Posted on June 5, 2023 (https://hc.edu/center-for-christianity-in-business/2023/06/05/leading-from-within-modeling-biblical-transformation/)

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ABSTRACT

One of the loudest drumbeats of modern leadership centers on organizational transformation. Driven by technological innovation, disruption, and agility, combined with workforce generational and organizational shifts, business leaders increasingly realize that we must "change or die." However, thousands of leadership texts and billions of leadership development dollars seem insufficient enablers to lead this change. In an area replete with theories, models, constructs, and styles, what is missing? We suggest that the biggest enabler is not found in another external system or model, but in behavioral change rooted deep within the leader's identity. A critical, yet largely unknown element of the leader's identity surrounds our vulnerability to self-conscious emotions. The aim of this analysis is threefold. First, by examining the relationship between self-conscious emotions and our identities, we offer Christian leaders a framework to better identify gaps in their behavioral styles. Second, we examine a deeper comprehension of our union with Christ, unlocking identity messages that Christians often overlook. Finally, we offer a model of recurring spiritual disciplines designed to enable the leader's transformation from within. Through this personal change process, Christian leaders are better equipped to lead the business transformations our modern era demands.

INTRODUCTION

Any 21st century leader, business or otherwise, faces the dizzying necessity for organizational transformation. The modern pulse of innovation, disruption, and agility, combined with workforce generational differences and technological enablers, often leaves us searching for equally innovative and adaptive approaches to leading. This may be particularly true for the Christian leader who feels the tension of breakneck speed and associated change rubbing against the voice saying, "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). How do we lead through the chaos? How do we create a path through unexplored territories, where distinctions between the human and artificial seem increasingly blurred?

Ironically, it seems we may not need a new leadership model so much as we need a recovered one. Increasingly, a host of managerial writers remind us that, in our modern age of cognitive computing, analytics, robotics, and ubiquitous connectivity, the greatest human differentiator is indeed our humanity. Emotional intelligence in leadership, it seems, is getting more press than ever. Daniel Goleman's themes of self-awareness, other-awareness, emotional-regulation, and social adaptability are recurring topics in business literature.[1] No wonder. For all our challenges ranging from managing technological advancement to adopting new organizational paradigms, the biggest hurdle remains behavioral.

Behavioral change is a topic in which Christians ought to be well-versed. While Christianity is not centered on behavior modification, changed behavior naturally flows from following Christ. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22) reflect natural outcomes of our faith. And nowhere should this be more visible than in our leadership—of others and ourselves.

Surprisingly, however, this is often not the case. Any casual web search will yield numerous stories of high profile Christians censured for their toxic leadership styles.[2] Marshall Goldsmith's 20 bad interpersonal leadership habits[3] seem hardly limited to non-Christians. Yet this cannot be for a lack of scholarship. One recent survey identified some 329,803 books available on the general topic of leadership.[4] Leadership development is a $366 billion industry, yet research indicates most of these programs fail to create the desired results.[5] In an area replete with theories, models, constructs, and styles, what is missing? Content and opportunity are not the problem; personal transformational and sustained change is.

We suggest that the next generation of leadership lies less in developing a new model and more in applying a much deeper biblical one—one that augers to the leader's very identity (Rom. 12:2). This requires a deep courageous commitment to self-examination and reflection. Emotional intelligence must be extended well below the surface into the "thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). This can prove daunting and even a bit uncomfortable. But its rewards can truly be transformational. And we believe this transformation is what a recovered biblical leadership model uniquely offers.

THE LEADER'S SELF-CONCEPT

John is the Senior Vice President of Operations for a $13 billion Fortune 400 firm. Throughout his 26-year career with the company, he has catapulted through multiple engineering, operations and lower-level executive roles with great skill. His current position is viewed by some as a potential launching pad into the CEO's chair. John is talented, bright, charismatic and highly respected throughout the firm—except by one team.

Six months prior, John commissioned an agile-based development team for a new research and development project he felt could serve as an industry disrupter. He intentionally chose to use an agility-based model with younger, fresh thinkers at the helm. However, from the beginning, their cultural and organizational styles clashed with his. While John felt he was a flexible and adaptive leader, he was also very cognizant of his organizational position within the company. He wanted his opinions to be taken seriously. He expected respect, if not deference, which most in the company happily obliged.

The agile team did not. Their attitude appeared indifferent if not hostile to John's positional authority. They viewed his knowledge and approaches as antiquated. And, the more visible this cultural condescension emerged, the more subtly enraged John became. It would have been easy enough to replace the team but they were quite competent and respected in their own right. They were bright, gifted, young, respected by their peers, and thoroughly unimpressed with hierarchy. This galled John to the core, such that he eventually abandoned any desire to collaborate and instead began to devise a methodology to permanently remove them. At one point, having been informed of some "John the Boomer" jokes amongst the team, John flew into a rage with some private confidantes. Amidst a string of epithets, John began reciting the most distinguished elements of his 26-year career. He concluded a no-holds barred rant with the assurance that not only would they be off the project, but they would be out of the company. The confidantes, many who had known John for years, felt like someone or something had finally tarnished his gold-plated image. Apparently, John wasn't quite the practiced and polished leader everyone had imagined— something had really gotten under his skin.

John is an archetypal character but his story is based on a real one. It is the biblical story of Haman as recorded in the Book of Esther.[6] John figuratively, and Haman actually, suffered a deep affront to their self-concept. Richard Robins and Roberta Shriber identify this self-concept as "our beliefs about who we are, our worth as a person, and our aspirations for the future."[7] When John's opinion of himself was not shared by his detractors—in fact when it was directly challenged—he rushed headlong into an emotional tailspin. His true identity was revealed.

Ironically, the research linking self and emotionality is relatively underdeveloped, particularly when applied to leadership.[8] Yet this linkage is exactly what we see in John's case. And, if we pull back the covers, we can see it around us every day—in leadership and in life.

SHAME, PRIDE, AND APPROVAL

Recently, the study of self-conscious emotions has begun to gain traction in several psychological research streams. While some research has examined more subtle emotions such as guilt and embarrassment, the existing literature tends to emphasize shame and pride. In fact, some researchers have postulated that shame and hubristic (as distinguished from authentic) pride tend to mirror each other because they both center on the "I am" of self.[9] Shame speaks in terms like "I am a failure." Hubristic pride speaks in terms like "I am extraordinary." Unlike guilt and authentic pride, which speak in terms of "I have done" either a good or bad thing, shame and hubristic pride drill to the center of our self-concept. Not surprisingly, in the Genesis narrative, shame and hubristic pride emerge as the first consequences of The Fall.

SHAME

Shame may be defined as our emotional response to condemnation, evoked from a sense of nakedness and exposure. It manifests itself most when we are personally humiliated, ridiculed, scorned, or rejected. As June Tangney notes, shame often leaves us with the desire to cover up and hide.[10] In fact, shame was the first emotion recorded after our original parents sinned. Covering up was their first response.

Shame is not always easy to pinpoint. As Curt Thompson observes, shame's elusiveness proves to be a key element of its power.[11] But one way of drawing out shame may be to reflect on our feelings when we hear spoken or unspoken messages like, "you are totally worthless," "you are a complete failure," "you don't matter at all," "nobody really cares about you," or "you will never be good enough."[12] Those are shame's voices.

Once we understand the pattern of shame, we can see it in action all the time, both personally and professionally. As an executive coach, Simon Cavicchia documents shame's phenomenology in multiple leadership contexts. For example:

> I was coaching a newly promoted senior executive in an oil company, let us call her Jenny. She described her line-manager as controlling and prone to being directly and publicly critical if he did not agree with the way Jenny was thinking. My client, who I knew to have a capacity for creative and innovative interventions, increasingly spoke of feeling stupid and confused. On one occasion she described feeling as if "everything I have been able to draw on over the years is worthless. I feel pretty dumb and useless right now, I can't even think. I just don't know what to do!"[13]

Our inability to "even think" in midst of these shame storms, as Thompson calls them, exemplifies shame's raw emotional power. Gershen Kaufman refers to shame as "an entrance to self…an inner torment, as a sickness of the soul."[14] When we are deeply shamed as both Jenny and John were, we are often helplessly incapacitated and laid bare.

PRIDE

As noted, research distinguishes between authentic and hubristic pride. Authentic pride reflects the emotional sense of satisfaction or accomplishment we feel in a job well done. It speaks in terms of "I did" versus "I am." Authentic pride tends to promote the attainment of value, based on expertise or legitimate achievement.[15] While this can certainly be taken to extremes, the Bible provides for it.[16]

Our focus, however, centers on hubristic pride, which may be seen in egotism, boastfulness, presumption, and self-centeredness.[17] Hubristic pride is rooted in comparison and self-congratulation. It resides in competition and a desire to "be better" than the next person. Regarding the competitive nature of this pride, C.S. Lewis wrote:

> Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone.[18]

In its basest form, hubristic pride screams to its competitors and to its audience—don't you know who I am? I'll tell you who I am! Let us return to the leadership allegory. How did John respond to his public shaming? He responded by fighting back with hubristic pride. In the face of condescending humiliation, John used his resume to prop up his damaged self-concept.

APPROVAL

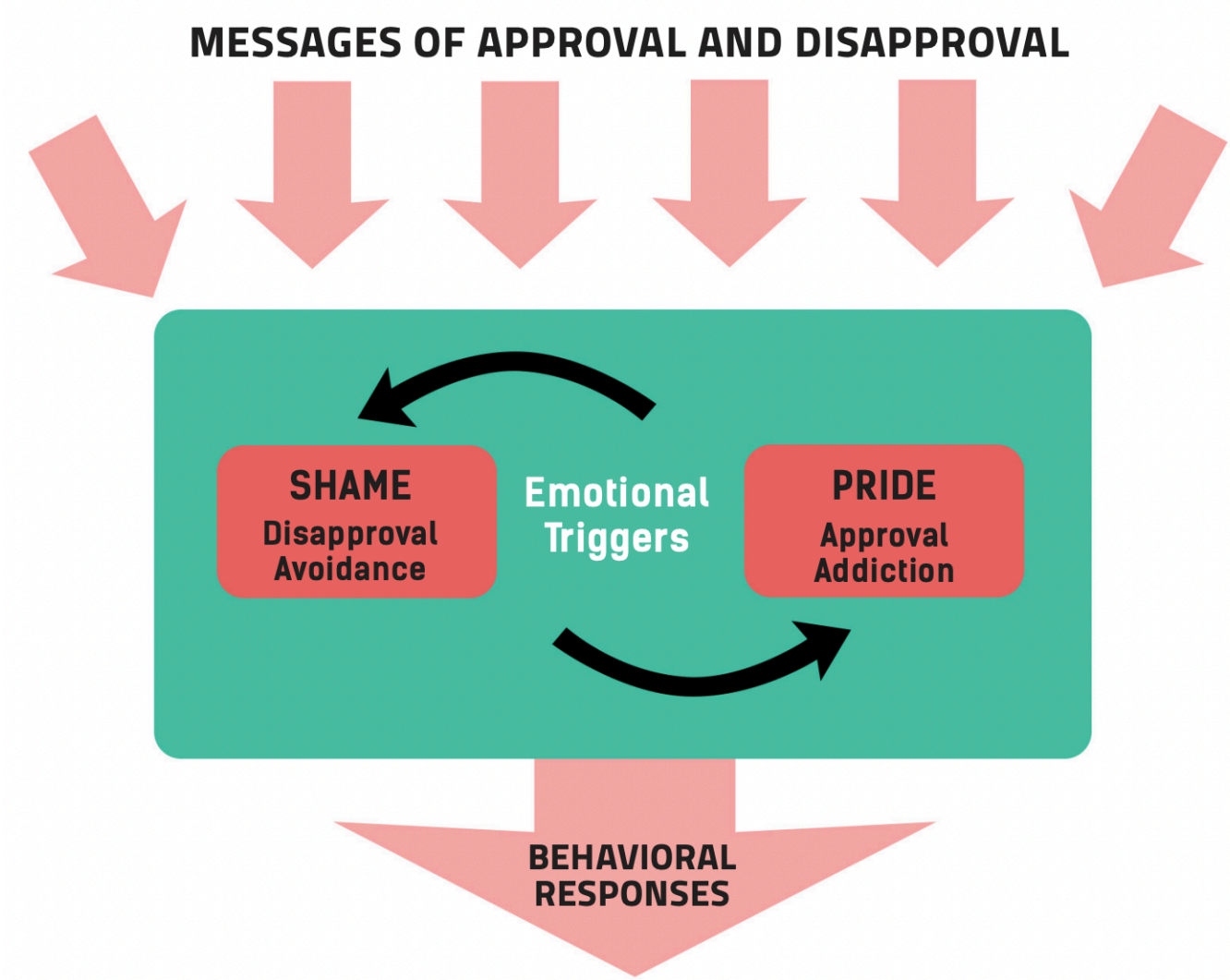
The intertwined relationship between shame and pride should not be overlooked. Although they appear opposite in nature, shame and pride often operate together in a cyclical manner; as two sides of the same coin. When we feel threatened or attacked by the painful voices of shame, many of us counter with our own voices of hubristic pride. But to truly put all the pieces together, we need to add one more important component—that of approval.

Approval takes form in the authentication, validation, and acceptance in the eyes of others. The message of approval directly opposes the message of shame. Rather than a voice of condemnation, approval offers a voice of praise. Rather than a voice of worthlessness, approval provides a voice of esteem. Approval brands the message "you are worthy and good" upon our self-concept.

As image-bearers of God, we were created for approval; it is part of God's design. We were meant to matter. We were created to be valuable. We were designed to be worthy, esteemed, and purposeful (Ps. 139). In fact, anyone who serves Christ properly is "acceptable to God and approved by men" (Rom. 14:18). However, both shame and hubristic pride twist this natural design into very unhealthy behavior, which can be seen in both our life and leadership. The Bible refers to this unhealthy contortion as "the fear of man" (Prov. 29:25).

Shame contorts our natural need for approval into "disapproval avoidance." We naturally flinch at the belief that anyone in our circle of importance might disapprove of us, so we cover up and self-protect. We lead defensively. If we consider Goldsmith's 20 bad leadership habits, these would show up in things like failing to express gratitude (fear of showing weakness), withholding information (fear of vulnerability), negativity (fear of risk-taking), unwillingness to listen (protectionism), and deflecting blame from ourselves (fear of exposure).[19] To this list, we might also add isolating and micro-managing behavior rooted in a defensive need to control all of our circumstances. Ironically, behavior stemming from disapproval-avoidance might itself bring the most amount of disapproval. But a leader entrenched in the fortress of self-protection will rarely see this. Instead, in our experience, such leaders always seem to have a reason, a rationale, or a justification at their fingertips to explain why they are right—and why others should just see it their way.

Conversely, pride contorts our natural need for approval into a non-stop quest for applause. Approval addicts seek an "IV drip" of personal validation from anyone and anything possible; particularly the highly-esteemed. Such addiction lives in the world by showing off in hopes of receiving attention. Returning to Goldsmith's bad leadership habits, this manifests itself in areas like winning too much, telling the world how smart we are, claiming credit that we don't deserve, and excessive needs to "be me."[20] To this, we might add constantly proving ourselves, name dropping, professional gossiping, throwing people under the bus, and sycophantic behavior toward colleagues and higher authorities. Most pride-based approval habits are reasonably subtle, or only occasionally come in out in full force. From the time we are children to our turn as leaders, we learn cleverer and more disguised ways to say, "Look at me!" But the underlying need and motivation remains the same.[21]



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As Figure I illustrates, this is the world in which John lived. Rooted in true giftedness, over time he began to create a pseudo-narrative rooted in his own press release. His self-concept became wrapped up in the pride-based approval and respect that his resume and position "deserved." He came to expect, even live for, validation and approbation. And when he did not receive it from the agile team, feelings of shame and inferiority began to kick in. His identity was under direct frontal attack. In short, pride's mask was exposed and shame's naked vulnerability was in full view. The emperor was losing his clothes.

A MODEL FOR LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION

In our experience, simply understanding how leadership can be impacted by negative self-conscious emotions may serve as a valuable diagnostic tool. Leadership is naturally aided by deeper levels of self-awareness. However, for this understanding to be truly transformational, any corrective action must involve a core identity-shift. The negative cycle between shame-pride-approval and a leader's defective view of self must be interrupted.

WRITING A NEW NARRATIVE

Increasingly, researchers are recognizing the formidable interplay that exists between human cognitive, emotive, and behavioral elements. Jolyn Davidson writes that these three elements comprise an internal "operating system" working together to shape the attitudes we use to interact with ourselves and our environment.[22] Moreover, as Thompson writes, we begin to frame these elements into stories or meta-narratives of our lives. These narratives help us make sense of our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, particularly in light of past and present experiences. Over time, we begin to interpret life-events according to these narratives. If the narratives are rooted in truth, all is well. But, for the Christian, shame- and pridebased narratives are not rooted in truth. Writing on shame (to which we would add hubristic pride), Thompson states, "It has purpose in a larger narrative, an interpersonal neurobiological instrument that is intentionally and skillfully used to distract and disrupt the story that God is telling."[23]

Leaders who want to find increased freedom from the impacts of shame, pride, and their associated approval patterns, must learn to change their narrative. This begins with developing new ways of thinking, principally about ourselves. The "I am" statements that are so often tied to self-conscious emotions need to be reprogrammed. The Christian leader needs to uncover his/her true self-concept.

Alistair Begg states, "One of the reasons for Christian ineffectiveness is that we don't know who we are in Christ."[24] We would apply that maxim to Christian leadership. The term "in Christ" is used so frequently in Scripture that we can blow through it without taking the time to truly consider its implications. As John Stott stated:

> The commonest description in the Scriptures of a follower of Jesus is that he or she is a person "in Christ." The expressions "in Christ," "in the Lord," and "in him" occur 164 times in the letters of Paul alone, and are indispensable to an understanding of the New Testament. To be "in Christ" does not mean to be inside Christ, as tools are in a box or our clothes in a closet, but to be organically united to Christ, as a limb is in the body or a branch is in the tree. It is this personal relationship with Christ that is the distinctive mark of his authentic followers.[25]

Being "in Christ" and, by extension, having Christ dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9-11) might be the most important biblical identity statement a believer can possess. While many identity themes are important, our union with Christ holds distinguished preeminence. This union, as we have previously written, has less to do with who "I say I am" and more to do with who "God says I am." [26]

This has profound implications for the way in which Christian leaders identify with shame and hubristic pride. As many have noted, it is important to note why Christ suffered and died a death of shame. The vivid accounts of his being stripped naked, mocked, slapped, spit on, and ridiculed aren't just part of an interesting story. When the Scripture states Jesus "endured the cross, scorning its shame" (Heb. 12:2), it shows us that he overcame shame exactly the same way he overcame sin.

Jesus put shame to death. And if we are in Christ, the leader no longer needs to live in shame's identity—it isn't ours anymore (Is. 53:3-5).

Similarly, when he came to earth as a man to live in our stead, Jesus also overcame pride.

If we are in Christ, the leader no longer needs to live in the identity of self-comparison and self-congratulation, because that identity isn't ours anymore.

The voices inside need no longer seek to congratulate us, inflate us, and exaggerate us. They need no longer scream, "Compare yourself! Be sure you're better! The only voice that matters anymore is God's voice—the voice that belongs to us because we are in Christ.

Rewriting the leaders' self-narrative involves actively and constantly changing the voice we hear. It is the cognitive equivalent of choosing to change the radio station—daily and hourly—in order to receive a different message. It is a message of God's ultimate approval.

God's message to leaders in Christ who are visited by shame remains one of ultimate approval. We do not have to hide in our shame because he calls us out of the shadows. We have inestimable value to him (2 Co. 5:21, Rom. 14:4). Similarly, those in Christ visited by pride do not have to boast in our accomplishments and comparisons. He has created us as one of a kind and approves of us. We have inestimable value to him. He doesn't just know us—he knows us by name.[27] (Ps 139:13-16, Ex 33:17).

For the Christian leader, what are the practical implications of this narrative change? Consider the following:

- We don't need to prove ourselves because in Christ, we're already approved.
- We don't need to overpower people because in Christ, God is our strong tower.
- We don't need to fear others because in Christ, God is the strength of our heart.
- We don't need to constantly add value because in Christ, we are eternally valuable.
- We don't need to constantly seek attention because in Christ, God always delights, rejoices, and smiles on us.
- We don't have to always be right, be smarter, be in charge, and be accomplished because in Christ, we are highly esteemed.[28]

In short, the freedom to lead teams and organizations more effectively comes when our redirected self-concept—a true self-concept in Christ—becomes part of our daily experience (2 Pet. 1:3-11). How so? Consider that when leaders are freed from the "fear of man" (be it approval addiction or disapproval avoidance), we are increasingly able to consistently convey authenticity, genuineness, and transparency. We are able to lead less defensively, without resorting to tight-fisted micro-managing and bullying. We are able to increasingly focus on team success rather than individual appearances. We are able to delegate more freely and rely less on exerting control. We are also able to deliver difficult messages, make unpopular decisions, and ensure team accountability. All of these attributes are demonstrated contributors to high-performing organizations.[29]

LIFELONG PATTERN SHIFTS

It would be disingenuous to imply that reading a few paragraphs could overcome years spent building incorrect narratives. It will not. Neither do we suggest that all leaders who struggle in this area do so equally. A biblical case could be made that shame, pride and misplaced approval desires tie directly to our fallen nature and show up as early as Genesis 3. However, developmental research also suggests that our sensitivity to self-conscious emotions can be influenced by relationships with our early caregivers and the social environment in which we develop.[30] Every leader's experience will be unique. However, as both neuroscience and spiritual practices inform us, applying a discipline of sustained and consistent pattern shifts can, over time, lead to authentic and effective change.

Increasingly, research points to the ability to "rewire" the neural pathways in our brains. Conceptually, this is not unlike choosing to take new roads to a destination. Over time, our brains form these neural pathways and strengthen them through repetition. This strengthening results in habits, which often translate to automatic behaviors used in things like reading and driving. So too, we develop automated behavioral responses to emotional impulses. These responses are typically born out of years of mental training, often developed from childhood. This life-long development can make behavioral habits difficult to break—but not impossible.[31]

Behavioral habits change through increased recurrence and repetition of new pathways. Not coincidentally, this recurrence and repetition mirrors the process of biblical meditation. Sadly, biblical meditation, which is replete throughout the pages of Scripture and Christian historical practice, is nearly lost in modern Christianity. While space does not permit a thorough review of this spiritual discipline, we will point out a few key components (see Box "Biblical Meditation"):

First, biblical meditation involves high levels of mental engagement. Some scholars call biblical meditation the act of "mental chewing." That is, meditation involves extensive pondering, musing, and even verbalization. As some have ironically noted, worrying and meditating actually involve the same process, albeit to different outcomes, of playing and replaying our thoughts.[32] Meditation can also involve actively speaking our thoughts through periods of biblical reflection. This may appear akin to Eastern practices, but it is far from them. As Thomas Merton noted, "True contemplation is not a psychological trick but a theological grace." [33]

Second, the common objects of biblical meditation include God's Word, his work, and his ways. In our specific case, meditations are focused on who God says we are in Christ. Therefore, biblical meditation is often connected with prayer. Charles Spurgeon observed, "Meditation and prayer are twin sisters, and both of them appear to me equally necessary to a Christian life. I think meditation must exist where there is prayer, and prayer would be sure to exist where there is meditation." [34]

Finally, while it engages the mind, biblical meditation is not exclusively mental; it consists of aligning our mental and spiritual gaze with God, the work of his Spirit, and his truth. When the Bible speaks of setting our minds on things above (Col 3:2), it is not simply speaking of directing our physical brain waves. Rather, it is an encouragement to focus our physical and spiritual selves on heavenly things. To aid us, we ask God's Spirit to "guide [us] into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). Thus, while biblical and Eastern meditation may both quietly and reflectively concentrate, biblical meditation does not encourage us to clear or empty ourselves. Rather, biblical meditation propels us to fill ourselves, invoking God's Spirit to direct our recurring thoughts toward God's Word, work, and ways—which are primarily found in Scripture itself.[35]

BIBLICAL MEDITATION

Below are a few recommendations for its practice:

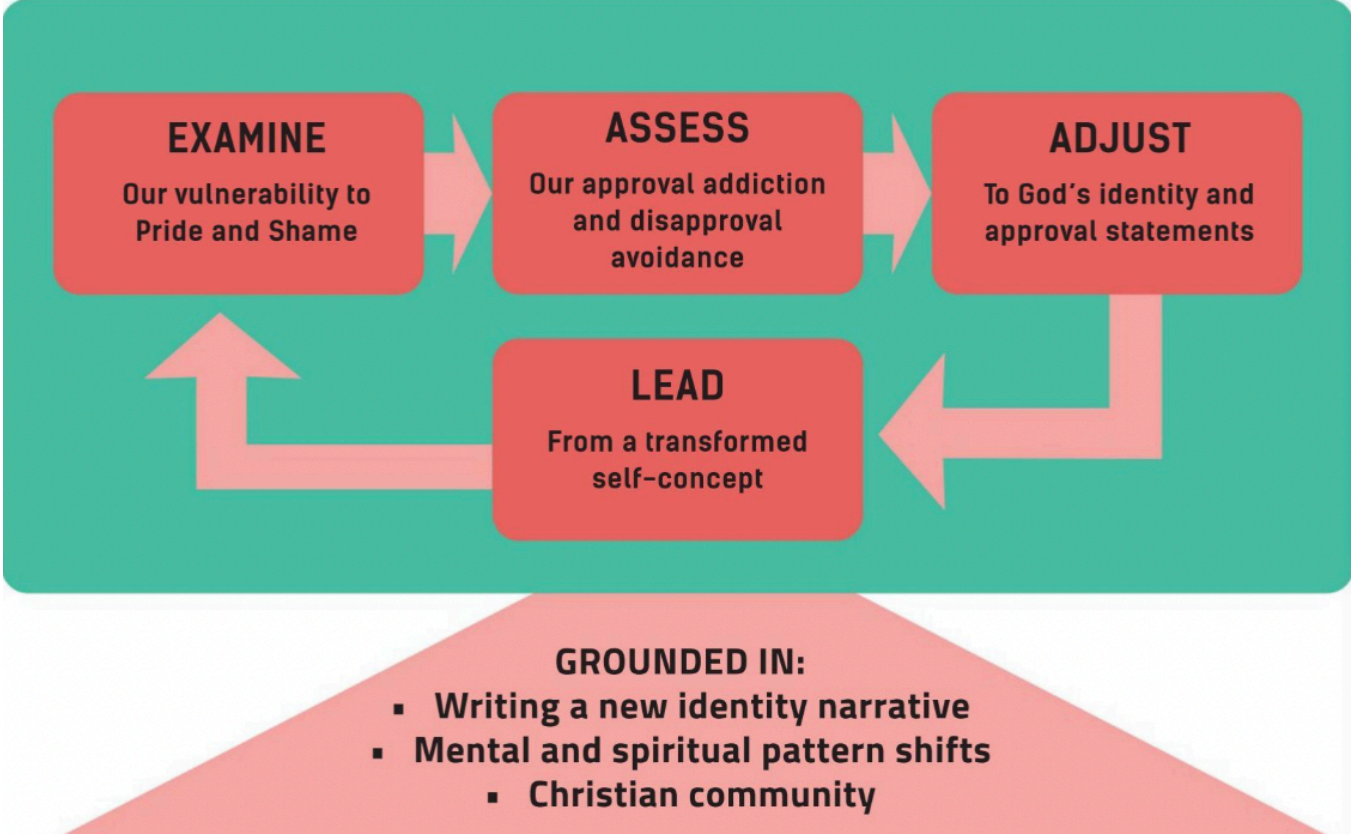
- Be intentional - our meditations may often feel choppy and scattered and that's okay. But we should be intentional about coaching and focusing ourselves throughout the process.
- Develop a recurring time and location removed from distractions - we are creatures of habit so recurrence is useful. We should also free ourselves from distractions; especially our electronic devices.
- Seek God's presence and power - begin by asking for his Spirit to lead us; filing us with joy in his presence and eternal pleasures at his right hand (Ps. 16:11)
- Seek God's cleansing - reflect on God revealing the dark and often hidden stains of sin and washing our souls (Ps. 51:10, 139:24, 51:7)
- Declutter our souls - reflect on the peace of God breaking through the disquieted clutter (Phil 4:7). Also reflect on God binding up our hurt and wounded hearts (Ps. 73:26)
- Commune with God by reflecting and listening - reflect on his word, work, and ways. Center on an aspect of God's nature and how that relates to our identity. Pray and listen to ways God's attributes lead to joyous fellowship with him; thereby refreshing our souls.

WE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE

While these spiritual practices are mostly learned and experienced in solitude, we also belong to a community of believers dependent on one another for the body to function (1 Co. 12, Rom. 12). The practice of listening to God's voice in community is challenging if we have not first learned to listen to it individually. But once we do—once we have some level of individual proficiency—receiving and discerning God's will together is a powerful and rewarding experience. Leaders are part of a broader team that encourage and support each other, point out our blind spots, and help set direction. Reciprocally, leaders need a broader team that we may pour ourselves into, thereby spurring one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).

As believers, we were not intended to operate alone and we need to confirm God's direction through the agreement of Christ's body. These practices operationalize our leadership from within, enabling us to listen to both God and one another, thereby multiplying our leadership effectiveness. In so doing, we are freed from our shame-pride-approval tendencies and natural desires to be the source of all leadership decisions. As Ruth Haley Barton notes, "Corporate or leadership discernment, then, is the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and activity of God as a leadership group relative to the issues we are facing, and to make decisions in response to that awareness."[36] Discernment and working together as a team does not guarantee unanimity, nor does it include abdicating ultimate individual responsibility. However, it does mean that the team will be heard collaboratively and leaders will be willing to release their shame-pride-approval based biases. Through the input of others, we will be open to receiving God's direction that may differ from our own limited human perspectives. Through the community of others, we will be more eager to encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11).

Learning to grow together as a team and appreciating our differences as strengths rather than aggravations, represents an essential element of leading from within. As Henri Nouwen states, "Community always calls us back to solitude and solitude always calls us back to community. Both are essential elements of ministry and witness."[37]



In summary, as shown in Figure II, we believe that biblical meditation, prayer, and study, led by God's Spirit, and accompanied by the strength of community, can provide the foundation by which regular thought patterns are changed and new behavioral habits are formed (I Tim. 4.7-8, Heb. 12:1-3). As we are personally transformed into his image (2 Co. 3:18), so too does our leadership transform. Christian leaders can learn to change their self-narrative; increasingly finding freedom from the impacts of shame-pride-approval patterns. Over a lifetime of renewal and practice, the Christian leader can increasingly discover their true identity (1 Pet. 1:14-15; Eph. 1:1-10, 2:1-10; Rom. 8:29) and, from that identity, lead more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Does this model of leadership transformation actually work? Beyond our personal experiences, we conclude by sharing a few examples from Scripture and contemporary leadership.

It is hard to miss the behavioral evidences of shame-pride-approval in the Apostle Peter during Jesus's years on earth. At the top of his frequent bravado was his overconfident assertion to Jesus, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Mt. 26:35). Perhaps comforting to all of us who are works in progress, Peter never seemed to totally get over his approval addiction (Gal. 2:11-13). However, it is equally hard to overlook the personal and leadership transformation that took place in his life. As he stood boldly before the Sanhedrin declaring God's approval over man's (Acts 5), he was clearly a changed person. He had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13), and his leadership had immeasurable impact on the early Christian church.

Similarly, it is hard to miss the behavioral evidences of shame-pride-approval in James and John, the "sons of thunder." Like Peter, they held a special position in Jesus's earthly ministry. Yet, scarcely after witnessing his transfiguration (Lk. 9:28-36), they were among those arguing about "who would be the greatest" (Lk. 9:46). After their attempt to coopt Jesus into sitting at his right and left in God's kingdom (Mt. 20:20-23), Jesus delivers his most concise teaching on servant leadership contrasted against their naked personal ambition. However, after having been with Jesus, they were never the same. John, particularly, stands out as the "apostle of love"—the last original disciple to leave earth, transformed at his very core.

Being with Jesus clearly means much more than studying him or even walking with him across Palestine. Being with Jesus means, in the words of Nouwen, "rooted in a permanent, intimate relationship with the Incarnate Word."[38] One such modern experience comes from Dave Brown, former CEO of Lens Crafters. Trained in the mold of "Neutron Jack" Welch and "Chainsaw Al" Dunlap, within a decade of Brown's tenure as a 29-year old CEO, Lens Crafters catapulted to the largest eye ware provider in the world. From day one, Brown was singularly results-driven. He states, "I was fortunate to become the CEO at just 29 years old and thought I was 'hot stuff'

but the truth is, after a couple of years I was miserable." He was, in his words "a classic numbers-only butthead who could do everybody's job and was proud of telling them that."[39] Yet, as he describes in further detail, after coming face-to-face with his disconnected faith and his overbearing "results at all costs" style, God deeply transformed his life and his entire style of leadership.

We believe that any 21st century Christian leader can experience the same transformation and become more effective in the process. Any leader, unshackled from the self-preoccupations of shame-pride-approval, and all its behavioral dysfunctions, will lead more effectively. Such a leader, uncluttered by mental and emotional chaos, has much more margin at their disposal. Christ's perpetual source of living water (Jn.7:38) leaves more undistracted time to reflect, comprehend, create, value, and vision-cast. It yields more opportunity to invest in others and grow in community. In short, as we journey the path of biblical transformational leadership, we are left freer to truly lead.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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NOTES

[1] "Why Emotional Intelligence Is More Important Than Ever," RallyBright, February 18, 2020. https://rallybright.com/why-emotional-intelligence-is-more-important-than-ever/ (accessed January 20, 2020).

[2] Recently, a number of high profile Christian leaders have been dismissed, resigned, or taken leaves of absence for unhealthy, abusive, or toxic leadership. This list includes Steve Timmis, CEO of Acts 29, Cameron Strang, CEO of Relevant Magazine, James MacDonald, Pastor of Harvest Bible Church, and Noel Castellanos, CEO of the Christian Community Development Association, to name a few. While we do not presume to address the unique circumstances surrounding each situation, we do seek to encourage the personal leadership transformation necessary to mitigate unhealthy leadership tendencies in their various forms.

[3] Marshall Goldsmith and Mark Reiter, What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful (New York: Hachette Books, 2014), 40–41.

[4] Al Gini and Ronald M. Green, "Three Critical Characteristics of Leadership: Character, Stewardship, Experience," Business and Society Review 119, no. 4 (2014): 435–46.

[5] Chris Westfall, "Leadership Development Is A $366 Billion Industry: Here's Why Most Programs Don't Work," Forbes, June 20, 2019. https://www.forbes.com/sites/chriswestfall/2019/06/20/leadership-development-why-most-programs-dont-work/ (accessed February 24, 2020).

[6] According to the biblical record, Haman was second in command in the Persian Empire during the reign of Xerxes I. Yet, despite his nobility and lofty position, Haman possessed a fatal flaw which was exposed by Mordecai the Jew. Mordecai's regular unwillingness to bow or genuflect to Haman served as perpetually insulting. In one particularly galling moment, while returning home from Esther's party, Haman saw the defiant Mordecai at the king's gate and it threw him into a free fall. Scripture states: Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate." (Est. 5:10–13).

[7] Richard W. Robins and Roberta A. Schriber, "The Self-Conscious Emotions: How Are They Experienced, Expressed, and Assessed?" Social and Personality Psychology Compass 3, no. 6 (2009): 887–98.

[8] Jessica L Tracy and Richard W. Robins, "Putting the Self into Self-Conscious Emotions: A Theoretical Model," Psychological Inquiry 15, no. 2 (04, 2004): 103-125. As Tracy and Robins note, the linkage between our self-concept and self-conscious emotions like embarrassment, guilt, pride and shame has only recently emerged amongst behavioral researchers.

[9] Robins and Schriber, "The Self-Conscious," 888-89.

[10] June P Tangney, "Self-Conscious Emotions, Psychology Of," International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (2001), 13803–7.

[11] Curt Thompson, The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe about Ourselves (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 9.

[12] To the degree we personally identify with these types of messages, we are impacted by the voice of shame. Not everyone is equally affected. Research and observation suggests that both nature and nurture combine to influence everyone differently. But to some degree we all feel shame's condemnation, and it often reinforces what we already tend to believe about ourselves.

[13] Simon Cavicchia, "Shame in the Coaching Relationship: Reflections on Organisational Vulnerability," Journal of Management Development 29, no. 10 (2010): 877–90.

[14] Gershen Kaufman, The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes (New York: Springer, 2011).

[15] Edward Yeung and Winny Shen, "Can Pride Be a Vice and Virtue at Work? Associations between Authentic and Hubristic Pride and Leadership Behaviors," Journal of Organizational Behavior 40, no. 6 (2019): 605–24.

[16] For example, Paul offers the Corinthian church an opportunity to "take pride in us" (2 Co. 5:11-13) based on the authenticity of the apostle's message. Similarly, Paul encourages the Galatian church to test their own actions so they might "take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else." (Gal. 6:4)

[17] Os Guinness, Virginia Mooney, and Karen Lee-Thorp, Steering through Chaos: The Vices and Virtues in an Age of Moral Confusion (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2000), 1–3.

[18] C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), 122. As Lewis keenly observes about pride, "I pointed out a moment ago that the more pride one had, the more one disliked pride in others. In fact, if you want to find out how proud you are the easiest way is to ask yourself, 'How much do I dislike it when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or shove their oar in, or patronize me, or show off?' The point is that each person's pride is in competition with everyone else's pride. It is because I wanted to be the big noise at the party that I am so annoyed at someone else being the big noise. Two of a trade never agree."

[19] Goldsmith and Reiter, What Got You Here Won't Get You There, 40– 41.

[20] Ibid.

[21] While we do not wish to paint an overly negative view of most leaders and their styles, we do wish to highlight how many commonly observed leadership shortcomings tie directly to the leader's self-concept. We also wish to reinforce what biblical teaching and an increasing body of academic research states—much of our self-concept is linked to latent self-conscious emotions; particularly shame and hubristic pride. No leader or person lives in just one of these camps. Some may have more of an inclination toward shame or pride-based behavior. On any given day or hour, we might alternate between the two sides of the coin. But, at the core, our experience suggests that defective leadership often traces back to defective views of self.

[22] Jolyn Davidson, Transforming Words into Wisdom: Change Your Attitudes and Save Your Life (Los Angeles: Davidson, 2016). 29.

[23] Thompson, The Soul of Shame, 80.

[24] Alistair Begg. "Introducing Ephesians: Part I of II," Truth for Life, https://www.truthforlife.org/broadcasts/2020/02/17/introducing-ephesians-part-1-of-2/ (accessed February 20, 2020).

[25] John R. Stott, "In Christ," C. S. Lewis Institute, July 15, 2013, http:// www.cslewisinstitute.org/In_Christ_page1 (accessed October 19, 2018).

[26] Lane Cohee, The Disquieted Soul: Paths of Discovery and Deliverance (Grand Rapids: Credo House, 2019), 84. Specifically, Cohee writes that "To be in Christ means we are so connected to him that everything he has done, we have done through association. Everything he has accomplished, we have accomplished. Everything he has overcome, we have overcome. Everything he has put to death, we have put to death."

[27] For further discussion of the phrase, "I know you by name" and its significance, see Cohee, The Disquieted Soul, 90-92.

[28] Derived from Romans 8:31–32; Proverbs 18:10; Psalm 73:26; Zephaniah 3:17; Ephesians 2:10; Song of Songs 4:7.

[29] Mike Robbins, "The Secrets of High Performing Teams with Patrick Lencioni," December 18, 2018, https://mike-robbins.com/podcast-post/the-secrets-of-high-performing-teams-with-patricklencioni/ (accessed May 29, 2020).

[30] Tracy and Robins, "Putting the Self," 106.

[31] Juli Hani, "The Neuroscience of Behavior Change," Medium. Health Transformer, August 8, 2017. https://healthtransformer.co/ the-neuroscience-of-behavior-change-bcb567fa83c1 (accessed February 20, 2020).

[32] "Joyce Meyer Quotes," BrainyQuote.com, BrainyMedia Inc., 2019, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/joyce_meyer_567530 (accessed January 20, 2019).

[33] Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline: the Path to Spiritual Growth (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2018), 22.

[34] "Meditation on God by C. H. Spurgeon," Blue Letter Bible, last modified April 18, 2001, https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon_charles/sermons/2690.cfm (accessed January 20, 2019).

[35] For more complete discussions of biblical meditation, see Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 22-42 and Cohee, The Disquieted Soul, 155- 168.

[36] Ruth R. Barton. Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books/Formation, 2012), 11.

[37] "Top 25 Quotes by Henri Nouwen (of 497)," A-Z Quotes, https:// www.azquotes.com/author/10905-Henri_Nouwen (accessed May 31, 2020).

[38] Henri J.M. Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2013). p. 31.

[39] "Former CEO Shares 3 Essential Elements of Leadership from Building Billion Dollar Company," EDGE Mentoring, May 9, 2016. https://www.edgementoring.org/leadership-blog/building-billion-dollar-company-lenscrafters-ceo-shares-leadership-framework (accessed May 31, 2020).