



CHAPTER 2

Graceful(1) Leadership: God's Initiative and a Leader's Response

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Emerging trends in leadership theory emphasize the leader's unique and creative role of initiating momentum. Conversely, the biblical worldview reveals a God who initiates, is uniquely creative, and creates ex nihilo; God's unique creativity is an expression of His grace. This chapter examines God's creative, gracious impulse and divine initiative in three distinct expressions across the Bible. First, God's grace is examined in the Old Testament barrenness type-scene through the pregnancies of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah. Second, by understanding that this creative impulse is foundational to the very character of God, God's grace is examined in the basic reality of the creation account. Third, both the barrenness motif and creation

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story are examined through their intertextual connections in the New Testament. Understanding of God's grace as a creative and incongruous impulse forms the foundation for three leadership prescriptions: the Christian leader is formed by God's grace, responds to God's grace, and points others to God's grace. The Christian leader is not primarily an initiator, but a recipient.

One possible perspective on leadership understands it as a unique combination of power and authority, resulting in influence. "Power is the ability to influence others to get things done, while authority is the formal rights that come to a person who occupies a particular position, since power does not necessarily accompany a position" (Kotter, 1985, p. 86). Indeed, the emergence of the formal term "leadership" has its roots in political influence (Stogdill, 1974), and influence remains a key concern of leadership today. "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2018, p. 43). Leadership, in this thinking, is concerned primarily with maximizing what already exists: lifting one's vision to higher sights, raising one's performance to higher standards, and building one's personality beyond normal limitations (Drucker, 1974).

Recent trends in leadership studies, however, emphasize a different perspective of leadership. Rather than maximizing what already exists, the leader is viewed as the primary facilitator of knowledge creation (Tse & Mitchell, 2010). Leaders must understand the cognitive requirements of creative problem solving and must: equip their employees to define and construct problems; search and retrieve relevant information; and, generate and evaluate diverse sets of alternative solutions (Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). This requires the leader to exhibit creativity by discrete problem solving in ill-defined domains (Mumford & Connelly, 1991). Leaders must be both comfortable in and adept at navigating previously un confronted realities. "Complexity, novelty, and information ambiguity define one set of attributes that set apart leaders' problem-solving efforts" (Mumford et al., 2000, p. 14). Such understandings and competencies are invaluable for a leadership context that is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). Invaluable, yes, and necessary.

Still, for the Christian leader who functions under the authority of a Biblical worldview, such uniquely creative competencies are not sufficient. While the Christian leader must recognize the value of these competencies, there is a prior creative impulse within Scripture of which the

Christian leader must be aware and on which the Christian leader must rely. It is God who is uniquely creative—who creates something from nothing—and God's unique creativity is an expression of his grace. That creative, gracious impulse is grounded in God's character and is on display in various manifestations across both the Old and New Testaments, as has been shown in the previous chapter. It is that creative, gracious impulse—that divine initiative—that forms the context within which the Christian leader must function.

This chapter analyzes God's creative, gracious impulse and divine initiative in three distinct expressions, and then identifies the implications of these manifestations for the Christian leader. First, God's grace is examined in the Old Testament barrenness type-scene through the pregnancies of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah. Second, by understanding that this creative impulse is foundational to the very character of God, his grace is examined in the basic reality of the creation account. Third, both the barrenness motif and creation story are examined through their intertextual connections in the New Testament.

THE OLD TESTAMENT BARRENNESS TYPE-SCENE

Alter (1978) identified multiple Biblical type-scenes, or literary patterns with stock features used in formulaic fashion. Williams (1980) identified multiple Old Testament type-scenes involving women, including the contest of the barren wife and the promise to the barren wife. Consideration of these specific type-scenes requires an understanding of their place within both the Old Testament and the larger flow of redemptive history.

Redemptive history takes a consequential turn in Genesis 12 when the Lord promised not only to make Abraham a great nation but expressed his plan to bless other nations through Abraham; as Abraham flourished, so too would the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:1–2). Murray (1954) observed that this underlies the development of God's redemptive promise. "The redemptive grace of God in the highest and furthest reaches of its realization is the unfolding of the promise given to Abraham and therefore the unfolding of the Abrahamic covenant," (Murray, 1954, p. 4). As the purpose and promise of God flowed to Abraham, they would flow through Abraham to the nations.

Such a monumental development appears tempered by the reality that Abram's wife Sarah was barren and could not have children (Gen. 16:2). God eventually promised a child to Abraham and Sarah despite Sarah's

barrenness (Gen. 17:15–16), and ultimately provided that child (Gen. 21:1–3). The reader’s attention is drawn to the fact that this theme is repeated throughout the Old Testament: Rebekah was barren until Isaac prayed and she conceived (Gen. 25:21); God remembered Rachel and opened her womb (Gen. 30:22–24); God remembered Hannah and she conceived (1 Sam. 1:19–20). Tracing the type-scene of barrenness through the Old Testament, Jobes (1993) affirmed Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah as significant Israelite women who contended with barrenness. In these instances, barrenness was deliberately and purposefully overcome by God, and the barren woman bore a son who became a hero in Israel’s history (Jobes, 1993).

The barrenness type-scene is significant because it represents a potential breakdown of God’s promise to the patriarchs (Havrelock, 2008). When Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel were barren, the reader is left to doubt the faithfulness of God’s promise. Hannah was not in the patriarchal lineage, *per se*, but she, like Rachel, was the more beloved of two wives. Indeed, God seemed to correlate being loved and being barren (Havrelock, 2008).

Williams (1980) observed that the barrenness type-scene stands in contrast to the beauty type-scene; the promise of a son is often addressed to the infertile wife instead of the beautiful wife or maiden (Williams, 1980). The barrenness type-scene therefore involves the more beloved wife, but not necessarily more beautiful wife (Rachel’s beauty is described in a scene unrelated to her barrenness; Gen. 29:17). These distinctions indicate that, while beauty may be a sign of favor with God and potential fertility, barrenness is potentially a sign of actual sterility and also an invitation for God to intervene. If the mother could give birth apart from divine intervention, then the origins of her progeny would not be sacred, for God is the one who opens and closes wombs (Williams, 1980). The barrenness type-scene, therefore, necessarily involves God’s special, sacred work.

Havrelock (2008) traced further sacred significance to barrenness type-scenes, observing that the female journey from barrenness to fertility parallels the migrations through which the patriarchs achieved intimacy with the Lord. While male heroes conquer, claim, and sanctify land through military conquest, female birthing and naming their children were the counterpart to settling and inaugurating territory (Havrelock, 2008). Havrelock (2008) further understood the encounter between the barren mother and God as a female “cutting” of the covenant. To this

end, “This severing of the promise of a child...from the prior actions of the would-be mothers obscures female agency and portrays conception as an inscrutable act of grace,” (Havrelock, 2008, p. 172).

The barrenness type-scene therefore takes on special importance as a manifestation of God’s unique, special, and gracious creative work. The concept of a miraculous birth to a barren woman is a demonstration of God’s power to deliver a nation of people from death (Jobes, 1993). God’s promises to the patriarchs are never in danger of failing due to barrenness, but further serve to highlight God’s graciously initiating, unilateral, and uniquely powerful action of creating life where none previously existed. The divine impulse to create life from death—something from nothing—in the barrenness type scene has obvious soteriological implications that are realized via explicit intertextual connections in the New Testament. However, that same divine impulse demands attention in another, prior context first: Creation.

CREATION *EX NIHILLO*

The barrenness type-scene is a prominent facet of the Old Testament, but it is not a unique facet. Martin Luther observed: “It is of the nature of God that he make something out of nothing” (Linebaugh, 2020, p. 49). The prime example of God making something out of nothing is creation itself, or creation *ex nihilo*. Torrance (1996) understood creation *ex nihilo* to literally mean that creation came into being through the absolute fiat of God’s Word; where previously there was nothing, the whole universe came into being. McFarland (2014) defined God’s ability to create something out of nothing in three ways: the existence of the world is ascribed to nothing but God; the existence of anything other than God exists only because God brings it into being (nothing apart from God); and, God is the only condition of the existence for whatever exists other than God (nothing limits God). Copan and Craig (2004) argued creation *ex nihilo* safeguards and promotes God’s aseity, God’s freedom, and God’s omnipotence.

Understanding creation *ex nihilo* in purely cosmological, ontological, or existential terms, however, misses a key reality. Creation *ex nihilo* is a manifestation of God’s grace. Youngs (2014) concluded God is under no obligation to create, but freely and willingly enters into a relationship with the world He has created. That God ‘created out of nothing’ is true, as is it also true to say that God ‘created out of freedom.’ However,

it is also true to say that God created ‘for the sake of love’ (Youngs, 2014). That God should create *ex nihilo* is a matter of grace, since there is neither any power external to God nor any deficiency internal to God that could render creation necessary to God (McFarland, 2014). Luther’s observation—it being the nature of God to make something out of nothing—flows from his reading of creation wherein he views, “almost everything in the account as a revelation of God’s benevolence and grace. Thus, the creation of the heavenly bodies, the physical conditions of the earth, and the plant life reveal God’s benevolent character,” (Kaiser, 2013, p. 125). It is constitutive of God’s character to make something out of nothing, and such manifestations are gracious expressions of God’s inherently gracious nature.

The soteriological implications that accompany understanding creation *ex nihilo* are not unintentional and were fundamental to Luther’s understanding of creation. To say creation *ex nihilo* is a manifestation of God’s grace is to assert it is solely and exclusively an expression of divine mercy and goodness and is so apart from any human worth or merit (Linebaugh, 2020). Creation *ex nihilo* is therefore an absolute, categorical given that finds nothing in its recipients but contradicts their nothingness by calling them into being (Bayer, 2010). *Ex nihilo* can therefore be understood as the *sola gratia* of the doctrine of creation (Schumacher, 2010). The doctrines of creation and re-creation are therefore fundamentally intertwined.

SOLA GRATIA

Understanding creation *ex nihilo* in terms of salvation’s *sola gratia* underscores the connection between creation and re-creation, unearthing a rhyme between creation *ex nihilo* and the justification of the dead (Barclay, 2020). Far from implicit, this rhyme is an explicit theme of New Testament theology, found most prominently when Paul appropriated the Abrahamic narrative in Galatians 3–4 and Romans 4. Present purposes identify that rhyme in conjunction with the previously discussed type-scene of barrenness.

Jobes (1993) described the intertextual intersection of barrenness, creation *ex nihilo*, and salvation’s *sola gratia* as the nexus of Sarah’s story in Genesis, Isaiah’s use of Sarah (Is 54:1–3), and Paul’s use of Isaiah in

Galatians 4:27ff. An intertextual foundation will be laid using Isaiah 54:1–3 and Galatians 4:27ff before considering other ancillary interactions in turn.

Callaway (1979) observed three important elements concerning Isaiah's use of Sarah's barrenness type-scene in Isaiah 54:1–3: (1) an oracle of salvation is addressed directly to the mother; (2) this oracle of salvation shifts from telling a story about the past to foretelling a story about the future; and, (3) the barren woman is not a single individual, but the whole people of Israel. Isaiah used barrenness not to speak of God's past faithfulness, but to proclaim a future manifestation of God's power (Callaway, 1979; Jobes, 1993), therefore amplifying the Biblical type-scene of barrenness such that it is exegetically possible for the New Testament to dissociate Isaiah's proclamation from ethnic Israel exclusively and to include among the children of Sarah all who pursue righteousness and seek the Lord (Jobes, 1993).

Isaiah, having transformed Abraham and Sarah's historical narrative into prophetic proclamation, introduced the Holy Spirit as the agent who works new life in the spiritually barren and dead. Paul applied this understanding to the Galatians' experience, and how that experience is realized, when he followed Isaiah's trajectory in Galatians 3 and 4 (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2011; Jobes, 1993):

Isa 53:1: "Who has believed what works of he has heard from us?"

Isa 53:2–12: the suffering servant who "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter," "pierced for our transgressions," and "crushed for our iniquities."

Isa 54:1: "Sing, O barren one!"

Gal 3:2: "Did you receive the Spirit by the law or by hearing with faith?"

Gal 3:1: "It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified."

Gal 4:27: "Rejoice, O barren one!"

Grounded in Isaiah's prior expansion of the barrenness type-scene in Abraham and Sarah's narrative, Paul appropriately applied that expansion to the experience of the New Testament believer who places their faith in Jesus Christ. "Because barrenness was associated with death throughout the Old Testament, its antonym, miraculous birth from a barren woman, could aptly be associated with resurrection from death," (Jobes, 1993, p. 314). Indeed, the promises of Isaiah 54 can be understood as addressed to the church of the new age (Bruce, 1982). Galatians, however, is not the only New Testament passage where Paul outlined the implications of the barrenness type-scene for those who believe in Jesus.

Paul further worked out the implications of this intersection in Romans 4. Here, Paul seized upon Abraham's hope against all reasonable expectations to draw a parallel between Abraham, Sarah, and the situation of those who believe in Jesus (Barclay, 2015). In Romans 4:17–25, Paul connected Sarah's barrenness with death and Isaac's birth with resurrection, describing Sarah's womb as dead and Abraham's faith as a faith that believed God had the power to do what he promised and could give life to the dead (Jobes, 1993). Abraham and Sarah's faith in the God who gives life to the dead (Rom. 4:19–22) shares the character of the faith of believers given new life upon their belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:23–24; Barclay, 2015). Paul invoked Abraham and Sarah not simply to convey history, but because they fulfilled a representative purpose; what was true of their faith is true of all who have faith in God. If Abraham was justified by faith, so too are those who believe in Jesus justified by faith (Hodge, 1974).

Understanding how God's gracious creation of life in the narrative of Abraham and Sarah is parallel to God's gracious creation of life in the New Testament believer elucidates the rhyme between creation *ex nihilo* and salvation *sola gratia*. Both the mode of Abraham's relationship to God (faith), and the means by which his seed has come into being (creation *ex nihilo*) are seen again in Romans as believers have faith that God justifies the sinful and raises the dead (Barclay, 2015). This creation of life is depicted as the life-giving act that joins believers to Christ (Gal. 2:20; 3:21; Barclay, 2020). Barclay (2015) extended this understanding of creation *ex nihilo* from the individual to the corporate, identifying God's creative work in Abraham as the starting point of election through which all of God's people are joined together as one new community.

The preceding understanding of the intertextual intersection of barrenness, creation *ex nihilo*, and salvation *sola gratia* proposes a final element for consideration: the nature of God's creative grace itself. God's grace for the apostle Paul is not a divine disposition or generic benefit, but the very son of God himself, whom God did not spare but gave (Rom. 8:32; Gal. 2:20; Linebaugh, 2020). The gospel is the kenotic self-giving of Jesus Christ, and the benefit of the gospel is neither abstract nor amorphous, but tangibly manifest in the incarnation.

The good news of the gospel announces not the general character of God, but an event of divine grace enacted in Jesus Christ (Barclay, 2015). Grace, then, is properly understood as the Christ-gift (Bertschmann, 2020). Grace is by its very nature not a congruous reward in turn, but

an incongruous gift possessing no correspondence with the worth of its recipients (Barclay, 2015). An incongruous gift given by an unconditioned and unobligated giver does not preclude the creature's counter-gift, however, but indeed actually empowers the recipient to faith and love (Linebaugh, 2020). It is to the counter-gift attention must now be turned.

A GRACIOUS RESPONSE

The Christ-gift is not given with an eye towards the worthiness of the recipient; grace in creation and new creation is unconditioned by that creation (Linebaugh, 2020). Incongruous grace is thus the mark of the God who creates *ex nihilo* (Barclay, 2015). While the Christ-gift is freely given and entirely unmerited, reciprocity is not fundamentally excluded. A gift conveys a social bond in view of mutual recognition of value; the gift contains sentiment because it initiates a personal, enduring, and reciprocal relationship signaled by the use of the Greek term *charis* (Barclay, 2015). That reciprocity as an expected response indicates in some way that the Christ-gift evokes a reaction in the recipient. Paul highlighted the incongruity of grace in Romans 5:12–21 to show that while the Christ-gift does not correspond with the worthiness of the recipient, it does positively reverse their condition (Barclay, 2015). “[S]piritual growth in a transformed human agency is to be expected and may be depicted as a legitimate and proper return: To God’s gift in abiding dependency on God’s gracious initiative in Christ” (Bertschmann, 2020, p. 30).

Eubank (2020) called this the transformative potential of grace, which stands alongside the incongruity of the Christ-gift. What grace conveys, then, is not just a gift but the very power of the giver (Barclay, 2015). For those who have received the Christ-gift, all that is said, thought, and done is by means of God’s gift and generosity (Eubanks, 2020). Paul connected these themes in Ephesians 2:8–10. Sinners for whom Christ died should practice indiscriminate generosity in recognition of the fact that they themselves hang by the single thread of divine mercy (Eubank, 2020).

Returning to an intertextual analysis, it is possible to read Hannah’s surrender of Samuel to the service of the Lord as a divinely-empowered response to a gift of God’s gracious action. Hyman (2009), in his analysis of four Old Testament vows—including Hannah—observed all

vow-makers are in positions of dire need and affliction. Further, the vow-maker is entered into a special relationship with God (Hyman, 2009), not unlike the relationship of reciprocity initiated by the incongruous gift as detailed above. Previous analysis depicted the extent of God's gracious action towards Hannah—the creation of life in a dead womb. Promising Samuel to the Lord was an action of gratitude (Hyman, 2009). Hannah recognized Samuel was a gracious gift of God and she was empowered to respond by offering the very same undeserved gift that God gave to her.

Brueggemann (1990) noted God's gracious action toward Hannah and Hannah's subsequent response contributed to the gracious development of Israel, for Yahweh alone initiated the sequence of Hannah, Samuel, Saul, and David *ex nihilo*. Old Testament literature begins in barrenness and voicelessness because Israel's monarchy had to begin in weakness, barrenness, prayer, and miracle (Brueggemann, 1990). Indeed, as Paul showed in Romans 9, God's incongruous and unconditioned mercy lay at the very root of Israel's existence, both in the event of its initial calling or creation, and in the event of its re-creating in the face of spectacular sin (Barclay, 2015; Bertschmann, 2020). God's gracious action toward Hannah and Hannah's empowered reciprocal response of gratitude is a key thematic element of Israel's existence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LEADER

In light of the preceding discussion, significant practical ramifications are discernible for the Christian leader. The Christ-gift incongruously initiating and conveying the power of the giver to an unworthy recipient carries at least three possible implications: (1) The Christian leader must recognize they are both saved and sustained by God's grace; (2) The Christian leader must recognize they respond to God's grace with gratitude, not obligation; and, (3) The Christian leader must recognize they reorient others to the initiating grace of God.

In 1 Corinthians 15:1–2 Paul nuanced his *sola gratia* understanding of salvation to include the reality that ongoing maturity and perseverance in the Christian life is steeped in grace. “This gospel is fruitfully received in authentic, persevering faith,” (Carson, 2008, p. 8). Yes, God through the gospel saves a person in Christ, but that person must then hold fast to the gospel—that incongruous Christ-gift that conveys the power of the giver—such that God's saving act is revealed as both effective once and also progressive (Kistemaker, 1993).

All that the leader does, then, must be saturated in the gracious Christ-gift, for that is the avenue of the power of the giver. Barclay (2015) argued grace conveys not just a gift but the very power of the giver himself. This means the leader relies not on their own strength and stamina to sustain their work, but on the power of God. The leader's access to the power of God is obtained for them through the person of Jesus Christ.

To that end, sandwiched between Paul's exhortation in Philippians 2:1–4 and description of Christ's humiliation and exaltation in Philippians 2:6–11 is verse 5, connecting the two thoughts: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (ESV, 2001/2011). How is the leader to execute the tasks that come before them? By relying on Jesus, who humbled himself for his children and now indwells them, imparting to them the power of God. Paul summarized the intended end result of this interaction in Philippians 2:12–13 contained therein are echoes of the reciprocal nature of the incongruous Christ-gift: the inworking of the power of God resulting in an outworking in the life of Jesus, and by extension the Christian leader.

This has important consequences for every Christian leader, but especially the one who is burdened by the pressures of ministry and feels as though any further exertion of effort is impossible; the leader for whom the power of God feels distant and unattainable. Paul prayed in Ephesians 2:16 that the church in Ephesus would be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit. However, notably, Paul did not envision this strength leading directly to empowering action. Instead, the indwelling of Christ and strengthening with power through the Holy Spirit are the avenues through which the leader may be, as Ephesians 3:17–19 says, rooted and grounded in love, strengthened, to know the love of Christ, and filled with the fullness of God. The strength of the Christian leader comes from apprehending the scope of the self-giving reality of God's grace—the incongruous Christ-gift. God's grace in Jesus Christ is the source of power, and it is God's grace in Jesus Christ that the Christian leader is empowered to apprehend. Grace is the beginning and end of the Christian leader's ministry ability (cf. Heb. 12:2; Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 21:13).

Apprehending the scope of the Christ-gift is necessary because the Christian leader's self-referential grit and determination are insufficient to produce the requisite motivation and momentum for ministry. Instead, the power of God delivered through the Christ-gift by the Holy Spirit

evokes in the Christian leader a desire to respond. Any discussion of the gift recipient's expected and anticipated response therefore immediately leads to a consideration of motivation. Depending on the Christ-gift for the power of the giver imbues the recipient with a grace-motivated desire and ability to respond. As Hannah responded to the gracious action of God in her life by devoting Samuel to the Lord in an act of gratitude, so too must the leader be grounded in gratitude for God's gracious action in their life. Paul affirmed this disposition in Colossians 2:6–7, connecting actions of Christian faithfulness to the foundation of thankfulness and gratitude: "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving" (*ESV*, 2001/2011). Thanksgiving to God for receiving the Christ-gift results in a recipient who walks in the Lord, is rooted in him, is built up in him, and is established in the faith. God's grace conveys the power of the giver, motivating and subsequently empowering both faithfulness and obedience.

Pao (2002) saw the same principle at work in Romans 12:1–2. It is in view of the mercies of God—Christ's death and resurrection bestowing the power of the giver—that the recipient of the Christ-gift is moved to obedient action grounded in gratitude. "In Romans 12, therefore, believers are urged to offer themselves as living sacrifices in grateful response to God's mighty acts through the death and resurrection of Jesus" (Pao, 2002, p. 102). Gratitude motivates both faithfulness and obedience.

Such a disposition of thankfulness fundamentally depends on the incongruous nature of the gift, the recipient therefore understanding they deserve nothing from the Lord; even suffering, sorrow, and hardship are received with thanksgiving. The scope of this hardship is particularly relevant for the Christian leader, as Paul described in 2 Corinthians 4:8–12: When hardship is experienced within the context of the incongruous nature of the gift, even that hardship is met with thanksgiving. "For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God" (*ESV*, 2001/2011, 2 Cor. 4:15). The leader thus endures difficulty for the sake of those whom they lead with a Godward response of gratitude.

Finally, the task of the Christian leader is to not just depend on the gracious and incongruous initiative of God personally, but corporately as well. God is fundamentally a giver (Jm. 1:16–18), and the leader is fundamentally a recipient. When leading an organization, the leader does

not catalyze action but discerns where God is already at work and joins him. In addition to depending on the gracious initiative of God in and through a given organization, the leader must also direct the attention of their followers to the same reality.

A similar impulse is already at work in evangelism: The evangelist depends on the God who has already initiated redemptive communication with humanity in the very nature of revelation itself. “At the same time, the saving magnitude of the Word carries an urgency that it be told to every creature. From this mandate issues a theology immediately related to the propagation of the gospel” (Coleman, 1980, p. 474). Evangelism depends not on human ingenuity, but the prior revelation of God which impels an urgency to proclaim that urgency. God graciously initiates and the evangelist joins God in his work. Leadership steeped in the incongruous initiative of God follows the same rhythm—prior action by God and subsequent responsive action.

The implications for the Christian leader are plain: All that the Christian leader is, flows from the absolute existence of God. “If God is, then everything that exists or happens must acknowledge his Lordship...-failure to see our lives within this context makes the gospel meaningless” (Coleman, 1980, p. 475). Every thought, word, and action offered by the Christian leader, when truly and fully formed by the incongruous Christ-gift, depends on the prior absolute existence of God. The Lord is the one true catalyst, and the Christian leader is called to respond with gratitude and join him in his work.

The gracious initiative of God is a consistent theme across Scripture. Both physically and spiritually, God incongruously creates life where it did not exist before. Recipients of his grace, grounded in gratitude, enter into a grace-dependent and grace-empowered relationship of reciprocity. The Christian leader recognizes they are saved by God's grace, but also must depend on the power of the giver for faithfulness. The influence of grace on motivation grounds enacted faithfulness in gratitude as opposed to obligation or guilt. Finally, the Christian leader recognizes they depend on the prior initiative of God, his absolute existence and action forming the context in which they lead others to respond to God. What is graceful(1) leadership? It is grateful to God for the extravagant gift of Jesus Christ and depends on that gift for empowering and equipping others to respond to God's prior initiative.

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