Christ Like Leaders for Every Church: A Qualitative Research Perspective
Lausanne Talk Script

Good morning! I'm happy to be here with you today. My topic is "Christ like leaders for every church: a Christian research perspective." I hope to do several things with you all this morning. First, I want to talk a little about what the Bible says about leaders, although this is not a sermon or a theological lecture. Next, I want to consider a few Western leadership theories, particularly ones that people tend to think are good Christian leadership theories. Part of the problem is that even though they may work well with a Christian ethos, they're still Western. From there, I want to talk a bit about how qualitative research can help you understand and develop good Christian leadership perspectives and models that work and make sense in your specific context. Finally, I will present some examples of recent research done by students in the doctoral program where I teach. Each of them explored good leadership in their local context. And each of them created new, context- specific and context-appropriate leadership models for the places they live and work.

Before I get started, I want to tell you a little about myself and my family. My husband, Paul, is here with us this week. We've been married for 30 years and have two grown daughters who live and work in Atlanta, GA, USA. This is one of my favorite photos of the whole family, taken recently at my parents' 80th birthday celebration.

Right after I graduated from college, at the age of 20, I moved to Austria to work with a student ministry there. I spent two years doing evangelism and discipleship with Austrian college students. At the end of that time, I returned to the US to attend seminary. That's where I met Paul. We married and after graduation we returned to Austria to work in evangelism and church planting. Our girls spent their early years in Austria, learning German and enjoying the snow. Then after some years, we moved to Barcelona, Spain. We continued working in church planting and evangelism. Over the years I moved into more and more education ministries, so that by the end of our time in Spain I was teaching at the Spanish Bible Institute. While living in Spain, I earned a Doctor of Ministry from Gordon-Conwell. And then not long after that, I did a PhD in adult education at the University of Georgia. For both degrees, my research projects focused on missionary women.

Five years ago, God led us to California. Paul currently works as Director of Innovation for Frontier Ventures. I am associate professor of Intercultural Studies and Intercultural Education at Biola University. I have the great joy to work with doctoral students from all around the world. Some are missionaries, some are in local ministry. We have students from many states in the US, from different countries in Asia, and Africa, and Europe. We're a very multi-cultural group.

One of the best parts of my job is helping doctoral students plan and carry out their dissertation research. Sometimes I think I learn more than they do! I've learned about Confucianism, and Asian ministry, and about leadership in Uganda and Ethiopia, and about church-ministry

partnerships in Singapore and about multi-cultural learning groups in Africa. I'll share more about some of those studies in a little while. First, I want to talk about being Christians in a world that needs the Gospel.

This is a picture of the President of Biola University, Dr. Barry Corey. He's in his full academic regalia, speaking to us at a graduation ceremony. One of his favorite sayings about us is that we should be a community of Christians with "firm centers and soft edges." By that he means that our core commitment to the truth of the Gospel is unshakeable. We don't change our commitment to Jesus. Our edges, on the other hand, are soft. We have people from different denominations and traditions on faculty and in our student body. When we interact with non-Christians, we want to be winsome and attractive, drawing them in towards a closer relationship with Jesus. We don't want to be constantly drawing lines and deciding who's in and who's out. Instead we want to pull everyone inward towards faith in Jesus. Last semester Dr. Corey took a sabbatical. This past week he was talking with us again, and he described the difference between keeping cattle with a well or a fence in the Australian outback. (I thought he took his sabbatical in Boston, but apparently he learned about cattle ranching in Australia. He says cattle stay near the well and don't really need a fence, and he wants us to be a community centered around a well, meaning Jesus.

When he talks, I'm reminded of how Jesus acted. He talked and ate with sinners. And he criticized the Pharisees for their rules and laws that closed people out. I'm also reminded of Hiebert's missiology concept of centered sets and bounded sets (also called fuzzy sets and well-formed sets). When our Christian emphasis in on bounded sets, we think about who's in and who's out. The problem is that we can't really know what is in someone else's heart, so we might have to look at external evidence which can lead to legalism. And at that point, I believe, we've lost our attraction for much of the non-Christian world—at least the non-Christian world in North America! When we focus on drawing people into the community—what we called "belonging before believing"-— in our European ministry, we find that people are more attracted to Jesus. So that's one of the reasons I love working at Biola—we have a missionary heart.

Now this concept of centered sets, where we attract people to Jesus, I believe is an inherent aspect of our Christian Gospel. The Bible, for example, has been translated into thousands of languages around the world. Christianity has entered countless cultures around the globe for more than two thousand years, and people have believed. How Christianity is expressed in Singapore or in Seattle or in Nairobi or in New York may look quite different—but it's still Christianity. Jesus is still at the center. Faith in Jesus is still the core belief that holds us all together.

To some extent, these characteristics may not be true of other faith communities. For example, Islam only permits reading the Qu 'ran in Arabic; translations are not considered to be a true Qu'ran. It's important to note that I am NOT saying the core of our faith—Jesus—changes. I am simply noting that the expressions of our faith are culturally and contextually bound. In fact, in

missiology we talk quite a lot about contextualization: how do we communicate a Gospel message that is meaningful in the setting and isn't loaded with cultural baggage from a different time or place? And that is part of what makes Christian faith so robust. The Christian message can go anywhere and speak to anyone. But what about Christian leadership? Do we also think of it as flexible or do we tend to become more rigid when we think about good Christian leaders?

What is a good Christian leader? That is a huge question. When we start thinking about leadership for the church—at least in my context—we often go straight to the lists of qualifications for elders in 1 Tim 2 and Titus 1. That's a good place to start. We can't stop with just that, though. Let's look at some of the passages and see what they tell us.

Often when I hear a sermon on elders or overseers for the church, this is the list that is used to figure out who could be an elder.

*Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be **above reproach**, **faithful** to his wife, **temperate**, **self-controlled**, **respectable**, **hospitable**, able to **teach**, **not given to drunkenness**, not violent but **gentle**, **not quarrelsome**, **not** a **lover of money**.*

*He must **manage his own family well** and see that his **children obey** him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He must **not be a recent convert**, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a **good reputation** with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 1 Timothy 3:1-11*

It's a great list. Is it an exhaustive list? What does it look like to be "not a lover of money" in America? Is it different if you live in NY than in California? IF you're an office worker or a farmer?  How recent is "not a recent convert"? What does it mean in a place where the Gospel has just arrived? A place where there have been believers for hundreds of years.
So applying this may not be as straightforward as we think. And it's not by far all the information we have about good leaders from the Bible.

A little further along in the book, Paul talks about Deacons, both men and women.

*In the same way, **deacons** are to be **worthy of respect**, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested, and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.*
*In the same way, the **women** are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers, but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*
*A **deacon** must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. 1 Timothy 3:8-12*

A lot of the qualifications are the same as the ones described for overseers a few paragraphs before.

Then in Titus, Paul repeats many of the same qualities he wrote about to Timothy.

*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be **blameless, faithful** to his wife, a man whose **children believe** and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be **blameless**—**not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain**. Titus 1:5-7*
*Rather, he must be **hospitable**, one who **loves what is good**, who is **self-controlled, upright, holy,** and **disciplined**. He must **hold firmly to the trustworthy message** as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. Titus 1:8-9*

Again, quite a lot of similarity with what was said to Timothy.

And again, like in the letter to Timothy, Paul goes on to talk about "older men" and "older women."

*You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Teach the **older men** to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Likewise, teach the **older women** to be reverent in the way thy live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Titus 2:1-3*

The word he uses here is the same one used for elders; translators have decided that in this case Paul is not talking about positional leaders in the church, but people of influence due to their ages. Interestingly, though, what Paul expects of these people is very similar to what he described for positional leaders.

I would argue that whether someone is leading from an "official position" or from a place of influence without a title, good leadership looks very similar, according to the Apostle Paul.

However, those passages on overseers, elders, deacons and women deacons, older men and women are far from the only information the New Testament offers about what Christ-like leaders would look like. What about the fruit of the Spirit, for example, in Galatians 5?

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another. Galatians 5:22-23*

What about the power of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 2?

*When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a **demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power**. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5*

What about the unity of the body as described in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12?

*For by the grace of God given to me I say to every one of you: **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment**, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function , so **in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others**. Romans 12: 3-5*

***We have different gifts**, according to the grace given to each of us, if your gift is **prophesying**, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is **serving**, then serve; if it is **teaching**, then teach; if it is **to encourage**, then give encouragement; if it is **giving** then give generously; if it is to **lead**, do it diligently; if it is to **show mercy**, do it cheerfully.*
*Romans 12:6-8*

The body of Christ is one body, with many gifts. What role do these gifts play in the exercise of leadership in the church? And do these things look exactly the same in every time, location, and culture? Probably not. What is "generous giving" for a Silicon Valley tech expert is enormously different (in quantity) than generous giving from a rural veterinarian. What matters isn't the amount, but the attitude. In fact, the Bible has quite a lot to say to believers about our attitude.

Consider the "one another" commands from the New Testament. There are 100 occurrences of the single Greek word for "one another" in the NT.
About one –third of the one another commands have to do with believers getting along with each other. Here are some examples:

- *Mark 9:50 Be at peace with one another*
- *John 6:43 Stop grumbling among yourselves*
- *Rom 15:5-6 May God. . .give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *Eph 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you*.

Another one-third of the commands are about believers loving each other.

- *John 13:34 a new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another.*
- *Gal 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. . . Serve one another humbly in love.*
- *1 John 3:11 For this is the message you heard from the beginning: we should love one another.*

And many of the rest have to do with attitude, telling believers how to think and act with each other.
- *Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*
- *Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value other above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.*
- *Gal. 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ.*
- *Eph 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

Honor, humility, helpfulness are all expectations of Christians. Would we say that expectations of Christians are also expectations of leaders?

I've only brushed the surface of what the New Testament has to say to us as believers about how to treat one another and how to act. While the "qualification lists" in 1 Timothy and Titus are a good starting place, they are far from the only requirements or qualifications for a Christ-like leader. I've shown some other passages that also clearly speak to what leaders should be like. Now let's look the question from another angle: what do some existing leadership theories say about what makes a good leader?

Western scholars have only been studying leadership for a little more than 100 years. As a discipline, then, leadership studies is pretty young. That doesn't mean that people weren't interested in leadership prior to that time. For a long time, though, leadership meant the monarchy, and possibly the upper class or noblemen. Then, in the late 1800s and the start of the 1900s in the United States, scholars started getting interested in influential business and political leaders. The first theories were called "Great Man" theories because they looked at the "great men" in business and politics. Researchers started trying to find out what these great men had in common that made them important leaders. For a while the focus was on traits— things like intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. Trait theories of leadership are a lot like looking at the list of qualifications from 1 Timothy and Titus to find the leader who possesses the "right traits" or "right characteristics."  But scholars had a hard time agreeing on what the exact traits were that made a leader. And eventually they also realized that good leaders had more than just certain traits; they also had certain skills. So the next set of leadership theories tried to identify the specific skills required to be a good leader. One idea was that leaders had technical skills, human skills, and concept skills.  These "skill lists" that researchers came up with varied almost  as much as the trait lists; it was really difficult to pin down a specific set of skills that good leaders had in common.

So the next iteration of studies examined behaviors. Two sets of studies carried out in the 1950s in the US were important here. One set was the Ohio State studies, and the other set was the University of Michigan studies. Completely independently, both the Ohio State studies and the University of Michigan researchers came to the same conclusions: a good leader fundamentally pays attention to two things: tasks and relationships. Paying attention to tasks means the leader knows what needs to be done and helps make sure that the goals or tasks are accomplished. Paying attention to relationships means taking care of the people doing the work. Scholars have named these domains as "Agentic" or "take charge" and "communal" or "take care" kinds of skills. From this point on, almost all leadership theory has been built around these two domains.

Since the 1950s and the Task and Relationship framework, more and more leadership theories have been developed. Situational leadership suggested that leaders focus more strongly on tasks or relationships depending on what the follower needs. Leader-follower theories delve into the relationships between the two: what makes for a good working relationship? For a long time leadership studies focused almost exclusively on the leaders. More recently, studies of followers in relation to leaders and studies of followers' influence on leaders have become more developed. After all, as they say, if no one is following then is a leader really leading?  Or are they just out taking a hike?

Now I want to talk briefly about three leadership theories that were developed in secular scholarship and have wide appeal to Christian organizations. First is servant leadership.  Servant Leadership, as the slide says, promotes the idea that the leader wants to serve the followers and help them develop their full potential. It's easy to see how Servant Leadership has a lot of similarities with the way Jesus did things. So many Christian organizations want to practice servant leadership and often it works well. But sometimes this approach can overemphasize the "relationship" aspect of leadership and lose sight of the "task" side. Followers may become frustrated because things don't get done the way they should, or because problematic people don't receive correction and guidance from their leaders.

Another leadership approach that many Christians like is Transformational Leadership. Similarly to Servant Leadership, this approach places a lot of emphasis on the leader helping followers develop their full potential. It may have a little more emphasis on the "task" aspect of leading, because it talks about how leaders inspire followers to reach their goals. And it does seem to be pretty effective in many situations. If you've read or used the book Leadership Challenge, then you know about transformational leadership. It's easy to see how this theory appeals to Christians since we talk so much about being transformed by the Gospel and the positive change that brings in our lives.

But Transformational Leadership isn't always ideal. For one thing, it relies really heavily on a strong charismatic leader who always knows what's best. But we all know that leaders aren't always perfectly good and perfectly knowledgeable. In the hands of an unprincipled person, this leadership style can create a lot of damage. Some people think Adolf Hitler is a good example of

how badly a bad Transformational Leader can turn out. More commonly, transformational leadership done poorly comes across as patronizing or paternalistic.

A third leadership model that is becoming better known among Christians, at least in the US, is Authentic Leadership. This model is based on the idea that the leader needs to be authentic (and authentically good!) in order to lead well. A leader with strong values, self-discipline, passion for the job,  and a clear purpose will be a good leader. This model also relies upon the leader having gone through some difficult experiences to help develop their character. Again, it's easy to see why Christians like this model. It values many of the good moral principles of our faith, and it acknowledges the value of some of the difficult experiences in life. This one is so new that it's hard to know yet how well it will work. One concern I have is the assumption that suffering leads to character growth. We all know that isn't necessarily true; some people become stuck and bitter. Additionally, like the other two models I just shared, it has the common flaw of placing too much responsibility on a single leader, alone.

Still, scholars do pretty much agree on one thing: Leadership is cultural and contextual. What makes for a great leader in one setting is terrible in another. So we're left with the question: what is a good leader in your setting? In your context? In your specific work or ministry? How do you find out?

Basically, there are two kinds of research. First is humanities, or "book" research. If you want to learn how to understand leadership and be a good leader, and you read all those books I just showed you, then you're doing humanities research. This kind of research is very useful and we can learn a LOT from reading what people have already done.

The second kind of research is social science, or "field" research. For this type of research, you try to find out what is actually happening in the world. It could be research done in a lab, like biology research or health research. It could be research done by conducting a survey to quantify people's experiences. And it could be research done through interviewing people and observing what is happening in order to understand the situation.

My colleague calls this "the great divide" in research. Both kinds of research are "legitimate" in that the7 all can yield valid results that inform leadership  theory and practice.  What I want to focus on for the rest of our time together is on applied social science research, that is, research involving people. Specifically I am going to talk about qualitative research, which means research done primarily through interviews with people and observations of people and situations.

What are the main characteristics of qualitative research that make it useful to answer the question of what makes a good leader in a specific context?

First, qualitative research is interested in people. Qualitative research wants to understand people's experiences and perspectives, and what those experiences mean to them.  Sharan Merriam said, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret

their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5).

So qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning people make of their experiences. Hesse-Biber and Leavy explained: "Qualitative researchers are after meaning. The social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances, and situations, as well as the meanings people embed into texts and other objects, are the focus of qualitative research" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4).

Qualitative research also seeks to understand a social phenomenon—like leadership—in its actual social context.

So the first main characteristic of qualitative research is that the focus is on meaning, and understanding. The second characteristic is that the researcher is the primary instrument. What that means is that qualitative research doesn't use a lab or test tubes or surveys or scales to measure things. Instead, the researcher himself or herself, in person, actually talks with people to ask them questions about their experiences and their perspectives.

Qualitative research is also inductive. It doesn't start with a hypothesis to "prove" or "disprove." Instead it starts with the data –meaning the stories people tell in their interviews— and builds understanding from the data.

Finally, because qualitative research is word and language based, it's richly descriptive. The results of a survey might be shown in a chart or a table. The results of a qualitative study will probably be shown in an essay or an article or a book.

I want to pause here and add a bit of commentary about qualitative research and women's leadership. This is Tammie Jo Shults. She successfully landed a plane in Philadelphia last week after one of the engines exploded shortly after takeoff. She is being hailed as a hero for saving the lives of all the passengers (except one who was killed in the explosion itself). Her story is interesting: she joined the Navy back in the days when the Navy didn't have women pilots, and she opened the doors for other women to follow suit. Her story illustrates the ongoing challenges faced by women in leadership. Often existing leadership theories don't fit women and existing leadership models that work well for men don't work well for women.

Qualitative research with women in leadership offers a way to understand how women lead, understand what leading as a woman means to women, and helps researchers develop theories and models of leadership that make sense for women. This is an ongoing area of research for me. So I couldn't keep going without acknowledging the importance of qualitative research for this particular area of leadership study.

I said earlier that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument, the one who gathers the data. So there are some qualities that you can cultivate as a qualitative researcher that will help you be a better researcher. Let me describe a few of those qualities.

What do you see in this picture? How many of you see an elderly woman? How many of you see a beautiful young woman? See the caption of the picture: "My wife and my mother in law." That's because both are in the picture; it just depends on how you look at the different elements.

Looking at this picture both ways illustrates several important qualities of a good qualitative research. First is a questioning stance. The first thing you see may not be the only thing there is to be seen; be willing to ask questions and look at things from a different perspective or a different angle can help you become a better researcher. Similar to that, careful observation can help you. Again the first thing you see or the thing right on the surface may not be the whole picture. Look carefully, closely, and many times. Finally, develop a tolerance for ambiguity. Not everything is clear cut. Different people have different experiences; and people can have the same experience and have very different meanings from it. Just because people have different perspectives on an experience doesn't make one right and the other wrong; they are each right in their own life.

Another important quality for a qualitative research is asking good questions. "Tell me more about that" is one of the qualitative researcher's best questions. Again, you are looking for multiple perspectives, multiple meanings, the complexities of human life.
A qualitative researcher also needs to be able to think inductively, from the data to the conclusions, rather than looking for data to "prove" what they already think. Next, since qualitative research relies on words, comfort with writing up the findings is a great skill to develop.

Finally, qualitative researchers don't pretend to be "objective."  We recognize that everyone comes to the research process with our beliefs and preferences and biases. So we know that unbiased research is illusory. Instead of trying to hide our bias or pretend it doesn't exist, we acknowledge it right up front. We reveal our  bias in a transparent effort to "bracket" that bias, allowing our readers to "keep us honest."

How do you know if a qualitative research project is good? Let's talk about a few standards.

**Credibility**, or What are you really studying?
First, is it credible? Do the results match the question posed at the beginning of the study?  Is the study what about what it was supposed to be about? This seems obvious, but when you are working through data from a dozen interviews, and have hundreds of pages of transcripts, you could find yourself going down a rabbit trail. Or in the interviews themselves, people can wander far off topic and not really give you helpful data. So it's important to pay attention that you're reporting data that actually relates to the topic you're studying.

**Consistency,** or Are the results consistent with the data collected?

Next, is the study consistent? Do the results match the data that was collected? When you write up the study well using lots of data from your participants' interviews, thus "showing" rather than just telling what you learned, the reader can check your consistency.

**Transferability,** or How might what I found apply in another setting?
Finally, does the study seem like it might make sense in other settings as well? Is it descriptive enough that someone can read it and say, "Oh, that's like my experience!" If that happens, it's likely a study that was well-done.

Finally, a good study is also an ethical study. It's important to understand any possible risks to your participants. Would they be in any kind of physical or emotional or spiritual danger if people know they talked with you? What if you discover harmful or wrong behavior? There are lots of things to think about before you start the study.

Now, I want to shift gears to some practical examples. This is the dean of the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Dr. Bulus Galadima. He's Nigerian and has been with us for four years now. Our school has a strong international flavor and our dean helps ensure that we remember our global purpose. Now I want to show you three examples of good qualitative studies on leadership that have been done recently through our school. The first was done by an American missionary in a Muslim part of China; the second by a Ugandan studying the Acholi people's leader-follower relations that helped end decades of hostility, and the third is by an Ethiopian studying leader-follower dynamics in his denomination.

The first example comes from China and is **called Follower Valued Leadership.** Dr Cunningham interviewed 14 urban Hui Muslims regarding their views of what makes a good leader. His findings are really interesting because they are so different both from the traditional ways of doing things and  from the "conventional wisdom" that everyone says is true of this particular group of people.

For example, Chinese society is very hierarchical and everyone assumes this is the best way to lead. But Dr. Cunningham's participants deeply desired flexible leaders who treated them as individuals and showed personal consideration of them as people. They also envision good leaders as leaders who empower and enable them to do their jobs. But they don't want to gradually take on more leadership themselves as many Western models say; rather, they view good leader-follower relationships as stable. They do want their leaders to solicit their input, which is contrary to typical Islamic and Chinese emphasis on hierarchy.

In another example, a common belief or saying about this group was that they only go to work for a paycheck. Dr. Cunningham's findings, however, showed that followers deeply desired a personal relationship with their supervisors and good relational work environment. So by doing his own qualitative research he learned new, interesting, and useful things for leaders in that setting to know and use.

Imagine how useful his findings can be as the church grows in that region. The church can work to establish a form of leadership that truly values followers; such a church may be very attractive to these people since it will resonate with their values and desires.

My second example is about effective followership in Uganda. The study was called "Followership Construction among the Acholi People in Uganda." Dr. Ofumbi interviewed 39 Acholi leaders and followers to understand how they developed –together—the ability to change the government narrative regarding Northern Uganda and bring an end to years-long fighting. His final description was that good leader-follower interactions were like a strong, fruitful tree. Deep roots consisting of strong character and values led to strong actions of observing the problem, diagnosing the problem, acting to create a solution. And the tree bore good fruit of human dignity for all parties in the conflict. Now imagine a church built on these leadership and followership principles, and how attractive it could be in that part of Uganda.

My third example is a student who is not quite finished with his study. His study is about leader-follower relationships in Ethiopia. He interviewed 29 leaders and followers in Ethiopia to understand the dynamics of the leader – follower relationship in his denomination.

He has developed a model that shows four different kinds of interactions that currently happen in the denomination. He discovered a continuum of relationship type from detached to interconnected. And he discovered an organizational structure continuum that ranged from hierarchical to dynamic and democratic. Based on the way those styles interact, he identified four current leader-follower models he called individualism, authoritarianism, partnership, and integration. Even more interesting, based on what participants told him the ideal situation would look like, he has also been able to develop a picture of the ideal, or the goal, for leader – follower relationships in the denomination. Imagine how much stronger the denomination can become and how much more effective they might be in their evangelistic and church planting work if they can move towards the ideal type of interactions.

It's really important to see that all three of these studies started by understanding the existing leadership theories and models. Each of these students read the books and had a good idea of what Western scholars were saying. But their results look very different from the Western models.

In conclusion, I want to re-consider the question: What can good research do for the church? I believe that good research can help build a strong church; promote flourishing among leaders and followers; spread God's Kingdom; and enable us to better be a light to the world.

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