

# Spiritual Leadership: A Biblical Theology

While the world often measures success in leadership by power, achievements, charisma, or titles, the foundational premise for a believer is distinctly different. For the Christian man or woman called to guide others, “leadership understanding must begin with theological inquiry,” affirms Skip Bell, editor of the multi-contributor volume *Servants and Friends* (2014, Introduction). We will use this extensive volume to get the big picture of leadership from a biblical perspective as, according to its editor, the work is “the most complete biblical theology of leadership available”. Our handbook is the Bible, as the editor suggests “the starting point for leadership understanding is theological learning, and the center of that learning process is Scripture.”

For the purposes of this study, the Biblical perspective can be approached through five essential dimensions that trace the development of leadership from the first page of Genesis to the last one in Revelation: (1) God is the Ultimate Leader; (2) He calls men and women to share this work of leadership; (3) the way spiritual leaders influence is through moral power, in servant-oriented leadership; (4) Jesus Christ is the perfect model; (5) following Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit is continuing the work of leading God’s people.

## **1. The Biblical Framework**

Our biblical arc begins with the definitive theological truth: leadership is rooted solely in God, as Doukhan (2014, chapter 2) insists, “God is the only Leader... because He is the One who preceded everything and everyone else”. Following the fall into sin, the focus shifts to God’s delegation and purpose, as Wibberding (2014, chapter 5) adds: “God calls each leader to share in leading others to Him.” Such a calling redefines the leader’s approach, as

Moskala (2014, chapter 4) states: “faithful leaders do not think about *God’s place in their leadership role*, but they find *their place in God’s leadership*” (emphasis in original).

Accordingly, he continues, “spiritual leaders influence others to pursue God’s will” and they do that “through the exercise of moral power built on love, truth, justice, and freedom.”

The Biblical theology of leadership culminates in the person of Jesus Christ. Paulien (2014, chapter 7) notes that Jesus “models God’s way of leadership in terms that human beings can understand. A study of Christian leadership must, therefore, center in Jesus Christ”. The author justifies it by noting that “nearly every leadership title in the New Testament is applied to Jesus.” Citing Walton (2014, p. 135) Paulien affirms that “the heart of Christian leadership is to be like Jesus, doing and teaching what He taught”.

## **2. Apostolicity (Being Divinely Sent)**

The Gospel model of leadership is fundamentally rooted in apostolicity, the concept of being divinely “sent” (*apostellō*). The very first leader introduced in the Gospel of John is the famous John the Baptist, and he is identified as “a man sent by God” (John 1:6). A powerful preacher and a reformer, the greatest of all prophets (Luke 7:28), he got his mission from God: “for the prophets, leadership was never just a matter of a horizontal relationship. God was both the origin of their message and the focus of their worship and commitment” (Petersen, 2014, chapter 6). An interesting element is highlighted by Paulien (2014, chapter 7) who points out that when an apostle “is sent by a king or by God, his or her status becomes extraordinary. It is as if the sender accompanies the one sent.”

Everything a God-sent leader is and does is received from above, as John himself recognized: “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven” (John 3:27). Receiving the message from God is essential for a spiritual leader, affirms Clinton (2012, chapter 3), “because it builds spiritual authority, which is the basis for a spiritual leader’s influence.” When asked about his credentials, John replies “in the words of Isaiah,

the prophet” (John 1:23), confirming his ministry is validated not by human endorsement, but by the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy.

### 3. Following a Divine Plan

Being sent by God, with His authority, acting in His presence, “spiritual leaders understand God is their leader” (Blackaby, 2011, p. 47). This framework establishes that spiritual leadership is not a matter of human appointment or agenda. This principle is the core of Jesus’ own ministry, underscoring His reliance on the Father: “I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38; see also 5:36; 8:42; 9:36; 14:31).

Thus, the leader operates entirely under the Father’s direction, characterized by specific manifestations such as: *divine action* – following the leading from above, the spiritual leader executes only “what he sees his Father doing” (John 5:19; see also 5:30); *divine instruction* – the leader speaks not his own words, as Jesus stated, "My teaching is not My own, but His who sent Me" (John 7:16; see also 7:28; 8:26, 28, 38; 12:49, 50; 14:10, 24); and *divine timing* – the leader is bound by God’s *kairos*. This is powerfully illustrated by Jesus’ constant reference to a pre-determined plan of salvation, moving from statements like “my hour has not yet come” (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20) to the culmination when “the hour has come” (12:23, 27; 13:1, 31; 17:1) and “it is finished” (19:28, 30).

Jones (2014, chapter 15) notes Jesus’ radical dependence: “Jesus continually sought His Father’s will, submitting His agenda... to what had been foreordained”. The paradox of Christ’s own ministry – authority is exercised only through submission – is concisely expressed by the same author: “Jesus could lead because He was led”.

This theological foundation was significantly advanced by Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby in their cornerstone volume *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda* (2011). Their core thesis being “Spiritual leadership is moving people on

God's agenda" (2011, p. 36) it follows that as the spiritual leaders understand God is their leader, their primary task is to seek God's guidance – not to sell their own vision – but to discern and share what God has revealed to mobilize their organizations. The Blackabys outline that this divine agenda is made known through four primary channels (pp. 221–225): The Holy Spirit guides through *prayer* (as “a leader's first course of action”), through *God's Word*, the Bible (“when leaders sense God is saying something to them in prayer, they confirm it with what he says in his Word”), through *other believers* (“leaders should: (1) recruit a variety of godly counsellors; and (2) give their advisors the freedom to speak directly and candidly to them”), and through circumstances and events (“wise leaders watch for God's activity in the midst of their experience”). The essence of spiritual leadership (p. 47): “He [God] asks leaders to walk with him so intimately that when he reveals his agenda, they immediately adjust their lives and their organizations to his will and the results bring glory to God. This is not the model many religious leaders, let alone business or government officials, follow today, but it encompasses what biblical leadership is all about.”

The Johannine Gospel narrative ends with apostles Peter and John, who embody this posture of submission, following Jesus' command and entrusting themselves to His will (John 21). Nouwen's (1989, p. 38) hope for the church in the future is of an organization whose “leaders are willing to be led.” He sees here Jesus' vision of maturity for His followers, that is “the ability and willingness to be led where you would rather not go” (p. 37). One needs humility in order to accept to be led.

#### **4. Humility of Spiritual Leaders**

The essence of the spiritual leader's character in the Gospel of John is radical subordination, a posture powerfully exemplified by John the Baptist, who demonstrates a great level of humility. The greatest of all prophets, yet he doesn't jump on the public's adoration wagon – he is not the bridegroom (John 3:27-30). When asked about his identity

and authority, John decisively refuses any claims to Messianic status: “I am not... [Messiah]” (John 1:20). This aligns with a principle articulated by Jesus: “no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:16).

A great leader, John the Baptist embodies *followership*, acknowledging that the one coming after him “is in fact greater than him” (John 1:15). In *Incarnate Leadership* (2009, p. 19) Robinson distinguishes here “the voice of a faithful follower introducing his leader to the world.”

John’s emblematic statement about his relationship with Jesus remains definitive for any spiritual leader: “He must become greater; I must become smaller” (John 3:30). This can only be affirmed by one who is “free from selfish ambition and drive” (Jones, 2014, chapter 15), as “the call and career of the servant leader is marked by humility and total dependence upon God, not self” (Davidson, 2014, chapter 1).

### **5. *Kenosis* (Self-Emptying) of Spiritual Leaders**

One can’t accept to be led without first being emptied of himself. The model was given by Jesus Christ: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5–8). Jones (2014, chapter 15) concisely notes this paradox, “the way of self-abnegation is the way of exaltation by God”, while Hybels and Wilkins graphically illustrate it: “if you want to be truly great, then the direction you must go is down. You must descend into greatness” (Hybels & Wilkins, 1993, p. 16).

Indeed, John the Baptist “was humble and self-effacing, willing to defer to Jesus, whom he acknowledged to be the ultimate leader” (Johnston, 2014, chapter 8). On the same line, White (1942, p. 37) makes the case that is not what one already possesses but rather how

much is ready to be emptied of in order to be filled by God and reflect Him: “In choosing men and women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess worldly wealth, learning, or eloquence. He asks, ‘Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them My way? Can I put My words into their lips? Will they represent Me?’”

Emptied of himself, John the Baptist points to Jesus only. Led by God, he has the unique capacity to recognise Jesus as the one upon whom the Spirit descends (John 1:32) and directs his own disciples to follow Jesus, “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, 35). Nouwen (1989, p. 38) recognizes in John’s approach “the most important quality of Christian leadership in the future. It is not a leadership of power and control, but a leadership of powerlessness and humility in which the suffering servant of God, Jesus Christ, is made manifest.”

Humble, and self-emptied, the spiritual leaders are not weak leaders. They are aware that “theologically centered leadership will inevitably be distinct in some ways from secular culture” (Bell, 2014, Introduction), and expect conflict.

## **6. Fulfilment through the Holy Spirit**

This broader biblical theology provides the essential framework for focusing on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John – the *sine qua non* of authentic spiritual leadership. John devotes extensive space to the Spirit’s work (especially chapters 14–16), presenting the Spirit of God as the internalised authority who replaces Jesus’ physical presence following His ascension. As the continuing guide who leads God’s people until the end of time, the Holy Spirit fundamentally distinguishes spiritual leadership from all human-centric models. “Spiritual leaders are directed by the Holy Spirit” (Blackaby, 2011, p. 33).

The spiritual leader’s strategy and teaching are not self-derived but validated by continuous submission to the Spirit, as exemplified in Jesus’ ministry: the Spirit “remains on”

Christ (1:32) and is given to Him “without limit” (3:34). For the human leader, this Spirit is the source of new life: “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (3:5), because “the Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing” (6:63). Furthermore, Jesus is “the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit” (1:33).

Sanders, in his seminal work, *Spiritual Leadership* (2007, p. 30), sharply contrasted the natural leader with the spiritual leader, insisting that true spiritual influence must transcend personality and natural gifts because it must be “penetrated, saturated, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.” Sanders leaves no room for ambiguity: “There is no such thing as a self-made spiritual leader” (p. 31). He was echoing reflections from Samuel Brengle (Salvation Army) who in *The Soul Winner’s Secret* (1903, p. 19), firmly roots the authority of spiritual leadership in a divine source, emphasizing that “spiritual leaders are not made by man, nor any combination of men. Neither conferences, not synods, nor councils can make them, but only God.”

The process of making comes in more than one stage, as identified by Tozer (2016, p. 51): “First He comes in some degree and measure when we are converted, otherwise we wouldn’t be converted. Without Him we couldn’t be born again, because we are born of the Spirit”. Then “His coming and possessing the full body and mind and life and heart, taking the whole personality over, gently, but directly and bluntly, and making it His, so that we may become a habitation of God through the Spirit.” This is not a mechanical process, but rather a walk of life: “God would work mightily for His people today if they would place themselves wholly under His guidance. They need the constant abiding of the Holy Spirit.” (White, 1948, p. 238).

Bell concludes it: “We go with the Holy Spirit, guided by His counsel, taught through His providential instruction, empowered by His presence and gifts, filled by His intimate

indwelling presence. To lead without the presence of the Holy Spirit denies the biblical foundation of leadership” (Bell, 2014, chapter 21).

God works *in* us and *with* us and *through* us by means of spiritual gifts and proves it by the fruit of the Spirit.

## 7. The Spiritual Gifts

Wagner (2012, p. 6) recognizes that people want to experience the Holy Spirit in everyday life, and “one of the most prominent facets of this new experience of the Holy Spirit is the rediscovery of spiritual gifts.” Being the most influential author on the topic of spiritual gifts, we will use his working definition: “A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ, according to God’s grace, for use within the context of the Body” (2012, p.19). These could be found in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and 28-30, and Ephesians 4:11.

The spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the church include various leadership and equipping roles such as *apostles* (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11), *prophets* (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Ephesians 4:11), *teachers* (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11), *evangelists* (Ephesians 4:11), and *pastors* and *teachers* (Ephesians 4:11). The gifts related to service, administration, and encouragement are *serving* or *ministry* (Romans 12:7), *exhortation* or *encouragement* (Romans 12:8), *giving* (Romans 12:8), *leadership* or *ruling* (Romans 12:8), *showing mercy* (Romans 12:8), *helps* (1 Corinthians 12:28), and *administrations* or *government* (1 Corinthians 12:28). Finally, the revelatory or power gifts are the *word of wisdom* (1 Corinthians 12:8), *word of knowledge* (1 Corinthians 12:8), *faith* (1 Corinthians 12:9), *gifts of healings* (1 Corinthians 12:9, 28), *working of miracles* (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28), *discerning of spirits* (1 Corinthians 12:10), *various kinds of tongues* (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28), and the *interpretation of tongues* (1 Corinthians 12:10).

How should all these be administered? “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). Definitely, “the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (1 Corinthians 12:7). The recipient of the gift is being led by the Giver. Wagner (2012, p. 20) courageously affirms:

“Here is the biblical truth, pure and simple: “But one and the same Spirit works all these things [spiritual gifts], distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Cor. 12:11). And “God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (v. 18). You have your gifts, not because you chose them, but because God chose them for you.”

Furthermore,

When related to doing God’s will, your *general* call should be seen as equivalent to your spiritual gift. No better framework exists within which to interpret your call than to know your specific gift-mix. God does not give you gifts that He does not *call* you to use, nor does He *call* you to do something for Him without equipping you with the necessary gift or gifts to do it. Besides a general calling, however, you may also have a more specific calling. Some like to refer to this specific call as a person’s ministry. Your ministry is the particular way or the particular setting in which God wishes you to exercise the gift or gifts that He has given you. (Wagner, 2012, p. 19)

Aware that “leadership is a gift as well as a commission from God” (Moskala, 2014, chapter 4), Patterson (2014, chapter 20) promptly notes that “the description of leadership among the gifts of the Spirit does not limit leadership to one receiving an exceptional gift.” In fact, he stresses, “the gifting and the calling of God are one.”

## **8. The Fruit of the Spirit**

The Fruit of the Spirit is distinct from the gifts of the Spirit, as prominently detailed in Galatians 5:22–23. While spiritual gifts are diverse abilities given by the Holy Spirit, the Fruit is a singular, unified evidence of Christ’s character being developed in a believer’s life. This nine-fold quality of spiritual maturity is represented by: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It stands in stark contrast to the “works of the flesh” (the carnal, not spiritual). Patterson (2014, chapter 20) clarifies that the

fruit of the Spirit “reveals a standard of character possible to those being transformed by the indwelling Spirit.”

This character is not merely a desired trait but an essential component of spiritual leadership. “Spiritual leadership is not built on competency alone,” asserts Patterson (2014, chapter 20). The expectation of consistent Christ-like character patterned after the relational standards of Galatians 5 is a must. Reflecting on the situation in the apostolic church, Patterson argues that the “leadership role was determined by spiritual giftedness and a spiritual character that demonstrated Christ-like relational behavior. These two Spirit-given and interwoven qualifications – character and competence – establish the spiritual foundation for leadership in the New Testament.” Moskala (2014, chapter 4) echoes this sentiment, observing that “people want to know if their leaders are with God.”

While Galatians 5 focuses on the *source* and *nature* of this transformation, 2 Peter 1:5–7 offers a practical model, encouraging believers to actively “make every effort” to add a progressive list of virtues to their faith: goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection and love. This inward, continuous cultivation of the Fruit – the display of godly character – is inseparable from the external, ultimate hope and salvation secured by divine power and maintained through the constant reliance on faith. To make sure that spiritual leadership is not reserved for some, not unattainable by others, the Blackabys (2011, p. 247) note that “holding a leadership position in a Christian organization does not make you a spiritual leader. Nor does working a secular occupation preclude you from being a spiritual leader at your workplace. *Spiritual leadership is not an occupation: it is a calling.* Christian businesspeople—physicians, educators, politicians, and parents—should be spiritual leaders.” (emphasis in original)

In conclusion, biblical leadership (Bell, 2014, chapter 21) “is the transforming relational process of a serving community sharing a common God-inspired vision and

purpose. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and submissive to the Spirit's promptings, people freely associate for the transformation of society, church, family, and the individual."

### **9. Spiritual Leadership as Counter-Cultural Witness**

Spiritual leadership, particularly as framed in John's Gospel, is an inherently counter-cultural witness, operating in direct opposition to "the world." This contrast is unequivocally established by Jesus, who states that while the Spirit of truth comes to help and be *with* and *in* His followers, the world "cannot accept him" (John 14:17, see also Genesis 6:3). This fundamental distinction confirms that the source of authentic spiritual leadership is not this world.

And here lies the crux of the problem: spiritual leaders orienting themselves toward the world, seeking its approval and adopting its models of influence, while the world itself remains incapable of receiving the Spirit. Such a contrast highlights the central conflict behind the scenes: the world is led by another power, referred to by Jesus as "the prince of this world", one who "has no hold over me" (John 14:30). This adversary is explicitly identified as Satan, the devil, "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Petersen (2014, chapter 6) reminds us that "the divine judgment preached by the prophets concerns not only the earthly regimes, but also the spiritual powers behind them, as expressed by Isaiah, "On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth" (24:21)."

### **10. The Insufficiency of Secular Models**

Aware of this reality, those called to Spirit-led leadership should not look for inspiration nor pursue validation from a realm that, by its very nature, cannot embrace the Spirit of truth. Thus, a core function of the spiritual leader is discernment and standing for truth against deceit. Johnston (2014, chapter 8) affirms this commitment: "No greater

service to God or humanity can be done than to introduce them to the true God without distortion.”

One cause for distortion is adopting models of the secular world into the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ. The inherent differences between secular leadership models and the requirements for a truly spiritual leader necessitate a clear distinction: worldly theories do not create the spiritual leaders the Bible requires.

Christian scholars warn that there is a constant temptation to draw leadership models from the worlds of finance, commerce, and politics – often relying on texts like the *Harvard Business Review* – rather than seeking a distinctly Christian understanding revealed in the Scriptures (Bredfeldt, 2006; Robinson, 2009). In the introduction of *Incarnate Leadership* (Robinson, 2009), Eric Peterson and Eugene Peterson (the famous author of *The Message*) painfully noticed that what “is lacking in most leadership lexicons is the distinct language and values of the Scriptures. Far too often the church has adopted the language, the values, and strategies of the marketplace.” The Blackabys don’t leave much room for negotiations: “A significant question for Christian leaders is: Do theories and practices found in secular writing and seminars equally apply to work done in God’s kingdom?” (2011, p. 18).

### **11. The Biblical Alternative: Character over Formula**

The primary weakness of any secular theory – its focus on methodology and formulas rather than spiritual character. Analyzing leadership through the prism of Biblical wisdom literature, Widdering (2014, chapter 5) admits that it offers “few obvious correlations with standard leadership theory”. Yet, “the wisdom tradition, with the pathos and ethos, provides a different function for leaders. Its compass is spiritual inquiry, which distinguishes this literature from secular theories.” Widdering gives examples of figures like Job and Solomon, where the Bible emphasizes their character over specific strategies or formulas. Biblical wisdom, focused on spiritual inquiry, therefore stands in contrast to

behavior-based theories that prioritize prescriptive methods – Wibberding is not shy in noting the popular appeal of models like John C. Maxwell’s *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. He concludes: “leadership formulas, or methodologies, do not create spiritual leaders.”

This mandates adherence to a biblical standards – Jones (2014, chapter 15) answers the question of applicability: “For the Christian, leadership must be viewed and understood on Jesus’s terms, not those of modern leadership texts or manuals.” And Patterson (2014, chapter 20) confirms: “His words and model serve as the standard for Christian leadership and, as such, take precedence over all factors – cultural, organizational, and political – that inform the practice of leadership in the church.”

## **12. The Challenge of Hollow Vocabulary**

The crucial gap that secular theories cannot bridge is this active work of the Holy Spirit *in* and *through* us. Secular and spiritual leaders may employ similar methods (e.g., communication, strategic planning), or even words/concepts (e.g. spirituality, transcendent, higher power, charisma, belief, hope/faith), but they are empty of Biblical meaning. Touching on a term we mentioned before, Wagner (2012, p. 51) decries the highjacking of the concept “charisma”: “But a century ago a famous German sociologist, Max Weber, began to use the word “charisma” to describe a certain kind of dynamic leader, whom he called a charismatic leader. His word “charismatic” had no theological overtones.” Wagner illustrates the consequence, noting that sociologists could regard Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin as charismatic, demonstrating how the term lost its original definition as a spiritual gift.

A similar semantic hollowness plagues the concept of a “higher power” (Fry, 2003), “higher power or transcendent” (Dent et al., 2005), “higher powers” (Rajni et al., 2025), “supernatural being or power” (Krishnakumar et al., 2014). Fry (2003) introduced “a generic definition of God as a higher power and a continuum upon which atheistic, humanistic, theistic, and pantheistic definitions of God can be placed.” He defined this as “a higher power

or being that may or may not be called God”. He based his position on the work of Horton (1950, pp. 4–5) for whom “The quest for God is the quest for an ideal Source of Help and Object of Devotion: a being so much greater, more enduring, and more worthy than ourselves that we may confidently lean on it for support and unreservedly give ourselves to its service.”

This universalizing effort acknowledges that “there are many nonexclusive paths to the presence of God through spirituality, including and excluding religion” (Fry 2003, p. 706; citing Horton, 1950). Fry (2003) himself uses terms similar to those in Christianity (e.g., *vision, charity, altruistic love, and veracity*), yet these are achieved through a “theistic God’s will” or through humanistic systems. However, a reader of the Bible must rightly challenge such a generic approach: Are all these people desiring the same things? Are they aiming for the same “higher power/God”?

### **13. “An Unknown God”**

The phenomenon of secular theories, specifically SL in employing words like “faith,” “vocation,” “hope,” and “spirit” for non-transcendent, human-centered purposes is, at its root, a modern echo of a perennial spiritual search. Many seem to be paying homage to an “unknown God” (Acts 17:23), pursuing the virtues and relational goals that Christianity first revealed, yet divorced or at least distanced from their divine origin and power source. For Blackaby (2011, p. 19) it is “clear that many of the ‘modern’ leadership theories currently being espoused are, in fact, biblical principles God has commanded throughout history.” Giving the example of “integrity”, a hot topic for secular leadership gurus, the Blackabys insist: “This should be nothing new for Christians”, as such a leadership standards has been required from God’s appointed leaders all through the history.

The task of Christian leaders and theologians is not simply to critique this secular vocabulary but to identify it as a bridge. Where modern theories recognize the need for compassion, meaning, vision, or excellence, they tap into rightly-inspired aspirations that are

fundamentally broken and hollow without Christ. These concepts are incomplete because they are sourced from human efforts rather than divine *charis* (grace).

For this reclamation work, the Spirit's role is crucial for the leader's mandate to lead groups, organizations, acting as divine interpreter and guide: "He will teach you *all things* and will remind you of *everything* I have said to you" (14:26, emphasis supplied; see also 15:26), and "he will guide you into *all the truth*" (16:13, emphasis supplied). Nouwen (1989, p. 38) wisely combines the truth and the leading, envisioning a journey where we will "thus be truly led where the Spirit of Jesus wants to lead us."

This commitment to the Spirit and truth is the ultimate unifying factor, as Jesus confirmed: "God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Because this worship is defined by the Spirit, rather than by human standards or cultural models, all believers, regardless of their background or prior distance from God, are called to draw near and lead via the same singular, authentic spiritual process.

Furthermore, the final imperative is to heed the call for a semantic reclamation: sanctify them by God's Word (John 17:17). This is a call to a deliberate, sanctifying work, where we take the common themes – the universal human aspiration for meaning and purpose – and re-fill them with their original, robust, and Christ-centered meaning. The Gospel is the ultimate source, the original lexicon, and the only perfect blueprint for the *spiritual* concepts the world seeks. Believers can fully trust that the Bible is richly and entirely sufficient to address every requirement and need of effective spiritual leadership: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

By confidently drawing the contrast and proclaiming the fullness of Christ, we offer not just a critique of secular limitations, but the truth that brings life and substance to the very concepts they have attempted to use apart from their original source.

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