaders experience a unified experience of commitment between the two parties, the care receiver and the caregiver, in restoring a person to a better quality of life (Ghanbari-Afra et al., 2022) as represented by the Christian formation ministries of multi-ethnic churches deeply rooted in the New Testament. In these New Testament churches, all church members shared a common devotion to one, Christ, as

a family, regardless of ethnicity, like the Jews and Gentiles of the New Testament. Paul demonstrated this experience as a church leader in the New Testament. Paul dismantled ethnocentrism by encouraging all to live together in a loving harmony within a diverse, reconciled, globalized church. This guidance allowed churches to overcome tension despite ethnic background (Dunlow, 2017) and remain strong in faith.

Donahue et al. (2014) argue that faith is weakened when lacking encouragement and the support of others. The authors identified biblical mandates for group ministries, such as love one another and serve one another. By following these mandates, Donahue's et al. (2014) research revealed an increase in a sense of belonging resulting in greater participation, commitment, and spiritual growth of individuals. Also, Donahue et al. (2014) provided evidence that team building actions of encouragement and support based on scripture reveal the following statistics: 90% had a closer relationship with God, 87% had increased love for others, 82% could forgive others more easily; 53% encountered relationship healing; and 61% became a community, volunteer worker.

Send

Dunlow's (2017) research identified the importance of multi-ethnic church leaders being intentional in their Spiritual formation purpose and planning of empowered community members. The author identified the effect of empowering church members. Members, such as lay members, demonstrated greater power than the church leaders in shaping a group's identity; crossing ethnic community boundaries, creating true unity; teaching with sensitivity, adaptability, and consultation while staying faithful; and emphasizing Spiritual formation with a diverse rather than individual mindset for the development of committed, relational members of communities (Dunlow, 2017).

Like the disciples, Keener (2024) discussed the effects of followers of Christ, empowered with the Holy Spirit. The followers transcended cultural barriers and formed multicultural communities of committed followers after experiencing a time of preparation prior to receiving the Holy Spirit. And, like the disciples, this preparation time was not an individual effort but a unified effort united in prayer, waiting for the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2024).

Keener (2024) used the book of Acts, chapters 1 and 2, as a primary foundational example. The author captured the power of God when the disciples were empowered by the Spirit. Empowerment of the follower strengthened their relationship with God. The disciples embodied trust with prayer; took God's message across cultural barriers to the ends of the earth; and received a foretaste of the Kingdom to come (Keener, 2024).

Through Spiritual formation and transformational leadership, believing in the unseen, a power beyond self, leaders can build all-inclusive, empowering cultures projecting a life with meaning and connections to others while making the world a better place (Howard, 2002), like the disciples of Jesus Christ. The disciples represented a collective body of confident, committed, spiritually transformed followers committed to the instruction and obeying the words of their discipling, caring leader, Jesus Christ (Keener, 2024).

Conclusion

This paper, through contributing knowledge and research of multiple authors, demonstrated the impact of consistent Spiritual formation supported by team building actions with a scriptural foundation on multicultural individuals becoming committed followers of leaders and Jesus Christ. The provided research establishes a strong correlation between servant leadership, a Scriptural learning environment, and communal, multicultural members. With a gradual Spiritual formation plan, servant leaders can create a learning environment that

transforms and combines the hearts of individuals into a committed, unified body. The plan, through empowerment, motivates individuals to extend themselves beyond their local boundaries as part of a collective body with purpose and the positive outward attributes (respect, generosity, compassion) with supporting emotional resources (joy, truth, peace, wholeness, love). And, with this new identity, individuals seek opportunities to reach and teach others, further increasing the membership of a multi-cultural body to send and fulfill God's Great Commission, reaching all to the ends of the earth. More research would probably conclude that fewer individuals returned to the total darkness of their previous life, hindered by multiple barriers after coming to know the light of the world, Christ, through the inerrant truth of God's word. The research strongly supported the development of a Christ-centered Spiritual formation plan by leaders to assimilate a diverse team of committed followers.

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