SHARE LEADERSHIP: BEST PRACTICE
IN A MINISTRY CONTEXT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Shelden Juanette Johns
May 2015
APPROVAL SHEET

SHARED LEADERSHIP: BEST PRACTICE
IN A MINISTRY CONTEXT

Sheldena Juanette Johns

Read and Approved by:

________________________________________
Michael S. Wilder (Chair)

________________________________________
James A. Parker III

Date ________________________________
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>| LIST OF TABLES                               | vi  |
| LIST OF FIGURES                             | vii |
| PREFACE                                     | viii|
| Chapter                                     |     |
| 1. INTRODUCTION                             | 1   |
| Solo Leadership                             | 6   |
| Shared Leadership in Ministry: Biblical Examples | 8   |
| How Shared Leadership Can Work: Best Practices | 11  |
| Research Question                           | 13  |
| 2. LITERATURE REVIEW                        | 14  |
| The Power of Shared Leadership in Organizations | 14  |
| Connecting to a Postmodern Culture through Shared Leadership | 17  |
| Shared Leadership Defined and Explored       | 18  |
| Theological Perspective for Shared Leadership Practice | 27  |
| Best Climate for Shared Leadership Practice  | 36  |
| Conclusion                                  | 42  |
| 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY                     | 44  |
| The Research Question                       | 46  |
| Research Design Overview                    | 47  |
| Pragmatic Worldview                         | 48  |
| Population                                  | 49  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which Churches as Case Studies and Why</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Instrumentation</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting the Data</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Data</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Findings</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compilation Protocol</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic and Sample Data</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings and Displays</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Findings</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Lens</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Data</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings by Case Study Site</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Findings as Compared to the Literature Review</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research Findings</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Research Design</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Conclusions</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to the Literature Base</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Shared Leadership Practice</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Practice</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Suggestions for Research</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. BEST PRACTICES OF SHARED LEADERSHIP IN A MINISTRY CONTEXT</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SHARED LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CUMULATIVE BEST PRACTICES AND UNIQUE PRACTICES</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Solo leader and team leader comparison</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participant demographics</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Red Door Church best practices findings</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trinity Baptist Church best practices findings</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reformed Bible Church best practices findings</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Oceanside Christian Fellowship best practices findings</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Top three collective best practices</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Unique best practices</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Best practices characteristics</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1. Cumulative best practices and unique practices</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The characteristics of a high performance team</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shared leadership at Trinity Baptist Church</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shared leadership at Oceanside Christian Fellowship</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Shared leadership at Reformed Bible Church</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shared leadership at Red Door Church</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE

The thesis idea came about through a selection process. I considered several topics and became interested in the idea of shared leadership. Initially, my understanding of shared leadership was through the vernacular of “lead pastor” and “associate pastor.” Not only did I gain a more accurate definition and picture, but quickly learned how important shared leadership is in fulfilling the Great Commission. Moreover, the principles were greatly needed in my personal ministerial work.

God prepared the way for me even before I knew that I would pursue this degree, and I am so grateful. He orchestrated the timing beyond what I could ever have imagined with my job. I thank Dr. Paul Chitwood, Executive Director-Treasurer of the KBC, who had an open-door policy and allowed me the freedom to email him with school-related questions. His words of encouragement were timely and always a God-send.

Dr. Michael Wilder, my advisor, has inspired me more than I can adequately communicate. His hours of sacrifice to ensure that I was making progress did not go unnoticed. I thank him for encouraging me to press on even when I had yet another round of revisions on my chapters. He consistently told me, “We will get there.”

I also have to thank my family—my mom and dad; my brother, Keebe; and my sister, Chiquita—for always being in my corner, even the Christmases and vacations where I spent more hours studying than sharing with each of them. Mom and Dad always remind me of just how much they love and support me. I thank them for telling me over and over that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” I love you.

To my friends, too numerous to mention for fear of forgetting someone, thank you for praying for me, and even sending prayer-texts and emails along the way. Many
thanks go to Betsy, my editor and style guru, who read my work and kept me in sync
with SBTS style.

Praise God for He is my portion and the reason that I have my being. Thank
you, Lord, for every good and perfect gift comes from you. I give this work back to you
for your glory and thank You for entrusting it to me! I love you.

Shelly Johns

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2015
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of average human beings. No institution can endure if it is under one-man rule.”¹ Nevertheless, the single leader has made strategic decisions and aligned the rest of the organization to implement them.² Dick Iverson uses the term the “one-man rule.” This form of leadership is most recognizable and most familiar in churches. The decisions, goal setting, and authority are controlled by this categorical leader. He alone is the resource for enthusiasm, new ideas, and programs. This mentality and practice of leadership will often lead to disaster, which wreaks havoc on the ministry.³ Dictatorship threatens the survival and success of the institution, as well as the health of the leader.

There are several issues with this model. An environment for leader failure, as well as ministry mayhem can form. Leader failures often include moral failures, greed, pride, moral misconduct, burnout, and a host of other destructive and known pitfalls. Ruben Exantus revealed statistics in 1991 that have continued to trend and still carry weight in the twenty-first century:

According to the survey, 93% of pastors work more than 46 hours a week, and 80% believed pastoral ministry affected their families negatively. Furthermore, 33%


believed ministry was a hazard to their family, 70% reported a significant stress related crisis at least once in their ministry, and nearly 50% of ministers felt unable to meet the needs of the job, while 90% felt inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.

Another source provided updated findings that support these older statistics. MAPPINGS, an organization that provides coaching, training, and consulting services to help Christian leaders and their organizations grow, shared statistics spanning from 2005 to 2006:

1050 pastors were surveyed from two pastor's conferences held in Orange County and Pasadena, Ca-416 in 2005, and 634 in 2006. Of the one thousand fifty (1,050 or 100%) pastors we surveyed, every one of them had a close associate or seminary buddy who had left the ministry because of burnout, conflict in their church, or from a moral failure. . . . Eight hundred eight (808 or 77%) of the pastors we surveyed felt they did not have a good marriage. . . . Eight hundred two (802 or 71%) of pastors stated they were burned out, and they battle depression beyond fatigue on a weekly and even a daily basis. . . . Three hundred fifteen (315 or 30%) said they had either been in an ongoing affair or a one-time sexual encounter with a parishioner.

Moreover, 60 percent of pastors believe that involvement in church ministry has negatively impacted their passion to spread the gospel; the average length of a pastorate is four committed years; 1,500 pastors leave their pastorate each month over burnout, conflict, or moral failure; and 90 percent work more than 50 hours a week, yet feel as if the work is never done and the expectations never end.

In a society where ministers face even more ministry demands, leadership style and practice are crucial. Among the causes for ministry burnout are role overload and the inability to share ministry responsibilities. According to Exantus, four practices can prevent burnout: self-awareness of weaknesses; maintaining a balance of one’s time,


5MAPPINGS, Navigating Christian Leadership, “The Difficult Truth,” accessed June 3, 2015, http://www.mappings.org/content/read%20more%20page%201/ infobox/page_texts_wrm/template/default/active_id/266. The statistics reported on MAPPINGS were by drawn from an article posted on the Schaeffer Institute website by Dr. Richard J. Krejcir.


7Ibid., 13.
emotions, and other boundaries; social connectedness that comes as a result of intimate and authentic relationships among equals; and continued education. Thus, shared leadership practice can also help leaders prevent burnout, counter moral failure with accountability, and add balance to the lone leader by connecting multiple gifts of leaders that shared leadership establishes while leading churches to reach people for Christ, and encourage and equip the body, as well as provide the proper environment for members to partner in kingdom growth.

Shared leadership practice not only disperses the work load but develops God’s people into vessels who are truly living out their purposes according to His plans. Furthermore, membership retention can be improved through shared leadership practice because members have an avenue through which to be engaged in and equipped through ministry. Over 3,500 people a day left the church last year. Shared leadership can offset this number as more are able to plug their gifts into the ministry. In addition to membership retention, shared leadership can assist churches in the collective work of reaching people beyond the church doors in the midst of a changing world.

The North American Mission Board research illustrates how the face of the world is changing:

From 1970 to 2005, the foreign born population in the United States rose from 4.7 percent to 12 percent. By 2050, it is expected that half of the U.S. population will be of a different ethnicity than non-Hispanic white. As of 2004, over half of the residents of the city of Toronto were foreign born. Globalization and transnationalism have afforded North America a unique opportunity in history. Just as Judea was a crossroads for the known world during the time of Jesus, North America has become a modern crossroads of peoples from around the globe.

The world is coming to America. Actually, the world has already arrived, and God’s

8Ibid., 15-16.


ambassadors need to step into the leadership potential already established in Christ.

Shared leadership is a biblical practice that enables the body to function as God’s agent while establishing barriers to individuals from burnout, greed, moral misconduct, pride, and a host of other destructive and known pitfalls of the lone-leader syndrome.\textsuperscript{11} Moreover, sharing Christ within the church’s local community and abroad, as well as establishing the ministry to strengthen the flock, requires the gifts, resources, and passions of a collective body—sharing leadership.

In addition, as shared leadership is practiced effectively, evangelistic outreach occurs and can lower the number of people dying without Christ. According to the North American Mission Board evangelism campaign statistics, one person in North America dies every 11 seconds, and three out of four die without Christ.\textsuperscript{12} Although this statistic is dated (2001), the importance is always relevant and current. Great Commission (Matt 28:16-19) fulfillment will take the partnership of gifts, resources, and leadership skills of multiple people, practicing shared leadership.

Strauch writes about shared leadership practice through elders: “Local church leadership consists of elders and deacons. By definition, the elder structure of government is a collective form of leadership in which each elder shares equally the position, authority, and responsibility of the office.”\textsuperscript{13} This type of leadership structure bears different names. More formally it is called collective, corporate, or collegiate leadership. In contemporary terms it is referred to as multiple church leadership, plurality, shared leadership, or even team leadership when shared practice is emphasized and practiced. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this research, shared leadership will be


\textsuperscript{13}Cuyahoga Valley Church, “A Council of Equals.”
the term used and meaning implied is a collective form of leadership in which each leader shares equally the position, authority, and responsibility of leadership.

Ministries functioned at a satisfactory level under the one-man rule of leadership and even appeared strong. For example, traditional, vertical leadership has been equated with a pyramid, denoting stability. Numerous workers lined the bottom with fewer at the top. Leaders could face challenges and function with relatively no assistance “because little information was needed to make decisions.” Goals were few and relatively basic. Since change occurred slowly, tasks were more repetitive. Yet, information began to explode, and no longer would the skills, gifts, goals, and resources of one leader be able to maintain the momentum needed to lead the people in accomplishing the mission.

The information explosion can be traced in various methods. In 1949, there were 1 million televisions. By 1961, there were over 50 million. In 1962, Telestar satellite orbited, making the first transatlantic broadcast. In 1971, Intel invented the microprocessor. Apple sells its first personal computer in 1976. The Dot Com boom occurred in 1999. The US Telecommunications Acts of 1996 provides the Internet to schools and libraries. According to the Census Bureau, 8.2 percent of American households had a computer in 1984. By 1997, the number was up to 37.4 million American households or 36.6 percent. In 2008, over 150 million websites were on the internet, and nearly 10,000 new websites were reportedly created every hour. Today, not only do individuals have computers and/or internet access at home, school, and library, but the workplace, internet café, and through their smartphones with the freedom and flexibility of wi-fi. In the quake of such change, which includes mass technological

---


15 Ibid., 4-5.

advances, shared leadership has to be practiced if Christians are to be positioned and mobilized to offer the Truth in relevant, meaningful, creative ways, and with life-changing, God-sized results. This will demand the collective leadership of various members and their resources, gifts, and skills.

Although the traditional pyramid-shaped leadership style was hierarchical and stable, in the mix of what has been termed “a permanent white-water society” change, problems arose, for the speed of change is increasing as new technologies emerge. This permanent white-water society has shed its river of time as a “slow, peaceful stream with quiet eddies and calm pools where we have ample opportunity to regain our equilibrium or recoup our energies. We are instead white-water rafting through the rapids of social, technological, and demographic change.” This rapid change leads people to seek information and continuous feedback inside and outside their organization. Leaders will find it difficult to rely on the limited information they alone can gather, retain, and apportion. As a result, individual leadership can deteriorate and organizational growth can be compromised. Shared leadership practice embraces and releases the resources, gifts, and creativity needed for such a time as this. Solo leadership is unhealthy, misses the mark in ministry and leads others down the same path.

Solo Leadership

An unhealthy view and practice of leadership—one in which an individual is expected to perform all critical tasks such as motivating, mobilizing, directing, and resourcing people to fulfill a vision—is commonplace and viewed as a level of excellence

---

17 A permanent white-water society refers to the rapids of social, technological, and demographic change. People, including leaders, are shooting down a foaming river filled with unexpected whirlpools and turbulent, rock-strewn channels. Hawkins, The Learning Congregation, 3.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.
and influence that separates the leader from the bulk of humanity. According to George Barna’s nationwide survey conducted among 1,005 adults, several expectations of what they feel are “very important” for a leader to do were identified:

87 percent expect leaders to motivate people to get involved in meaningful causes and activity
78 percent believe leaders should negotiate compromises and resolve conflicts when they arise
77 percent look to leaders to determine and convey the course of action that people should take in order to produce desirable conditions and outcomes
76 percent rely on leaders to identify and implement courses of action that are in the best interests of society, even if some of those choices are unpopular
75 percent expect leaders to invest their time and energy in training more leaders who will help bring the vision to reality
63 percent want leaders to communicate vision so that they know where things are headed and what it will take to get there
61 percent say leaders are responsible for the direction and production of employees associated with the leader’s organization or cause
61 percent think leaders should analyze situations and create the strategies and plans that direct the resources of those who follow them
56 percent hold leaders responsible for managing the day-to-day details of the operation

Other expectations of a leader were to direct activities, negotiate agreements, strategize, encourage participants, motivate participants, manage people, supply resources, evaluate plans and progress, and resolve conflicts. Although the burden is heavy and the expectations are often unrealistic, many ministries continue to use autocratic leadership instead of practicing shared leadership. Shared leadership is not only more efficient in doing the work of the Lord but it is also the biblical model for leadership in a ministry context. Regis University compared the solo leader versus the team (sharing leadership


21Ibid., 3-4.
focused).\textsuperscript{22}

Table 1. Solo leader and team leader comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo Leader</th>
<th>Team Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Plays unlimited role (interferes)</td>
<td>1. Chooses to limit role (delegates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Strives for conformity</td>
<td>2. Builds on diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Collects acolytes</td>
<td>3. Seeks talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Directs subordinates</td>
<td>4. Develops colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Projects objectives</td>
<td>5. Creates mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solo leaders use positional power to get things done. They are often called the movers and shakers, relying on their own intuition and power to make things happen. On the other hand, effective team leaders share the leadership and surround themselves with very capable people and create environments that bring out the best in people. They affirm team members and increase their self-confidence to act, to make decisions and to make things happen rather than simply perform assigned tasks.\textsuperscript{23}

They believe the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Thus, they “look for linkages between team members so that they can use these leverage points to optimize productivity. Because they see things from a more holistic perspective, they create highly inclusive, collaborative work environments.”\textsuperscript{24} Shared leadership is not only a better model but a biblical one that illustrates the importance and nature of this practice.

**Shared Leadership in Ministry: Biblical Examples**

By the middle of the twentieth century, the ratio was one pastor to one flock with defined roles and expectations for each. As the nature and needs represented in churches and communities continued to evolve, the age of specialization became popular.


\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid.
In the latter half of the twentieth century, the emergence of multiple staff occurred. Where the pastor once solely performed various functions, staff personnel was added. While the size of churches may have placed a necessity for such staffing, churches regardless of size were discovering how important multiple staff members (paid or unpaid) were to the ministry.

**Moses Exemplifies Shared Leadership Practice**

Proverbs 15:22 reminds that “where there is no counsel, purposes are disappointed; But in the multitude of counselors they are established.” Moses, who had been judging the people by himself, gained this wisdom through the words of Jethro, his father-in-law:

> You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people’s representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace.” So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. (Exod 18:18-24)

Jethro came to visit and taught Moses a model for shared leadership. The battle with Amalek also provides the wisdom of shared leadership when Moses became too physically exhausted to hold up his arms during the battle (Exod 17:10-16). Aaron and Hur took a stone so that Moses could sit as they positioned themselves on either side to hold up his arms. In the meantime, Joshua was below, leading the soldiers in battle, which the Lord helped them win—as they shared leadership.

---

25 All Scripture references from the American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.
Apostle Paul Exemplifies Shared Leadership Practice


When Paul addresses the issue of leadership (1 Tim. 3), the two offices mentioned are elder and deacon. Elders (also called pastors or overseers) are to direct the affairs of the church and deacons are elder helpers with the basic function of serving the body of Christ.26

Although some may argue against the Bible providing a specific, binding pattern of church government, Scripture gives only one model for church government, which is shared leadership. There is no example in the New Testament of a local church ruled by one. The Bible does, however, promote that each local church is to function with a plurality of elders (e.g., Acts 14:23, 20:17, 28; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14). In these passages, elders is plural, and church is singular. Thus, at least two or more qualified men must be elders at each local church.27 Whether referred to as elders or pastors, the intention is clear. Leadership is to be shared so that Christians can serve and impact the world for Christ as mandated in Scripture.

Jesus Christ Modeled Shared Leadership

Mike Tan writes, “Shared leadership is a biblical concept and practice even before the emphasis on such approach by modern management and leadership gurus.”28 Jesus modeled shared leadership in choosing the twelve disciples, illustrating the design and need for a plurality of leaders (Luke 6:12-16). Nevertheless, like Moses, many have


27Ibid.

a natural tendency to try it all alone. Shared leadership for most people is counterintuitive. Perhaps it is how the world has been conditioned to think about leadership and the assumed greatness of well-known leaders. Nevertheless, while leadership is an individual trait and activity, this does not imply that it is done alone. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr., was a great leader who did not lead alone. King’s disciples included Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, Julian Bond, Coretta Scott King, and Ralph Abernathy.\(^{29}\) These leaders knew and practiced shared leadership in order to advance their cause. How much more should Christian leaders allow shared leadership to reframe their ministries in order to utilize resources, gifts and individual passions to advance God’s kingdom.

**How Shared Leadership Can Work: Best Practices**

Shared leadership reframes the hows and whys of leadership, creating avenues for use of various gifts, resources, and experiences, while each leader serves and serves with the team. Shared leadership is not meant to imply that no one is really in charge, but it does mean that no one bears or carries the burden of leadership alone.\(^{30}\) Great care is needed to establish shared leadership as leaders serve together.

Prayer, careful selection, wisdom, and commitment are indispensable to establish best leadership practice. Although shared leadership is the biblical model of leadership, the work is difficult. Ground work, which includes clarifying the language of shared leadership, has to be laid and certain criteria for identifying leaders are generally established.\(^{31}\) The best shared leadership practice does not happen overnight or by chance. How shared leadership is presented and practiced by leaders will determine the


success of this model.

How leadership is defined influences how people will participate in shared leadership practice, and to some degree, how well it will work. Every Christian has the right, responsibility, and ability to be a leader. Shared leadership ministry opens the learning process for Christians to work together in serving God and others. Birchall defines shared leadership as “the sharing by many in the life of a congregation, in both its internal maintenance (everything from flowers and the boiler to visiting members in hospital) and also its external relations (all its local community involvement, outreach and care).” According to Birchall, various concepts have been associated in the creation of an environment of shared leadership, among which are accountability, partnership, equity, and ownership.

Although shared leadership practice can be difficult and calls into question what many leaders have come to know, believe, and practice, shared leadership continues to be successfully modeled. Churches and other organizations are developing and successfully observing the best shared leadership practices. According to George Barna, the best practices of shared leadership fall into four general categories: (1) a viable leadership partnership was created, (2) an environment was designed to facilitate effective team leadership, (3) leaders’ perform their duties somewhat similarly, and (4) lay leaders are intentionally equipped to succeed in their roles.

Jay B. Carson, Paul E. Tesluk, and Jennifer A. Marrone list other conditions for the best practice of shared leadership to occur. The antecedent conditions that lead to the development of shared leadership and the influence of team shared leadership on

---


33 Ibid.

34 Barna, The Power of Team Leadership, 116-17.
team performance are “both the internal team environment, consisting of shared purpose, social support, and voice, and external coaching were important predictors of shared leadership emergence.”  

Research also indicates hurdles of shared leadership: resistance to the models, decision making, and conflict of structure between a single-leader and team structure as it deals with purpose, commitment, and accountability.  

**Research Question**

In many ways, the research on shared leadership in ministry contexts is in its infancy. Models of the best shared leadership practice in a ministry context will provide characteristics, limitations, and even the how-to of implementing shared leadership. Thus, this research will seek to answer the following question: “What principles are identified within the best practice of those implementing shared leadership in a ministry context?”

---


37 Ibid.
CHAPTER 2  
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature that is relevant to the study of determining the best shared leadership practice. The first section of the literature review examines the terminology and provides definitions of shared leadership as discussed through the work of various writers. The next section sets the theological foundation for shared leadership and examines why this type of leadership and governing basis is not only preferred, but biblical. Next, Jesus’ ministry as servant leadership that engaged and invited all to come and be a part of team ministry (those sharing the work of ministry by exercising their giftedness) is examined, including overview of select, biblical characters who followed His example. The next section focuses on defining shared leadership and providing alternative terminology for this concept, as well as various organizations, with best practices of this leadership style. Next, the best climate for shared leadership is discussed, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of shared leadership to provide an overview of why some succeed, others might not even try, and some venture in the shared waters only to return to the autocratic leadership practice. The final section explores the research others have completed regarding shared leadership practice in ministry contexts with a focus of what appears to lead teams sharing leadership along the path of successful implementation of values, beliefs, and leadership styles to the best shared leadership practice in a ministry context.

The Power of Shared Leadership in Organizations

Shared leadership can empower individuals, groups, and organizations and extend their reach beyond that of one. Organizations, in general, have recognized the
benefits of shared labor and are experiencing the fruit of the practice. For example, the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) is a professional educational association of over 1,300 active and retired secondary school administrators. According their website, “MASSP supports, advocates for, and provides professional development to our members. We are committed to improving instruction and achievement for all students.”

Shared leadership is one way MASSP has organized to follow through with their commitment:

Shared leadership . . . is less like an orchestra, where the conductor is always in charge, and more like a jazz band, where leadership is passed around . . . depending on what the music demands at the moment and who feels most moved by the spirit to express the music.

MASSP tapped into a wellspring of knowledge through resourcing the gifts and talents found in shared leadership.

Children’s National Medical (CNM) is another organization exercising shared leadership. This provider of pediatric care in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area serves all children and is the largest non-governmental provider of pediatric care in the District of Columbia with more than $50 million in uncompensated care. Nurses at any location are intricately involved in the health care and over all well-being of patients. Furthermore, they have integrated nursing theory, the practice of shared leadership among nurses, evidence-based practice and research, and have collaborated with the healthcare team. Their understanding of shared leadership is clearly communicated:

Our Shared Nursing Leadership model empowers and engages nurses to partner in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of care. The councils serve as a

---


2Ibid.

forum for shared decision-making and process improvement within nursing and throughout the organization.4

This group of nurses has banded together for an extremely important and clearly communicated purpose—work together to provide the best care in hopes of saving lives.

**Shared Leadership in the Church**

Each of the mentioned organizations has important and mission-oriented reasons for exercising shared leadership. Moreover, they realize the magnitude of the task and the importance of collaborative effort to accomplish their goals. Yet, it is the church that has the greatest mission-oriented reason for utilizing all its resources as it engages from an eternal perspective—the mandate of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20): “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” In his dissertation, Jesse Adkinson noted the very nature of the Great Commission ushers in the idea of team:

Not only was the command given to the team comprised of the disciples, but also inherent to the task is the idea that these disciples were to gather others and teach them how to do likewise. The Great Commission is primarily about discipleship, but one of the tools used for that task seems to be collective team effort. Church leaders, if they are to be successful in fulfilling the Great Commission, must take seriously the task of building and leading a team that will meld the diversity of gifts present in the body of Christ.5

Gary McIntosh notes the time when a pastor was the one go-to guy: “The typical pastorate at the midpoint of the twentieth century was ‘one pastor’ to ‘one flock’ with well-defined roles and agendas for each.”6 Nevertheless, as the world changed, the church’s work became increasingly more complex, calling for a variety of needs to be

4Ibid.


6Gary L. McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth: Building Team Ministry in the 21 Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 86.
addressed: “We now live in an age of specialization . . . one major change, at the heart of
church leadership in the latter half of the twentieth century, was the emergence of the
multiple staff . . . added to develop the membership and maintain the flock.”  

Connecting to a Postmodern Culture
through Shared Leadership

Postmodernism also demands the church creatively, actively, and
collaboratively engage the culture today. Although the message never changes—for the
cross is the same yesterday, today and forever—the way the church engages the culture
must change, and it will need to be led by more than one leader. The “New World
Church,” according to Leonard Sweet, has a new “ecclesiastical ecosystem” that changes
how it functions and the meaning of the body of Christ. The “Old World Church” refuses
to change its culture, desiring that the world stops so that it can do church. Nevertheless,
the New World Church embraces the realities and seeks to connect to the culture in light
of the cross:

The New World Church wants to live not a separated lifestyle from the world, but a
sanctified lifestyle in the world. It is reverent about the message and agnostic about
the medium. Its models of success have shifted from bigness to speed, which can
become as idolic as bigness was to the Old World Church. The New World Church
centralizes complexity and decentralizes simplicity.

This “New World Church” also recognizes it will take more than one leader to connect
the church to its community, imparting Truth that will penetrate the darkness around it.

Much is at stake as the church today seeks to reach people for Christ in hopes
of developing healthy followers of Christ around the world. With the eternal factor of

7Ibid., 87.

8“Leonard Sweet is a scholar of US American culture . . . who communicates
the gospel by bridging worlds of faith, academe and popular culture.” Leonard Sweet,

9Leonard Sweet, Post-Modern Pilgrims: First-Century Passion for the 21st
Century Church (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), xviii.

10Ibid., 141-42.
souls either being reached and offered eternal life or not, churches are recognizing and utilizing shared leadership to reach the masses for Christ starting where they are—in their own communities and then reaching out through collaborative efforts. What is working the best among those sharing leadership, and how?

**Shared Leadership Defined and Explored**

Shared leadership is often defined within the context of team effort when teams function as a unit to accomplish the work of the ministry. For example, Strauch defines shared leadership as a team effort of pastoral oversight—not the sole responsibility of one person. He even credits the shared leadership model with providing stable, long-term, pastoral care for the people of God, as well as the spiritual development of his Christian character, leadership abilities, and teaching ministry. Cladis offers a similar definition of shared leadership in *Leading the Team-Based Church*. He defines shared leadership as team ministry, emphasizing Paul’s description of the body of Christ operating like the human body:

> Diverse, with many different kinds of parts that yet function interdependently. . . . Paul radically reinterprets the analogy (of slave) to mean that the body of Christ has no part more important than another part . . . the good team leader learns to discern the various gifts of the team. She works to make these strengths shine as she also works to render team members’ weaknesses irrelevant.

Teams are made up of people with diverse skills and temperament whose contributions are a synergistic collaboration, “producing a net effect that far outweighs the sum of the work of individuals. . . . We have exchanged Paul’s notion of the church as the body of

---


12 Ibid., 35.

13 George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 92.
Christ for a clergy-centered parish model of ministry that usurped the role of the laity.”  

Henkelmann and Carter identify shared leadership as team ministry that exists for the church’s mission. They support using professional and lay leadership to help the church: “The mission calls for human and financial resources to be effectively organized to provide word and deed Gospel-sharing and ongoing discipleship.” People are confused, families are breaking down, and people are living purposeless and empty lives. The stakes are high, and God’s people can meet the challenges effectively through team ministry. This reference of team ministry stresses cooperation instead of competition, snuffing out selfishness, pride, and isolation. Relationships—closeness and intimacy—become priority. The desire is to let God build the team ministry relationship “so that we can model a Christ-centered, Spirit-led, person-oriented ministry to the church and world.”

Iverson emphasizes eldership within a team ministry when highlighting the shared leadership model. A group of elders acts jointly within team ministry where each has subordinated his individual interests and opinions to the unity and efficiency of the group. As peers, according to their ordained roles, all watched over the flock—not simply one pastor, as is common today. The presbytery in a church was a group of spiritual elders who had oversight in the house of God. In this context, team ministry is shared leadership. Authority and responsibilities do not simply rest on the shoulders of one but are distributed among a team: “When team ministry is developed and perfected in the local church administration, almost any growth goal is attainable. The sky is the limit.”

14 Ibid., 91.
15 Ervin F. Henkelmann and Stephan J. Carter, How To Develop a Team Ministry and Make it Work (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), 11.
16 Ibid., 12.
17 Ibid., 32-33.
Michael Kocolowski explores the process of shared leadership and whether or not more organizations should adopt it. He explains while research indicates the challenges of shared leadership, “overall, the benefits of shared leadership often outweigh the limitations. Organizations of all types should take notice and consider implementing a shared leadership approach.” The phenomenon of shared leadership practice entails multiple individuals instead of someone at the top or by those with formal leadership titles and roles. The research shows shared leadership to be a “relational, collaborative leadership process or phenomenon involving teams or groups that mutually influence one another and collectively share duties and responsibilities otherwise relegated to a single, central leader.”

### Shared Leadership Environment

Kocolowski’s research also confirms the many dimensions, components, and factors that affect shared leadership. He cites the work of various authors writing on shared leadership. For example, Carson communicates shared leadership through a team environment with shared purpose (similar understanding of team’s objectives and focused collective goals), social support (team members’ efforts to provide emotional and psychological support of one another), and voice (participation and input). Carson examined the antecedent conditions leading to shared leadership development and influence upon the practice, and in addition to purpose, support, and voice, external

---


20 Ibid., 24.
coaching was an important predictor of shared leadership emergence.\(^{21}\)

Michael Shane Wood describes traits exhibited by teams that practice shared leadership. First, team members intentionally influence one another through an aggregate behavior approach. The goal is for unresponsive members to adjust to the desired behavior or leave the team. Next, team members engaged in sharing leadership practice an enhanced sense of autonomy to address issues that directly affect their specific role within the team. Rather than relying on a supervisor’s insight, team members who share leadership personally address issues that affect their work, balancing personal autonomy with collaboration among members.\(^{22}\) Third, members on a team sharing leadership participate in the decision-making process. A fourth characteristic of teams practicing shared leadership is accountability.\(^{23}\)

In describing shared leadership, C. Gene Wilkes relays the story of the 13-year-old eighth-grader who stood before thousands to sing the national anthem before the Dallas Mavericks and Portland Blazers in the NBA’s 2003 postseason playoffs. Natalie knew the song, as she sang it several times in sold-out arenas and even on national television. Nevertheless, this particular day, standing before over 20,000 people at the Rose Garden arena, she suddenly forgot the words. Then Maurice Cheeks, the Blazers’ coach, stepped beside her and began to sing. Natalie and then the crowd of people joined in—everyone finishing the song together. Wilkes credits shared leadership with saving the day that afternoon in the Portland Rose Garden Arena: “The only way this save will happen is if the servant leader is surrounded by other servant leaders who share the same


\(^{23}\)Ibid.
vision and are willing to step up in a moment of crisis.” 24 Jesus modeled shared leadership with a servant heart. “While He never faltered under pressure, he demonstrated the power of shared leadership to complete the mission. Those who follow Him will lead this way.” 25

Robbins and Finley also use the team motif in describing shared leadership. Team is easily defined as people doing something together: “The something that a team does isn’t what makes it a team; the together part is.” 26 People who gather together and collaborate to accomplish jointly agreed upon outcomes are teams sharing leadership. 27 Authors use various analogies and terminologies for shared leadership practice. The list includes a group sharing leadership in “an organization rowing in the same direction;” 28 blend of cooperative spirit with a strong competitive, effective collaboration; 29 depiction of God as perichoretic 30 Trinity, illustrating a model for team ministry, 31 or cross-disciplinary collaboration, flattened hierarchies, and continuous innovation that “blends relating to people, listening to other point of view, coordinating actions, and making


25 Ibid., 103.


27 Ibid., 25.


30 Perichoretic refers to the image of the Trinity where the three persons of God are in constant movement in a circle, implying intimacy, equality, unity yet distinction, and love. Cladis, Leading the Team-Based Church, 4.

31 Ibid., 6.
shared decision . . . developing both affective (feeling) and cognitive (thinking) skills.”

Distributed leadership is another name commonly used to communicate the principles of shared leadership, which sees all members and staff as “experts in their own right—as uniquely important sources of knowledge, experience, and wisdom.”

Distributed leadership can also be traced back to the Bible. Jethro noticed that Moses was trying to do all the work alone and informed Moses that he would become exhausted. Furthermore, the people would become worn out waiting on him to assist them with their case (Exod 18:13-23). Thus, Jethro proposed that Moses continue teaching people the law and how to live before God (Exod 18:16), but Moses would appoint spiritually and morally qualified leaders as judges (Exod 18:20-21). The leaders Moses was to select were to be wise, respected, and leading men in their tribes (Deut 1:13, 15).

The source of knowledge that ensues from distributed leadership is often referred to as collective efficacy (or performance competence), which is “likely to be more powerful when several team members are pursuing it rather than a single individual.” Jesus’ ministry, as well as His followers, explicitly supported collective efficacy. In addition to the establishment of elders (i.e. Acts 20:28), the Bible is clear regarding Christians serving together and being most effective when they are not alone. For example, disciples were sent out in pairs of two (Luke 10). Paul always traveled with

---


a companion, and Acts 15 supports the collective governing of the Jerusalem church by James, Peter, and John. The mission to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) provided purpose for Jesus. Yet the heart of His desire was to glorify the Father (John 12:27-30). While organizational managers and church leaders recognize the value of shared leadership as an effective tool for managing and addressing a rapidly changing culture, the church should be at the forefront of this cultural shift as it seeks to engage a lost world in hopes of winning people to Christ by carrying out the Great Commission with the heart of Jesus Christ to glorify the Father as well.

Glen William Espy aptly writes, “The church should be a place where wounds are healed and relationships are developed and strengthened.”36 There are no “solo saints” according to Romans 12: “Paul directs believers to consider themselves part of a community. . . all work for a team . . . No individual has the skills or ability to do every job. The purpose of a team is to make strengths productive and weaknesses irrelevant.”37 If a team, group, collective body, or other term so used embodies the heart of such shared leadership, then the ministry is among those that illustrate the best practices.

Pearce and Conger, in Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership, further examine the best shared leadership practices, defining shared leadership as a “dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both.”38 Traditionally, leadership has been centered on a single leader and the relationship of that individual to followers. This relationship has been from a vertical, informal, or unstructured model.

36Glen William Espy, “Perceptions of the Relational Factors Necessary for Building Effective Team Ministry in the Local Church” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), 20.

37Ibid.

top-down perspective. Thus, the leadership field has concentrated on the behaviors, mind-sets, and actions of the lone leader for decades. Nevertheless, this is changing, as some scholars are “arguing that leadership is an activity that can be shared or distributed among members of a group of organization.”

Furthermore, Pearce and Conger use the term “shared leadership to describe the condition in which teams collectively exert influence.” They share power and decision-making authority. “As such, shared leadership is a collaborative, emergent process of group interaction in which members engage in peer leadership while working together.” At the least, shared leadership should allow team members the authority to “chart the team’s forward path”:

As such, shared leadership is consistent with familiar tenets of team empowerment such as power sharing and selective devolution of decision-making authority from management to employees. Team empowerment places authority in the hands of the frontline employees who best understand the work. Frontline empowerment also has the potential to enhance mutual adjustment, communication, coordination, and accountability among peers.

Moreover, Pearce and Conger hold that a sequence of conditions must be in place for shared leadership to emerge over time. First, “constructive lateral influence” among team members is a non-negotiable expectation. Second, each member must “accept responsibility for providing and responding appropriately to constructive leadership from their peers. Third, the team members must develop skills as effective leaders and followers.”

---

39 Ibid., 1-2.
40 Ibid., 2.
41 Ibid., 52.
42 Ibid., 53.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
Bernard M. Bass denotes a team as one that practices shared leadership by sharing common goals and tasks: “Team members have more specialized and differentiated roles, although they are likely to play a single primary role.” Moreover, teamwork often requires “monitoring performance of self and other members, self-correcting error, providing task and motivation reinforcement, adapting to unpredictable occurrences, closing communication loops, and predicting other team members’ behavior.”

Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber note more evidence for shared or collective leadership in organizations as hierarchical models are removed and replaced by team-based structures practicing the shared leadership model. Instead of an individual leading the team, the focus is on a person engaging multiple members of the team through “shared leadership,” “distributed leadership,” and “collective leadership” interchangeably, “paralleling their usage in the leadership literature.”

Collaborative leadership, eldership, plurality of leaders, ministry teams, lateral leadership, non-autocratic leadership, multiple staff ministry, and even groups are terms frequently used in referring to shared leadership practice if they embody and express shared leadership principles. The goal is that deindividuation occurs as “members lose their identity as individuals and merge themselves into the group.” Whenever any of these terms are used in this research, shared leadership is implied. Shared leadership is


46 Ibid.


48 Deindividuation refers to intentionally moving from individual centeredness to inclusivity of others, merging into a group.

not only a more efficient way to lead but has theological support that encourages and exemplifies shared leadership. Christian leaders move toward a horizontal relationship in fulfilling the Christian roles as displayed in the Bible. Shared leadership has theological roots and is a biblical practice.

**Theological Perspective for Shared Leadership Practice**

The value and necessity of deindividuation or not solely using the leadership of one individual can certainly be understood in viewing how Christians are to live and relate to one another as they carry out the mission in partnership with God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although shared leadership is not commanded in the Bible, it is modeled throughout the Old and New Testaments. Moses’s father-in-law, Jethro, shared words of wisdom in Exodus 18, which recued Moses from ministry burnout by directing Moses to form a team to minister to the Israelites. 50 Even Jesus effectively ministered through a team—twelve disciples (Mark 3:13-19; 6:7) and later sent the seventy-two out to minister two-by-two (Luke 10:1-12). Shared leadership was an instrumental and necessary component of a God-centered community to impact the world.

The impact of the best shared leadership, at its core, is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God’s very nature illustrates the importance of shared leadership. God is one, yet three distinct persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully God and each equally God. Each fully possesses one undivided divine nature. Yet each Person of the Godhead has a different role and relationship with respect to the others:

To understand how these roles are expressed, consider some of the works that God accomplishes. Often we think of these as the works of “God,” and rightly they are. Yet these are the works of the triune God, with the Father, Son, and Spirit each

---

50 Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 211-12.
contributing to the whole of the work and together accomplishing all that God brings to pass.\textsuperscript{51}

A working theology directs the organizational, communal practices and behavioral norms, intentionally or not. Thus, one’s understanding of the Trinity will re-conceptualize his practice of leadership in the twenty-first century. Zscheile illustrates how the Trinitarian concept guides leaders to understand their leadership style and “look to the Triune God’s own active leading in our midst through the Holy Spirit to remake our community in its own image.”\textsuperscript{52}

The Triune God is always inviting and seeking others to be reconciled to Him, which is the ultimate destiny of the church, the cosmos and most definitely Christian leadership. Through this type of leadership, the church serves as a witness, a sign, and as a foretaste of God’s reconciliatory, Trinitarian nature. Moreover, it is the genuine mutuality of the three in one that calls one to embrace the full humanity and giftedness of others around us as God-given and vital not only for the world’s well-being and growth, but for ours too. In a Trinitarian perspective, otherness is not to be erased, diminished, or overwhelmed, but rather treasured and enhanced within the pattern of a larger unity and purpose.\textsuperscript{53}

As the \textit{imago Dei}, Christians are not only created in the image of God but should expect and allow the life and character of God to shine inside the church and outside.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, as it is the nature of the Trinity to collaborate together in serving so that all who will come might be saved, shared leadership becomes pivotal when expressing power and authority with the cross center stage. “This eschatological and missional backdrop is critical for


\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 53

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 44.
understanding the nature of Christian leadership within the life of the church and God’s larger purposes” as one considers the best shared leadership practice in a ministry context.

As Christian leaders move within a Trinitarian perception of leadership, they “understand their own particularity and that of others as unique gifts from God intended to be shared in a mutual life... for diversity that transcends mere pluralistic tolerance.” The other centeredness guides and recognizes the Trinity as instrumental in reaching “today’s multi-cultural, multiperspectival world.” Shared leadership, as it stems from a Trinitarian perspective of unity, authority, and yet distinct roles, leads one to the Bible as its foundation.

**Jesus’ Leadership Style as Model for Shared Leadership Practice**

Shared leadership is not “a new concept to a Bible-reading Christian. Shared leadership is rooted in the Old Testament institution of the elders of Israel and in Jesus’ founding of the apostolate.” Strauch expands New Testament plurality, noting the twelve comprised the first leadership council of the church and jointly led, taught, and encouraged the first Christian community: “The Twelve provide a marvelous example of unity, humble brotherly love, and shared leadership structure.” It is a significant point that Jesus did not appoint one person to lead His church. Jesus’ ministry and leadership further guide Christians into a biblical understanding and expression of collaborative or shared leadership practice. Fernando’s *Jesus Driven Ministry* provides substantial leadership principles pointing to a Trinitarian view for His followers to imitate

---

55 Ibid., 52-53.
56 Ibid., 53.
57 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
collaboratively. His identification and incarnational ministry have direct implications for Christian ministerial leadership. This spirit-led mindset positions the leader to release the hierarchical, autocratic leadership style with Christ’s self-emptying as the example and empowerment:

Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:6-8)

As Jesus’ disciples, Christians are left, instructed and empowered to carry out his mission of reaching sinful humanity, for “the whole life of Christ was a paradox propelled by the need to redeem sinful humanity.” Fernando reminds that He took on burdens that He chose to bear and gave up things to which He was entitled. Likewise, the disciples are to be on mission with and for Him, exemplifying this same type of leadership and purpose at heart—to point sinful humanity to God. As Christians are enabled by the Spirit, “this practice of incarnation and identification” while serving people occurs. Fernando highlights Paul as a slave of Christ, who says that he was free yet made himself a servant to all in order to win more (1 Cor 9:19). In verse 22, Paul illustrates the sacrifice of this by not being “like” a weak person but “becoming” weak and becoming “all things to all people by all means that I might save some.” Of course Christians cannot become the doulos of Christ (slave of Christ) apart from Him. As Jesus was totally devoted to His Father, becoming a slave of Christ, Christians are to follow His example. There is a price to pay, and the lifestyle of a Christian leader is more effective if lived from this
identity in Christ. This emptying is heart work and creates the environment necessary in
the believer for unity to be expressed in and through shared ministry practice at its best.

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ continues to work through His followers
called the Body of Christ (Rom 12:5; Heb 13:3; 1 Cor 12:27). The church or the Body of
Christ are the same (Eph 5:23 and Col 1:24). Through His physical body, Jesus
demonstrated obedience and love for God that was an example for those He redeemed
through His sacrificial death on the cross (1 Cor 5:7-8). Thus, the Body, those truly
saved, carry on His work in the world. This demonstration is best exemplified in
following Jesus’ example of leadership, which embodies shared leadership principles. This
leadership style “depends on a proper understanding of what it means to be the Body of
Christ.”65 The word kephale occurs twelve times in the Epistles and most commonly
designates Jesus as the Head of the church. The other instances connect the relationships
between husbands and wives. Thus, “a serious commitment to the servant-steward-
sharing model of New Testament leadership rejects authoritarian and autocratic roles for
those who propose to lead God’s people.”66 Gangel argues to emphasize a pastoral role
as a single-leader of a church rather than a shared ministry (a rather common concept in
some of the late twentieth century methods) reduces the biblical emphasis of shared
leadership.67 Several leadership principles are taken from Jesus’ leadership characteristics:
(1) Leadership is servanthood. Whereas the world teaches to do everything to climb to
the top, the Bible teaches that to lead is to serve. (2) Leadership is stewardship. The
Christian has absolute responsibility for knowing the Master’s will and to carry out tasks
in light of the master’s return. (3) Leadership is shared power. Instead of joining the

65 Kenneth O. Gangel, Team Leadership in Christian Ministry: Using Multiple
Gifts to Build A Unified Vision (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 32.

66 Ibid., 60-61.

67 Ibid., 56.
secular view of grasping, retaining and using power, Philippians 2:4 steers the heart and delivers from this understanding of leadership.68

Leadership development should emphasize a decentralized institutional philosophy and “push decision making and authority as far down the ranks as possible.”69 Jesus empowered ordinary, sinful people to share leadership as they followed Him in ministry for, and with, God.

Gangel also offers the meaning of diakonia to support non-autocratic leadership. Diakonia commonly means ministry or service and appears thirty-seven times in the verb form and thirty-four times as a noun in the New Testament. From Matthew to Revelation, diversity ranges but it most frequently means to serve or care for others. Although viewpoints differ regarding the meaning, “it seems clear that the concept of diakonia emphasizes again the servant leadership concept which Jesus initiated in the Gospels.”70 Leading like Jesus describes a leadership that is gentle and humble (Matt 11:25-30) and one that directly opposes autocracy. This teaching of leading by serving denotes the idea of sharing leadership: “[Jesus’] work with the disciples provides a pattern of group leadership worthy of the most diligent study.”71 The work of a growing church necessitated collaboration, as well as obedience in following the example Jesus provided.72

68Ibid., 58-59.
69Ibid., 59.
70Ibid., 57.
71Ibid.
Select Biblical Characters Model
Jesus’ Leadership Style

The disciples continued this particular pattern of shared leadership in the book of Acts. This pattern of plurality was “continued with the establishment of the Christian eldership.”³³ Merkle explains the first use of Christian elders—Acts 11:30. Later in Acts 15, the elders and the apostles are mentioned in the context of the Jerusalem Council: “Similar to the apostles, the elders formed a collective body of leadership.”³⁴ There are no examples in the New Testament of a pastor or an elder leading a congregation as the sole or primary leader. There was a plurality of elders:

Antioch of Pisidia, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe (Acts 14:23), Ephesus (Acts 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17); Philippi (Phil. 1:1); the cities of Crete (Titus 1:5), the churches in the dispersion to which James wrote (James 5:14); the churches in the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Peter 5:1) and possibly the church(es) to which Hebrews was written (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).³⁵

Gangel considers James’ leadership as moderator of the Jerusalem church as well. Jesus’ half-brother, James, modeled servant leadership as he moderated the “public assembly with a broad view to the greatest possible benefit of the body of Christ; he allowed all viewpoints to be appropriately aired, summarizing the consensus of the assembly, and preserving the unity of the saints.”³⁶ In order to move toward the best practice of shared leadership in a ministry context, the leader must have a servant leadership heart as exemplified by James.

Gangel also notes Barnabas’ ministry, highlighting his rise from a layman’s role in Jerusalem to a leader of the New Testament’s second church at Antioch: “He affords a brilliant example of unthreatened, secure leadership, willing to thrust others

³³Benjamin L. Merkle, 40 Questions about Elders and Deacons (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 161.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 164.

³⁶Gangel, Team Leadership in Christian Ministry, 57.
(Saul of Tarsus) toward the greatest potential of their gifts, never defending his own turf or holding on to position for personal prestige.”

Paul’s leadership also modeled shared ministry as he mentored, encouraged, exhorted, and trained others. On Paul’s first missionary journey, he and Barnabas appointed elders in every church according to Acts 14:23. Chance writes, “Elders first appeared within the leadership structure of the early church in Jerusalem (11:30). The appointment of such leaders in ‘each church’ that Paul and Barnabas had established shows continuity with the mother church of Jerusalem.” At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul summoned the elders of the church in Ephesus to him (Acts 20:17). These elders were instructed to shepherd God’s church (Acts 20:28).

Gangel uses Timothy as an example of one who followed Paul’s leadership style, providing “a brilliant example of how leadership is learned behavior.” Furthermore, Gangel affirms how a plurality of leaders strengthen and unify the body of any given congregation. On the local church level, shared pastoral leadership was a consistent pattern in the New Testament. Therefore, plurality of leadership is a biblical practice that exemplifies shared leadership at its best. In addition to leadership characteristics, in order for shared leadership to be practiced at its best, a certain climate is necessary.

---

77 Ibid., 57-58.
79 Merkle, 40 Questions about Elders and Deacons, 162.
81 Ibid., 62.
82 Merkle, 40 Questions About Elders and Deacons, 37.
Dysfunction of Shared Leadership in Ministry

The question, “Why do teams not work?” must be considered when exploring models of best shared leadership practice. Those who practice shared leadership must have a general understanding of what creates the dysfunctions of teams in order to be successful in achieving their mission. Reeder writes, “If a leadership team is unable to achieve the mission, then either the mission is wrong and needs to be reconsidered or the right team is not in place and needs to be re-formed.”83 He suggests adjusting the team mission if necessary too. Then “prayerful patience will be needed as the mission is reexamined. It is always appropriate to examine the mission or the leadership team to be certain that everything is biblical, God-centered, and strategically appropriate.”84

Furthermore, Reeder suggests examining oneself if he is the principal leader:

If you’re the principal leader, you should first prayerfully examine yourself before the Lord. Have you contributed to the lack of success? If so, you should assume responsibility, make changes, or even resign. If the problem is the composition of the team, does a personnel change need to be made?85

Patrick Lencioni develops a leadership fable that exposes the five dysfunctions of teams, illustrating why some do not work and even fail. The first dysfunction is an absence of trust among team members who are in essence unwilling to be vulnerable within the group86: “Team members who are not genuinely open with one another about their mistakes and weaknesses make it impossible to build a foundation for trust.”87

Fear of conflict is the second dysfunction, which is set up by failure to build

84Ibid.
85Ibid., 164.
86Lencioni, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, 188.
87Ibid.
trust. The team members are plagued with “veiled discussions and guarded comments.”

The dysfunctions build on each other. Thus, “a lack of healthy conflict is a problem because it ensures the third dysfunction of a team: lack of commitment.” Without open and robust debate, “team members will rarely, if ever, buy in and commit to decisions, though they may feign agreement during meetings.”

The fourth dysfunction, avoidance of accountability, is ushered in by the lack of real commitment. The final dysfunction is inattention to results, which “occurs when team members put their individual needs (such as ego, career development, or recognition) or even the needs of their divisions above the collective goals of the team.” This dysfunctional chain reaction causes teams to deteriorate “even if a single dysfunction is allowed to flourish.”

**Best Climate for Shared Leadership Practice**

According to Bradford and Cohen, for shared responsibility in leadership to work, three main elements beyond the new mind set need to be implemented: (1) A **setting in which shared responsibility can occur.** To make critical managerial and strategic decisions together, the leader and members need to develop a strong, cohesive team where those issues can be raised, debated, and jointly resolved. (2) **Basic agreement about the purpose and direction of the unit.** This requires developing commitment to a tangible vision of what the unit does that makes it special and significant. If members buy in to the vision, they will pull together when sharing in overall decision-making. (3)

---

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., 188-89.
90 Ibid., 189.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.

36
A dramatic increase in the extent to which team members influence each other and the leader, and are influenced to return. Thus relationships between individuals must be based on mutual influence rather than dominance or avoidance. This makes it easier for the leader to share responsibility.\textsuperscript{93}

Although shared leadership does not eliminate the leader’s role, the leader is no longer expected to nor should carry the entire weight of leadership. This distinguishes between the traditional mindset of the heroic (or lone) leader and the “post-heroic leadership” where everyone is responsible. Thus, the leader and members have a tangible vision, share responsibility, and mutual influence, overturning the heroic leadership mindset.\textsuperscript{94} Bradford and Cohen write,

The shared responsibility mind-set turns the historic tension that exists between ambitious, competent team members and their leaders on its head; it harnesses their ambitions and competencies to larger organizational goals in partnership with others. Leaders can divert their energy from control and mastery to developing and engaging the talents of team members around important problems.\textsuperscript{95}

This new system of leadership works together, reinforcing each other, creating a system of shared leadership:

Share responsibility for managing and making most important decisions builds the commitment that enables high performance; tangible vision pulls team members together; and mutual influence skills make it possible to get the best from everyone. All there are needed to create a system of shared responsibility leadership and to prevent backsliding.\textsuperscript{96}

When collaboration and teamwork overcome the barriers and problems of shared leadership, then shared leadership outweighs the cost. People must make the effort to first


\textsuperscript{94}Ibid., 16-17.

\textsuperscript{95}Ibid., 49.

\textsuperscript{96}Ibid., 125.
be a sharing team in order to work effectively as a team. Mutual accountability is key.  

Pat MacMillan, in *The Performance Factor: Unlocking the Secrets of Teamwork*, distinguishes between teams and high performance teams who practice shared leadership. He credits synergy as the primary difference between these teams. Cooperation is also a distinguishing factor, and “the level of cooperation drives the level of the results. It’s important not to see cooperation as an on-off concept, but a matter of degree.” On one end of the continuum, no to low cooperation is experienced. On the opposite end, high levels of cooperation are experienced—as are results. Then, “at some point in our efforts, we begin to see signs of synergy.” Yet, the choice of cooperation and enlisting others seldom is the first choice. Echoing the words of Jethro to Moses, “You cannot do it alone” (Exod 18:13-27). MacMillan writes, 

> God did not create people to be self-sufficient and to move through life alone. He didn’t intend his work to be done by gunslingers, who ride alone into the sunset, but rather by posses. Creation itself was not complete until there was a community. However, as all of us have discovered, the presence of community is not a guarantee of cooperation.

People have to make a concerted choice and effort to operate as a team sharing leadership. Thus MacMillan lists six characteristics of teams successfully sharing leadership and discusses them at length (see figure 1). “If one of these [characteristics] is missing or inadequate, the team is, at best, limping. If two or three are lacking, this group is probably not a team at all.”

---

97 Ibid., 5.
99 Ibid., 27.
100 Ibid., 29.
101 Ibid., 36.
Figure 1. The characteristics of a high performance team

According to Pearce and Conger, shared leadership is “fully expressed only when team members are prepared to function as savvy agents and targets of lateral influence.”

Kevin Lynn Roberts shares insight regarding shared leadership practice characteristics. First, he sets the shared leadership team stage by stating that if time is going to be invested in improving team ministry, one must understand and believe that team ministry is actually beneficial. Furthermore, he provides an environment that is most conducive for shared ministry:

102 Pearce and Conger, Shared Leadership, 53.
Being part of an effective team ministry does not mean a lack of accountability or progress toward individual goals. Successful teamwork includes clear and challenging personal goals and encouragement toward reaching them. Supervisors are not intimidators, but positive motivators and encouragers, giving team members input into personal and team goals. This emphasis provides a healthy work environment motivating team members to do their best rather than simply doing enough to get by. 103

Sujin Han also discusses shared leadership characteristics in her dissertation entitled “An Analysis: The Impact of and the Relationship between Team Ministry and Members’ Spirituality”:

Ideally, the pastoral staff and leadership should be an example for the congregation to show how diverse individuals working together in a team-spirit can create unity though acceptance, love, forgiveness, support, encouragement, and true accomplishment of common goals. 104

John Esau wrote on leadership development for the Mennonite Church. His thoughts on multiple staff give insight into how the Body of Christ can serve in unity:

A healthy approach to ministry is based on the assumption that all members of the body of Christ are called and gifted to serve and minister; some in pastoral roles, others in areas of program leadership. Hence, it is strategic to empower members to serve as they are gifted. It should then be normative to form multiple staff teams. 105

Esau also provides a look at shared leadership climate when it works well:

1. Immediate collegiality and built-in support relationships—you are not alone; 2. Shared responsibility with specialized areas allowing you to concentrate on your strengths; 3. Opportunity to mentor and train persons new to ministry; 4. Opportunity to learn in an experience-based setting; 5. Potential to offer more diversity of experience to the congregation through a more diverse program that is enriched by heightened levels of specialization and competence; 6. Appropriate time off with back up persons to cover for special needs. 106

---

103 Kevin Lynn Roberts, “Leading the Staff of Cadiz Baptist Church, Cadiz, Kentucky, into a More Effective Team-Based Ministry” (D.Min. project, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 43.


106 Ibid.
Wellins, Byham, and Wilson identify six key factors in team development when shared leadership is practiced at its best:

1. Commitment—team members see themselves as belonging to a team rather than as individuals who operate autonomously. They are committed to group goals above and beyond their personal goals.

2. Trust—team members exercise faith in each other to honor their commitments, maintain confidences, support each other, and generally behave in a consistent and predictably acceptable fashion.

3. Purpose—the team understands how it fits into the overall business of the organization. Team members know their roles, feel a sense of ownership, and can see how they make a difference.

4. Communication—refers to the style and extent of interactions both among members and between members and those outside the team. It also refers to the way that members handle conflict, decision making, and day-to-day interactions.

5. Involvement—everyone has a role in the team. Despite differences, team members must feel a sense of partnership with each other. Contributions are respected and solicited, and a real consensus is established before committing the team to action.

6. Process Orientation—once a team has a clear purpose (why it’s together and where it is going), it must have a process or means to get there. The process should include problem-solving tools, planning techniques, regular meetings, meeting agendas and minutes, and accepted ways of dealing with problems.  

The best practice of shared leadership, using Lencioni’s model, entails a healthy, productive team who “(1) Trusts one another. (2) Engages in unfiltered conflict around ideas. (3) Commits to decisions and plans of action. (4) Holds one another accountable for delivering on those plans. (5) Focuses on the achievement of collective results.”

Bass describes the best practice of shared leadership in a team as one that has a “drive, cohesion, collective efficacy, potency, selection, alignment, and attainment of goals” for greater accomplishments. He states that disinhibition of deindividuation “is reflected in less compliance with outside authority and more conforming to the demands of the task.”

---


108 Ibid.

of the group or team. Responses are more immediate, and there is less self-awareness and premeditation. The collective mission is stressed over the individual’s needs.”

These ground rules for the best shared leadership practice can be invaluable for the Body of Christ, as she seeks to be the “New World Church” of the twenty-first century.

**Leadership Dynamics of Teams**

**Sharing Leadership**

Leadership characteristics are also crucial factors when considering the best climate for shared leadership. Reeder emphasizes the importance of team, focusing on the characteristics of the leaders who make up the team.\(^{111}\) He shares six team dynamics or characteristics in *The Leadership Dynamic: A Biblical Model for Raising Effective Leaders*:

An authentic calling, consistent character, informative content, demonstrated competency, true commitment, and productive chemistry are powerful team dynamics when applied as gifts of God’s grace from Christ through the Holy Spirit. But to apply them requires prayer and the insights of wise counselors.\(^{112}\)

**Conclusion**

Despite varied dysfunctional teams, churches and Christian organizations are practicing shared leadership more today than ever before successfully. This practice looks different and the success varies accordingly. The terminology used to describe how the leaders and oftentimes volunteers (lay leaders) work together to accomplish the mission may vary. Moreover, leaders are allowing the Holy Spirit to develop the necessary leadership characteristics so that leaders have the proper attitude for practicing shared leadership at its best—collectively using gifts and resources of the body.

\(^{110}\)Ibid.

\(^{111}\)Reeder and Gragg, *The Leadership Dynamic*, 159.

\(^{112}\)Ibid., 163.
Change is rapid, and the window of opportunity for the church to impact its world significantly seems to be closing ever so slightly as various world leaders are selected and elected. Yet, the mandate of the Great Commission has not changed. Nor is it any less urgent today—more so in the scheme of the “times.” Christians still are called to serve God through reaching others in hopes of changing lives for eternity. The church can only reach the masses as it works together as a team sharing leadership. What does this type of team look like? According to the literature review, the following characteristics were discovered:

1. A biblical understanding of and motivation for shared leadership in a ministry context is foundational.
2. Leadership shares power and decision-making authority.
3. A particular environment is established for shared leadership to thrive: (1) shared purpose—team members have similar understanding of objectives and focused collective goals, (2) relational or social support within leadership—team members try to provide emotional and psychological support for one another, (3) participation and input within leadership—members have a voice in the sharing of leadership (4) accountability is practiced within the leadership team, (5) Trust is exercised within the leadership team, (6) team members have adjusted to the desired behavior for shared leadership to be successful, and (7) Communication is open and intentional among those practicing shared leadership.  
4. There is a balance of personal autonomy and collaboration among members.
5. Leadership style is more servant-driven, which is what Jesus modeled.
6. Spiritual maturity is evident.
7. Spiritual giftedness is recognized and utilized in a synergistic collaborative manner.

The gap in the literature is in discovering models to confirm whether or not these characteristics are among the best shared leadership practice. This multiple case study researched churches implementing the best shared leadership practice.

\[113\] In order to code and distinguish how many aspects of the “environment” were actually occurring, the characteristics compiled from the literature review are listed as 13 individual categories in the findings because “environment” was comprised of seven, individual characteristics in the actual research.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In 2013, the *Christian Post* reported that baptisms among Southern Baptists had declined in six of the last eight years, listing 2012 as the lowest since 1948.\(^1\) While Southern Baptists were still the nation’s largest Protestant denomination, the report showed “a decline of 5.5 percent.”\(^2\) Moreover, the number of ‘nones’ is on the rise. The nones are those who do not identify with any religion. According to the Pew Research Center, this number of Americans continues to rapidly increase. Remarkably, one third of adults under 30, one-fifth of the US public, “are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.”\(^3\) In the last five years, the unaffiliated increased from just over 15 percent to under 20 percent of all U.S. adults. More than 13 million self-described atheists and agnostics (nearly 6 percent of the US public), as well as nearly 33 million people say they have no particular religious affiliation (14 percent).\(^4\)

These statistics are sobering and Christians across denominations must live and serve with greater understanding of God’s Word if people are to be engaged and reached.

---


\(^2\)Ibid.  


\(^4\)Ibid.
for Christ. Although Christians are to do more than add members to the church, numbers are important if the lost are to be engaged and members are to be cared for as Christ desires. The collective body of Christ with its gifts, resources, and talents is needed to effectively minister in today’s culture.

In today’s culture Christianity is being widely and rapidly disowned. Evangelism, for example, is considered intolerant or even classified as a hate crime, and “we find the stakes are changed.”5 On one side, the culture to which one would conform in order to be relevant is so highly opposed to the gospel “that to conform to it must result in a loss of the gospel itself.”6 On the other side “it is more difficult for nominal Christianity to thrive.”7 Shared leadership is a vehicle that prepares and moves the collective body to do life together while establishing it as the light of the world.

A shared leadership model increases the possibility of providing greater personalized care, such as shepherding or pastoring believers in the church, as well as encouraging effective evangelism outside the church.8 For example, one model of shared leadership, the plurality of elders, is “plainly and amply set forth by the New Testament writers.”9 J. A. Motyer, former principal of Trinity College in Bristol, England, captured the heart of church leadership in the New Testament when he penned, “It is not as much as hinted in the New Testament that the church would ever need—or indeed should ever want or tolerate—any other local leadership than that of the eldership group.”10

6Ibid.
7Ibid.
10J. A. Motyer, *The Message of James*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers
leadership, whether termed plurality of leaders, eldership, etc., positions leaders in the local church to operate as biblically designed, dispersing ministry, gifts and resources among two or more within the church.

Shared leadership utilizes various gifts and resources within the body of Christ, which allows one to “rehear the Bible and reimagine the concept of successful ministry not as necessarily immediately fruitful but as demonstrably faithful to God’s Word.”

Thus, the purpose of this study is to study Christian churches employing the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context in hopes that patterns will emerge. This chapter outlines the procedures and methods employed: population delimitations, case studies selected, and identifies the study’s instrumentation.

The Research Question

Joseph Hellerman maintains the local church should be led by a plurality of leaders “who relate to one another first as siblings in Christ, and who function only secondarily—and only within the parameters of that primary relational context—as vision casting, decision-making leaders for the broader church family.” Yet, one can still walk in many churches today and locate the senior pastor’s picture on the wall, dating back several years. While the “New Testament reveals that the pastoral oversight of many of the first churches was committed to a plurality of elders,” the research lacks disclosure of the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context where church leaders are

Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 189.

11Ibid.


implementing a biblical model of shared leadership and utilizing the gifts and resources of the body to reach, evangelize, and simply be the church God has called her to be. Thus, the following questions were answered through this multiple case study: What best practices of shared leadership can be identified from a multiple case study of Christian churches where leaders intentionally practice shared leadership in a ministry context?

**Research Design Overview**

The methodological design for this study was a qualitative, multiple case study in order to identify best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. The selection of case studies entailed searching the internet, using key words such as “distributive leadership,” “collaborative leadership,” “plurality of leaders,” “shared leadership,” and “eldership” in churches. Websites of Christian churches sharing leadership were studied in hopes of locating representatives who, at least, based upon this initial search, were sharing leadership as noted by representative language (i.e. plurality of leaders, eldership, etc). In addition, churches referenced in shared leadership books were reviewed, and I accepted recommendations from various Christian leaders regarding churches practicing shared leadership with longevity (at least three years) and success (sustained shared leadership goal accomplishments).

Four churches were selected as case studies to determine the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. The selection process entailed

1. Contacting the churches and verifying that shared leadership is being actively practiced.
2. Asking questions via email or telephone, depending on the best contact method, to determine if their church represents the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context.
3. Securing the church as a case study if they met the selection criterion.

Upon securing the case studies, I facilitated online questionnaires with leaders sharing leadership at each site. Responses were reviewed and follow-up questions asked of various leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the best practices of shared leadership.
In addition, I spent two days on site, making copious notes and securing various documents to understand and identify best practices of shared leadership. I determined the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context by exploring patterns of behavior; describing current conditions, and listing characteristics or behaviors of specific individuals sharing leadership. The goal was to understand the phenomena primarily from the participants’ perspective so the research results will not only be credible but believable.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Pragmatic Worldview}

While the participants’ perspective is important when seeking to understand the phenomena within the case studies, my worldview will guide interpretation of reality or what is believed to be true. Creswell mentions four worldviews or framework that shapes one’s approach to research: post-positivism, social constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism.\textsuperscript{16} The overarching framework of this study is based on a pragmatism worldview,\textsuperscript{17} which is concerned with consequences of actions, is problem-centered, pluralistic, and real-world practice oriented. Although I affirm


\textsuperscript{16}John Creswell, \textit{Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach} (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 6-11. In addition to pragmatism, Creswell discusses post-positivism, which reflects a deterministic philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes. Hence, there is the need to examine causes that influence outcomes. The social constructivism worldview-led researcher addresses the processes of interaction among individuals. It is also reductionistic in that the researcher’s intent is to reduce the ideas into a small, discrete set of ideas to test, such as the variables that constitute hypotheses and research questions. The researcher seeks to interpret the meanings others have about the world. The advocacy/participatory perspective arose during the 1980s and 1990s from those who felt that the post-positivist assumptions imposed structural laws and theories that did not fit marginalized individuals in our society or issues of social justice that needed to be addressed.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 6. ‘Worldview’ refers to one’s beliefs that guide action. Worldview is a general orientation about the world and the nature of research for the researcher. The types of beliefs held by the researcher generally guide the approach to research the researcher chooses.
absolute truth, the ‘what and how’ to research will be the focus in hopes of understanding the research problem.

In considering case studies, research objectives need to be clearly defined. These objectives are based upon the characteristics of qualitative research, as well as my worldview. “We gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part.”

Perhaps the in-depth knowledge of an individual example can be “more helpful than fleeting knowledge about a larger number of examples.”

Qualitative research involving the case studies presented entailed asking open-ended questions, handling and analyzing interview data, observation data, and document data. Themes and patterns within the data were observed, analyzed and interpreted.

**Database**

To bring order to the data collection while enhancing the reliability, a computerized database was utilized, allowing tracking, retrieval, and database searching at a later date.

**Population**

The population for this study was four Christian churches where leadership displayed the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. These churches

---

18 This truth must never be watered down or compromised in any way. All truth is found in Jesus Christ’s life, work, and teachings. What is good, true, right, and real stands on the foundation of Christ by which all truth must be judged. Art Lindsley, *True Truth: Defending Absolute Truth in a Relativistic World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 21.


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.
were selected based upon the following criteria:

1. Christian churches with belief that the Bible is God’s inspired Word; belief in the Triune God; salvation by grace through faith in God’s Son, Jesus Christ; practices baptism by immersion, and the Lord’s Supper.

2. Currently practicing shared leadership within the definition of the biblical model of shared leadership (i.e., eldership, plurality of leaders, etc.).

3. Practicing shared leadership for at least three years.

4. Clearly defined vision of shared leadership.

5. Shared leadership clearly stated in church documents (i.e., elder led, plurality of leaders, team based with shared leadership practiced, collaborative leadership, etc.).

Case Studies Overviewed

I reviewed multiple churches before selecting four case studies. The following were considered during email or telephone interviews with church staff members:

1. Discussion of the church’s history with shared leadership (i.e. why shared leadership was established, progression of shared leadership within their context, etc.)

2. Discussion of best practices of shared leadership and why one might consider their ministry context as an exemplar.

3. Discussion of being a case study and what it would mean for their leaders and church staff.

Which Churches as Case Studies and Why

After prayerfully researching and considering churches sharing leadership in light of the best practices in a ministry context, I selected Oceanside Christian Fellowship in El Segundo, California; Red Door Church in Bloomington, Indiana; Trinity Baptist Church in New York, New York, and Reformed Baptist Church in Rutland, Vermont. These churches are representative of those clearly practicing shared leadership; seeking to align the governance of the church to Scripture through shared leadership; establishing biblical leadership within a community of leaders who are in relationship with each other, and who, after telephone and/or email communication, appear to exhibit best practices of shared leadership within a ministry context as discovered within the literature review.
Oceanside Christian Fellowship, El Segundo, California

Oceanside Christian Fellowship (OCF) was mentioned in Joseph Hellerman’s (Talbot School of Theology) book “Embracing Shared Leadership.” OCF started as a Bible study in summer of 1985 and officially launched as a church in February 1986. According to Denny O’Keefe’s historical account, the founding pastor, Duke Winser, and the elders met with Alexander Strauch (author of Biblical Eldership) in the late 1980s or early 1990s about the biblical basis for the plurality-shared leadership model. They agreed to implement this model; however, the “founding pastor had such a strong personality, it did not function as such in reality . . . only partially.” 24 Ultimately, the founding pastor resigned.

The congregation is mixed, “bordering on high income individuals and families to their west (i.e. Manhattan, Hermosa, Redondo Beach); mid income (El Segundo), and to their east, mid and lower income families (and higher ethnic diversity, e.g., Hawthorne, Lawndale, Lennox, Gardena).” 25 OCF averages 600 to 700 on Sundays.

OCF is led by nine, male pastor/elders 26 whose primary role is to shepherd the individuals who attend the church (i.e., attend to their spiritual health, guard the orthodox Christian faith/doctrine), oversee the overall operation of the church and then propose recommendations to the congregation to vote on.

In the last chapter, Hellerman discusses shared leadership at OCF and credits “relationships” among those sharing leadership for the health of the leadership team. 27


25 Ibid.


27 Hellerman, Embracing Shared Ministry, 266.
His in-depth description of their successful practice of shared leadership was persuasive, as many of his descriptive words were supported by the literature review. Trust among the pastor/elders and with the congregation is a key component for this model to function lovingly and biblically. “Multiple voices from the pulpit is considered a major plus by our people as is the functioning of spiritual gifts among the pastor/elders and people overall.” After reviewing the church’s website and later speaking with pastor/elder Brandon Cash; emailing Pastor/Elder Hellerman, and interviewing Pastor/Elder O’Keefe (the known church historian), OCF was confirmed as a case study.

Red Door Church, Bloomington, Indiana

Red Door was discovered during an internet search on “churches sharing leadership.” This Vineyard29 church plant is over three years old and averages approximately 120 on Sundays. They are set within the college community of Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Affectionately called B-town, Bloomington is a college town and has a population of about 70,000.30

According to the church’s website, they chose a shared leadership model because “best we can tell, it was the model that was set up in the vast majority of New Testament churches.”31 Each Red Door pastor “still maintains specific, unique

____________________________________________________________________________________

28 Ibid.

29 Vineyard USA, accessed Monday, July 28, 2014, http://www.vineyardusa.org/site/. The Vineyard Movement, led in its early years by the late John Wimber, is a network of over 1,500 churches worldwide who embrace Christian character and the activity of the Holy Spirit. They hold to biblical doctrines of the Christian faith while pursuing the work of the Spirit of God and are committed to reach each generation with the Gospel.


responsibilities and roles.” After reading the website information, an email was sent to elder Jordan Warner, one of the three pastors who share leadership, requesting to speak by telephone. During the telephone conversation, Warner disclosed that he had always been fascinated by shared leadership and had a passion to exercise this model of leadership. It was after reading Alexander Strauch’s *Biblical Eldership* that he truly caught the vision. The more he learned about this biblical model, the more convinced he became that shared leadership was the right model for this new church plant. Just over three years later, they are tweaking the model because they were “so busy trying to ensure the sharing aspect that no one was leading.” Now they are focusing more on sharing authority, allowing each pastor to serve from his giftedness. Warner noted emotional maturity, a depth of relationship, conflict management, among other traits, as necessary components for best practices of shared authority, which were in line with those found in the literature review. Red Door was confirmed as a case study following the conversation.

**Trinity Baptist Church, New York, New York**

Trinity Baptist Church was provided by a church leader serving at another church in New York who has attended leadership conferences facilitated by Trinity and remembered that shared leadership was their model of leadership. Following a thorough review of their website, pastor James Leonard one of two pastors, was contacted by telephone and later via email.

According to Leonard, “Trinity is a church that reflects and celebrates the diversity of the city.” One can find thirty or more languages spoken on any given

---

32 Ibid.

33 Jordan Warner, telephone interview with author, July 8, 2014.

34 James Leonard, “A Spiritual Growth Strategy for Postmodern Busters at Trinity Baptist Church in New York City” (D.Min. project, Fuller Theological Seminary,
Sunday where families, singles, young and old gather to worship. The average attendance on Sundays is 300.

Leonard and the leaders have extensive experience sharing leadership, as Trinity has been using the shared leadership model since 1994. According to Leonard, who provided background information on Trinity through his doctoral project, the change to elders, deacons, and trustees were initiated primarily by Boyd (senior pastor) “in an effort to align the governance of the church with Scripture.” for the New Testament epistles regularly mentioned a “plurality of church leaders, commonly called ‘elders,’ ‘overseers,’ or ‘shepherds.’ In addition, deacons were appointed to meet needs in the local church.”

These three bodies (elders, deacons, and trustees) along with the associate pastor and staff make up the decision-making profile of Trinity Baptist Church. Their longevity of sharing leadership is phenomenal, as well as the clearly written method of sharing leadership among the pastors, elders, trustees and deacons as stated in the church bylaws. Thus, Trinity Baptist Church was asked to serve as a case study and agreed.

The Reformed Bible Church, Rutland, Vermont

Reformed Bible Church is a small fellowship in central Vermont and is associated with the Green Mountain Baptist Association of the Southern Baptist Convention. The church was formed roughly 25 years ago and averages around 36 on Sundays. The building is paid for and is located in a rural region of mostly farms and

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 30.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 31.
individual homes scattered through the mountains. Three elders share leadership: Hugh Diggins, David Kerstetter, and John Beaulieu. Diggins and Beaulieu have served together over 17 years.\textsuperscript{39}

The Reformed Baptist Church was discovered after I contacted Terry Dorsett, author of \textit{Developing Leadership Teams in the Bivocational Church}. Dorsett, former Director of Mission for the Green Mountain Baptist Association in Vermont prior to his current position at the Baptist Convention of New England, provided contact information of churches in his association sharing leadership. Shared leadership from a bivocational\textsuperscript{40} pastor’s perspective and as well as the culture of Vermont were reasons to consider Vermont. The “lack of church connection in Vermont culture results in a larger number of smaller churches across the state than in most other parts of the nation.”\textsuperscript{41} Dorsett reported only thirty-seven Southern Baptist Churches and missions are scattered across the state.\textsuperscript{42} The number has increased to 38 Southern Baptist churches in Vermont, as per a telephone conversation with the Baptist Convention of New England (BCNE).\textsuperscript{43}

Dorsett encourages the bivocational pastor and even the small church pastor to establish team-based leadership (shared leadership style). Leaders will not only be less prone to burn out, but the church and leaders become healthier as members are trained to be a part of the pastoral leadership team, sharing the ministry.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{39}Hugh Diggins, email with author, July 28, 2014.

\textsuperscript{40}Terry Dorsett, \textit{Developing Leadership Teams in the Bivocational Church} (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2010), 2. Dorsett would define bivocational pastor as a full-time pastor who is not fully funded by his church. Instead, he is considered a bivocational pastor because he must discover funding through another means in order to accomplish the ministry to which he was called.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{43}Carolyn Johnson, telephone interview with author, August 18, 2014.

\textsuperscript{44}Dorsett, \textit{Developing Leadership Teams}, 1-5.
After emailing Dorsett regarding research needs, he forwarded my email to churches in the area practicing shared leadership. Those who agreed to participate, contacted me. The Reformed Baptist Church was initially reviewed and contacted based upon the lead pastor’s twenty-plus years of shared leadership experience.

I asked Diggins (one of the three pastors sharing leadership) why he would consider Reformed Bible Church to be among the best practices of shared leadership. He listed the most important as the understanding that they serve as equals—responsibility of and are equally active in teaching the body. They also function within their giftedness in that Diggins is the primary preacher. Nevertheless, there is collaborative decision-making among the pastors. Following our email interview, the church was formally enlisted to serve as a case study for the best practices of shared leadership within a ministry context.

**Delimitations**

This study was delimited to Christian churches practicing shared leadership according to the inclusion criterion. The findings are generalized only to the churches who serve as case studies for this project; however, the findings may be transferable to similar churches who are practicing shared leadership or desire more information.

**Research Instrumentation**

Yin notes questions are important and should lead the researcher to other questions that provide greater depth in understanding the participants' expressed views. The tentative answer to the researcher’s question should immediately lead to a host of new questions. Thus, the interview was completed in two phases. First, an online questionnaire was completed by church staff (full-time, part-time, and volunteer) (see appendix 2). Data collection consisted of an online questionnaire and on-site interviews

---

with elders and leadership staff, direct observation, and a content analysis of church documents. Data was collected from the website and church documents to guide my understanding and analysis of the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. While on location, I acquired and later analyzed church bylaws, brochures, published articles, leadership training materials and other documentation as applicable.

**Online Questionnaire**

The leaders sharing leadership were asked to complete the online questionnaire and were forwarded the agreement to participate (see appendix 1), as well as, the online questionnaire instrument (see appendix 2). The instrument was designed to be completed in approximately forty-five minutes as participants answered questions regarding their experiences with, expectations for, and evaluations of the best practices of shared leadership in their perspective ministry contexts. Categorical questions included

1. “Background” information on the leadership team entailing actual name used if “shared leadership” is practiced but not so named; steps taken to implement shared leadership; style of shared leadership practiced (i.e. elder model; plurality of leaders, etc.), and diversity of the leadership team (i.e. full-time, volunteer, etc.).

2. “Mechanics of the Best Practices,” entailing how the shared leadership has been tweaked over the years moving to best practices in a ministry context; benefits of shared leadership for those sharing ministry (i.e. less burn out, health issues deflected, etc.); decision making process, and safe guards for maintaining the integrity of shared leadership practice (i.e. is sharing really happening and how is it maintained).

3. “Leadership among those sharing leadership,” entailing how leadership members were actually chosen; what leadership styles are often reflected among the leadership team; how each style affects the sharing leadership within the ministry; explanation of how and what leadership responsibilities are shared; how spiritual growth is encouraged and aided, and training expectations for leaders (see appendix 2).

**On-Site Interview Questions**

The on-site interview questions (see appendix 3) required approximately one hour and a half as the leadership team\(^\text{46}\) (which included volunteers, part-time and full

---

\(^\text{46}\)Most of those sharing leadership were present in California, Illinois, and
expounded on select responses from the online questionnaire and any questions generated, as some responses could lead to crucial follow-up questions that provide understanding of the best practices of shared leadership. The categorical questions included

1. “Shared Leadership Environment,” entailing listing the top four or five traits of shared leadership in their leadership team environment; best behavioral trait(s) a leadership team should develop for the best practices of shared leadership to occur; explain how the shared leadership environment within the leadership team happened, and explain how this environment is evaluated and maintained.

2. “Results of the Best Practices of Shared Leadership in a Ministry Context,” entails leadership disclosing insights regarding how shared leadership impacts the congregation numerically and spiritually; discuss the effects of shared leadership on the church’s community outreach and/or global outreach.

3. “Shared Leadership in a Ministry Context Closing Insights,” entailing other insights those sharing leadership want to add about the best practices of shared leadership in their context; suggestions for other churches who are interested in implementing the best practices of shared leadership; precautions to churches who desire to share leadership, and helpful books for understanding and implementing the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context (see appendix 3).

The agreement (see appendix 1) to participate in onsite interviews was read and all verbally agreed to participate and be recorded for data collection purposes.

I was approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics committee to conduct research and followed protocol in organizing the questionnaire, conducting interviews, direct observations and data analysis. A minimum of two days on location was spent to complete follow-up interviews, observe and gather information for research.

Vermont; however, only one of the two pastors sharing leadership was available for the onsite visit in New York. Nevertheless, both pastors completed the online questionnaire. In each case study, office personnel, elders, and other church leaders were included in the onsite interview. When schedules allowed, they were interviewed together. Otherwise, individual appointments were made, providing as much rich data as possible about the best practices of shared leadership in their ministry context.
Research Instrumentations

Each instrument was based upon the findings within the literature review of the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. These best practices included

1. A biblical understanding of and motivation for shared leadership in a ministry context is foundational.

2. Leadership shares power and decision-making authority.

3. A particular environment is established for shared leadership to thrive: (1) shared purpose—team members have similar understanding of objectives and focused collective goals, (2) relational or social support within leadership—team members try to provide emotional and psychological support for one another, (3) participation and input within leadership—members have a voice in the sharing of leadership (4) accountability is practiced within the leadership team, (5) Trust is exercised within the leadership team, (6) team members have adjusted to the desired behavior for shared leadership to be successful, and (7) Communication is open and intentional among those practicing shared leadership.

4. There is a balance of personal autonomy and collaboration among members.

5. Leadership style is more servant-driven, which is what Jesus modeled.

6. Spiritual maturity is evident.

7. Spiritual giftedness is recognized and utilized in a synergistic collaborative manner.\(^47\)

I based the research instruments on the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context as listed in the literature review to help determine if these were also present in the case studies. The instruments were field tested by Hugh Diggins (a shared leadership expert of over 20 years); Ashley Allen (WMU and Women’s Leader, North Carolina Baptist Convention) and church leader/Bible teacher, Ron Zaccagnini. Their suggested changes and input were accepted and are represented in Appendices 4 and 6.

Direct Observation

According to Suter, to understand a complex phenomenon, the researcher has to consider the participants’ various realities. “Natural environments are favored for

\(^{47}\) See chap. 2, “Literature Review.”
discovering how participants construct their own meaning of events or situations.”

Thus, I spent a minimum of two days for direct observation at each case study location. Following direct observation protocol, I did not try to become a participant in the case study context. I was as “unobtrusive as possible so as not to bias the observations.” Second, direct observation is a more detached perspective. Thus, I watched rather than taking part. Consequently, technology, such as videotaping, was used when possible to capture words, expressions, and the environment to be as unobtrusive as possible. Third, observed certain situations or people rather than trying to become immersed in the environment.

**Collecting the Data**

Data collection activity primarily focuses on the type of information collected; how the information will be recorded, and storing the data for easy retrieval for coding. Thus, data was collected from online questionnaires, as well as follow up interviews. Data was also gleaned from published material collected on site and from notes made while observing. Documents and audiovisual information (i.e., shared leadership-related sermons, training materials such as new member information, bylaws, etc.) were collected and stored for retrieval to understand the case study data.

---


50 Ibid.


52 Ibid., 147-49.
Understanding of Data

I looked for patterns, themes, and ideas in light of the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context as presented in the literature review. The most important goal was to find “meaning embedded within rich sources of data.” Thus, open-ended, emerging data was collected with the primary intent of developing themes from the data.

The validity and reliability was preserved by the use of multiple data sources, which included documentation, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observations, and participant-observation. Survey data, which facilitates reaching a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied, was also incorporated. Data from these multiple sources was converged in the analysis process rather than handled individually, for each data source constituted one piece of the puzzle and contributed to understanding the whole phenomenon. “This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case.” In addition, the participants in the case study received the results, which allowed member checking—a verification strategy. Participants were given the opportunity to clarify, confirm, or reject themes and ideas reached by the researcher.

Trustworthiness is also a concern for qualitative research. A variety of techniques increase the trustworthiness of the research. For example, did the researcher do everything possible to ensure that data was appropriately and ethically collected,

53 Suter, Introduction to Educational Research, 352.

54 Ibid., 17.


56 Ibid.

analyzed, and reported? More responsibility is placed on qualitative researchers to demonstrate the worthiness of their entire research.

Carlson mentions five procedures most often used to increase trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry: audit trails (keeping careful documentation of all components of the study, should an external auditor be utilized); reflexivity (recognition that personal biases can influence interpretation of data and actively reducing the risks by such means as journaling thoughts); thick and rich description (detailed descriptions of settings, participants, data collection, and analysis procedures that draw out commonalities that may exist between situations); triangulation (gathering and analyzing data in more than one way such as interviews and questionnaires for example), and member checking (members or research participants to approve the interpretation of the data they provided to the researcher). Each of these components were incorporated in order to increase the trustworthiness of the results.

In addition, I enlisted an external auditor—someone trained and qualified to examine the process, who has no vested interest or involvement in the conduct of the research, and who formally and systematically reviewed the research to determine the trustworthiness of the findings.

**Report Findings**

I reported the findings of the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context based upon the multiple case study conducted. Open-ended data were coded into themes and patterns to identify common ideas or expressions by respondents. I followed

---


59 Ibid., 1103.

60 Ibid., 1104-05.

the content or data analysis outlined in Creswell’s “Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design” in order to prepare and present findings:

1. Data organization—files of data were created and organized.
2. Reading and memoing—read through text; made margin notes and formed initial codes.
3. Describing the data into codes and themes—entails describing the case and its contents.
4. Classifying the data into codes and themes—the use of categorical aggregation (forming into groups or clusters).
5. Interpreting the data—direct interpretation will be utilized and what was learned will be developed and shared.
6. Representing the data (visualization)—use of narratives, tables and figures to present in-depth data.62

**Conclusion**

My role was to gain a holistic overview of the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. Various themes and expressions were reviewed, and interpretations were prepared, allowing me to contrast, compare, analyze, and locate the patterns.63 The strategies used produced valid and reliable information. My goal was to identify the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context using a multiple case study of Christian churches.

---


CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Through conducting four case studies, I sought to determine the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. This chapter discusses how the data was compiled and analyzed. The findings and displays are addressed in conjunction with the research question and reviewed based upon the unique characteristics of the individual sites. The overall strengths and weaknesses of the methodology are also disclosed.

Compilation Protocol

The study proceeded in three stages. In the first stage, data was gathered from relevant documents: online questionnaires, follow-up personal interviews, and unstructured observations. Although several months were utilized researching possible ministry contexts with the best practices of shared leadership, the population for this study was four Christian churches where leadership best fit the selection criteria. The purposeful sample was four case studies with 37 participants, which included elders actually sharing leadership, church staff, and available church members.

It is important to note that the research focused on participants’ subjective experiences, as well as documents, training manuals made available, by-laws, and websites. Four protocols were followed during the research: collection of site data, interpretation of meaning behind the data, emergence of new questions based on data interpretation, and construction of inductive themes. Online questionnaires completed by elders directly sharing leadership were analyzed. Follow-up interviews with elders directly sharing leadership, and available staff and church members were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Preliminary results were isolated and compared to the list of best
practices identified through the literature review included in chapter 2. Chapter 3 lists the characteristics in detail. Additionally, important quotations or excerpts were identified for inclusion in the report of research findings. Dedoose was used to store documents, isolate and organize excerpts, analyze, and export the data.¹

Coding of Data

A code chart was prepared and entered in Dedoose. These codes were gleaned from the literature review and represent characteristics of the best practices of shared leadership. Once the codes were in place, each completed online research instrument as well as the follow-up questionnaires were entered in Dedoose. In addition, the research instrument data gathered while on site was entered. A table illustrating the results of each research instrument are located in appendix 4.

The files entered were then reviewed in order to assign the codes to quotes, words, and phrases, resulting in a string of code-specific occurrences. These occurrences indicate the best practices as demonstrated in each case study. The characteristics are the best practices among the case studies as derived from the literature review. Unique best practices were discovered as well.

Best Practices Characteristics Discovered in the Literature Review and Used as Codes

The literature review yielded the following characteristics that were used as descriptive codes in the research data:

1. A biblical understanding of and motivation for shared leadership in a ministry context is foundational.

2. Leadership shares power and decision-making authority.

3. A particular environment is established for shared leadership to thrive: (1) shared

¹Dedoose.com is a cross-platform application for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research with text, photos, audio, videos, spreadsheet data and more, subscription secured December 15, 2014.
purpose—team members have similar understanding of objectives and focused collective goals, (2) relational support within leadership—team members try to provide emotional and psychological support for one another, (3) participation and input within leadership—members have a voice in the sharing of leadership (4) accountability is practiced within the leadership team, (5) Trust is exercised within the leadership team, (6) team members have adjusted to the desired behavior for shared leadership to be successful, and (7) Communication is open and intentional among those practicing shared leadership. 2

4. There is a balance of personal autonomy and collaboration among members.

5. Leadership style is more servant-driven, which is what Jesus modeled.

6. Spiritual maturity is evident.

7. Spiritual giftedness is recognized and utilized in a synergistic collaborative manner. 3

As exercised in accordance with God’s Word, these characteristics are the core in the best practices of shared leadership within a ministry context. Once the codes were assigned, tables were exported through Excel, illustrating the number of occurrences per characteristic.

Although two research instruments were utilized, the occurrences found were coded and charted together, as the follow-up interview was designed to build upon the online questionnaire. Thus, the questions were not identical. For example, the online research instrument was created to extrapolate more personal information from those sharing leadership—such as age, their work status, education, etc. In addition, two available staff members from the sites completed the online research instrument. 4

2In order to code and distinguish how many aspects of the “environment” were actually occurring, the characteristics compiled from the literature review are listed as 13 individual categories in the findings because “environment” was broken down into its parts in the actual research.

3For further discussion, see chaps. 2 and 3.

4Staff members who completed the online research instrument were instructed to answer the questions from the perspective of someone experiencing shared leadership instead of actually from the inner circle of those sharing leadership. This was important in understanding how the best practices of shared leadership are viewed from outside the shared leadership circle. Furthermore, wives (as they were available) of those in the inner circle were included in the follow-up interview. This option was incorporated only at RBC in Vermont. Since RBC was by far the smallest site, their input as well as the members who were available for the interview provided insight on their understanding and experiences of shared leadership.
The follow-up instrument was created to record details about how the best practices of shared leadership were developed, expressed, and experienced at each site. The follow-up research instrument was designed to build on the online instrument without duplicating results. Thus, the instruments were uploaded, assigned codes, and results exported (see instruments in appendix 2 and 3).

Verification strategies of triangulation and member checking were utilized to ensure validity of the data. Data triangulation involved the compilation of interviews, documents, and observations. Nevertheless, utilizing a variety of data sources does not guarantee a lack of error or bias in the analysis of the data. Therefore, additional verification was necessary. Thus, participants were asked to verify the authenticity of the data and concur with the research findings. This participant feedback was used to affirm the integrity of the report.

**Demographic and Sample Data**

From a general population of all Christian churches who intentionally practice shared leadership, this study’s sampling pool included 37 participants from four case sites: (1) Oceanside Christian Fellowship (OCF) in El Segundo, California, (2) Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) in Manhattan, New York, (3) Red Door Church (RDC) in Bloomington, Indiana, and (4) Reformed Bible Church (RBC) in Rutland, Vermont. The participants’ demographic profiles are summarized in table 2.
Table 2. Participant demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCF 1</td>
<td>Elder/Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 2</td>
<td>Elder/Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 3</td>
<td>Elder/Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 4</td>
<td>Elder/Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 5</td>
<td>Elder/Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 6</td>
<td>Elder/Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 7</td>
<td>Elder/Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 8</td>
<td>Elder/Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 9</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 10</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCF 11</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDC 1</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDC 2</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDC 3</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC 1</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC 2</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC 3</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC 4</td>
<td>Wife of Elder</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC 5</td>
<td>Wife of Elder</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC 6</td>
<td>Wife of Elder</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC 7</td>
<td>14 Congregants</td>
<td>Mixed Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBC 1</td>
<td>Associate Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBC 2</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBC 3</td>
<td>Staff Member</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings and Displays

One research question guided the display and communication of findings from this study. This question was designed to explore and examine the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context by church leaders. The findings from this multi-case study are presented, as well as the unique characteristics of shared leadership discovered within each case study site.
Research Question

What best practices of shared leadership can be identified from a multiple case study of Christian churches where leaders are intentionally practicing shared leadership in a ministry context?

Summary of Findings

The multi-case study validated the best practices for shared leadership identified through the literature review as well as unique practices common to all four sites. The data analysis supported that Christian church leaders who practice shared leadership embraced thirteen best practices. The research findings also indicated five unique, shared leadership practices.

Four sites were examined in light of the research question regarding the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. Primary sources examined included online questionnaires with elders and available staff; field visits which included follow-up questions with elders and available staff and members; notes documented while on site; audio information of related sermons on shared leadership, training materials, bylaws, and other pamphlets or material to discover and isolate the number of occurrences of the established best practices within the selected case sites. Table A1 represents the overall findings of the best practices represented in the literature review and the ranking of each per case study (see appendix 4). The information gathered aided in analyzing the environment at each site. The goal was to understand the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context.

Theoretical Lens

Joseph Hellerman presents a perspective on shared leadership that “naturally encourages the proper use of authority in local church ministry.”\textsuperscript{5} Shared leadership, also

referred to as plurality leadership, establishes a community of leaders who model community in ways a lone-ranger senior pastor cannot. Through this leadership style, authority is distributed, the health of church leaders and the congregation in which they serve is protected, and Paul’s vision for servant leadership is best facilitated.⁶

Marshall Goldsmith of Harvard Business recognizes that “shared leadership involves maximizing all of the human resources in an organization by empowering individuals and giving them an opportunity to take leadership positions in their areas of expertise.”⁷ From the Christian perspective, as expressed and experienced in the local church today, Scripture supports pastoral oversight of the church as a council of elders and “the early church established by the apostles followed the plurality concept.”⁸ While the business world has a different reason and end result for shared leadership, Christians using the model are being exemplary of servant leadership as modeled by Jesus. The end result is to be more efficient and effective in reaching the world for Christ Jesus.

**Descriptive Data**

The research question drew upon my understanding of shared leadership as expressed by Christian leaders in a ministry context. Through the data collection process, each site was clearly, intentionally practicing shared leadership. Each reiterated an elder-led expression of shared leadership or a plurality of leaders because it represented a biblically-based structure. Although two of the churches were facilitated through shared leadership in the beginning of their ministry existence, the other two churches moved into this leadership style after practicing a single pastor-led model. Yet, the purpose of each

⁶Ibid., 17-18.


church is to operate as the early church, expressing leadership through a shared model or plurality of leaders, which is within the context of relationship to Christ, each other and the body at large. For example, the leaders of Reformed Bible Church, during the onsite follow-up, stated their practice of shared leadership as a “commitment to Christ and to Word, as well as to His Body.”

Red Door is a four-year old church plant established on shared leadership principles from its beginning. Reformed Bible Church is over 20 years old and was founded on the shared leadership model. Oceanside and Trinity, over 20 years old as well, both moved into a shared leadership model. Each church shares a strong value for shared leadership. Yet, the language used to express the model employed varied by site. For example, while Trinity Baptist Church practices shared leadership, they do not necessarily use this terminology. James Leonard stated, “I think it is assumed based on the structure . . . elders, trustees, deacons and staff all working together.” Boyd, listed on the website as “Senior Pastor,” explained the shared leadership approach:

We have elders who are the spiritual authority of the church, overseeing the theological, missiological and shepherding responsibilities of the church, under which everything ministry-related falls. The trustees oversee the financial and operational concerns. Deacons handle the various practical outworkings of the mission, under the direction of the elders. Various staff oversee their specific ministry areas. You might say that certain staff members are paid deacons, due to the fact that their area of concern requires fulltime commitment (i.e. children’s ministry).

Red Door uses “shared leadership” as the descriptive language for their model. Nevertheless, they acknowledge,

The model has evolved a lot over the last three years as we’ve sought to learn how to work it out in the “real world,” but we have not strayed from the core idea that we want to share the leadership of the church, particularly in terms of big picture direction, values, and styles.

Similarly, Reformed Bible Church maintained the central idea of sharing the leadership of the church, yet, they refer to it as a “plurality of elders that are coequal in their responsibilities . . . which affords them the opportunity to (share) the burden that would be placed on one single individual.” Oceanside Christian Fellowship also uses the
elder-led model, referring to it as a plurality of elders. While “other churches have elders, they don’t function in a plurality model.” Thus, each site is intentional in their expression of the leadership that they share—regardless of the actual term used. The intentionality of shared leadership is not only affirmed by those directly sharing leadership at each site, but also caught by the church staff and members alike, as they live out what each believes is the biblical model for the church.

Descriptor of Each Case

Trinity Baptist Church. Trinity is set in Manhattan, New York, on East 61st Street. Within two blocks are four churches in addition to Trinity. The area is extremely busy as various people walked, rode bikes, drove, ran, or skated by. Several brownstone buildings were visible, and the area was littered with restaurants, hotels, apartments and other businesses. Yet, anyone walking through the doors of Trinity Baptist Church leaves the hustle of the city and enters church architecture replete with stained-glass windows, vaulted ceilings, and other details wrought with symbolism and lessons from Scripture—a theme that penetrates the heart of their shared leadership model. Thus, according to Leonard, elders, deacons, and trustees were established to “align the governance of the church with Scripture.”9 According to Trinity’s by-laws, the elders guide the church in three broad categories. Figure 2 illustrates the organizational chart of shared leadership at Trinity.10 The emphasis is less about direct reporting relationships and more about

---

9 According to background information provided by Leonard, over 30 deacons take responsibility for overseeing many of Trinity’s ministry areas. Each deacon takes responsibility for recruiting, training, and supporting volunteers as he helps his area of ministry thrive. Deacons, along with volunteers from each ministry network, the elders, pastors, trustees, and staff during Trinity’s monthly leadership have breakfast on the first Saturday of each month. Trinity’s ministry staff (5 individuals) and the pastors are on hand to guide, support and resource each ministry, and the elders take responsibility for supporting the deacons personally and programmatically. The board of elders consists of no fewer than 3 and no more than 18 elders. James Leonard, “A Spiritual Growth Strategy for Postmodern Busters at Trinity Baptist Church in New York City” (paper presented to Fuller Seminary, April 2013), 36.

10 Trinity Baptist Church was the only site for which I was able to locate an
primary area of Scriptural guidance from the elders and by extension the trustees and deacons.\textsuperscript{11}

Leonard further explained the shared leadership among the elders, deacons, and trustees as in accordance to the New Testament epistles, which speak of a plurality of church leaders.\textsuperscript{12} While the deacons were appointed to meet needs in the local church, elders offer spiritual oversight. The board of trustees manages the business affairs of Trinity as the legal representatives in all matters of the church. According to Leonard, the trustee board is made up of female and male members who “exhibit spiritual maturity in combination with business acumen.”

![Organizational Chart]

\textbf{Figure 2. Shared leadership at Trinity Baptist Church}

Although Trinity functions with a senior pastor and an associate pastor, according to Leonard, everything is shared leadership and includes elders, deacons, trustees and a host of volunteers:

\begin{quote}
I would say just take a look at the way Jesus did ministry. It was really a shared leadership model. \ldots Those 12 guys turned the world upside down. I think that if
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
we are going to develop leadership principles, then our church really ought to be based on leadership principles Jesus demonstrates. And I think that shared leadership is the model. Nowhere do we see Jesus suggesting that one person go out and that everyone else be spectators and watch and do what that one person says. It’s much more collaborative, and I think that’s what people are looking for.

Their practice of shared leadership is an overflow of hearts united to function as the Bible directs, allowing people to use their gifts in conjunction with the gifts of others. If the church is to help people grow in their faith, Leonard stated, the hearts and minds of people need to be captivated: “The only way that you can do that is to help them feel like they are a part of what is happening.” Shared leadership helps Trinity accomplish this task collectively.

**Oceanside Christian Fellowship.** Oceanside is located within an industrial park setting in El Segundo—a suburb of Los Angeles—and averages 600 to 700 on Sundays. The church building resembles the surrounding buildings, but the scriptural monument of Isaiah 12:3-4 in the front of the building reminds the community that Oceanside is serving the area: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: ‘Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.’” The grass gives way to pavement; however, a running water fountain and a small garden of landscaping catch the eyes and ears of passersby, creating a type of sanctuary for those who enter. The front of the church bears the address 343 Coral Circle in the center above the main doors. The Metrolink Rail Line runs perpendicular to the back of the church, allowing people to travel from various areas around Los Angeles.

The inside of the building is contemporary with high ceilings, various classrooms for age-appropriate activities. The church motto is painted on the wall—visible to all and serving as a reminder of the church’s mission: “Passionately pursuing

---

13 Oceanside has 14 deacons and 9 elders. Five elders have worked together for over 10 years. They do not have trustees.
God, healthy relationship and people who need Jesus.” DVDs, pens, promotional event pieces, class information, and the church bulletin are in containers throughout the atrium. If one reviews a bulletin, it is not long before reading, “OCF is led by a plurality of pastor-elders”—followed by their names, phone numbers and emails. The full staff and ministry contact information are located in the bulletin as well. Further perusal of the website sheds more light on the shared leadership model and why it is such:

OCF is led by a plurality of pastor-elders (in the NT pastor/elder/bishop are used interchangeably to describe the local church leaders). Instead of a single (or senior) pastor leading our congregation, we have a group of pastor-elders who share the preaching on Sundays and share most of the day-to-day leadership of the church community. We take this approach for two reasons, one biblical and one pragmatic. Biblically, from what we can tell, every church in the New Testament was led by a team of leaders. Pragmatically, plurality leadership best ensures the spiritual health of both leaders and members in a local church community.  

OCF was planted in 1986 and laid the ground work for the plurality model by inviting the author of Biblical Eldership, Alexander Strauch, to educate church leaders in the process of shared leadership. The church’s founder left the church in 2000 with shared leadership only partially implemented. Since that time, OCF has been a team-led church. Shared leadership is the heart of how OCF functions as a New Testament designed church, living out its calling in the twenty-first century.

The pastor-elders meet each Tuesday to pray and meet once a month on Saturdays for business. I met with them on a Saturday, following their business meeting. I observed a spirit of unity unlike any I have ever encountered. The pastor-elders spoke honestly and openly with me about the brotherhood they experience as they share leadership. Pastor-elder Joe Hellerman credited their success to the relational aspect built and strengthened each Tuesday during their prayer time:

The quality of relationships take precedence over “traits” or “styles,” etc. We think and have demonstrated that if we have enough social capital—i.e., mutual trust and respect—then the differences in “traits” or “styles” augments, rather than complicates, the leadership process.

---

In addition, a commitment to cultivate mutual relationships among the pastor-elders leads them to be open with their people, holding quarterly meetings with their approximately 25 key leaders (those who do not serve as pastor-elders) in the church. Thus, shared leadership has instilled community within the church body through the example of a plurality of leaders. At the heart of their shared leadership model is the “conviction by church leaders that this is a biblical model. Practically, it just works better.” Figure 3 illustrates the organizational chart of shared leadership at Oceanside Christian Fellowship.¹⁵

![Organizational Chart of Shared Leadership at Oceanside Christian Fellowship]

Figure 3. Shared leadership at Oceanside Christian Fellowship

Reformed Bible Church. Set in the rural area of Rutland, Vermont, Reformed is a small congregation of sisters and brothers in the Lord, averaging about 36 on Sundays.¹⁶ Driving down the two lane highway, a white sign marks where they meet

¹⁵This organizational chart was created from information provided by a staff member.

¹⁶Reformed has 3 elders who serve the congregation and 2 deacons. They do not have trustees. The 3 elders have practiced shared leadership together approximately 10 years. The primary teaching elder is retired, and the other two are bivocational. The church is 25 years old and has used the shared leadership approach the majority of those 25 years.
each Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. The building is inviting, resembling a large house rather than the typical church building with steeple. Driving into the gravel driveway reminds one of the simplicity of life in the small town area. Once inside, the simplicity is overshadowed by great faith. For example, on the Ministries bulletin board, the work of this small congregation is displayed through various announcements, letters, and pictures. Sub-headings on this same board such as “Operation World,” “Missions,” and “Prayer” remind of the big work anyone can do when hands and hearts join God in work. A short walk across the room, a large table-top display reminds the congregation about the work to be done in Rutland, providing county demographics, scripture, the church’s mission/purpose statement, and their outreach plans for the work.

The elders and the congregation understand the work and know that completion will require all hands on deck. Although the congregation is small, and one person could shepherd, shared leadership is practiced because they recognize “the proper biblical norm for church leadership to be invested in a plurality of God-ordained elders, as opposed to a one-man dictatorship or the opinion of the majority.” Their constitution clearly articulates the why and how of shared leadership, including the qualifications of the elders. Even the congregation has been trained through sermon series and other training opportunities to understand and articulate their practice of shared leadership:

We have a plurality of elders that are coequal in their responsibilities. There is somewhat of a preeminence for the person that does the primary teaching. They are obviously going to carry added responsibilities, but within that construct of eldership they are all equal with positions and responsibilities besides the main teaching, which affords them the opportunity to not bear all of the burden that would be placed on one single individual.

Reformed Bible Church recognizes the demands of ministry but also accepts the biblical design of shared leadership as obedience and God’s design to maximize its ministry in

Rutland and beyond. Their commitment to God for their local body is summed up in one of their elder’s words:

The eldership is a brotherhood in the truest Biblical sense of the term. When you think about Paul and Timothy or Paul and Titus; Paul and Barnabas; Paul and Silas . . . there are four examples. The relationship they had was very special and tightly knit . . . . Brothers look out for brothers. They are on your hearts. You think about them often. You pray for them. That’s all part of the glue that comes together. (We have) different gifts but all equal. You live together around that and it makes a big difference in the success of shared leadership.

The unity within Reformed Bible church is evident and the understanding within the congregation has been firmly rooted with biblical teaching about the shared leadership practiced. Figure 4 illustrates the organizational chart of shared leadership at Reformed Bible Church.¹⁸

---

**Figure 4. Shared leadership at Reformed Bible Church**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Elders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Called by God to shepherd His church and maintain the doctrinal integrity of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the fellowship (I Tim 3:1-7; Acts 20:23-35; I Pet 5:1-4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two Deacons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Called by God to oversee the infrastructure of the Church (physical building,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.) and attend to the physical (and at times spiritual needs) of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>congregation (I Tim 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Red Door.** Red Door is a church plant in the college town of Bloomington, Illinois, and averages approximately 120 on Sundays.¹⁹ The church body meets

---

¹⁸This organizational chart was created from information provided by elder Hugh Diggins.

¹⁹At the beginning of the research, Red Door had 3 bivocational pastors who served as elders. However, one elder stepped down in December 2014 due to health reasons, but continues to attend the church. Shared leadership allowed this church plant to continue ministry even as one pastor/elder stepped down. Moreover, the relationships among the three men sharing leadership remain strong. As Red Door continues to
downtown at Fairview Elementary School. The church name symbolically represents a place of refuge and shelter for those in need of rescue. In ancient times, places of refuge and shelter displayed red doors. Thus, they seek to be a faith community that “puts flesh on these symbols.”

Upon entering the school doors, one is welcomed by various members in position. After getting coffee and a donut, a person is welcome to review and gather information on Red Door to help to journey with God, abide in communion with Jesus, taking steps to Christlikeness, and fellowship with others before worship. One will find information on ways to connect, belong, serve, and even lead through Red Door. Other information includes spiritual practices sheets, recommended reading for spiritual growth and healthy theology, volunteering at Red Door to serve the city and the church, as well as a small group information, what to expect during worship, and other details that can provide comfort for the unbeliever and the visitor. Red Door ministers to families, singles, and seniors and others who feel led to be a part of their body.

Just over three years old, they decided to organize with the practice of shared leadership. In the beginning, they tried to share every decision, Warner stated, “We currently have clear areas of leadership/responsibility, which allow each of us to function in leadership to the degree we are gifted.” Nevertheless, the church plant’s impetus for establishing shared leadership was biblically-based and is openly shared on the church website:

minister in the community, they have 4 accountability elders and 4 pastor/elders. The 2 pastors and their wives make up the 4 elders. Those directly sharing the leadership are Giff and Lucas. According to one of the pastors, technically, the 2 sharing leadership are referred to as pastors in the day to day scheme of things, and the 4 accountability elders would simply be elders. They do not have deacons or trustees.


21Information listed in a Red Door pamphlet gathered while on site.
We chose a shared leadership model because, best we can tell, it was the model that was set up in the vast majority of New Testament churches . . . within our shared leadership, each pastor at Red Door still maintains specific, unique responsibilities and roles.22

Red Door offers shelter and refuge through its practice of shared leadership in the church body and community, equipping those who enter to be followers of Christ. Figure 5 illustrates the organizational chart of shared leadership at Red Door Church.23

![Organizational Chart]

**Two Pastor/Elders**  
(Spouses are also included as pastor/elders in the decision making process)

**Four Accountability Elders**  
Check and balance on the ministry and direction of the church. Have the relational power to intervene with decisions of pastor/elders if they prayerfully sense the need to do so.

**Figure 5. Shared leadership of Red Door Church**

**Best Practices**

The best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context phenomenon was studied. Best practices as established in the research were confirmed through triangulation of data, which verified the research. Nevertheless, triangulation also helped capture different dimensions of the phenomenon. Thus, unique best practices bubbled to the surface and are also discussed.

**Established Best Practices**

The literature review yielded seven best practices of shared leadership in a

---


23 This organizational chart was created from information provided by Jordan Warner and Giff Reed.
ministry context. “Environment,” the third practice, was subdivided into seven categories because they were necessary and connected to each other in creating the overarching environment for the best practices of shared leadership to thrive. Thus, thirteen best practices will be addressed. After analyzing data gathered to isolate the best practices, the unique practices were established as well.

Data was collected from the online questionnaires, on site interviews, published material from each case study, notes documented while observing, audiovisual information of related sermons on shared leadership, training materials, bylaws, and other pamphlets or material to discover and isolate the number of occurrences of the established best practices within the selected case sites illustrate the thirteen best practices represented in the literature review and the ranking of each per case study. Furthermore, both research instruments and follow-up interviews on site are accounted for in the participant column. The top five as determined by the number of occurrences per site were Relational Support, Biblical Shared Leadership, Decision Making Authority, Trust and Communication. The top five were those within the range occurrences of 52 to 36. Many excerpts (quotes) were recorded during the onsite interviews, observations, collection of material and the online research instruments. Thus, I will allow the excerpts to relay the tone, intentions, and insight of the best practices of shared leadership in each context.

Findings by Case Study Site

Best Practices Findings at Red Door Church (RDC)

Several characteristics from the precedent literature were discovered at RDC, and findings are represented in the RDC table. The top five highest occurrences were

---

24 Table A1 illustrates the number of total occurrences of patterns, themes, and ideas that supported the established best practices as presented in the literature review. It is located in appendix 4.
spiritual giftedness (15); decision making authority (15); communication (12); relational support (10), and personal autonomy and collaboration (10).  

Table 3. Red Door Church best practices findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>RDC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Giftedness</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Authority</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Support</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Autonomy and Collaboration</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Shared Leadership</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Behavior</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant Driven Leadership</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Purpose</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Participation and Input</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spiritual giftedness.** Serving from spiritual giftedness is a characteristic discussed in the literature review.  

Kenneth Gangel offers Barnabas as an example of one who is unthreatened in his ministry and willing to see others reach the greatest potential of their giftedness. Respecting and serving from spiritual giftedness is crucial to the best practices of shared leadership. RDC pastors learned this early on. Initially they shared most of the responsibilities, but Jordan Warner said they realized nothing was

---

25 The top five were considered because four of the five ranked identical in number of occurrences. If two or more rank identical number of occurrences, they will be discussed for each site as appropriate.

26 See chap. 2 for a discussion of the characteristics.

really getting done. Eventually, they restructured their shared leadership model, allowing the giftedness and leadership strengths and styles to designate positions and responsibilities. They strongly believe “for the church to move forward, we can no longer fret about sharing the smaller (less significant) areas of church life. As we have loosened up on this, it has allowed us to realistically name and respect the ways each of us has been individually gifted.”

**Decision making authority.** John Esau listed decision making authority among the best environment for shared leadership.\(^28\) This decision making process does not mean that no one is in charge. Nor did it mean nothing was completed. He reiterated the need to share authority while respecting and trusting each other to complete the tasks at hand. Decision making authority is definitely enforced at RDC. Although they practice a shared leadership model, they stated it is “actually probably closer to a ‘shared authority’ model than anything else.” The process only works as they respect leadership strengths and styles and trust each other in the process, acknowledging the importance of trusting God with the results.

**Communication.** Closing communication loops is invaluable in team empowerment according to Bernard Bass. Among monitoring self and others on the team, communication within the team sharing leadership is definitely an aspect that hinges upon those involved. RDC spends many hours discussing church-related information, responsibilities, various ministry components, etc. For RDC, communication allows diversity to shine. Moreover, communication (in addition to conflict resolution and trust) was among their top non-negotiables for the best practices of shared leadership to ensue.

---

Relational support and personal autonomy and collaboration. The final two high occurrences were relational support and personal autonomy and collaboration. According to RDC, relationships created through shared leadership can further exacerbate the environment that leads to conflict. In any human relationship, one “should see more of the reality of the other person.” Shared leadership stresses cooperation, which voids competition, selfishness, pride, and isolation.  

Relational support has remained on constant watch at RDC and is directly linked to personal autonomy and collaboration for RDC. They constantly work at their relationships—even going to counselors for personal and team issues. One of the pastors stated that he takes their ministry and personal responsibility that seriously. In order to work alone as well as collaborate with others, relational support has to be healthy.

Personal autonomy and collaboration. Personal autonomy and collaboration can coexist. Brian Walker discusses the two, citing how they can be exercised without compromising one another. Jordan Warner says there is a balance between the two at RDC: “We all own our own pieces of it while simultaneously collaborating. Collectively, we do things together and all also take responsibility for our own pieces and somehow fit those within the larger jigsaw puzzle.”

Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) Findings of the Best Practices of Shared Leadership

Characteristics in the precedent literature that were discovered at TBC are represented in the table 4. The highest occurrences were collective participation and input, spiritual giftedness, shared purpose, decision making authority, and trust.

29Ervin F. Henkelmann and Stephan J. Carter, How to Develop a Team Ministry and Make It Work (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), 11.

Collective participation and input. Trinity is deliberate and prayerful regarding the inclusion of its staff and congregation at large. Pastor Keith Boyd and associate pastor James Leonard reiterated the importance of collective participation and input. Leonard shared how this practice is exercised within the staff, as well as the congregation:

Anybody in the room might come up with the best solution or the best idea. So you have to be open to listening to every single person on your team regardless of who they are...if it’s a custodian on your team, that custodian might have insights about what people need within the congregation that senior pastor or associate pastor or worship director wouldn’t have. And so it’s important to recognize that every person on the team has a voice and should be listened to.

Leonard stated that they often ask, “Are we giving each person on the team action points that they are responsible for—personally—that they then bring back to the team so that we can work through those corporately?” This question helps the team move together and forward. “Otherwise, you form teams that are kind of stagnant. You have teams, but they are not really accomplishing or moving forward. So you have to encourage your teams to be self-starters in that regards.”

Spiritual giftedness. Spiritual giftedness at Trinity is important for the
individual and is seen as highly connected to the body at large. Leonard acknowledged how they “are wired to collaborate and to allow our gifts to be used in conjunction with other people’s gifts.” Leonard shared how they train volunteers in the Word and meet with them on a regular basis in order to equip them to serve in their giftedness and have input within the church ministries.

Furthermore, a staff member shared how she is invited to discuss her passions and then pursue them as they further the vision at TBC: “They encourage me in my giftedness and to step out of my comfort zone in ministry.” Marlene Ortego shared how she has been given such freedom to soar in her giftedness at Trinity, allowing her to minister alongside so many others.

**Shared purpose.** TBC has a “unified vision and mission the elders have set forth that kind of creates an umbrella, enabling every ministry endeavor to align itself with the vision and mission.” This shared purpose was revisited, causing them to “collectively discern and decide on our vision and purpose as a church . . . it must be discerned corporately.” Their mission is summed up on their web page is “Trinity is an international and multi-generational community dedicated to making disciples of Jesus Christ who are growing in faith, obedience, and joy, as we go out to advance God’s Kingdom.”

**Decision making authority and trust.** Decision making authority and trust tied in number of occurrences at TBC. Leonard shared that trust allows the three

---

bodies—elders, deacons, and trustees “along with the associate pastor and staff make up the decision-making profile” of Trinity Baptist Church:

Trust becomes an important part because in our current structure, we do have elders and trustees and deacons making major decisions that impact everyone else usually in collaboration with other trustees, deacons or elders. And so there needs to be a willingness to trust that those people have been anointed to make those decisions.

Reformed Bible Church (TBC) Findings of the Best Practices of Shared Leadership

Three best practices were present in Reformed Bible Church’s shared leadership approach. The highest ranking occurrence was biblical shared leadership (24), followed by spiritual giftedness (17), relational support (13) and accountability (13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>RBC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Shared Leadership</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Giftedness</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Support</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Authority</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Participation and Input</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant Driven Leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Purpose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Behavior</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Autonomy and Collaboration</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 According to associate pastor Leonard, the board of elders consists of no fewer than three and no more than eighteen elders. The senior pastor also serves as an elder. Each elder, other than the senior pastor, holds the office until death, resignation, disqualification, or removal. Additional elders, if needed are nominated by members. Currently, the church has 26 deacons, 8 trustees, and 6 elders.

Biblical shared leadership. The shared leadership model has to be based upon God’s Word. Otherwise, it will not be as effective or efficient. The goal is to model the Christ-like ministry needed to reach the lost (those who have not accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior); minister to the church congregation, and utilize the various gifts and resources within the body of Christ. Reformed Bible Church practices biblical shared leadership, citing it as “a biblical term.” “But if you are going to have a biblical eldership model in the church, make sure it is in accordance with the model given in Scripture.” Hugh Diggins, the primary teaching elder, even led the church through a sermon series reiterating biblical shared leadership as expressed in Acts (chaps. 6 and 14). Reformed Bible Church elders and members state the church “was modeled after the 1st century church of the Apostles appointing elders and deacons.”

Henkelmann and Carter reinforce team or shared ministry according to God’s Word because the stakes are so high. For example, families are falling apart; people are trying to find meaning in their lives and for their lives. The family of God can meet needs through shared leadership. The goal is to offer a biblical shared leadership approach to ministry for the church and world. Reformed Bible Church seeks to accomplish this goal in the best practices of shared leadership in their ministry context.

Spiritual giftedness. Reformed Bible Church elders have been intentional in serving from their giftedness and encouraging their congregation to do so as well. Diggins is the lead teacher based upon his giftedness. Nevertheless, he knows the other elders are capable and willing to step in when he needs to be away. Each elder partially credits the ease of their shared leadership to operating from their spiritual giftedness. They appreciate the well-roundedness and freedom a plurality of elders brings in the area of spiritual giftedness:

When dealing with a plurality of elders, there is a greater opportunity that gifts

---

34 Henkelmann and Carter, How to Develop a Team Ministry, 11.
will arise out of those individuals, rounding off spiritual gifting within leadership that can be best used to serve the body.

Even the congregation sees the elders serving from their giftedness and are encouraged and trained through sermon series and actual Bible study in serving from one’s own giftedness.

**Relational.** J. B. Carson describes relational support as those sharing leadership who provide emotional and psychological support for one another.\(^{35}\) Reformed Baptist Church has a brotherhood of support for emotional, spiritual, physical, and psychological needs. The elders know that “you go through a period of learning that you are a part of a team . . . you are part of this plurality of elders. We need each other and need to depend on each other. You can’t come in with your agenda.” Furthermore, if one cannot attend Sunday or exercise his responsibilities, each knows others are in place and can carry on. John Beaulieu shared how he knows the others have his back when he needs to be away. He understands the pressure that is alleviated because he is in the ministry with his brothers:

> For me, the blessing of having Hugh, as primary teacher, allows me, as a bivocational person, to not have to dedicate hours to sermon preparation. So I knew a month ago that he was going. Three weeks is enough time for sermon preparation (to step in for him). Having three weeks to prepare a sermon is a lot of time compared to week after week after week. The blessing of being bivocational is that it provides the financial support as I share the Gospel. The plurality of leaders removes the burden that could be there because of my work responsibilities.

**Accountability.** “There is accountability to each other and we have iron sharpening iron study at the start of our monthly meeting,” shares the elders at RBC. These elders have learned the importance of accountability and hold each other in accordance with Scripture. Michael Shane Wood lists accountability as the fourth characteristic of

teams practicing shared leadership well. Elder wives have also come to appreciate this important characteristic over the years, as they see men walking together. Namely they say that they know their husbands are not in the ministry alone but have like-minded men walking together. One elder’s wife stated:

Those who are going to be the elders in shared leadership have to be really genuine brothers in Christ and really care for one another. If you don’t it will be only eldership by name, and there will be tension, lack of accountability and all the things that go with it.

Moreover, accountability is in place and exercised when an elder is considered for service. When an elder begins at the church, they are an “elder in training” for one year, which allows an opportunity to see if he is a proper fit. If not, they inform the candidate and seek another as God leads. Since they do not have a requirement for elders to leave the board after a set number of years, this accountability process is built in so that relationships are maintained with integrity, according to one of the elders.

**Oceanside Christian Fellowship (OCF)**

**Findings of the Best Practices of Shared Leadership**

The top three occurring characteristics at Oceanside Christian Fellowship were relational support (31); trust (21), and spiritual giftedness (21).

The relational support is lived out at OCF. All nine elders do life together, as they term it. Tuesday mornings are devoted to building relational support. The elders credit their relationship among the pastor-elders to being as open as possible. They check in on each other, asking tough questions that arise from prayer requests or during conversations that frequently take place among the pastor-elders: “Perhaps most importantly, however, we are very careful about who we add to the team. They are vetted  

by being part of our church community for a number of years, and then they must spend one year with us as a ‘pastor-elder in training’ to ensure that the fit is right.”

Table 6. Oceanside Christian Fellowship best practices findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>OCF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational Support</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Giftedness</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Shared Leadership</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Authority</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Participation and Input</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Autonomy and Collaboration</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Purpose</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Behavior</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant Driven Leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trust.** Wood described traits exhibited by teams that practice shared leadership: “First, team members intentionally influence one another through an aggregate behavior approach. The goal is for unresponsive members to adjust to the desired behavior or leave the team.” Unresponsive members have to make the necessary adjustments in order for the best practices of shared leadership to occur. When OCF was asked about this question on adjusting behaviors, several shared the adjustments they had to make along the way. One pastor-elder shared how one of the hardest things to do in “migrating to this model is to relinquish control. If that happens, everything is going to fall apart. When in fact, it is actually liberating, and it takes a huge amount of pressure off of a senior pastor’s shoulders.”

---

37 Ibid.
**Spiritual giftedness.** In *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry*, Gangel discusses spiritual giftedness and how it looks when leaders selflessly thrust each other toward the greatest potential of one’s giftedness. This not glorifies God but helps others to reach their greatest potential. Turfism pales, and love for the others propels you forward in helping everyone serve from their giftedness.38 OCF pastor-elders discussed how ministries/roles are divided, largely, on giftedness (and training and availability) largely taken on ministries/roles because of giftedness (preaching, counseling, etc.). For example, Brandon Cash (OCF pastor-elder) shared that “those with the strongest teaching gifts are our regular preachers. Stan has an off the chart gifting in mercy, so he oversees our mercy ministry, etc.

**Collective Findings as Compared to the Literature Review**

The top three most recurring best practices are spiritual giftedness (58); relational support (56), and biblical shared leadership (49).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>RDC</th>
<th>TBC</th>
<th>RBC</th>
<th>OCF</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Giftedness</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Shared Leadership</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each site reiterated the importance of giftedness and serving from these areas of passions. TBC, for example, recognizes that everyone has different gifts as outlined in Scripture, and they “play to one another’s strengths.” RDC pastors discovered that they must be less rigid about perfectly sharing leadership and “respect the ways each of us

have been individually gifted.” Although this may require submission or the death of a
dream, it allows the Holy Spirit to be placed in “a greater position of leadership. We have
really tried to identify gifts of leadership, administration/organization, pastoral care,
service/support, etc.”

One elder from RBC stated the importance of giftedness in the plurality sense in contrast with the single or lone pastor:

The Word of God says God gives gifting in relation to how He chooses . . . and oftentimes a single pastor in the fellowship . . . well that man may not hold any number of gifts. He may be a very good speaker or teacher. But perhaps finances are his weakness. Perhaps any number of the gifts he may be lacking. When you are dealing with a plurality of elders, there is a greater opportunity that gifts will arise out of those individuals, rounding off spiritual gifting within leadership that can be best used to serve the body.

In each case study, shared leadership from the position and passion of spiritual giftedness ranked the highest, unique occurrence.

**Relational support.** Relational support ranked the second highest within the sites as a best practice of shared leadership in a ministry context. This aspect of shared leadership, according to OCF elders, is first important among those actually sharing leadership (as opposed to the staff and members) and was discussed extensively within the online instruments, as well as the onsite interviews. They believe the church body needs to see the relational connection among those sharing leadership in hopes of following in their footsteps. Hellerman stated,

I will tell you as a pastor whose primary calling is to challenge our people to be in healthy community with one another. To have the prophetic credibility to say that because I am in a healthy community with these guys. . . . I can’t even articulate how important that is and how counter intuitive it is, as I think about it, that a senior pastor who answers to no one is up there telling his people to love one another. So I think this is a key thing. I was going to talk about it even if it weren’t one of your questions because it is one of the benefits of the plurality model. I think our people sense what you said that you sensed in us too—the joy, the unity, etc. (They) see us sharing the platform. They see how we interact with each other in the lobby. They really pick up on our love for one another. Now how much that influences them, I don’t know how one would measure that, but we get a lot of feedback from new people coming in to the church that there is really a relational ethos here of some kind that’s kind of unique.
The elders/pastors pray together weekly, building relationships in the process and credit this spiritual discipline of prayer as the bonding agent in their relationships at OCF. Red Door pastors pray together frequently, and the challenges of the model force us to consistently “sharpen one another” and grow in the fruit of the spirit. I can be a senior pastor without needing to always be patient, gentle, submissive, or open-minded. I cannot share leadership without all those things. It keeps us grounded. We also frequently go to counseling to better understand ourselves, each other, our woundedness, our personalities, and our motivations. The more we abide in Jesus, the better our perspective is.

Reformed Bible Church uses the expression of “brothers lift you up to press on,” indicating their reliance on prayer for their relationships in shared leadership, for “over the course of time, a plurality of elders as watchmen can stand strong because they are united and can stand against the wiles of the enemy and the flesh.” Trinity Baptist pastors also shared their dependence on prayer to help them do ministry like the Trinity who illustrates “this perfect balance of shared leadership . . . affirming, loving, relational and incarnational. And I think that’s the way our leadership should be.” Leonard continued with the theme of prayer, explaining it as the necessary component for shared leadership “and not just for the advancement of whatever initiative that you are working on but for each other as individuals because that’s unifying the same way that it would be unifying for husbands and wives to be praying together and for one another.” E. M. Bounds encourages men to be “men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.”39 The elders are using prayer as their spiritual privilege and posture that undergirds the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. Moreover, comments from staff and members of each site were recorded, indicating prayer as an obvious and necessary catalyst to their relationships, which yields the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context.

**Biblical shared leadership.** Biblical shared leadership, the third highest occurrence, is the backbone of the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context.

---

context. Each site reiterated studying the Bible, church history books, visiting churches who have established a biblically-based shared leadership, etc., in order to adhere to this non-negotiable trait within the practice of shared leadership. The RBC congregation affirmed a biblical shared leadership (as they spoke of the elders): “This is not something they came up with or indoctrinated us to. We believe it is the model the Bible tells us to use. We simply go to God’s Word. This only works within a Scripture model.” Red Door’s affirmation of a biblical shared leadership model was “birthed out of conviction.” Another Red Door elder shared that “they wanted multiple voices to lead the church. . . . (They) felt this was a more biblical way to lead the church.” Hellerman, in Embracing Shared Ministry, discussed plurality leadership, highlighting the relational nature, as the biblical model for community formation:

Paul’s philosophy of leadership was markedly relational in nature. From what we can tell, for example, none of Paul’s congregations had a solitary (or “senior”) pastor figure. All were led by a plurality of overseers. And Paul modeled team leadership in his own life and ministry, as well, partnering with Timothy, Silas, and others to spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire.40

This theme of shared leadership was repeatedly echoed by the pastors, elders, staff, and members of each site. Shared leadership was birthed out of conviction to stay scripturally sound, which is one of the ways each site practices the best shared leadership in a ministry context.

**Unique Best Practices**

The best practices as established in the literature review were discovered and used in coding the data gathered from the case studies, isolating the best practices as established in the data. These were discussed earlier by site for clarity and to highlight the best practices of shared leadership in each ministry context.

40Hellerman, Embracing Shared Leadership, 192-93.
During the analysis, four, unique best practices were discovered. For the purpose of this study, the number of occurrences for unique best practices ranged from 41 to 33. The top two were respecting leadership strengths and styles and spiritual wellness.

Table 8. Unique best practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unique Best Practices</th>
<th>RDC</th>
<th>TBC</th>
<th>RBC</th>
<th>OCF</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respecting Leadership Strengths and Styles</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Wellness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Kerzner, a best practice originates as an idea that has a technique or process “more effective at delivering an outcome than any other approach and provides us with the desired outcome with fewer problems or complications.” \(^{41}\) The results of such a process usually end up with the most effective and efficient way of completing the task “based upon a repeatable process that has been proven over time for a large number of people and/or projects.” \(^{42}\) The unique best practices are those, after analyzing the best practices, common among the case studies and not revealed in the literature review.

**Respecting different leadership strengths and styles.** Leadership strengths and styles ranked first as the unique best practice occurrence among the case studies. Warner and the other pastors at Red Door were familiar with each other’s styles and strengths and recognized the indispensable value of working within these personal settings for the best practices of shared leadership:


\(^{42}\)Ibid., 18-19.
Various styles and personalities require us to be patient with each other and to try to
lean into the “best” of each of our preferences, while pushing back on the
shortcomings. For example, Lucas is clearly a ‘support’ role type of leader—he is at
his best when he is not forced to come up with a plan but is able to walk that plan
out with others around him. This contrasts with Giff’s style of leadership which is
communal and spiritually-guided, and mine which tends to be more organizationally
guided.

The pastors also explained how these strengths directly dictate how they share leadership—
based upon their strengths, as they try to create “contexts where we can thrive in the areas
we are strong in, and defer in the areas we are weak in.” They each have pastoral and
practical roles, and the importance of demonstrating both to the congregation can be seen
as they guard each other while serving:

It is important to us to ensure that each of us are able to demonstrate both of those to
the church. Lucas primarily functions as the worship pastor on Sunday mornings, but
we go out of our way to make sure he has opportunities to teach or speak from his
heart to the church pastorally, so that he never becomes the worship or kids’ guy.

The same diligence to lead from this strength and respect for each person is also present
in the other sites. The RBC congregation provided insight into how leadership strengths
and styles are recognized and respected among the elders as they share leadership.
Depending on the need, the members know to whom to take their concerns based upon
the elders’ leadership strengths: “There are many different (leadership) areas, and each
one has their strength in certain areas. So we kind of get a feeling for that depending on
what it is.”

Pastor Leonard from Trinity associates the honesty about leadership strengths
and style to the “art of shared leadership.” He appreciates that he can be “honest about his
strengths and recognize that there are other people in the room who can compensate for
my weaknesses.” He further explained that they use the StrengthsFinder inventory to
discover leadership strengths in order to understand and use them more efficiently.

Although OCF elders/pastors did not mention using an inventory such as
StrengthsFinder, they recognize the need for understanding and capitalizing on leadership

\[43\] StrengthsFinder is a resource created by Gallup to help individuals discover
and develop their strengths. StrengthsFinder, accessed February 1, 2015,

97
strengths. When I asked the group to explain how their leadership strengths/styles affect shared leadership, the response from one of the elders/pastors relayed that “each style or strength helps shoulder the burden of the group.” One of the elders/pastors continued to explain that where he is lacking in a certain leadership strength, the others “have it covered well,” which alleviates unneeded stress.

As I observed the sites and noted the various ways each practices the best shared leadership, they work well together and make the most of all God has provided. Exercising leadership strengths in order to enhance the best practice of shared leadership was definitely well articulated and demonstrated among the leaders.

**Spiritual wellness.** The second unique best practice shared among the sites was spiritual wellness. Spiritual maturity was discovered in the literature review; however, the sites mentioned spiritual wellness over maturity, as wellness ushered in the thought of consistently providing and maintaining what the congregation needs. In addition, it connects to outreach in the community and spiritual formation among members, staff and those sharing leadership. Oceanside Christian Fellowship noted spiritual wellness as the component that makes shared leadership and their church in general “so much healthier. It is church as close as I think we get to being open and trusting and being a community that is healthy together . . . for health to exist, spiritual health has to be there. (It happens as we all are) pursuing God.” RBC elders also encouraged spiritual wellness or nourishment from the top down and shared similar sentiments as they discussed spiritual health and its connection to God’s Word: “Each elder serves using the Word and expositional teaching . . . individual (leadership) styles and gifting are encouraged. Personal study is seen as critical. Preaching to the lost and bringing spiritual nourishment for his own from the living Word.” Moreover, the members of Reformed Bible Church witness spiritual wellness as expressed by the elders and connect it to the spiritual wellness of the congregation at large. They see these men chosen by God to lead them, staying in the Word as they serve from a heart of patience and humility. The elders recognize what
Christ did for them as they approach Scripture and understand the need for their spiritual well-being as a community of believers:

From the standpoint of Christ did this for me . . . there is an attitude of submission in their hearts. It comes from a heart that recognizes the weight of their own sins. As a congregant, I can look at them and say I can identify with that. I've been broken like that as well.

The members understand more clearly as the elders express their need for spiritual wellness through the continuing work of the Word as they read and apply it to their lives, as well as their decision-making process. Furthermore, their constitution clearly articulates that elders are to “watch over the spiritual affairs of the church, to guide, guard and feed the flock of God according to the principles of the Word of God to prevent corruption of doctrine or morals from entering.”

The elders clearly understand the importance of spiritual wellness and their responsibility to oversee the results.

One of the staff members of Trinity also cited the importance of spiritual wellness and connected it to how the elders “develop the congregation to be future leaders.” This member understands spiritual wellness is crucial to moving them along in spiritual formation. Trinity’s pastors look for creative ways of doing this, recognizing the value in every person as they seek to provide the environment for spiritual wellness to occur:

Every person has been uniquely made with incredible gifts that God has instilled in them, and for whatever reason He has brought them here at this time and this place. So we need to be sensitive to what God is doing and assume that every person can bring value. Now having said that, part of that requires a great deal of discernment because sometimes people don’t know exactly what God is wanting to do through them. They are not aware of their greatest gifts and their strengths or their aptitudes.

Trinity’s pastors work closely with staff and leaders within the congregation to lead their flock in spiritual wellness. Likewise, Red Door elders are concerned about its flock’s spiritual wellness, giving elected elders and core community members the freedom to address unhealthy spiritual issues or anything that they determine would impede spiritual

---

44Reformed Bible Church, “Constitution of Reformed Bible Church.”
wellness. The elders recognize that they must demonstrate spiritual wellness among themselves as they seek to shepherd the flock and reach their community.

**Commitment and Conflict Resolution** were the final two unique, best practices discovered. Each site was decidedly aware of and alert to the importance of these unique, best characteristics. The elders were committed to adhering to God’s Word, which is why each listed shared leadership as their chosen way of obedience. “For us, that has been the glue—the commitment,” stated one of the Red Door Church elders. One of the Reformed Bible elders discussed their commitment in terms of prayer, stating that “we have to go back to committing this (shared leadership) to prayer. We examine this according to Scripture.”

Conflict resolution was the least occurring, unique best practice; however, this characteristic was discussed and considered one of the nonnegotiable traits for the best practices of shared leadership to occur and be maintained. One of the elders even considered conflict resolution to be “an important spiritual discipline because shared leadership cannot thrive otherwise.” Moreover, the members receive instruction on conflict resolution and have come to understand its important role:

Where they’ve (the elders) had to make some tough calls, they were very transparent if the issue pertained to people not being here anymore. Ultimately the goal was restoration. Yet, it’s one thing to have a problem and identify. It’s another thing to be able to deal with. Ultimately the greater joy is knowing that healing is happening. James Leonard of Trinity Baptist in New York had similar thoughts about conflict resolution:

Conflict resolution or reconciliation is essential. In order to accomplish things well, you have to be able to be on the same page relationally. And too often, I think we sweep conflict under the rug, which then breeds resentment. And it breeds distrust. It breeds things that keep a team from really moving forward. So when anyone on the team senses there is conflict between two other members on the team, you have to put that on the table and say, before we move forward, we need to deal with this conflict that is keeping us from being able to collaborate or work together.

Although the literature review rendered several characteristics for the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context, unique characteristics were revealed after
reviewing the case study results. Both characteristics undergird the best practice of shared leadership in each case study.

**Summary of Research Findings**

The goal of the study was to identify the best practices of shared leadership in a multiple case study of Christian churches where leaders are intentionally practicing shared leadership in a ministry context. Nine of the thirteen best practices discovered in the literature review were also prevalent in the case studies. The data also unveiled four unique best practices among the case studies.

**Evaluation of Research Design**

Yin explains that the case study is preferred when examining contemporary events “but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated.” The case study’s unique strength is the ability of the researcher to deal with a plethora of evidence—documents, artifacts, interviews and observations. In this qualitative, multiple case study, I used various evidentiary support to identify the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. Nine of the 13 best practices discovered in the literature review were identified after analyzing the data gathered. In addition, four unique best practices were identified.

The research design enabled the discovery of the findings of the current study. Moreover, the case study findings may not be generalized to all Christian leaders sharing leadership in a ministry context. Nevertheless, the findings can be a precursor to the understanding and the application of shared leadership principles to those interested in establishing shared leadership in a ministry context.

---


46 Ibid.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

One of Red Door Church’s elder’s words echo loudly:

Shared leadership prevents burnout, provides community for pastoral loneliness, gives clearer boundaries for who can be ‘in-the-know’ about pastoral situations (preventing gossip or grapevine communication), and helps lift the burden of practical responsibilities. Most of all, it allows us to realistically name where we are strongly gifted and where we are not. The church can end up with a plurality of leaders who are able to ‘own their gifting’ and not feel the burden to operate in areas they are not gifted, thus making the entire church stronger.

Shared leadership, based upon the research, does make the church stronger when practiced from a biblical foundation. Moreover, “as it turns out, plurality leadership is an eminently biblical option.”1 In light of shared leadership as a biblical option, this study was conducted to answer, “What best practices of shared leadership can be identified from a multiple case study of Christian churches where leaders are intentionally practicing shared leadership in a ministry context?” The research question was answered according to the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context as supported in the literature review. Those best practices were

1. A biblical understanding of and motivation for shared leadership in a ministry context is foundational.

2. Leadership shares power and decision-making authority.

3. A particular environment is established for shared leadership to thrive: (1) shared purpose—team members have similar understanding of objectives and focused collective goals, (2) relational or social support within leadership—team members try to provide emotional and psychological support for one another, (3) participation and input within leadership—members have a voice in the sharing of leadership, (4) accountability is practiced within the leadership team, (5) trust is exercised within the leadership team, (6) team members have adjusted to the desired behavior for

shared leadership to be successful, and (7) communication is open and intentional among those practicing shared leadership.

4. There is a balance of personal autonomy and collaboration among members.
5. Leadership style is more servant-driven, which is what Jesus modeled.
6. Spiritual maturity is evident.
7. Spiritual giftedness is recognized and utilized in a synergistic collaborative manner.

The occurrences of best practices discovered in the literature review and identified among the case studies are illustrated in table 9. Each case study was found to support the best practices of shared leadership in their context with nominal exceptions.

Table 9. Best practices characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>RDC</th>
<th>TBC</th>
<th>RBC</th>
<th>OCF</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Giftedness</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Shared Leadership</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Authority</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Maturity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Participation and Input</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Autonomy and Collaboration</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Purpose</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Behavior</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant Driven Leadership</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four unique, best practices were discovered among the case studies: respecting leadership strengths and styles; spiritual wellness; commitment, and conflict resolution. The occurrence rankings are shown in table 8 in chapter 4, and illustrate the number of occurrences as experienced by site. The two highest ranking occurrences were respecting leadership strengths and styles and spiritual wellness.

Although each case study has a vastly different background and setting, the uniting points hinge on biblical shared leadership. Each site intentionally established a biblically shared leadership model. Thus, being in relationship with each other as brothers was foundational to the success of shared leadership and effectively ministering to and with the flock under their care. Based upon the data of this qualitative study, best practices of shared leadership as discovered in the literature review were common among the sites, and unique best practices were also present. Church leaders and individuals interested in a biblically shared leadership model can glean understanding from this work that can guide them in how the best practices of shared leadership were established in the case studies presented, and, in turn, utilize the principles shared.

Other findings from the data can also prove invaluable in moving toward the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context for those willing and ready for the challenges plurality of leaders ushers in: (1) shared leadership can be successfully practiced in various church settings; (2) those practicing shared leadership experienced slow numerical growth; (3) the best practices of shared leadership expresses the Christ-centered relationships the church should exercise, and (4) shared leadership helps the church navigate conflict resolution biblically as the elders hold each other accountable and guide the process as a team and as a church body.

Research Conclusions

Shared Leadership Can Be Successfully Practiced in Various Church Settings

The best shared leadership practices supersede a church’s setting. Shared leadership can be successfully modeled in church plants, churches in cities or rural areas,
in small, medium, or large congregations. Hellerman reminds that the New Testament structure of plurality leadership protects churches from “harmful activities of these dysfunctional, isolated leaders, and encouraging the healthy exercise of pastoral authority.”

Jordan Warner shared that if the church is to function and be cared for according to Scripture, “models of leadership which create space for a variety of spiritual gifts, perspectives and personality types to collectively and collaboratively lead the church” must be exercised in churches. Each case study selected exercises the best practices of shared leadership; however, the church settings are drastically different. Red Door is a small church plant just over four years old; Reformed Bible Church is a small, rural church in Vermont; Oceanside Christian Fellowship is a medium size congregation in the suburbs of Los Angeles, and Trinity Baptist Church is a medium size church where over 31 languages are spoken on any given Sunday in Manhattan. Yet each is firmly established on the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. Each believes the biblical responsibility to model their church after the first century church is greater than their setting or other restraints, trusting God to help them function within the plurality model.

In Acts 20:28, Paul reminds the Ephesians elders that they have been placed by God the Holy Spirit as overseers who will shepherd the flock. In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter encourages the elders to be totally given to the flock as shepherds. These churches are following the biblical model in their respective settings and exemplifying the best practices of shared leadership. According to Marshall Goldsmith, “sharing leadership

\[\text{2Hellerman, } Embracing \text{ Shared Ministry, } 195.\]

may be a requirement, not an option.”

The secular world has gleaned and is using the principles of shared leadership. Yet it is the church with the greatest investment—eternal in nature. If the church is to fulfill the Great Commission, how much more, then, should Christians recognize and pursue shared leadership to be biblically aligned with the first century church, involving a team of pastors or elders?

**Those Practicing Shared Leadership Experienced Slow Numerical Growth**

While others sharing leadership have noticed numerical growth, significant at times, the elders of each case study site stated that their numerical growth has been slow and steady. They report there has never been a huge spike—just consistent growth. Nevertheless, each reaffirmed spiritual benefits and growth far outweigh numerical growth—both for those directly sharing leadership, as well as the congregation reaping the benefits of diversified leadership and gifts. Moreover, the elders believe people can often be attracted to a particular personality, creating “growth in droves. Then if that personality left, the people would leave in droves. Jesus called us to bear fruit that would last.”

**Christ-Centered Relationships Are Expressed**

In discussing shared leadership and the benefits it brings when practiced within a biblical framework, Hellerman shared a benefit many overlook or fail to connect in a shared leadership approach: “As a plurality of pastors-elders open their lives up to each other and to their congregation, Christian community expressed as Christ-centered

---

relationships ensues.” Hellerman sited Philippians 2: 6-11 where Paul admonished the Philippians to “defer in honor to their Christian siblings. And this honor would be granted to those who used their social capital in the service of others, after the example of Jesus.” This “social context is everything to a healthy pastoral ministry.” Thus, Paul established churches with a plurality of elders’ model. Moreover, “Paul modeled team ministry in his own missionary journeys, as well, traveling with bands of like-minded persons throughout the eastern Roman Empire.”

Jesus modeled team ministry, and His followers modeled team ministry. Social context of ministry was established by God. As each case study site established the best practices of shared leadership over the years, they discovered that Christ-centered relationships the church should exercise were expressed. The social aspect of ministry became a by-product of their obedience.

The elders of each case study “expect healthy relationships happen when the leaders help things happen in the congregation.” As the elders cultivate relationships with each other during weekly meetings and simply doing life together, they hold meetings with leaders throughout the church at least on a quarterly basis, developing relationships as they invest in each other with the intentions of becoming family. Paul’s twofold strategy for leadership and community formation play out through the best practices of shared leadership at each site. Christ-centered relationships are forged and expressed through the best practices of shared leadership.


6Ibid.

7Ibid.

8Ibid., 198.
Shared Leadership Helps the Church Navigate Conflict Resolution Biblically

Conflict resolution is a necessary component for any group—especially the Body of Christ. To be about kingdom business also means to be alert for dissension and other distractions from the cause of Christ. Conflict is natural and to be expected when people interact; however, to live supernaturally is the way Christians will provide an authentic, Christ-centered representation of what it means to live in union with Christ. Thus, conflict has to be biblically addressed. Shared leadership helps the church navigate conflict resolution biblically.

Each case study shared the importance of conflict resolution within the elder body and church body as a whole. One elder expressed what elders from each site believe and practice:

I think that conflict resolution or reconciliation is essential. In order to accomplish things well, you have to be able to be on the same page relationally. And too often, I think we sweep conflict under the rug, which then breeds resentment and distrust. It breeds things that keep a team from really moving forward. So when anyone on the team senses there is conflict between two other members on the team, you have to put that on the table and say, before we move forward, we need to deal with this conflict that is keeping us from being able to collaborate or work together.

The elders pray together and handle conflict according to God’s Word. They hold each other accountable, as well as members of the congregation, bringing in outside assistance as necessary. Every situation is different, of course. Yet the elders practice conflict resolution by standing firm with the attitude of “deal with it as soon as it manifests.” The elders uniformly believe the beauty of conflict resolution is expressed in character formation, emotional formation, and development of the fruit of the Spirit. “A lot of awkward conversations are the end result. Although conflict resolution remains uncomfortable, tough conversations are easier with practice.”

Contribution to the Literature Base

The results of this study are important to the literature base, as the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context have not been studied. Generally, insight into
shared leadership has been gleaned from secular businesses, healthcare, and education. Thus, this multicase study contributed a list of best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context.

The intent for the study was to establish a list of the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. While this study cannot be generalized, the findings can be helpful to church leaders or Christian organizations currently practicing shared leadership or those who are interested in learning more about the best practices of shared leadership as experienced and expressed in various ministry contexts. Moreover, in doing so, unique best practices to the case studies were also established. Analysis of the data suggests that church leaders sharing leadership practice have the same, as well as unique best practices. Both Christian and non-Christian leaders can benefit from the findings.

**Recommendations for Shared Leadership Practice**

Many have their thoughts about God and about His church—what they think God is like and what they think His church should be like. Nevertheless, what God has said about Himself in His Word and has said about His church is the heart of the matter. If the church is to be and multiply healthy followers of Christ, it has to be concerned with translating all it does and says through the epistemological presuppositions based upon the Word. The Word became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, and Christianity was born with His coming. Through His life, His followers have the supreme example of how to live and treat one another. Through His death and resurrection, hope and security of eternal life became real for those who believe in Him and accept the grace His love provides. Subsequently, the Holy Spirit enables His followers to continue with the mission of God as set in eternal motion by His Son.

The New Testament provides a rich legacy for faith, in which the apostles, following Christ, trained men to fulfil the Great Commission. The apostles’ pattern for establishing churches who would live out the Great Commission was based upon a team
of elders.\textsuperscript{9} Evangelizing and strengthening the church for generations to come\textsuperscript{10} is crucial, and it will take a team of leaders sharing leadership. Based upon this research, the following recommendations are offered in light of the tremendous task of fulfilling the Great Commission.

\textbf{The Basic Benchmarks of Healthy Christianity Develop Best through Shared Leadership}

Hellerman discussed the basic benchmarks of healthy Christianity as spiritual maturity, transparency, and community. They “have all but vanished from day-to-day ministry at the top level of church leadership.”\textsuperscript{11} Instead, subtle manipulation and even abuse of pastoral authority as the senior pastor (lone ranger pastor) governs with his personal agenda in tow.\textsuperscript{12}

Shared leadership harnesses the gifts, resources, and leadership skills of those serving as a team. No longer is the top person making all of the decisions and casting his vision. A team of pastors who “share life together, who genuinely love one another, and who lead their church, as a team, out of the richness of the soil of those peer relationships”\textsuperscript{13} serve as authentic Christian leaders, leading the church in a biblical fashion.

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11}Hellerman, \textit{Embracing Shared Ministry}, 305.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 306.
Chemistry Commands Attention in the Best Practices of Shared Leadership

In most cases, what the average Christian wants most from spiritual leaders is to be loved and to be cared for.\(^{14}\) True biblical eldership consists of men serving as joint pastors in the local church. Men are chosen according to biblical qualifications. These teams of men are able to provide stable, consistent, sustaining pastoral care for the flock. While leadership traits and even spiritual giftedness are not as important in the selection process as biblical qualifications, each site reiterated “chemistry” or “fit” as an important component to consider during the trial period each candidate serves prior to being confirmed as an elder.

The elders of each case study embraced spiritual giftedness and listed this as an important component of how shared leadership plays out in everyday life of the church:

There is a general awareness of leadership styles, and some assignments might be given/accepted on that basis. Most of the assignments/organization for ministry is related, however, to giftedness. After working together for some time, certain spiritual gifts are seen in members of the group, and these naturally gravitate to ministry assignments.

Moreover, the biblical qualifications as outlined in Scripture are the starting point for any man being considered, but the sites also listed the quality of chemistry among the elders ministering together. The starting point for consideration are biblical qualifications, but each site requires a period given to working with the new elders in order to see if the chemistry or fit is there.

The California elders have what they consider a time of vetting where they consider chemistry and character. This period is usually a year, providing the team of elders the window of opportunity to work alongside, develop a relationship, and even supported a team of three qualities that are important to confirm during this vetting period that usually lasts a year at OCF—chemistry (and character) are considered on a much deeper level as relationships form and leadership traits are witnessed on a personal basis.

“There has to be a like-mindedness in the group. It has to be the careful choosing of those who are going to be a part of the team. You aren’t just trying to find people who think like you. That’s a misunderstanding.”

Each site confirmed and recognized that the elders or overseers are set by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20: 20, 26-28) and lean on the Him to guide, they also test the Spirit so that they walk wisely in their choices of elders. “If the (candidate) doesn’t bring good chemistry to the team, then it should be a deal breaker.”

**Recommendations for Practice**

Shared leadership harnesses the gifts and resources of those in leadership.

Furthermore, if practiced utilizing the characteristics as disclosed in the literature review, as well as the unique characteristics within the case studies presented, the entire church body and community benefit from the overflow of obedience of leaders to God’s Word—exemplified through the ministry of Jesus Christ. Often defined within the context of team efforts when teams function as a unit to accomplish the work of ministry, the pastoral oversight provided by the team disperses responsibilities usually delegated from one to multiple leaders. Stable, long-term, pastoral care for the people of God, as well as the spiritual development of Christian character, leadership abilities, and teaching ministry is also disseminated.

Michael D. Kocolowski investigated shared leadership to determine its practicality for organizations adopting this model. He argues that leadership affects the failure and success of an organization while recognizing that today’s business environment increases leadership challenges. One individual simply cannot encompass all the skills and abilities needed to effectively lead. The truth is that the church is no less exempt;

---

15 Ibid., 35.
16 Ibid.
17 Michael Kocolowski, “Shared Leadership: Is It Time for a Change?”
for the Great Commission renders leadership an even more important challenge for church organization.

A review of the literature illustrated the practice of shared leadership for centuries—namely in healthcare and education. Research on the subject is still in its infancy with much to learn from those modeling the best practices of shared leadership, which includes churches. While research confirms that shared leadership has its challenges and can be difficult to implement, the benefits of shared leadership render it a necessary implementation. Moreover, as churches follow Jesus’ ministry model, they look more like the first century churches. In light of this research, churches of all sizes should consider implementing a shared leadership approach. I offer the following recommendations for practice.

**Intentional Biblical Approach**

If church leaders are to implement the best practices of shared leadership, a biblical approach must be researched, studied, and intentionally implemented. While churches may term their shared leadership differently, eldership is the term most recognized by the case studies shared in this research.

Alexander Strauch was the common denominator for each site when implementing a biblical, shared leadership model. He lists five reasons the practice of shared leadership through eldership is important:

1. God’s Word teaches pastoral eldership. If it is in the Word, that should settle it.
2. Biblical eldership promotes the true nature of the church.
3. It provides genuine accountability through the formal structure of shared leadership by elders.

4. It provides true peer relationships, which promotes balance and comfort within the leadership.

5. It provides balanced care for the church, as it presents a more balanced leadership.\(^{18}\)

Strauch continues with further explanation of biblical eldership. First, eldership, should be by the book—it will represent eldership according to what the Bible teaches. Next, eldership should be pastoral. In Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1-2, Paul and Peter disclose what model churches should use if they are to obey the Word. This model should be led by biblically qualified men (Titus 1:1-9; 1 Tim 3:2-3, 1 Tim 5:17). Next, elders should be spirit appointed as mentioned in Acts 20:28. The Spirit of the living God calls men who are to be appointed as elders. Eldership is a calling. Finally, the pastoral oversight of elders is by a plurality of qualified elders, which will include diversity and equality. There will be differences of gifts, calling, interests, time, and experiences,\(^{19}\) yet the men are equal in office. Strauch reminds that Peter, James, and John were obvious leaders of the 12, but the 12 were co-equals.\(^{20}\)

Many problems in the church today, such as burn-out, moral failures, and other challenges, arise from leadership not following biblical, shared model by its very nature covers the church in many areas of ministry.

Unleash the Gifts and Resources of God’s People Providing a Place for Them to Live Out Their Calling

The church most often selects leaders with some form of degree—seminary, university, etc. Oftentimes, the qualified leader is viewed as one with the degree or degrees, years of experiences, and other attributes that generally mark the candidate as worthy for ministry. Yet, God looks at the heart and seeks to include all who will serve

\(^{18}\) Alexander Strauch, “What Is Biblical Eldership,” accessed April 14, 2015, http://biblicaleldership.com/. This website also explains how a church can implement biblical eldership, including multiple resources by various authors.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
Him, using their giftedness. First Corinthians 12 discusses a wide diversity of gifts and services within the body of Christ. This is the springboard from which God’s people live out their calling as leadership provides the training and opportunity for service.

**Promotes the Sanctification of Leaders and a Natural Overflow for Accountability**

Nancy Leigh DeMoss writes, “Humbling yourself by letting others into your life and allowing them to help you and hold you accountable will release the sanctifying, transforming grace of God in your life.”

Hoekema defines sanctification:

> That gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which He delivers us as justified sinners from the pollution of sin, renews our entire nature according to the image of God and enable us to live lives that are pleasing to him.

By pollution, Hoekema is referring to the corruption of one’s nature: “A corruption that is the result of sin, and that, in turn produces further sin.”

The best practices of shared leadership remove the walls of pride, jealousy, and other heart-issues that tend to plague leaders—especially the lone leader. As iron sharpens iron, so leaders sharpen each other as they work together to accomplish goals of ministry, balancing weaknesses, and correcting character issues.

**Further Suggestions for Research**

The goal of this research was to answer the question, what are the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. There are plenty of practical applications for its results. Future work includes developing an evaluation tool for shared leadership; the impact of conflict resolution on shared leadership, and leadership

---


23 Ibid.
development conducive to the best practices of shared leadership.

Each site agreed evaluation was a missing component. Michael Martin, an elder-pastor at Oceanside Christian Fellowship, stated that they really need to do better at evaluating their shared leadership process. Further research delving into the process of shared leadership could render a type of inventory to guide teams in periodic health checks for their environment to thrive, supporting the best practices. Thus, a particular methodology for evaluation could be established in order to measure for the desired outcome.

Conflict resolution is another area for further research as it relates to the best practices of shared leadership. Those establishing shared leadership or considering using this model would find this component invaluable. Hellerman, at Oceanside Christian Fellowship, reiterated how important conflict resolution is to the success of shared leadership. Nevertheless, many leaders overlook the damage unresolved conflict or overlooked conflict has on trust, communication, and other characteristics of the best practices of shared leadership. Boyd, at Trinity Baptist Church, also had strong caution about the undermining effects of conflict on a team:

Too often conflict is swept under the rug, which then breeds resentment, which breeds distrust. It breeds issues that keep a team from really moving forward. So when anyone on the team senses conflict between two other members on the team, one has to put that on the table and say, before we move forward, we need to deal with this conflict that is keeping us from being able to collaborate or work together.

Conflict occurs in all aspects of life, and Christians have to lead from a place unlike the world in every area, including resolving conflict based upon biblical principles.

Leadership development is another area for further shared leadership research. Are leadership traits more suitable for the best practices of shared leadership than others? Are certain leadership traits or styles even at work within the best practices? Can leadership development provide a framework for the best practices of shared leadership? These are sample questions for leadership development considered in conjunction with shared leadership. This type of shared leadership is one based upon leading as Jesus led.
Blanchard discusses this leadership style as a journey that starts in the heart and travels through the head. It is more than a leader who can simply recite a theory of leadership. The leader’s behavior actually changes to be more like Jesus.\textsuperscript{24} With the changing and complex church environment, leadership that is more collaborative needs to be understood and practiced. McIntosh writes, “By all current measures, it appears that effective pastoral staff teams of the twenty-first century will reflect more of a collaborative approach.”\textsuperscript{25} Seminaries and churches could use the information gathered from further study of leadership development within shared leadership to create curriculum and train leaders for the best practices within this model.

**Conclusion**

The best practices of shared leadership as expressed and experienced in each case study have an abundance of guiding factors for church leaders who wish to serve and equip according to a biblical perspective of shared leadership. The examples are plentiful, including the ministry of Jesus as He chose the 12 disciples. The diversity among the group was not only encouraged but furthered God’s mission.

The Great Commission has not changed. Nor is it any less urgent today. Christians are still called to serve God through reaching others in hopes of changing lives for eternity. The church can only reach the masses as it works together as a team, exercising the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context.


\textsuperscript{25}Gary McIntosh. *Staff Your Church for Growth: Building Team Ministry in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 175-76.
APPENDIX 1

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context. This research is being conducted by Shelly Johns for purposes of completing the capstone thesis in the Doctor of Education program at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions as they relate to the best (most effective) practices of shared leadership in a ministry context.

You may be recorded (video and/or audio) during the follow-up session to assist in the researcher’s note taking. Furthermore, the researcher will observe day to day operations and/or church services for the research. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Thank you for participating as a case study in this research.

Date: ________________________________

Participant Signature: ________________________________
APPENDIX 2

BEST PRACTICES OF SHARED LEADERSHIP
IN A MINISTRY CONTEXT

*Best = most effective

Shared leadership, for this research, will be defined and considered:

“Relational, collaborative leadership process or phenomenon involving teams or groups that mutually influence one another and collectively share duties and responsibilities otherwise relegated to a single, central leader.” (Michael Kocolowski, 2010, 22).

Shared leadership, in summary, reenvisions the ‘who’ and ‘where’ of leadership by focusing on the need to distribute the tasks and responsibilities of leadership up, down, and across the hierarchy. The ‘what’ of leadership is reenvisioned by stressing leadership occurs in and through social interactions. The ‘how’ of leadership focuses on skills and ability needed for collective learning to occur (Pearce and Conger, 2003, 24).

This questionnaire is designed to give the researcher insight into the “best practices in a ministry context.” Please begin by entering your first and last name followed by your age into the appropriate phrase-box. To enter your responses, place the cursor in the center of the phrase-box, “Click here to enter text.” Then left click, which highlights the phrase-box, “Click here to enter text.” You may type inside the phrase-box once it has been highlighted. Follow these instructions to enter each response.

First Name Click here to enter text.

Last Name Initial only Click here to enter text.

“X” your age? Click here to enter text.

Background

1. What is your weekly attendance for worship? Click here to enter text.

2. What is your role on the team? Click here to enter text.

3. How many serve with you and what are the roles of each? Click here to enter text.

4. Illustrate the diversity of those sharing leadership by placing the appropriate number next to how he is categorized:
   - Full-time Click here to enter text.
   - Part-time Click here to enter text.
   - Bivocational Click here to enter text.
   - Volunteer Click here to enter text.
   - Other. Please be specific. Click here to enter text.
5. If “shared leadership” is not the actual name used but practiced, what name is used instead? If referred to as “shared leadership,” place that name in the content box. Click here to enter text.

6. What led to the implementation of shared leadership at your church? Be specific and as detailed as possible. Click here to enter text.

7. Why was shared leadership selected as the option? Click here to enter text.

8. What steps were taken to implement shared leadership? Click here to enter text.

9. Explain the shared leadership style implemented and why that style (i.e. elder model, plurality of leaders, etc.). Click here to enter text.

B. Mechanics of the Best Practices of Shared Leadership in a Ministry Context

10. Describe what has been tweaked, over the years, with the implementation of shared leadership in your ministry context. In other words, explain what did not work; what is working, and describe aspects of shared leadership that have been redefined to bring optimal results for ministry. Click here to enter text.

11. Burn out, divorce rates, and health issues in general have been attributed to long hours of ministry, false expectations, shouldering the burden of ministry alone, etc. Click here to enter text.

12. If shared leadership distributes the ministry, allowing responsibilities and gifts to be shared by a group of leaders, explain if you and then others sharing leadership here have benefited and/or recovered from ministry struggles. Click here to enter text.

13. Explain how less significant to very significant decisions are made at your church? (Goal is to guide understanding of how shared leadership disperses the decision making process as opposed to the sole leader making the decisions.) Click here to enter text.

14. What safe guards are in place to maintain the integrity of practicing shared leadership? Click here to enter text.

C. Leadership Background among Those Sharing Leadership.

15. What individual leadership styles were considered when organizing your group/team? Click here to enter text.

16. What spiritual gifts are displayed among those sharing leadership within your ministry context? Click here to enter text.

17. Explain how each leadership style or trait affects shared leadership within the ministry context? Click here to enter text.

18. Explain how responsibilities are shared among leadership and why it is set up this way. Click here to enter text.
19. How is spiritual growth encouraged and aided among the leadership team? Click here to enter text.

20. Explain staff training mandates, expectations, and/or opportunities that enhances or facilitates personal/professional development among those sharing leadership. Click here to enter text.

21. Provide the educational background of yourself and others (seminary degree, non-seminary degree, college degree, etc.) serving on the team. Click here to enter text.
APPENDIX 3

SHARED LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Best Practices of Shared Leadership in a Ministry Context
*Best = most effective

Shared leadership, for this research, will be defined and considered:

“Relational, collaborative leadership process or phenomenon involving teams or groups that mutually influence one another and collectively share duties and responsibilities otherwise relegated to a single, central leader.” (Michael Kocolowski, 2010, 22).

Shared leadership, in summary, reenvisions the ‘who’ and ‘where’ of leadership by focusing on the need to distribute the tasks and responsibilities of leadership up, down, and across the hierarchy. The ‘what’ of leadership is reenvisioned by stressing leadership occurs in and through social interactions. The ‘how’ of leadership focuses on skills and ability needed for collective learning to occur (Pearce and Conger, 2003, 24).

A. Shared Leadership Environment

Literature supports an environment of trust; communication; purpose; conflict resolution intentionality; commitment; spiritual maturity; accountability; balance of collaboration (able to work within the group) and personal autonomy (able to complete one’s work responsibilities); relational or social support within the staff; intentionally practicing shared leadership; servant leadership style, and demonstrated competencies (capable of handling responsibilities and completing tasks with desired results) for the best practices of shared leadership. Remember: “best” denotes most effective.

1. Describe (list characteristics/traits) the shared leadership environment in your ministry context.

2. What personal behavior(s) did you have to change or adjust to create the proper environment for the best practices of shared leadership to occur?

3. List the proper behavior leaders sharing leadership should exercise for the best practices in a ministry context to develop.
4. What characteristics must be cultivated and practiced to create an environment for shared leadership to flourish?

5. Explain how the above environment was established in your ministry context?

6. Explain how this environment is maintained and evaluated.

7. What would you consider the top three to five best practices of shared leadership to be?

B. Results of the Best Practices of Shared Leadership in a Ministry Context

8. Share insights of how shared leadership is impacting your congregation numerically.

9. Explain how shared leadership is impacting spiritual growth within the congregation.

10. Explain how shared leadership is impacting the spiritual growth of the leadership team.

11. How is shared leadership among the leaders allowing the church to impact its community and beyond with the Gospel?

12. Share any external coaching, resources, spiritual disciplines or outside assistance utilized to move your leadership team toward best practices of shared leadership.

C. Shared Leadership in a Ministry Context Closing Insights

13. What other insights can you add about the best practices of shared leadership at your church?

14. What suggestions can you offer churches interested in implementing the best practices of shared leadership?
15. What precautions would you share with churches pertaining to the practice of shared leadership?

16. What books were helpful to you in understanding and implementing the best practices of shared leadership in a ministry context?
### Table A1. Cumulative best practices and unique practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>RDC</th>
<th>TBC</th>
<th>RBC</th>
<th>OCF</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Giftedness*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Support*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Shared Leadership*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting Leadership Strengths and Styles**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Authority*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Wellness**</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Maturity*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Participation and Input*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Autonomy and Collaboration*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Purpose*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Behavior*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Resolution**</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant Driven Leadership*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity**</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Best Practices */Unique Practices**
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


**Articles**


Dissertations and Projects


Espy, Glen William. “Perceptions of the Relational Factors Necessary for Building Effective Team Ministry in the Local Church.” Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005


Roberts, Kevin Lynn. “Leading the Staff of Cadiz Baptist Church, Cadiz, Kentucky, into a More Effective Team-Based Ministry.” D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012.
ABSTRACT

SHARED LEADERSHIP: BEST PRACTICE
IN A MINISTRY CONTEXT

Sheldena Juanette Johns, Ed.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Chair: Dr. Michael S. Wilder

This qualitative, multiple case study was concerned with the best practice of shared leadership in a ministry context. Four specific churches were considered for this study between September and November 2014. Data was gathered from the four churches through online questionnaires administered to leaders, on site interviews with leaders and staff, published material from each church, notes documented while observing, sermons on shared leadership, training materials, bylaws, and other pamphlets or material to discover and isolate the number of occurrences of the established best practices, as well as possible unique best practices in each ministry context. The top three highest occurrences of established best practices in a ministry context were spiritual giftedness, relational support, and biblical shared leadership. Unique best practices were discovered and isolated as well. It is hopeful this study will assist leaders and others interested in the best practices of biblical shared leadership.
VITA

Sheldena Juanette Johns

EDUCATIONAL
- B.A., Georgia State University, 1989
- M.A.C.E., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995

MINISTERIAL
- Women and Senior Adult Consultant, Kentucky Baptist Convention, 1997-

ORGANIZATIONAL
- Religious Conference Management Association