

Ethics in Public Leadership: The Role of Christian Leadership

Prof. Bismark Agbemble

Liberty University

October 23, 2022

Introduction

Ethics, the foundation of the social contract between leaders and followers, is a keystone in building trust within any organizational or societal platform. With such a baseline of trust, the followers can hardly advance any support to leaders who can do nothing noteworthy (Haricharan, 2023). Leaders may or may not be explicitly aware of this, but an ethical code will always direct one's actions to determine the successes made in a leadership drive. This paper attempts to investigate the five unique ethics models presented by Van Wart (2014) and provides a detailed commentary on their features. Apart from this analysis, the essay is also about Spiritual-Servant Leadership in public service and is critiqued for what it entails and means. Besides, the discussion deepens into assessing ethical codes as being adequate for leaders who subscribe to Christianity and questioning whether such leaders have any additional biblical moral responsibility. Finally, the essay culminates with applying at least one bible verse that brings a subtler approach to linking ethics and leadership by prompting personal reflection on the chosen scriptural wisdom. This analysis aims to understand the complexities of ethical factors in public leadership and analyze different models and principles that govern ethics on journey paths.

Wart's Ethics Models

1. Basic Integrity Model of a Virtuous Leader:

The Basic Integrity Model foregrounds virtue as integral within effective leadership. This framework necessitates that leaders shall exemplify character and moral excellence. A vital component of this model is that it requires leaders always to be honest, integral, and fair (Van Wart, 2014). Value in these virtues instils trust and reliability among the subjects, which is foundational for ethical decisions. This model points to the fact that it is from the personal

integrity of those at the helm first that ethical leadership would start and filter down to organizational culture.

2. The Ethical Leader as Moral Manager:

Herein, the leaders are regarded as custodians of morality within organizations for acting on ethical issues not solely through adhering to standards but by shaping ethical standards in the Ethical Leader as Moral Manager model. Developing and implementing ethical policies, practices, and standards that shape a morally healthy organizational culture is the responsibility of their leaders (Van Wart, 2014). This model understands ethical leadership not as just being limited to personal behaviour but as being proactive towards a work setting in which, as an essential element of the route that decisions get made, people think ethically.

3. The Ethical Leader as Authentic

In the Ethical Leader Authentic model, authenticity is a central tenet in ethical leadership where leaders are encouraged to work consistently with their core self (Van Wart, 2014). Therefore, the leaders are encouraged to be honest, transparent, and authentic to their core values. He introduces an environment where open communication and trust can exist because the followers can depend upon a leader for consistency and sincerity. This model perceives that authenticity in leadership can improve personal credibility and contribute towards a positive culture (Benlahcene et al., 2018).

4. The Ethical Leader as Spiritual Mentor:

It introduces a spiritual dimension to leadership that postulates leaders as mentors who help in their followers' spiritual and ethical growth. Beyond being seen within the conventional roles, leaders are assumed to nurture moral and spiritual well-being among their followers (Van Wart, 2014). As a result, the leaders of this model help their employees' wholesome growth by offering

guidance, assistance, and motivation on matters related to spirituality and ethics. This shows that the dimensions of spirituality and ethics interconnect effectively while leadership is based upon them.

5. The Ethical Leader as a Transforming Agent of Change for Common Good:

This model brings transformational leadership, showing leaders are change agents and catalysts to cause positive change centred on the common good (Van Wart, 2014). Leaders who have adopted this model intend to get things done optimally and with a broader sense of good for society. These leaders inspire and motivate their followers in making an overall collective perspective towards doing good beyond the boundaries of organizations. The model suggests that ethical leadership involves active involvement in doing good towards society and also imprints lasting good on others.

Critique of Spiritual-Servant Leadership in Public Service

Spiritual-servant leadership in public service should be thoroughly and critically probed for the attributes and implications of this new dimension of leadership concepts within the different contexts the public sector encompasses. In this model definition, a Spiritual-Servant Leader blends spiritual values with a serving disposition, intending to lead from a very high sense of purpose in their commitment (Prince, 2020). While this leadership style carries with it the commendable characteristics of emphasizing humility and empathy, a discerning critique can help reveal strengths and potential challenges.

Strengths

a) Emphasis on Humility and Empathy

Getting humility and empathy featured in the leadership model is such a strong point. Get a workplace that exhibits spiritual-servant leaders with these qualities characterized by

compassion, understanding leadership, and consideration for the diversity of the members and the public being served.

b) Commitment to Serving Others

The devotion toward service is a praiseworthy strength of this approach. Spiritual-servant leaders in public services commit to helping. This means orienting their leadership objectives toward the best interest of society (Prince, 2020). This devotion can help gain an increased level of trust and satisfaction among the people.

c) Integration of Spiritual Values

Spiritual values strengthen and add meaning to leadership practices. This model provides a framework for leaders who turn to their spiritual beliefs outside of which standard metrics operate so that they can be more values-driven and ethically informed in their decision-making.

Challenges

d) Religious Neutrality

The big challenge comes in maintaining religious neutrality as far as public service is concerned. Even though a Spiritual-Servant Leader may be inspired by their faith, it should always remain clear that religious belief should never subjugate the basic principles of secular governance (Sironen, 2020). Finding such a balance between personal spirituality and institutional neutrality is complicated.

e) Misunderstanding Chance

On the contrary, focus on spiritual values gives a connotation of proselytizing other cultures, which poses a challenge in diverse and multicultural environments where students from various

cultures and backgrounds come together (Sironen, 2020). The leadership approach must be accommodative and understand multiple belief systems to avoid alienation.

f) Operational Implementation

The ideals of humility, empathy, and service may be challenging to turn into concrete operational strategies in the bureaucracies of service to the public (Goltz and Goltz, 2020). Some government organizations are certainly hierarchically inclined, and accordingly, some of the virtues employees ought to display may only practically apply if further adaptations are witnessed within this realm.

Ethical Codes for Christian Leaders

At the intersection between professional standards and deeply held religious beliefs, the leadership discourse lingers a constant debate about whether ethical codes are sufficient to govern Christian leaders (Sironen, 2020). Moral Codes play the role of guiding frameworks, describing what is right in different settings. On the other hand, for Christian leaders, there is always a dilemma of whether these codes are strong enough or should have a higher moral obligation of a biblical nature to be the guiding compass of ethical decision-making.

Ethical Codes as a Framework

Codes of ethics are widely employed in various professions and define a set of principles that leaders should follow to make the right decisions when dealing with complicated ethical dilemmas. These codes commonly represent the society's norms, regulations and standards (Shakeel et al., 2019). These codes may act as a practical solution to ensure the Christian leader's adherence to ethical conduct in the wider professional environment. Although very valuable, such codes may not directly represent the intricate hierarchical moral aspects highlighted in the Christian teachings.

The Call for a Higher Biblical Moral Obligation

After all, Christian leaders may argue that any set of ethical codes will not be sufficient to guide them. They call for a higher level of biblical moral obligation, asserting that conformity with societal standards falls short. Instead, they claim to realize the necessity of aligning their actions with biblical teachings and ideals (Prince, 2020).

Alignment with Biblical Teachings

But a higher biblical moral obligation refers to the conscious attempt of leadership practices in line with the Christian morality textual content. Christian leaders may state that the teachings in the bible offer a much deeper and much more detailed code of ethics, superseding secular codes (Prince, 2020). This alignment includes the concepts of love, justice, mercy and being a servant leader, as the Bible teaches.

Integration of Faith and Leadership

Christian leaders must integrate their faith with the leadership. This comprises avoiding immoral practices and demonstrating Christian values in decision-making, team leadership, and organizational change (Sironen, 2020). Christian leaders want to create atmospheres through the biblical ideals of integrity, humility, and concern for others.

Navigating Challenges

While moral imperatives presented by the biblical orthodoxy offer a solid ethical base for Christian leaders, they may also be problematic in managing diverse and pluralistic environments (Sironen, 2020). A challenge arises in striking an optimal balance between personal faith convictions and respecting a company's various beliefs and views.

Application of a Biblical Passage

Using a biblical passage in the ethics of leadership context provides a spiritual foundation that sets leaders' abilities and directs them on their choices. One impactful passage is Proverbs 3: 5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean unto your understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path."

Interpretation and Significance

Proverbs 3 Five to 6 captures an enduring wisdom most apt for leaders in the murky moral waters of ethical decisions. Ultimately, the passage promotes a firm belief in one's higher power and chooses not to trust human understanding. For leaders, this means accepting the many shortcomings of individual knowledge and identifying the necessity for divine direction in ethical matters.

Importance of Trust

Within the scope of this discussion, trust — as a very significant trait for leadership practices — is spiritualized. Therefore, trust in the Lord is of surrendering one's understanding to a higher power and relying on the source's wisdom beyond human knowledge (Ortiz-Gómez et al., 2020). In such moral dilemmas, leaders are advised to rely on divine principles, understanding that ethical decision-making might not always be bright by common logic.

Humility in Leadership

In other words, leaning not upon one's understanding is an appeal for humbleness in the leaders. It is emphasized to the leaders that ethical decision-making does not simply revolve around intellectual ability but acknowledges the limitations of human knowledge (Van Wart et al., 2019). Adopting humility allows leaders to seek advice, adopt diverse views and be open to moral guidance beyond their perception.

Submission to Divine Guidance

The passage stresses the necessity of accepting God's will in every leadership sphere. This participation is an assurance to follow the values, ideals and actions that abide with those befitting a superior normative order. In the world of ethics, it is recommended that leaders subject their decisions to divine standards to be stiffly compliant with a better ethical order.

Straight Paths Through Divine Wisdom

The promise of straight paths in Proverbs 3: Five-six refers to the positive impacts of ethical leadership with a lot of divine wisdom. Leaders who believe in the Lord and follow divine guidance are sure of a course that fits with justice and morality. This assurance gives a lot of peace of mind to leaders with ethical problems, giving evidence that spiritual-based ethics lead to great success.

Practical Application in Leadership

In practical terms, the application of Proverbs 3: Leadership at 5-6 seeks intentional reflection, mediation and seeking spiritual counsel when forced to decide on ethical dilemmas. It summons the leaders to create an environment of trust, humility and submission to the rules formed not by themselves but by a higher entity (Daniels & Robinson, 2023). This passage is a perpetual reminder for leaders that ethical leadership does not occur in isolation but is an observable and collaborative effort powered by God's wisdom.

Conclusion

Ultimately, ethics in public leadership is a very complex and multilayered topic that transcends simplistic notions. The numerous models, particularly those elaborated by Wart, provide an appreciation of the ethical spadework implicit in leadership positions. This paper will provide a critical analysis of these models, an appropriate reflection on what makes Spiritual-Servant Leadership stand out among the others, and a discussion on how much responsibility Christian leaders need to bear. We come about with an overall insight.

The presented models by Wart are from the Basic Integrity Model to the Ethical Leader as a Transforming Agent of Change, showing us all the ways leaders can have when they work to promote ethics under them. These models are our priceless road guides for leaders trying to manoeuvre through the roughest terrains of decision-making, organizational culture and society.

The extensive analysis of Spiritual-Servant Leadership in the public service reinforces the importance of humility, empathy and a spirit to serve others. Despite noting its strengths, including an emphasis on compassion and concern for the general gain overall this c, this critique also points to difficulties in maintaining religious neutrality or practical execution.

The effectiveness of ethical codes for Christian leaders further complicates this discourse, as it creates tension around whether secular standards are enough or if there should be higher biblical moral obligations. Trying to achieve such a delicate balance between professional ethics and religious conviction should be a priority for Christian leaders, so their faith must permeate through their leadership.

Applying a biblical passage, Proverbs 3: 5-6, concludes this exploration with a heartfelt note. This passage expresses the crux of ethical leadership characterized by a trust in God and divine wisdom. Its use adds a lot of value to the conversation by allowing one to comprehend the principles while also doing them personally and spiritually through leadership.

Ethics in public leadership is a flowing interaction of diverse models, moral codes, and spiritual issues. It requires constant introspection, adjustment, and unwavering loyalty to universal standards. Leaders can flow in the complex terrain of ethical decision-making and integrate various models, spiritual frameworks, and biblical lenses that contribute towards a comprehensive approach that may have varying effects on individuals, organizations, and stands. Ultimately, ethical leadership is a cohesive combination of knowledgeability, virtue and commitment to all things good.

References

- Benlahcene, A., Zainuddin, R. B., Syakiran, N., & Ismail, A. B. (2018). A narrative review of ethics theories: Teleological & deontological Ethics. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 23(1), 31-32.
- Daniels, E. A., & Robinson, T. D. (2023). Servant Leadership and Spirituality: Perspectives on Healing and Black Christian, Eastern, and Womanist Insights. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Servant Leadership* (pp. 299-321). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Goltz, J. W., & Goltz, J. W. (2020). Leadership Ethics, Dimensions and Development Within the Public Affairs Triumvirate. *Higher Education Leadership Strategy in the Public Affairs Triumvirate: College and Community Engagement*, 155-178.
- Haricharan, S. J. (2023). Leadership, management and organizational implications for public service team member well-being and performance. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21, 2080.
- Ortiz-Gómez, M., Ariza-Montes, A., & Molina-Sánchez, H. (2020). Servant leadership in a social, religious organization: An analysis of work engagement, authenticity, and spirituality at work. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(22), 8542.
- Prince, S. A. (2020). *Influence of Religious Upbringing and Spiritual Values on Servant Leadership* (Doctoral dissertation, Grand Canyon University).
- Shakeel, F., Kruyen, P. M., & Van Thiel, S. (2019). Ethical leadership as process: A conceptual proposition. *Public Integrity*, 21(6), 613-624.

Sironen, R. J. (2020). The relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation in US churches.

Van Wart, M. (2014). Contemporary varieties of ethical leadership in organizations. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 5(5), 27-45.

Van Wart, M., Roman, A., Wang, X., & Liu, C. (2019). Operationalizing the definition of e-leadership: identifying the elements of e-leadership. *International review of administrative sciences*, 85(1), 80-97.