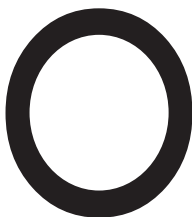



CHAPTER ONE



If the gospel we hear is not good news to the poor and freedom for the oppressed, then it is not the gospel of Jesus, no matter how many followers there are.

—Shane Claiborne, co-founder of the Potter Street Community¹

 Others	Modern Leadership	Millennial Leadership
	1. Others and their allegiance drive the leader.	1. Others and their needs drive the leader.
	2. Others are resources to be managed.	2. Others are souls to be nurtured.
	3. Others are led by vision.	3. Others are led by integrity.

WHERE DOES MILLENNIAL LEADERSHIP START?

Leadership is a interdependent mixture of intuition, experience, and inspiration. And precisely because of this extraordinary fusion a starting place becomes difficult, if not impossible, to assign. An easy entry point is one of the most common behaviors of millennial leaders, represented first by an **O** in chapter 1, and then by a **Θ** (Greek: *theta*) in chapter 2.²

STAYING POWER

As the weekend retreat ended, two influential elders of Clarkston Church³ drew me aside. “We’ve decided to call for Pastor Gordon’s removal,” began Julian. “It’s not that we haven’t tried,” continued Rosa, “but Gordon is single-minded and stubborn. This weekend has been one long sales job. He’s just trying to get us to buy his vision for a new building.” Within a week I received an e-mail announcing that the elders were bringing Gordon before the council for removal. As I thought back to my two years working as a consultant with this church, I marveled how quickly things had changed.

Two years ago, Gordon was fresh out of seminary and following a popular pastor at Clarkston Church named Joan. Joan had turned a dying church of forty attendees into a growing congregation of more than 120 worshipers. Tapped as her successor, Gordon had graduated from seminary after forty years of running an investment program for his denomination. This was his first pastorate, and I remember the passion he brought to his new vocation.

Two years later, the enthusiasm was gone, replaced by a spirit of pessimism and duress. “They wanted me to change things,” recalled Gordon in a phone conversation later that day. “And they gave me free rein. So I took it. They are forgetting that we grew a lot my first year.”

“But last year was different,” I interjected.

“Sure, they’ve got their own unrealistic ideas about how things should be done,” continued Gordon. “They don’t have the training. I do! They saw my way worked the first year. They should have listened to me last year too.”

Rosa, in her mid-seventies, and Julian, in his early thirties, formed an odd partnership aligned against Gordon. “We both feel that Gordon won’t support our ideas to help townspeople,” began Julian. “We’re the poorest area in the county, and Gordon just wants to focus on building a new sanctuary.”

“He’s afraid the new building won’t be built if we use our money to help the needy here in Clarkston,” added Rosa. “He’s forgotten our history as a denomination that looks after the poor.” Later Julian summarized: “Gordon is getting his ideas from what bigger churches are doing in bigger cities and the stuff he learned in seminary. He doesn’t listen to our input. But we’re more familiar with what people need around here because we live here. And he still doesn’t.”

Gordon recently confided, “Look, Bob, I’ve got three years until I can retire with some denominational benefits. No one wants to hire a pastor my age. So help me convince my board to do things my way for just three more years. Then I can retire. The church can hire someone else to beat up, and everyone will be happy.”⁴ Gordon didn’t have three years. He barely had three months.




STANDS FOR “OTHERS”

Among tomorrow’s leaders there is a passion not for themselves or their own accomplishments but for helping those most in need: the underprivileged, disad-

vantaged, and deprived. To understand this empathy, let us first look at what modern leadership has evolved into, for this will help us understand the millennial reaction.

THREE PERILS OF MODERN LEADERSHIP REGARDING OTHERS

<div></div> <div>Others</div>	Modern Leadership	Millennial Leadership
	1. Others and their allegiance drive the leader.	1. Others and their needs drive the leader.
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	3. Others are led by vision.	3. Others are led by integrity.

MODERN PERIL 1: OTHERS AND THEIR ALLEGIANCE DRIVE THE LEADER.

In the modern leadership world, numerous books extol leadership as the pinnacle of human ambition.⁵ And many of these books measure the leader’s success in terms of how many follow her or him.⁶ Harvard leadership professor Barbara Kellerman said, “The modern leadership industry, now a quarter-century old, is built on the proposition that leaders matter a great deal and followers hardly at all.”⁷ Another leadership writer warned, “Many in leadership positions today believe that their leadership should be measured by how many people look to or depend on them.”⁸ A result has been that modern leaders often measure success by the number of followers who meet the needs of the organization (or meet the needs of the leader).

**“The modern leadership industry, now a quarter-century old, is built on the proposition that leaders matter a great deal and followers hardly at all.”
—Barbara Kellerman**

Subtle clues abound in the church world, such as when the leader’s name is proudly displayed on church signage and in advertisements. Doing this builds a church on a person rather than a community and inadvertently fosters a cult of personality. Another damaging result is that the non-church community can view the leader as the most important person in the congregation. Leaders

exacerbate this problem when they use possessive terms: “My church is located on Second Street,” “my board does this,” or “my youth pastor does that.” Ownership, self-importance, and dominance are the subtle insinuation, announcing that if you want to be part of this church, you should view yourself as a possession subject to an earthly person rather than to Christ.

MODERN PERIL 2: OTHERS ARE RESOURCES TO BE MANAGED.

A type of management arose during the Industrial Revolution that valued workers for their labor, not for their worth. In 1913 Frederick Taylor described this as “scientific management”⁹ and famously intoned, “The worker must be trimmed to fit the job.”¹⁰ To legitimize his conclusions, he conducted time and motion studies to show how jobs could be better performed at the workers’ expense. Modern managers embraced this research to prove that by manipulating people, work can be done faster and more efficiently (oftentimes, however, at the expense of the workers’ input, self-worth, and dignity).

The human resource movement rose in reaction,¹¹ where fulfilling a worker’s needs and aspirations was seen as equally important. But this approach came to view humans as little more than just another “resource” to be allocated, deployed, and/or deleted.¹² After a century of these trends, modern leadership often became too focused on propping up the organization and/or the leader at the expense of the people it managed or served.¹³

An autocratic leadership model emerged in many churches that paralleled the business world where all major decisions passed through a central leader.¹⁴ Known in the business world as the sole-proprietorship model, this is a mom-and-pop business approach where all-important decisions pass through “pop,” the figurehead leader. In the church this figurehead is usually a professional clergy person. But this creates a bottleneck in the decision-making process, stalling growth for several reasons. First, growth stalls because of the time needed to get a decision approved by a senior leader. Second, volunteers may feel their input is not trusted because the volunteers must “convince” a figurehead, far removed from the work, of the merit of the volunteers’ ideas. Third, the figurehead will often respond by using past experience to criticize the new idea. Leaders become trapped in an experience trap and dismiss the innovations of others.¹⁵ Volunteers such as Rosa and Julian often feel they do not measure up to the leader’s expertise. They feel unappreciated, unacknowledged, and eventually a commodity.

MODERN PERIL 3: OTHERS ARE LED BY VISION.


“Everyone keeps talking about vision statements. They spend too much time on these things. Great Commission, Matthew 28:19, that’s our mission!” said Leonard Sweet.¹⁶

An abundance of books today deal with how to fine-tune a church’s vision.¹⁷

Yet very little church growth occurs because of a more accurate vision or mission statement. Rather, I have observed churches preoccupied with scrutinizing the language of their statements. Wrangling over words in our statements preoccupies congregations with the minutia of church language, disregarding the important language of good deeds to a non-church community.

Similarly, when conflict arises (as it will in the church), a leader may be tempted to retreat to her or his vision, using it as a weapon to demote the vision of others. Often, the leader may try to win over others by scheduling a vision retreat, which more aptly might be called a “vision-selling retreat.” Then, if others are not won over, leaders such as Pastor Gordon may focus on Jesus’ warning that “my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit” (John 15:1-2 NIV).¹⁸ Usually, this indicates the leader wants certain people (who don’t agree with the leader) to exit the congregation, which in a worst-case scenario can lead to congregants being forced out. This can be exacerbated if the leader has come to see one’s vision as superseding any corporate vision. This malady allows the leader to dismiss others’ foresight for ministry.¹⁹ Such a leader develops a type of people blindness.²⁰

THREE ATTITUDES OF MILLENNIAL LEADERSHIP
REGARDING OTHERS

<div> Others</div>	Modern Leadership	Millennial Leadership
	1. Others and their allegiance drive the leader.	1. Others and their needs drive the leader.
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MILLENNIAL ATTITUDE 1: OTHERS AND THEIR NEEDS DRIVE THE LEADER.

Tomorrow’s leaders have a healthy reaction to what modern leadership has become. One such reaction is a growing emphasis on serving others. But a parallel result can be that the leader feels overwhelmed by others’ needs. At first glance, being overwhelmed by the needs of others might seem a detriment to leadership. But actually, this is a healthy and honest appraisal of the dire situation of so many in need.

Emerging leaders bemoan the unmet needs in the world. Their parents lived in a world of utopian promises. They had banished the Axis powers of World

Despite their parents' best intentions to create a "perfect world," an emerging dislocation has divided rich from poor, wives from husbands, and residents from refugees. Generation X and the Millennials sense this is due to the failure of their parents' unrealistic perfectionism and overconfidence.

War II. Science and hard work seemed to be making the world a safe, ideal, and better place. But Generation X and the Millennials who followed saw no such grand hope. Despite their parents' best intentions to create a "perfect world," an emerging dislocation has divided rich from poor, wives from husbands, and residents from refugees. Generation X and the Millennials sense this is due to the failure of their parents' unrealistic perfectionism and overconfidence. They seek to help

others rise above this morass.²¹

It is little surprise that millennial leaders embrace a solidarity with Jesus' anguish when he cried, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing" (Matt. 23:37 NIV). They share empathy with Jesus when "he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. 'What a huge harvest!' he said to his disciples. 'How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!'" (Matt. 9:36-38 THE MESSAGE).

The millennial leader understands that one may need to relinquish his or her job and move on if this would better meet the burgeoning needs of others.²² Millennial leaders do not cling to promises of pensions, monies invested, and so forth when the needs of others are at stake. The dire situation of persons in need motivates the emerging leader, not the opportunity for ministerial status, success, or security.

MILLENNIAL ATTITUDE 2: OTHERS ARE SOULS TO BE NURTURED.

At one time, there was a line of thinking that autocratic leaders could more effectively lead an organization than any other type of leader.²³ Churches led by autocrats will sometimes grow rapidly in times of crisis or hardship,²⁴ but in the long term rapid church decline often results through firings, unresolved conflict, lack of accountability, and group exits.²⁵ An autocratic leader can help a church survive a time of crisis, but once that crisis ends, the same autocratic attitude can rapidly drive down church growth.

Groundbreaking research in the 1930s demonstrated that successful leaders

usually practice a style of “democratic” or “consensus-building” leadership.²⁶ Not surprisingly, millennial leaders prefer a consensus-building style of leadership. “We build from the bottom up, where people, not leaders, receive the most attention,” one young leader in England told me. “Your generation builds from the top down, but that doesn’t create health . . . or unity.” Millennial leaders sense that if there is disagreement, a synthesis must be discovered.²⁷ Sometimes synthesis is fostered by choosing to disagree, other times by compromising, but always through a type of nurturing.

MILLENNIAL ATTITUDE 3: OTHERS ARE LED BY INTEGRITY.

Authenticity and relevance are important to millennial leaders.²⁸ Authenticity consists of consensus, honesty, and evaluation.²⁹ The “relevance revolution” connotes sensitivity to local needs and fair-minded goal setting.³⁰ Both ideas are important, but integrity holistically describes most of these aspects. Integrity carries the theme of honesty, respect, and consequence, all with a corresponding consistency.

Fostering such integrity usually begins with an honest self-appraisal. Does the leader think more of oneself than he or she should? Does the leader promote his or her identity or ideas? Jesus bristled when encountering such haughtiness, criticizing such religious leaders of his day for the same reasons he might censure modern leaders. To his disciples, Jesus warned:

They [the Pharisees] package it [God’s good news] in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn’t think of lifting a finger to help. Their lives are perpetual fashion shows, embroidered prayer shawls one day and flowery prayers the next. They love to sit at the head table at church dinners, basking in the most prominent positions, preening in the radiance of public flattery, receiving honorary degrees, and getting called “Doctor” and “Reverend.” (Matt. 23:4-7 *THE MESSAGE*)

The leader’s response should be an unpretentious and stable demeanor.³¹ Dan Kimball, cofounder of Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz and a leading thinker within the emerging church movement, once worked with a church with a very senior pastor-centric leadership culture. Much of the decision making was top-down, and this negative experience led him to deemphasize his importance at the church he cofounded. Dan still has significant input at the new church, but he encourages an atmosphere of team leadership. “I saw how a senior leader can become the main personality in an organization, and I didn’t want that to happen here,” was Dan’s summation. “I want us to lead as a team, connected to those we serve.”³²

NURTURING THE THREE ATTITUDES REGARDING OTHERS

NURTURING MILLENNIAL ATTITUDE 1: OTHERS AND THEIR NEEDS DRIVE THE LEADER.

1.a. *Live among them.* A key to knowing the needs of others is to experience life with them. Leaders who become out of touch with those they serve experi-

**“Living involvement turns poor people from statistics into our friends.”
—John M. Perkins**

ence churches that stop growing in attendance.³³ For example, a church leader might move out of a church’s neighborhood as the church attendance grows and live in a different culture (usually a more suburban and

affluent one) than do the congregants. David McKenna states, “By leaving the ghetto behind, the church has implied that its mission is meaningless to the poor, the hopeless and the wretched—except when an ocean separates the church from the ghetto.”³⁴ Yet by living among them, a leader not only demonstrates solidarity with the poor but also continues to experience (and understand) their needs firsthand. John M. Perkins, a sharecropper’s son who went on to found a well-known urban ministry, believes living among the needy is key to understanding and not patronizing them. “Living involvement,” Perkins said, “turns poor people from statistics into our friends.”³⁵

1.b. *Learn from and with them.* One hundred years of church growth study in North America have shown that the more seminary training pastors received, the less likely they were to grow a church.³⁶ The culprit was not the training, but how the pastor came to depend on other seminary-trained leaders for ideas and innovations.³⁷ In other words, as pastors went through seminary, they began leaning more on the advice of other seminarians rather than leaning on the input of the people they served.³⁸

To prevent this, the millennial learner learns *from* and *with* the people he or she serves. Aaron Norwood, pastor of the Bridge in Phoenix, orchestrated the purchase of a homeless shelter for the church’s office. Norwood feels that having their office and ministry meetings in a homeless shelter keeps them connected to those they serve. “I learn so much from my friends in our addiction recovery program about faithfulness, perseverance, humility, and vulnerability,” states Norwood. “As I teach them each week from Scripture, they interpret it back in such a rich and challenging way. As a leader, this ongoing conversation with them grows me tremendously.”³⁹

Seminaries are discovering the power of two-way communication through student-congregant collaboration. Many seminaries offer online seminary education, so seminarians can remain in their local church and immediately apply the lessons they learn. And some seminaries even require students to get input and

advice from local congregants on their homework before they turn in their assignments.⁴⁰ Such collaborative actions are required if leaders are to indigenize the lessons they study.

1.c. *Prepare to “sift out” the bad since both good and bad are in each culture.* At the intersection of Christ and culture

As pastors went through seminary, they began leaning more on the advice of other seminarians rather than leaning on the input of the people they served.

there is innovation, but also pitfalls. Canadian researcher Michael Fullan said, “Change is a double-edged sword. Its relentless pace these days runs us off our feet. Yet when things are unsettled, we can . . . create breakthroughs not possible in stagnant societies.”⁴¹ The millennial leader understands that close fellowship with people outside the church can foster new innovations, but also immoral enticements. God recognizes this, too, and God “acts redemptively with regard to culture, which includes judgment on some elements, but also affirmation in other areas, and a transformation of the whole.”⁴² The church leader is not just a student of Scripture, but also an assessor of the culture into which he or she must translate it.⁴³ This requires the millennial leader to sift out what goes against the good news and retain what affirms it. “What does the gospel have to say to our culture? What elements does it affirm, what does it reject, what does it accommodate, and which need to be redeemed?”⁴⁴

NURTURING MILLENNIAL ATTITUDE 2: OTHERS ARE SOULS TO BE NURTURED.

2.a. *Look for and nurture the potential in others.* Millennial leadership has a keen sensitivity to the potential that God has put into all of his creation. Emerging leaders see God’s people as created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), which means they recognize that because the Holy Spirit is within laypeople too (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17), it will be together that a vision forward is discovered and attained.

But millennial leaders recognize at the same time that everyone has shortcomings and struggles. Millennial leaders often develop organizational unity by retelling stories about how anyone, even someone with shortcomings, can rise to the top. Citing their own personal journeys, leaders recall that though unqualified, it was circumstance, opportunity, and the help of others that allowed them to succeed.⁴⁵ Thus in millennial churches, those who might be overlooked by a more dignified Christian community are welcomed, affirmed, and put to use. As a result, the millennial leader embraces the biblical admonition to

take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don’t see many of “the brightest and the best” among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn’t it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these

“nobodies” to expose the hollow pretensions of the “somebodies”? . . . Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:26-31 *The Message*)

2.b. *See learning in others as important as their performance.* This is related to 2.a. The millennial leader will give followers permission to fail. As Jesus did not harangue but heartened his disciples when they failed (Matt. 17:16-19), so too the millennial leader recognizes that failure is a powerful learning tool (Matt. 17:20-21; Mark 9:29). The millennial leader is not frustrated, angry, or even surprised when failure occurs. He or she sees this not just as a part of life, but as an important element of instruction. In reflecting on his church’s office in a homeless shelter, Aaron Norwood states, “I have a sense that the call of the spiritual leader must be helping people internalize that they are in fact ‘His Masterpiece’ (Eph. 2:10) and that their value is based on their Creator/Redeemer, and not results.”⁴⁶

2.c. *Solicit others’ input.* An article titled “The Power Trip” in the *Wall Street Journal* pointed out while nice people are more likely to rise to power, once they get there, they become less compassionate.⁴⁷ The millennial leader instinctively recognizes the lure of a power trip and solicits frequent input from those one serves. Today’s successful leaders regard followers’ input as equal to their own insights.⁴⁸ Further, good leaders nurture “effective talkback” where followers are free to talk back to the leader with the truth.⁴⁹

2.d. *Obtain followers who complement your weaknesses.* In the increasing complexity of the new millennium one person’s insights and skills are inadequate for holistic leadership. Not surprisingly, millennial leaders surround themselves with people who complement them.⁵⁰ For example, if the leader is a strong visionary (sometimes called a “strategic leader”), he or she will often have a right-hand

**“The first Christ-suffering which every man [and woman] must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of the world.”
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

person who is good at number crunching (often called a “tactical leader”).⁵¹ If the leader is not a people person, a complementary colleague will relish interacting with others. In the complexity of the millennial world, team leadership is not an option, but a standard.⁵² The author of *The Leadership Jump: Building Partnerships between*

Existing and Emerging Christian Leaders summarizes: “We have begun to see that effectiveness depends less on the heroic leader and more on the collaborative efforts of a number of people to create a team environment where together they can move the company, organization or ministry forward.”⁵³

NURTURING MILLENNIAL ATTITUDE 3: OTHERS ARE LED BY INTEGRITY.

3.a. *Live a simple life.* It is not the number of followers or the number of luxuries that characterizes tomorrow’s leadership. In a world increasingly stratified