Transforming Self-Concept for Leader Development LDR 807-12

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Professor

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**Assignment #3 – Essay**

1. Write a 5-page paper based on the description below:

a. Synthesize and integrate all that you have learned thus far to write an essay on

the following question: “Why are self-concept, spirituality, and moral

development so critical for leadership?”

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

“The world has never seen a great leader who lacked commitment” (Maxwell, 2019, p. 588 ).

Successful leaders distinguish themselves by showcasing unparalleled dedication and determination. They excel in rallying their followers and inspiring meaningful change. Self-concept, spirituality, and morals are critical factors in effective leadership. These characteristics go deep into a leader’s personality and influence their ability to use leadership principles and exemplary behavior to spark organizational change. Leaders prioritizing moral and spiritual development and cultivating a robust ethical foundation motivate and accelerate positive change within their fields.

But there are leaders, and there are leaders. Leadership manifests in various forms - those who possess the title and those who genuinely embody its essence. Hitler and Saddam attracted followers motivated by fear and self-interest, yet they bred a dedicated core who believed in their cause and followed them based on their insidious moral convictions (Dineen, 2010). Consequently, when leaders’ self-concept revolves around their moral ideologies, morality turns subjective, contingent upon the leader’s agenda. Rosenberg (1979) argued that individuals formed their self-concept according to their perception of themselves — an object distinct from their being.

In exploring the impact of self-concept on leadership, Lapeiel et al. (2012) asserted that a leader’s self-concept is influenced by their self-perception in relation to others and their unique qualities. Lapeiel et al. suggest leaders cultivate a relational self-concept that fosters connections between mentors and followers. Joseph-Richard and McCray (2023) highlighted that studies on evaluation methods assume leaders inherently develop through their personal and professional relationships. By extension, leadership development in the health field goes beyond formal growth; it includes projects where leaders and teams collaborate to solve problems, encourage new ideas, and drive progress (Joseph-Richard & McCray, 2023).

People often perceive themselves as unique individuals separate from their identity and essence. However, Formation Science suggests each person possesses an unchanging essence from birth until the end of their life (van Kaam, 2017). As stated by Letterman and Muto (2013), to make meaningful contributions to ministerial endeavors, individuals are encouraged to foster personal development. Inner growth is significant in relation to outward service.

According to Van Dongen (2023), the development of leadership qualities occur when individuals adopt a Christ-centered approach. As the eternal teacher of truth, Christ liberates while the Holy Spirit inspires personal change in the hearts and lives of those who follow Christ (John 14:16-30). Wright (2023) evidenced apostle Paul’s transformation: “A blinding light a voice from heaven. A Caravaggio masterpiece. The persecutor becomes the preacher” (Wright, 2023, p.41).

Frequently, individuals determine morality and ethics through the lens of relativity, subjective biases, or societal norms and acceptance. Consequently, moral leaders define their morals based on what is relative to their perspectives. Rosenberg (1979) elaborates on this phenomenon: “The moral image is thus a set of standard, a system of should’s and of course, should nots. The content of this system of shoulds derives partly from social indoctrination, partly from idiosyncratic selections” (Rosenberg,1979, p.432).

            Kohlberg's (1971) hypothetical moral dilemma centering around Heinz and the drug offers an individual the decision to disobey the law and steal valuable medication to preserve the life of a spouse. The challenge revolves around choosing what is right and reaping the benefits to the individual (Snarey & Kohlberg, 1985). Research conducted by Kohlberg and others affirmed that, as individuals progress through their developmental journey, they traverse six universal stages of moral development (Kakkori & Huttunen, 2010).

Kohlberg’s theory of moral development explains the first stage of the pre-conventional level, where individuals base their moral choices on fear of punishment. Leaders avoid negative consequences in this stage, aligning with Christian beliefs that disobedience to God leads to punishment. Spurgeon (2021) warned that discussions on sin’s consequences, including eternal punishment, may be outdated today. Although these teachings are in the Word of God, they might disagree with how most people think. Thus, one is inclined to change or decrease these doctrines to achieve a more favorable response. Moral leaders who uphold societal and divine laws show how to uphold moral principles (English Standard Version Bible, 2017, Mark 12:17).

The second stage of the pre-conventional level focuses on individual needs and personal gain. Leaders in this stage prioritize their interests rather than selflessly putting their followers’ needs first. Bowie’s (2017) interpretation of Kantian ethics suggests that individuals overly fixated on their family and friends often fail to demonstrate kindness and benevolence towards others, creating an inherent imbalance. Moral leadership requires individuals to strive for equality and treat everyone with compassion. Bowie further argues that in wealthy nations, there is a typical inclination to neglect the impoverished in far-off regions while simultaneously prioritizing the needs and concerns of their loved ones.1 Cor 10:24 encourages believers to prioritize the well-being of others and selflessly sacrifice their interests.

Moreover, stage three of Kolberg’s pre-conventional level emphasizes relationships and justice. Leaders in this stage make moral decisions based on emotional connections and a desire to do what is legally right (Kakkori & Huttunen, 2010). Moral leadership benefits from caring about followers and making legal decisions that abide with obedience to God. (Matt. 22:37–40).

Finally, the post-conventional stage focuses on actions conforming to societal rules and laws. A moral leader considers breaking the law morally wrong, even if someone’s life is at risk (Kakkori & Huttunen, 2010). At stage six, leaders prioritize saving lives and ensuring the well-being of most followers. Matt 9:37 declares: Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Christians view moral development as crucial to leadership because it resonates with the scriptural injunction that enriches the lives of humanity. Spurgeon (2021) asserted that when believers in their unworthiness reduce themselves in the sight of God, they find solace and encouragement through the transformative impact of Jesus, who profoundly enriches lives. Solinger () argues that moral leadership emerges when individuals courageously take a moral stance on an issue, persuade others to follow suit, and collectively drive social change by changing the existing moral systems. In his pursuit of building his ministry, Christ rejected worldly pursuits and traditional religious practices (Tozer,2021).

 Crout (2021) affirms the need for spiritual leadership skills in youth aged 13 to 17. Crout emphasizes that leadership is critical for youth ministries, which helps reduce the church dropout rate among young people. Like adults, young individuals play a significant role in fulfilling the gospel’s call. Allen &Lawton (2012) supports this notion, asserting that a lack of adequate spiritual leadership support contributes to the disconnection of post-high schoolers from the church. Spurgeon skillfully wrote these compelling words, “Trees must be planted in the courts of the Lord while they are yet young if they are to live long and to flourish well (Spurgeon, 2021, p.142).

Allen and Fry (2021) found an increase in spiritual leaders' presence in academic literature, but the link between moral and leader development still needs to be explored. According to Allen and Fry, spiritual development inspires individuals to delve into the depths of situations and self-reflect through spiritual practices. Their study proposes that spiritual development leads to constant insight, the ability to learn from mistakes, and the chance to find comfort.

Spiritual development must be cultivated to reap the benefits of morality oriented toward society originated by God. Fry and Wigglesworth (2013) posit that spiritual intelligence (SQ) is a similar type of intelligence that helps leaders conquer their self-interest and direct their attention toward others. Their study suggests that the moral transformation in society can be attributed to the spiritual guidance offered by brands like Pizza Hut and Ben & Jerry’s. Allen and Fry (2023), spiritual leadership facilitates the cultivation of leader and moral development at a higher level. The interplay between the conventional and post-conventional stages allows moral leadership to recognize that societal laws are not absolute. Still, it is only the laws of God that hold that distinction.

Developing self-concept, spirituality, and morals is essential to becoming a moral leader. These traits go deep into a leader’s personality and affect their ability to use leadership principles and morals that change the organization. Leaders who put moral and spiritual growth first build a moral foundation that inspires others and produces a positive change in their fields. Christ exemplifies great leadership, which grants the greatness of an eternal transformed life to those who seek him. Tozer (2021) argues that the foundation of a ministry is Christ- a leader’s commitment to him, not by techniques and methods.

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