

How can the life, ministry and teaching of the Apostle Paul, address the development of cross-cultural leadership practice that is biblically-based, and informed by relevant secular theory?

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"Leadership functions for Christian leaders should be approached initially using biblical concepts and then as one has internalized those biblical perspectives, many insights may be gleaned from the secular disciplines of management, sociology, anthropology, leadership and education." (Elliston 1992, p. 36)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to outline the importance of understanding biblical concepts and principles in developing cross cultural leaders. These values are expressed throughout Scripture, and modelled in the life of the Apostle Paul, as a template for spreading the gospel message of Jesus Christ. This paper will focus on the life and ministry of Paul to outline a biblical perspective for developing cross cultural leaders. It will also highlight relevant secular theory to determine its effectiveness in supporting, or detracting from, Paul's approach.

Research and commentary from missionary experience covering the past 100 years will be examined in the light of Paul's experience, observations and directives. Two recent case studies will also be highlighted. One involves church plants in the Asia Pacific from a base church in Melbourne, Australia. Another involves an international aid agency operating within Australia and the Asia Pacific region. Personal observations will be offered from three settings: three decades of ministry experience in churches; educational leadership experience in various Christian teaching/training environments; and experience working in international organisations in the not-for-profit sector. Each of these settings have involved engagement with other cultures, and leadership development in cross cultural contexts.

The trends studied and observed indicate a need to be informed by secular theory, in order to develop an understanding of issues faced. Ultimately though, biblical

principles must be paramount in developing cross cultural leaders, so that the Gospel message retains its incarnational, transformational distinctive.

Introduction

The development of leaders is a crucial task of any organisation looking to thrive and grow. It is particularly important in the church with its message of eternal significance and contemporary hope. The Gospel message is ultimately one of conversion, involving a revolution and renovation of values in each individual's life, and reformation of communities. As such it cannot be transferred through knowledge alone. Biblical insights and discipleship strategies must form the basis of Christian mission practice in the development of cross cultural leaders.

Further to this, the development of cross cultural leaders is essential in ensuring the gospel message has global reach. Once upon a time this meant reaching the far flung regions of the planet: the unreached people groups in remote geographical locations, or the unchurched 'heathen' of foreign lands. However, in our increasingly globalised world, this concept of mission is outdated. As it turns out, there are growing numbers of unreached people in our own Australian communities. It is essential in our increasingly multi-cultural, multi-faith, anti-religious, or irreligious societies that the church is able to identify, select, and develop leaders who can function and flourish cross-culturally.

Christian leaders need not be alarmist, as the apostle Paul ministered into similar cultural conditions. He adopted very strategic, specific values and methodologies to facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming people and culture. The validity of Paul's approach has often been confirmed through modern research and historical insight. However, not all of his methods are consistent with secular disciplines or understanding. It is imperative that biblical insights offered through Paul's life and writings are examined and promoted over secular insights, so that the prophetic, incarnational and transformational nature of the Gospel message remains intact. Without these defining features, Christianity loses its personal, global and cross cultural effectiveness, becoming just another noise in the marketplace of pluralism of beliefs.

There is no doubt from Scripture that Christianity is a message for all people, times and cultures. Throughout the Old Testament God redeems people and nations regardless of their heritage. His concern is for their obedience to Him. It is important to note in God's mandate to the Israelites, His chosen people, that they are set apart as a means of blessing others: "*All the families on earth will be blessed through you*" [Genesis 12:3b].¹ Paul reiterates this theme of nation-to-nation blessing in his letter to the Galatians:

⁸What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith [Galatians 3:8-9 NLT].

¹ This 'blessed to be a blessing' concept is reiterated throughout Scripture: Genesis 18:18, Zechariah 8:20-23, Proverbs 11:25, Gal 3:6-9, to list a few examples.

This clear missional, global, culturally inclusive mandate is also given to the disciples by Jesus after His resurrection:

¹⁵ And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone [Mark 16:15 NLT].

Just prior to His ascension, when prompted with this localised question from His disciples, "*Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?*" [Acts 1:6], Jesus responds with a promise and directive regarding all people:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" [Acts 1:8].

The ever widening target groups may be applied symbolically:

- Jerusalem - friends and family
- Judea - immediate communities
- Samaria - territory where the message might be opposed
- The ends of the earth - the world at large

The imperative for cross cultural pollination of the Gospel is established clearly. Its initial and subsequent intent is always for all nations and all people. The disciples certainly showed that "their business was to testify of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed, and to preach a crucified Jesus, as the only Saviour of lost sinners" (Gill, 2017). They obeyed the commission when it involved moving beyond their own cultural boundaries and understandings. The New Testament is evidence of their faithfulness to the mission, with Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria noted in the recounts of their exploits.²

Life, Ministry and Teaching of Paul: an overview

The key issue to be addressed in this essay is the *methodology* used in achieving the missional mandate, specifically through the ministry of Paul. Whilst the disciples took the Gospel message to the Jewish people, it was Paul who initiated and deliberately implemented the work and pattern of making disciples 'of all nations' [Matthew 28:18]. It is Paul who selected and developed cross-cultural leaders, and established principles and patterns for doing so. He travelled extensively, but also strategically based himself for periods of time in places of cultural diversity like Corinth. There is a point here worth labouring in our contemporary context. Acts 1:8 has a broader layer of revelation: cross-cultural ministry in our current society is not exclusively defined by geographical spaces and borders. The cross cultural ministry required today is happening within our own localised communities. Yes, it also involves travel to distant and foreign destinations, but

² Acts 9:31 *The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.*

Acts 8:5 *Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah. Romans 10:18 But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have: "The message has gone throughout the earth, and the words to all the world."*

the 'ends of the earth' in our current globalised society may live next door to us! This is particularly true within an Australian context, as will become evident.

Research from the secular arena has much to teach us of changing demographics, allowing us the opportunity to analyse statistical data regarding the characteristics of populations. Age, gender, income, nationality can be readily accessed through census data, providing valuable information for targeted mission work. Further to this, leadership growth is assisted through advancements in education. These developments can enliven and enlighten the opportunities available, particularly in the area of technology, as a shrinking world allows access to leadership training in new ways. The passage of time allows us anthropological and sociological insights into societies, cultures and their development over the past 2000 years. However, it is the teachings of Scripture, particularly here insights from the life of Paul, that must dominate our understanding of cross-cultural leadership practice. God used him to move Christianity beyond Judaism to become a world-wide religion. It is wise to analyse Paul's principles in developing cross-cultural leaders, so that we can apply them with fresh understanding and vigour in our increasingly global contexts. Whilst our culture infiltrates our expression of ministry, and should inform it, God's Word is not subject to cultural relevance. Colossians 1:18 reminds us that Christ is pre-eminent, and we should give Him priority attention:

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Cross-Cultural Ministry in an Australian Context

Empirical investigation into the sociology of contemporary Australian society does indeed indicate a merging of 'Jerusalem and Judea', representing local contexts, with 'Samaria and the ends of the earth' symbolic of uneasy or unfamiliar territory. From its initial beginnings as an indigenous Aboriginal society, Australia became a predominately Anglo Saxon society with a 'White Australia Policy' (NMA, 2017). It has now transitioned into a complex multi-cultural society of varying philosophies, religions and worldviews.

The 2016 Census indicated 49 per cent of Australians had either been born overseas [first generation Australian] or one or both parents had been born overseas [second generation Australian]. There were over 300 separately identified languages spoken in Australian homes and more than 21 per cent of Australians spoke a language other than English at home (ABS, 2017).

The 2016 census also revealed the number of people reporting 'No Religion' in Australia has increased substantially over the past hundred years. In the 1966 Census 88.2% of Australians registered as 'Christian'. In the 2016 Census this number reduced to 52.1% (ABS, 2017), indicating quite a decline. While the clear majority of Australians reported a religion, the 'No Religion' count increased to almost a third of the Australian population between 2011 and 2016 [22 per cent to 30 per cent]. 'No Religion' was the most common individual response in the 2016 Census.³

Further to this decrease in Australians identifying as Christian, it is possible the meaning of Christianity is being redefined. Whilst the number of Australians selecting 'No

³ The 'Christian' category on the census is divided into denominational categories, so although 52.1% of Australians registered as Christian, 'No Religion' at 30% is the most common *individual* response.

Religion' on the Census has more than quadrupled from 6.7% (1971) to 22.3% (2011) to 30% (2016) of the population; only 2.2% of the "no religion" respondents indicated 'atheist', 'agnostic', 'humanist' or 'rationalist' as their worldview. The majority selecting the 'no religion' could be classified as 'spiritual not religious' (McCrindle, 2014). It is possible Australians are redefining a 'renewed Christianity' (Douthat, 2012). While there is some argument that the 'No Religion' increase can partially be explained by the fact that for the first time, the 'No Religion' category was listed first (Barker, 2017); for the purposes of examining the decrease in Australian Christianity, the trend cannot be disputed.

Add to this the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) data sampling 7200 congregations across 19 denominations. This data showed that over the last four decades the proportion of Australians attending church at least once per month has more than halved from 36% (1972) to 18% (2016) (Powell, R & Pepper, M, 2016). More concerning is the suggestion, from the 2011 results, that two of the reasons people aren't attending church is:

1. It's irrelevant to my life, and
2. I don't accept how it's taught (McCrindle, 2013).

John Bellamy, in his research on participatory and non-participatory rates in church, concludes that, "the certainty and salience of traditional religious beliefs and practices make the greatest contribution towards explaining patterns of church participation and non-participation" (Bellamy, 2001). Whilst the church cannot compromise its beliefs to accommodate secular tastes, there is reason here to suggest the church could change its manner of communication on issues, in a diverse cultural mix. "The task is perhaps one of asking our Churches how they might be best placed to proclaim Christ and minister in the new cultural, social and spiritual environment" (Brighton, Castle, & Bellamy, 2004).

It is here that Paul would concur. He reflects this in his example of conciliation; his willingness to use his freedom to identify with others, rather than as a weapon to force them into compliance, stands true in the face of this sociological dilemma:

¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings. [1 Corinthians 9:19-23 NLT]

Paul's flexibility of style and approach, whilst holding true to the gospel message, is necessary in the current Australian cultural climate. Christianity is declining, with the drop faster among certain ethnic groups⁴, particularly among Australians who recorded

⁴ Based on a comparison between Australian Bureau of Statistics census data 2011 and 2106.

Chinese ancestry, but also including the Korean and Sri Lankan communities (Lau, 2017). Further to this, the Australian Community Survey (ACS) shows that whilst people born overseas in non-English-speaking countries are more likely to be churchgoers (31%) than those born in Australia (19%), there is a diminishing effect on the children of these migrants (NCLS, 2004). Lower levels of involvement among second-generation immigrants have been documented, indicating a need for all denominations to relate more effectively to people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NCLS, 2004), or CALD⁵ communities as they have come to be known.

A number of different strategies have been implemented across denominations for dealing with ethnic diversity. This cross-cultural work within our borders is essential. By share of population, Australia has the ninth-largest group of migrants in the world, with an continuing increase of those born overseas, from 24.6 per cent [2011] to 26.3 per cent [2016] (Gothe-Snape, 2017). In addressing this cultural mix, some churches have fostered the development of congregations which serve one specific ethnic group, at times sharing the parish facilities of the Anglo-Australian church. Other churches have developed dual or multi-ethnic identities, with English as a common language, and provision of translation and activities in a variety of languages (NCLS, 2004). In view of the diversity of backgrounds which now comprise Australia, there is a need for denominations to develop effective congregational models for engagement within a diverse cultural mix.

The need to present a culturally diverse and relevant gospel message exists *within our borders*. Paul's words "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" are just as pertinent to developing leaders today. Paul himself was what might be called a 'third culture kid' – a child who was raised in a culture outside of his parents' culture for a significant part of his development years. Paul was a Jew who grew up in the Hellenistic culture of Tarsus. He trained in Jerusalem as a rabbi and Pharisee. Paul was a living example of the kind of cross cultural complexity that currently exists in Australia. We no longer have to be crossing shores to be in need of cross-cultural leaders who can bring an effective Christian message in complex contextual environments. This 'third culture' dynamic includes an interaction with the original culture/s of the parent/s, and the culture into which the child is placed. The culture of parental origin might dominate at home, but the surrounding culture will bear significant influence, and sometimes conflicting influence, on the child's development.

This kind of cross-cultural leadership is a complex process of influence, wherein leaders and followers interact in a context or series of contexts over time (Elliston, 1992, p. 7). It "requires an openness to dialogue and to learning from others, rather than assuming that one has complete access to Truth" (Drane, 2000, pp. 12-13). The issue of how to express truth in a pluralistic context is present both within and beyond our borders.

A 2008 ethnographic study of 'third culture teenagers' illustrates this cross-cultural dynamic. This ethnography of teenagers attending a Chinese church in Australia, found that those teenagers considered Chinese cultural practices more authoritarian and rule-oriented than those of their Anglo-Saxon peers (Mei, 2008) (Lau, 2017). In 2011, an 18-year-old Chinese Australian had a one in three chance of describing him or herself as

⁵ CALD is the acronym for 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse', used by the Australian Government Department of Health <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Glossary> .

Christian. But in 2016, for 23-year-old Chinese Australians - that is, the same group, five years later - the odds were one in six (Lau, 2017).

There is a context at work here on the followers. The broader Anglo-Saxon context places the Chinese young people in two comparative environments, where Christianity may be expressed differently. In the parental cultural context, Christianity is accepted and expressed in an authoritarian manner. In the surrounding cultural context, Christianity is accepted and expressed in a less authoritarian manner. This contradiction adds a layer of complexity to absorption of the gospel message and truths. The leader (parents); the follower (child); and the cultural context (situation); engage in a complex interplay. The cultural complexities can lead to a rejection of the Gospel message.

Paul's Expression of a Cross Cultural Gospel: Biblical and Cultural Dimensions

The Apostle Paul recognises the Contingency Paradigm of Leadership – that effective leadership involves a contingent set of relationships among leaders / followers / and the situation (Elliston, 1992, p. 15). He adapted his leadership style to acknowledge the context and the followers he was ministering into. Paul broadened the thinking of his contemporaries, to reflect how our freedom in Christ intersects with the expression of the gospel, in a cross-cultural setting. In reviewing Paul's cross-cultural approach, it is essential that missionary understanding includes both biblical and cultural dimensions of leadership. Personal values develop in a social context and may be influenced by national and regional culture (Russell, 2001, p. 76). This dynamic needs to be acknowledged, especially in a multi-cultural society. If ““incarnational contextualization” is both indigenizing (synchronic) and transformational (diachronic)...” (Grant, Christian Leadership And Globalizing Christianity: Missiological Approaches, 2005, p. 69), then the receptor culture needs to be incorporated into the follower / situation dynamic. Without this, migrant church leaders, alongside the dominant culture, may inflict unnecessary cultural impositions on developing Christian leaders within their communities.

Paul was keenly aware of values in the Gentile receptor culture, and sacrificed his apostolic rights to provide an example of Christian humility and selflessness:

Don't you remember, dear brothers and sisters, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled to earn a living so that we would not be a burden to any of you as we preached God's Good News to you. [1 Thessalonians 2:9 NLT]

Although Paul received aid from the Philippians when he was in Thessalonica (Phil 4:16), he continued working manually there. He was not working with the believers in order to gain financial remuneration from them, as may have been his right, or the general practice. He shows awareness and regard for the receptor culture.

Paul also worked manually at Ephesus and Corinth. It is particularly important to consider the receptor culture at Corinth:

- Corinth was a significant commercial Centre valuing entrepreneurial pragmatism in the pursuit of success (Theology of Work Project, Inc, 2014)

- Paul supported himself in the workshop of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor. 4:12), exhibiting the entrepreneurial values of the receptor culture, and the practical nature of financial achievement
- Most of the Corinthian congregation did not come from the ranks of the privileged classes “Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth” (1 Cor. 1:26), and
- A problem in the Corinthian church was growing factionalism (1 Cor 3:4)

Paul is interested in sowing a Gospel culture into the Corinthians, and does so not just in word, but in lifestyle too. When paralleling the receptor culture with the values Paul is trying to inculcate, it becomes obvious why he restricted his freedoms:

- The Corinthian believers are “*called*” along with “*all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor. 1:2). The foundation of their calling is not individual satisfaction but community development. Whilst Paul may prefer certain food choices, or work choices; he exhibits those preferences that emphasise the community nature of the gospel – what is best for others, and what reduces stumbling blocks for the receptor culture
- Paul is convinced that the believers in Corinth have received the spiritual resources they need to fulfill their calling. God has called them, and he has given them gifts that will enable them to be “blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8). *He relies on both his practical and spiritual gifts in demonstrating God’s provision of resources*
- Paul places emphasis on God’s calling, not man’s standards, and
- Paul values the importance of diversification and specialisation, as opposed to valuing one calling or identity over another [1 Cor 3:5]

Paul relinquishes his rights in the areas of food, marriage, work, to illustrate a higher principle: that God calls us as a *community* of believers, and resources us towards that common good. Paul is able to balance the group collectivist understanding of his Jewish cultural background, with an individualist concept of personal responsibility to God ⁶ (Hofstede, 2017), where one is not subjugated to the other in the pursuit of healthy community.

He is attempting to re-shape the contextual values. Malphurs emphasises that effective leaders instil values as much through deeds as through words (Malphurs, 1996), and Paul exemplifies this:

“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other” [1 Corinthians 4:6 NASB].

He offers the gospel without charge:

⁶ Hofstede includes Collectivism and Individualism in his 6 Dimensions of Culture.

“...so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more” [1 Corinthians 9:18b-19 NASB].

Sacred relationships between leaders and followers critically depend on the “clearly expressed and demonstrated values” of leaders (De Pree, 1992, p. 126). Paul demonstrates this principle. His leadership effectiveness is conditioned by the broader context, the surrounding political, cultural, economic, sociological, and religious context (Elliston, 1992, p. 17). His teaching and ministry radiates to us across the centuries in its content, and also in its style. In his initial attempts at globalising Christianity, Paul’s example shows acknowledgement of the following: Situation - leadership that is specific to the situation in which it is being exercised (Exeter, 2003, p. 5); Contingency theory - leadership that identifies the situational variables to predict the most appropriate style for the circumstances (p. 5); Leader / Follower dynamics - leadership that focuses on a leader’s relationship with their followers, and interdependency of roles (p. 12); Transformational leadership – leadership that focuses on purpose and values (p. 12); and Contextualisation – leadership that considers the role of followers and context (p. 6).

These are all important aspects to consider in cross-cultural leadership practice in the contemporary Australian environment. Specific care and attention must be given to the cross-cultural work done within our borders, not just beyond them. The worldview of the leaders, followers and the community in which they live must be considered, as theology flows from our worldview, and the interactional dynamics of these variables must also be taken into account (Elliston, 1992, p. 22). These interactional dynamics are complex in Australia:

When it comes to religion, Australia is a nation of contrasts. We are a secular nation, yet acknowledge god in our Constitution. We are becoming less religious yet more religiously diverse. Our parliament contains those of many faiths and those who would ban people from coming to Australia based on their faith... (Barker, 2016).

Add to that, we are a multi-cultural nation with a diversity of mono-cultural worldviews. In 2016, nearly one in five Christians born overseas was born in England (18%) while more than nine in ten Sikhs (94%) born overseas were born in India. People from Vietnam, Pakistan and China were also significant contributors to different religious beliefs (ABS, Religion in Australia, 2017). Australia has a diverse population mix comprised of an indigenous population; an Anglo-Saxon population; and a migrant population including first and second generation migrants⁷. The task of presenting the gospel in this environment has unique cross-cultural implications, and “as cross-cultural workers we dare not be unaware of our own culturally and ecclesiastically-imbued assumptions, values and allegiances” (Grant, 2005, p. 72).

Going Beyond All Borders

Just as the early church leaders underwent a theological and cultural conversion, so Christian leaders need to contextualise the gospel message, both within and beyond

⁷ The 2016 Census shows that 67 per cent of the Australian population were born in Australia, 49 per cent of Australians had either been born overseas (first generation Australian) or one or both parents had been born overseas (second generation Australian) (ABS, Census Multicultural, 2017).

their geographic borders. The first sign of a boundary crossing gospel appears at Pentecost (Acts 2) where the outpouring of the Spirit is accompanied by people from many nations hearing the good news in their languages (Fleming, 2012). This is an early sign and Holy Spirit declaration of things to come:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. [Acts 1:8 NLT]

In the initial recounts of Acts, the Christian movement operates within the local 'Jerusalem and Judea' areas, with Chapters 2-7 describing the gospel's progress in Jerusalem. Chapter 8 deals with Philip stepping into cross-cultural territory to share the Christian message with the Samaritans, an ethnic group distinct from the Jews yet part of them, and considered religiously and culturally inferior. The church in Jerusalem show their support, validating what is happening:

"When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God's message, they sent Peter and John there. As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit." [Acts 8:14-15 NLT]

It is interesting to note in Acts 8 a readiness in Peter to allow his 'local' cultural boundaries to be reconsidered, as he preaches to the Samaritans:

"After testifying and preaching the word of the Lord in Samaria, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. And they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way to preach the Good News." [Acts 8:25 NLT]

It is later that Peter is confronted by God, and Paul, with the need to extend not only his 'local' boundaries, but also his understanding of national borders. He undergoes a cultural conversion with his vision regarding the Roman Officer Cornelius⁸. He needs to realign his 'border mentality' to accommodate an understanding that the gospel is not just for the Jewish people as a nation, but the Gentiles also:

Peter told them, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean." [Acts 10:28 NLT]

This begins a process of cultural transformation in Peter:

"Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right." [Acts 10:34-35]

He later capitulates to old cultural understandings, and needs Paul's correction to realign the values [Galatians 2:11-21]⁹. Peter was perhaps falling into the modern trap of wanting to "transplant to the mission field the elaborate system of teaching and

⁸ Acts 10:1-33 The vision involves Peter being confronted with the challenge of eating forbidden animals, reptiles and birds, and is repeated three times. Peter refuses and is uncertain of the vision's meaning until Cornelius arrives, waiting to hear a message from God.

⁹ Galatians 2:11-12 *"But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹²When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision."*

organization with which we are familiar at home” (Allen, 1912, p. 5). He expected the ‘essentials and the accidentals’ (p9) of the Jerusalem church to be adopted by the church at Antioch, but this was not the way. Worldview is a stubbornly persistent orientation that needs to be held to account.

Leadership functions for Christian leaders need to be approached using biblical concepts first, so that inappropriate cultural allegiance and bias do not dominate. These functions need re-visitation, reflection, and remonstrance to keep them aligned with the egalitarian ethos adopted in the New Testament. It is Paul’s ministry as outlined in Acts 9-28 that provides a model of the new approach. In just over ten years he establishes the Church in four provinces of the Empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia (p7). Paul catapults the gospel message to the ends of the earth, and leads in the development of cross cultural ministry principles to be emulated today.

Case Studies

The first case selected involves my experience pastoring within the local church context. The second case study involves my roles within International Aid and Disaster Relief Agencies. The purpose of the case studies is to illustrate the factors that can maximise or minimise our cross cultural effectiveness in ministry. They have been grouped together due to the commonalities of their cross-cultural methodology, and their common involvement in the Asia Pacific Region. The approach applied is the Problem-Oriented Method – the case study is analysed to identify the major problems and suggest solutions, based on biblical principles and current research.

Case Study 1

For more than 20 years the case study church has had a strong missional presence in the Asia Pacific region. Its congregation is predominantly suburban; Caucasian; middle-to-working class; and family oriented. The church consists of approximately 500 active members. It has Baptist roots; an evangelical tradition; a contemporary expression; with a strong missional and evangelistic focus.

The local Australian church has established a number of projects around supporting and growing the faith community there, including:

- A strong personal friendship between the Senior Pastor in Australia and the Senior Pastor in the Asia Pacific [APAC], and between their families
- Several church plants that have grown into thriving Christian communities in their local APAC environments
- Leadership friendships and relational ties between the churches in each nation
- A local business in Australia, showcasing locally sourced products from the APAC community, with profits supporting the work there
- A Not-For-Profit child development agency operating in the APAC region

Case Study 2

The second case study is a Christian humanitarian aid organisation. The organisation is based in Australia, with associate partners in Europe, Asia; and an International Headquarters based overseas. The Not-For-Profit organisation has an

Australian Board of Governance, and some cultural freedom of expression, but is ultimately governed by, and receives some funding from, its international Board of Directors.

The aid organisation has initiated a number of projects over 40+ years, including:

- Children's Ministries
- Construction Projects
- Crisis and Disaster Response
- Discipleship, Education, and Training
- Feeding Programs
- Health and Medical Assistance
- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

The aid and assistance are given as needed, with the Australian arm of the international organisation working specifically in the Asia Pacific region.

Findings

For the purposes of this discussion, the similarities between the two organisations have formed the boundary of the findings:

- Integrity of leaders has led to favourable community reputations in all countries of involvement
- Engagement with indigenous leaders has enabled organisational longevity and stability (20 and 40 years respectively)
- Development of indigenous leaders has cultivated local respect and buy in
- Provision of funds has enabled ministry, educational and community progress
- External supervision of funds has created indigenous deference and non-national management teams, and
- International leadership has resulted in subtle cultural misunderstandings, as evidenced in a continued reliance of the Asia Pacific countries on Australian executive decision making.

Discussion

Both case studies involve a strong 'sending and receiving' culture. Whilst this is a natural outcome from financially strong nations supporting developing countries, it has resulted in more than economic dependence. After decades of involvement, the financial decision making is still coming from the sending countries, who are ultimately seen as the power brokers. There is no doubt that financial assistance has enabled the construction of vital community infrastructure – schools, medical centres, water supplies, housing, and so on. Also, the receiving countries have become self-supporting in relation to the expenses of running churches established there. However the receiving countries rely on the international leadership teams to make decisions regarding allocation of funds, particularly in property investment – a western paradigm in itself. Allen notes, "...the

permanence of foreign rule in the Church ought not to be our object in propagating the Gospel” (Allen, 1912, pp. 45-46). Perhaps there is cultivation of a “dynamic that confirms the feelings that we are superior, that they are inferior, and that they need us to fix them (Corbett & Fikkert, 2009, p. 125). And what does this do for indigenous leadership development, when international representatives are ever present in financial meetings and decision making? Surely it is a ceiling that prevents emerging leaders from flexing their own fiscal muscles, and developing their own faith propensities.

Whilst both organisations have faithfully raised national leaders, and engaged in essential relief and rehabilitation work, the ongoing decision making is counterproductive to raising mature visionary and executive leaders. There has certainly been ongoing participation of the affected population in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of assistance programs (Corbett & Fikkert, 2009, p. 111)). However, a certain managerial and resource paternalism (p119) pervades both cases.

The GLOBE¹⁰ Research Program, revealed that whilst different cultural groups have different conceptions of what leadership involves, the attributes of charismatic / transformational leadership are universally endorsed as contributing to leadership effectiveness (Hartog, et al., 1999). These qualities need development and expression within local contexts for emerging leaders to be identified and respected. Lord and Maher note from their research two factors:

1. Leadership can be inferred from outcomes of salient events
2. Attribution is crucial in these inference-based processes (Hartog, et al., 1999)

For a local leader to be viewed as successful within a follower-centric model, where the organization achieves success through the realisation, growth and development of its followers; then success needs to be observable and attributable. This opportunity is denied in a prototype that promotes international decision making and management.

Further to this, administrative leadership is defined in complexity leadership theory, as leaders who can structure tasks, engage in planning, build vision, and acquire resources to achieve goals (Uhl-Bien, Mario, & McKelvey, 2007). Without the opportunity to engage in these tasks, indigenous leaders cannot reveal or fulfil their potential in their leadership environments. They may have leadership potential but they cannot realise it without a situation or followers. It is imperative leaders in cross-cultural environments recognise that “influencing behavior is not an event but a process” (Hersey, 2017). The emerging leaders need to build followers by demonstrating success; by showing the competence to diagnose, adapt, communicate, and advance. Leadership exists in, and is a function of, interaction (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007, p. 302). A cross-cultural style that manages from the top down precludes this interaction and leadership development. It subjugates the primary task of preparing “the emerging churches under our mission’s care, for a viable future as a self-governing, self-supporting and self-reproducing movement” (Grant, 2012, p. 39).

¹⁰ GLOBE in an acronym for *Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness*

Hofstede's extensive research on values and culture revealed six dimensions of national culture. One of those is the Power Distance Index. This dimension expresses the degree to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 6 Dimensions of National Culture, 2017) (Hofstede, Geert Hofstede: National Culture, 2017). Countries in the Asia-Pacific region (where the two case studies are involved) have high power distance cultures, where the lower level person will unfailingly defer to the higher level person, and feel that is the natural order (Sweetman, 2012). The two Case Study organisations take an egalitarian approach, but need to be aware of cultural deference extended towards them, and work more intentionally on distributing decision making power within the local communities. This will further facilitate the emergence of effective indigenous leaders. It will allow balance between charismatic, rational, *and* traditional authority, recognising the "sanctity of traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under those traditions" (Grant, 2012, p. 61).

Paul offers us a biblical model that does not take advantage of cultural power imbalances. He consistently entrusts his experience to others, and expects them to entrust it to others¹¹. It would have been very easy for Paul to claim the higher ground, and in fact he does, only to relinquish it again. He had a commanding knowledge of philosophy and religion, a brilliant mind, an educated and expansive experience; yet he uses his power appropriately:

"If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ" [1 Corinthians 9:12 NLT].

Paul did not step into the economic power distance gap but exhorts the churches and provinces to be financially independent. He does not administer local church funds, but places supreme importance on how financial arrangements "affect the minds of the people, and so promote or hinder, the spread of the Gospel" (Allen, 1912, p. 40). He recognises his rights, but surrenders them to the will and contextual understanding of the people he is ministering to¹².

Whilst the case study church and aid agency have done much to improve the lives and conditions of those they are working with in the Asia Pacific, it is prudent to develop and release national leaders within their local environments. There must of course be accountability – with funds, character, resources – but also the room to make decisions and mistakes. It is in this process leaders learn to cast vision, execute decisions, implement change, and gain followership.

Conclusion

There is much to be gleaned in cross cultural leadership practice from the secular disciplines of management, sociology, anthropology, and leadership. Research into the Australian context specifically has provided valuable insights into the need to understand

¹¹ 2 Timothy 2:2 NLT "You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others".

¹² 1 Corinthians 9:1-23, Galatians 6:6

cross cultural factors within our borders. Australia is an increasingly secular and multi-cultural society, resulting in particular challenges across co-existing nationalities and ethnicities, as well as generational cultural disparities.

Broader international research, knowledge, and experience have highlighted important principles and practices worth adopting beyond our borders, with a primary focus on the need to contextualise the Gospel message. This national and international information is significant, but it serves to amplify the principles promoted by Paul in Scripture. These thirteen primary source letters remain the inspiration for cross-cultural Christian ministry, given their immediate effectiveness, their ongoing contribution to Paul's legacy, and their consistency with Jesus' teaching and example. Rather than relying exclusively on his own cultural lens, Paul recognises that leadership takes place in a situation of time, place and social interaction, within a framework of shared values (Elliston, 1992, p. 97). He surrenders himself, and the emerging leaders around him, to the superintending role of the Holy Spirit, despite the potential for mistakes and misunderstandings. His writings are a reminder that leadership can be messy, including the development of cross-cultural leaders, but out of the struggle truth rises and remains. Paul is able to integrate the continuous supra-cultural aspects of truth with the particular immanent aspects. In so doing he raises dynamic cross-cultural leaders who unleash the gospel message with potency and effectiveness. His life, ministry and teaching must inform our leadership practice and hold pre-eminence over other, albeit valuable, secular disciplines.

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