

The background of the cover is an abstract, textured composition of blue and white. It features a central circular motif that resembles a vortex or a stylized eye, with swirling, brushstroke-like patterns radiating outwards. The colors range from deep, dark blues to bright, almost white highlights, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Theology of
Leadership

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JOURNAL

Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

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Moriah Olmstead, a student at Toccoa Falls College, created the cover artwork. She explains that a wave is like a Servant Leader. Both are constantly changing with new tides of influence and resurfacing from depths that life passionately brings forth. Always seeking new horizons and growing in strength, Servant Leaders empower others by setting the example of what it looks like to remember hope. In the same way, a wave is powerful and graceful by its gesture of drawing its onlooker into its beauty. Life can become overwhelming when focused on the ever-present waves of chaos, but the very essence of becoming a Servant Leader is to hold fast and stand firm while focusing on, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever is admirable” (Php 4:8). There is a horizon to every ocean and there is a God whose greatness calms the sea. It is in this center of chaos that the Servant Leader displays a calm in the midst of the storm.

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Leadership



Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019
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theologyofleadership@gmail.com

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A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP: AN EXPLICATION THROUGH PAULINE LEADERSHIP IN ACTS

Kevin S. Hall

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: Utilizing the book of Acts, one can explicate Paul's methods of cross-cultural leadership. Through a historical-cultural hermeneutic, this article will establish Paul as a cross-cultural leader by understanding his identity and the contexts in which he led. Then, Paul's methods of cross-cultural leadership are extrapolated from further exegesis of Acts, demonstrating that he is intent on context-adapting, connection-making, foundation-grounding, relationship-building, and ministry-sharing. These methods from Acts are a guide for leaders who desire to be cross-culturally effective, especially for Christian leaders who share Paul's same vision of glorifying God through making and teaching disciples.

KEYWORDS: *Cross-Cultural Leadership, Paul, Areopagus Sermon, Contextualization*

A Biblical Foundation of Cross-Cultural Christian Leadership: An Explication through Pauline Leadership in Acts

In basic terms, leadership is about influencing others to achieve a goal (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2015; Northouse, 2018). Christian leadership, by distinction, is about influencing others from a biblical worldview towards a biblically informed goal. Leadership, then, is distinctly Christian when its source of authority is rooted in Biblical truth and its purpose is aligned with God's purpose. Since God desires for his image-bearers to have a right relationship with him, one fulfills the greatest commandments to love him and others through acting on his commission to make disciples of all nations (Mt 22:36–40; 28:16–18). Christian leaders, then, must practice cross-cultural leadership in order to influence the nations.

The book of Acts describes how leaders effectively cross cultures. This article focuses on Paul's interactions in numerous cultures within that book. Acts reveals Paul's adaptability to different people and cultures, his ability in making connections with those to whom he was preaching, his leadership grounding in a firm foundation, his heart for building relationships with those whom he leads, and his inclusion and development of others in sharing ministry.

METHODOLOGY

This study will examine Paul and his cross-cultural engagement in Acts by weighing the historical-cultural background, assuring conformity within the larger canonical historical-redemptive narrative, and drawing insights from scholars who further inform the linguistic contexts in which Paul's actions and words were immersed. This article discusses: (a) Paul's background; (b) Paul's ministry context; and (c) Paul's cross-cultural leadership characteristics as observed in key moments described primarily in Acts 13 and Acts 17. A final section addresses implications of Paul's cross-cultural methods.

PAUL AS CROSS-CULTURAL LEADER

Paul is arguably one of the most influential leaders in the early church, and many look to his practice for guidance in principles of leadership (Lokkesmoe, 2017; MacArthur, 2010; Newton, 2018). To understand his leadership in cross-cultural contexts, one must understand Paul's background and ministry context.

PAUL'S BACKGROUND

Paul was a Jew born in Tarsus (Acts 21:39). He was schooled in Jewish culture, literature, and religion as he became a Pharisee living and studying in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3; Capes et al., 2017; Keener, 2012; Larkin, 1995; Polhill, 1992). Arguably, his upbringing was in Jerusalem. From the construction of the Acts 22:3 text, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel," (NASB) each participle leads to its respective clause in the commonly used triad of birth, rearing, and education (Larkin; Longenecker, 1981; Polhill). The word *anatrepho* (ἀνατρέφω), translated, "brought up," means that "he was reared" (Polhill). The same word is used of Moses' rearing and upbringing in Acts 7:20–21. The reading of "this city" is to be prospectively,

meaning Jerusalem, rather than retrospectively, meaning Tarsus (Holladay, 2016). Thus, it appears the text explains that while he was born in Tarsus, he was reared and educated in Jerusalem (Keener; Witherington, 1998). Yet in either case, being brought up in Jerusalem or moving there after early childhood for studies, it is most often argued that Paul spent his formative years in Jerusalem (Bruce, 1988).

Paul was a Diaspora Jew living in Greek influenced Tarsus, at least for some time, where he more fully learned Greek culture and language (Acts 11:25; Capes et al., 2017; Wright, 2005). He also studied Greek literature (Acts 11:25; Barnett, 2008; Hengel & Deines, 1991; Porter, 2016). Paul had a dual background, having lived in Greco-Roman Tarsus steeped in Greek and Roman culture yet also as a Jew in a Jewish community (Lokkesmoe, 2017). For, even while living in Tarsus, he would have lived in the notable Jewish community that was there (Keener, 2012). He also spent substantial time in Jerusalem being educated under a famed rabbi, Gamaliel (Act 22:3; 26:4; Lokkesmoe). These cultural experiences gave him diversity in his language, education, and cultural pedigree (Acts 21:37–40; 26:14; Keener; Lokkesmoe).

Paul's living as a practicing Jew outside of Israel in a Hellenized environment reveals his diverse, blended cultural identity. For this reason, some argue that Paul was not technically a cross-cultural minister, because part of the "other" cultures had already merged into his own cultural identity (Raiter, 1999). For others, Paul's experience in a complex, mixed culture produced in him a complex, multiple identity (Hodge, 2005). However, such explanations over-simplify Paul's Jewish identity and living, even though he was in a Hellenistic time. Also, making Paul bi-cultural with a multi-faceted identity diminishes his struggles, such as those he encountered in Ephesus and Philippi (Acts 16:20–23; 19:24–41), when engaging the Gentile mission and the Hellenistic culture (Campbell, 2012).

Undoubtedly, Paul was "a product of both Judaism and Hellenism" (Campbell, 2012, p. 30). Yet, Scripture reveals Paul as primarily a Jew who regularly crossed different cultures. He stated his move from his own Jewish people "to turn to the Gentiles," because "the Lord has commanded us: I have made you a light for the Gentiles to bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:46–47, CSB; See also Acts 22:15; 26:16–20). Furthermore, the crossing of cultures can be as small as crossing into a different part of the same country where language, race, and religion are the same or as great a leap as encountering cultural differences completely opposite to one's own in a foreign land. Paul is seen crossing cultures in big and small ways.

Paul was primarily a Jew, not simply by ethnicity in the sense of being born to Jewish parents but also by practice and as his primary culture (Frey, 2012). Paul recognized this primary identity, calling himself a Jew and associating himself as a Jew (Acts 21:39; 22:3). Paul showed through his history and his zeal, that he could "speak as one who was a Jew through and through" (Dunn, 2016, p. 192). Even in taking the gospel to the Gentiles, Paul did not give up his Jewish identity, in order to preach, teach, and lead others in the gospel. He regularly went to the synagogue as a practicing Jew to be there on the Sabbath (Capes et al., 2017; Plummer & Terry, 2012). He demonstrated to the Jewish leaders that he was still orderly and kept the Law in order to go against some who had accused him of forsaking Moses and Jewish law and customs (Acts 21:21, 24–26).

Those living around the Mediterranean basin were diverse, living in a pluralistic world with many different cultures, and while there were certain similarities in experiences among the diversity, the different ethnic groups "sought to preserve their social identity by resisting cultural conformity"

(Capes et al., 2017, p. 15). Because Judaism in the Diaspora largely resisted assimilation to the surrounding Hellenistic world, being a Diaspora Jew did not mean giving up one's Jewish character (Frey, 2012). Paul and his family, like other Jews in Tarsus, would have kept the cultural expressions of Hellenism at a distance (Barnett, 2008).

Jews in the Diaspora, like Paul, could live in a Hellenistic world without losing their identity as Jews. Jewish people could, by God's grace, become Christian and keep their Jewish customs without inherent tension within themselves between the two (Keener, 2012). Being Hellenized in speaking Greek and even participating in Hellenistic social life and customs did not mean one's Jewish identity deteriorated (Campbell, 2012). Paul could and did remain faithful to his Jewish identity and culture (Keener).

PAUL'S CONTEXT

With Paul's identity established, one must then look more specifically at the contexts in which he ministered. The first-century, Roman-ruled, Greek-influenced world in which Paul lived was quite diverse. Those living around this Mediterranean basin in the first century negotiated a multicultural world (Capes et al., 2017). Paul's missionary journeys led him throughout this diverse Mediterranean region.

Paul, with Barnabas, had great success and spent considerable time leading the church in Antioch. While Antioch is just one of the many Hellenistic cross-cultural contexts in which Paul worked, it was considerably different from his primary cultural context in his Jewish community. Antioch was a primary Roman colony with multiple Greek deities and multiple Hellenistic temples (Bock, 2007; Keener, 2012; Schnabel, 2016).

Paul encountered cultural differences throughout his ministry. Even inside the synagogue, He addressed a diverse audience of Jews, Gentile proselytes, and God-fearers (Acts 13:26, 43; 17:4, 12; 18:4; Dunn, 2016; Plummer & Terry, 2012). He found disputes within the church that were based on cultural differences (Acts 15; Elmer, 2006). Paul traveled to other Greek cities, similar to Antioch, throughout the Mediterranean that had multiple deities and were highly influenced by Greek philosophy. It was common to encounter the different cultures as he made a point to spend time outside the places of worship, such as the marketplaces (Acts 17:17) and outside the city gates (Acts 16:13; Bock, 2007).

One sees that Paul led cross-culturally in his ministry contexts by reviewing a definition of leadership with what it means to lead cross-culturally. Leadership is aligning people by translating vision and values into "understandable and attainable acts and behaviors" and then creating "coalitions of people" to bring their passions into "alignment in carrying out the vision" (Ledbetter, Banks, & Greenhalgh, 2016, p. 18). Defining leadership in this way of directing and aligning people to achieve a vision is common (e.g. Haley, 2013; Kotter, 2012; Northouse, 2018; Winston & Patterson, 2006). Paul acted in this way by aligning people to the vision and values of the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the resurrected Messiah in order to bring about their repentance and belief. With these disciples, he then established churches, "coalitions of people," to bring their passions of salvation in Christ into alignment in carrying out the vision of taking this message to others.

Cross-cultural leadership is “inspiring people who come from two or more cultural traditions to participate. . . in building a community of trust and then to follow you and be empowered by you to achieve a compelling vision of faith” (Lingenfelter, 2006, p. 21, 30, 155). That is, leadership for the cross-cultural leader is influencing people from other cultures to be aligned around a vision and values to create coalitions of people, or communities of trust, in order to carry out, or achieve, the vision. Lingenfelter explained that this building of a community of trust among people from two or more cultural traditions is the challenge of cross-cultural leadership, as it provokes a clash of worldviews (Lingenfelter).

The book of Acts shows Paul leading cross-culturally in this way and with these results. Paul’s leadership occurred in and to diverse cultures. His message about the Jewish Messiah connected with the God of Israel was a threat and disruption to the Hellenistic culture, including its worship of Greek gods. Often, his cross-cultural leadership provoked a clash of worldviews. Acts 14 reveals a clash in Iconium, where a divided city made plans to stone Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:1–5). In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were ministering in Philippi, a city within the Roman colony of Macedonia where they were outsiders, “being Jews” (16:20; Bock, 2007). After casting out a demon in a fortune-telling slave, the slave’s masters accused Paul of “seriously disturbing” (16:20) the city as he clashed with their worldview and Roman customs (16:20–21). In Acts 19, people in Ephesus turning to Jesus threatened the very livelihood and worldview of those worshipping the god Artemis. This clash of worldviews caused a disturbance with “confusion” (19:29, 32) and a “disorderly gathering” (19:24-41; Peterson, 2009).

In general, as the apostle to the Gentiles, he was going to cities and colonies that were not primarily Jewish. Paul’s task involved an intentional crossing of ethnic boundaries. As an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was responsible for the ethnic and religious “other” (Hodge, 2005, p. 270). In these ways, the Jewish Paul crossed cultures for the sake of the ultimate goal of glorifying God through spreading the gospel.

PAUL’S CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP METHODS

Several characteristics of the method Paul used to lead in cross-cultural contexts stand out as guiding principles. Acts reveals Paul as one who contextually adapts and intentionally connects. He successfully leads as one who is firmly grounded and deeply relational. He extends his cross-cultural leadership success as one who willingly shares ministry to deliberately develop others.

CONTEXT-ADAPTING

Paul’s adaptability to all kinds of peoples and contexts characterized his cross-cultural leadership (Campbell, 2012). He adapted his message to those to whom he was preaching. To the Jews, he would preach in a way that they would culturally accept and understand, and likewise to the Gentiles.

Acts 13 is an example of how Paul addressed those in the Jewish context. As was Paul’s custom, he went to the Jewish synagogue in each town (13:5, 14; Acts 17:2, 18:4; Capes et al., 2017). As a Jewish church leader, he was given the opportunity to speak and provide insights (v. 15; Plummer & Terry, 2012). Paul knew this community in the synagogue was familiar with the Old Testament and was expecting the Messiah; thus, he reasoned with them with this in mind (Plummer

& Terry). He understood his audience was one ready and prepared to hear from the Scriptures (Longenecker, 1981). He quoted the Old Testament as he described four key Old Testament events (13:22, 33–35, 41; Larkin, 1995; Polhill, 1992). In this way, he used terms his listeners would understand to set up his address. He then gave both apostolic witness and scriptural proof of how Christ was the fulfillment of these Old Testament events (Polhill). He stated that God brought Israel a “Savior, Jesus,” (13:23) who fulfilled the promise God made to Israel (13:32–33). His message was specific for his audience.

When he moved outside the synagogue, he adapted his message to the culture outside the synagogue (Schnabel, 2016). Paul, like other first-century Jews, was aware of and related in varying degrees to the dominant Hellenistic culture of the era (Campbell, 2012). His reasoning and persuading, when it included Gentiles, was different than when he was speaking only to the Jews who would be culturally and religiously well-versed in the Scriptures.

This adaptation is most clearly noted in Acts 17 and his address to those in Athens. When Paul and Silas arrived in Thessalonica, they began reasoning from the Scriptures at the Synagogue (17:2). He described Jesus in terms that would resonate with the Jews, calling Jesus the *Christos* (χριστός), the Christ or Messiah (17:3). He was able to persuade some of the Jews, as well as “a great number of God-fearing Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women” (17:4, CSB; see also 17:12). He then moved on to Athens where he was struck by the rampant idolatry (17:16). When he was not reasoning in the synagogue, he daily spent time in the marketplace (17:17). There, he encountered Greek philosophers who were intrigued by his message of “foreign deities” (17:18) and ushered him to share at the Areopagus (17:19–21).

In the Areopagus, Paul’s approach took a visible shift. Among the Greeks with no Jewish concept of God, He no longer reasoned from the Scriptures to prove Jesus as the Messiah. Paul affirmed that he observed they were “extremely religious” (17:22), and he proceeded to proclaim to them the “unknown God” (17:23) – an inscription on their own altar. Then, Paul started with creation (17:24), and he reasoned with the Greeks from their own philosophers and poets, even quoting Greek poets (17:28; Holladay, 2016; Longenecker, 1981).

Paul adapted his message to meet the needs of the context. He recognized the need to understand his audience and contextualize his message in a way that his audience would understand (Hiebert, 1985, 1994). He is a model example of cross-cultural leadership, as effective leaders adapt “to meet the needs of their followers and the particular environment” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2015, p. 98). Paul showed a “profound willingness to adapt to cultural differences for the sake of winning men and women to Christ,” emphasizing his Jewish background when speaking to Jews and setting his Jewishness aside when speaking to Gentiles (Van Rheenen, 2006, p. 244; 1 Cor 9:19–22).

CONNECTION-MAKING

Paul made a point to make connections with others through seeking common ground. The contrast between Paul’s ministry to Jews exemplified in Acts 13 and his ministry to Gentiles exemplified in Acts 17 not only shows his adaptability but also his method of connecting to his audience through common ground. This connection opened the door for the message to be heard.

In Paul's Acts 13 address in the synagogue, he built a bridge by using language his audience would understand. Paul commonly used this method of starting with a point of contact (Polhill, 1992). Utilizing the prophets as he quoted the Old Testament, Paul presented himself as standing on common ground with the Jewish listeners (Pelikan, 2005). He included himself with the Jewish audience stating that God chose "our fathers" (13:17). He showed his expertise in contextualization as he addressed all who are in the synagogue, not just the Jews. Larkin (1995) argued that "With Gentile God-fearers in the audience, Paul articulates the particularity of God's dealings with Israel but within an international context" (p. 198). Even in a cultural setting in which he most fit, Paul understood his context and the need to connect with all whom he was addressing.

Elsewhere in Acts, he connected with his Jewish audience in order to be heard and understood. In the midst of chaotic conflict, with his life on the line, Paul sought common ground with those around him in order to connect (Acts 21:40–22:5, 23:5–7). In front of the council, he identified himself as a strict Jew and uses the Hebrew language to address them (Acts 22:2–3).

In Paul's Acts 17 address in Athens, he built a bridge to the audience, who would not have understood his Jewish worldview and use of biblical texts, by referencing their altar to the unknown God (Acts 17:23; Forrest & Roden, 2017; Longenecker, 1981; Newell, 2016; Polhill, 1992). His use of the term *deisidaimōnesterous* (δεισιδαιμονεστερουσ; Acts 17:22), translated as calling them "very religious," follows his method of bridge-building towards common ground. One will find little argument that the term has two possible meanings, namely "religious" or "superstitious" (Kistemaker, 1990; Larkin, 1995; Polhill; Schnabel, 2016). Some, however, argue that Paul would not have meant this as a compliment, as in meaning "religious," but in a negative sense, meaning "superstitious" (Witherington, 1998).

A case for the negative sense revolves around Paul's anger and frustration about the idols seen in verse 16 (Peterson, 2009). Here, the author of the text uses the strong verb *paroxuneto* (παρωξύνετο), which means "to be upset," "to stir to anger," or "to be irritated" (Louw and Nida, 1996; Seesemann, *TDNT* 5:857). The verb can also mean "infuriated" (Peterson; Polhill, 1992). One may argue that the wording at least indicates that Paul was irritated by what he saw (Witherington, 1998). Furthermore, some argue that compliments when making an address in the Areopagus were discouraged (Peterson; Witherington).

While his specific reasoning cannot be known, one can postulate in a consistent manner with his methods elsewhere where he started with common ground. The word used is ambiguous, and its very ambiguity may have been the intent in order to commend the Athenians in the positive sense yet have a negative connotation in his mind (Larkin, 1995; Polhill, 1992; Witherington, 1998). To use it in such an openly negative sense to start his speech in a confrontational manner would not have helped him gain an audience (Hiebert, 1994; Longenecker, 1981). It thus appears he was using it as a commendation, which seems to be the most accepted view (Kistemaker, 1990; Polhill).

Paul found a mutual purpose and sought mutual respect as he made reference to their searching for an "unknown God" (Acts 17:23) and encouraged them for being religious. During a crucial conversation, one like Paul's message where the stakes are high and there are opposing opinions and strong emotions, it is necessary for the communicator to seek commonality and mutuality to show one cares about the other's goals, interests, and values (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2012). Paul sought a common respect to keep his listeners from shutting him off and to stay open to hearing his message.

He needed to find common ground and connect with his audience in the Areopagus, especially being an outsider with a new, “strange” message (Acts 17:18, 20; Stählin, *TDNT* 5:2). Witherington (1998), who argued for the negative connotation in verse 22, explained that Paul “strikes a balance notable throughout this speech, between making contact with the audience and condemning their idolatry” (p. 523). Paul used points of contact rather than passing judgment or attacking their idol worship and polytheistic views (Kistemaker, 1990; Witherington). Instead of expressing harsh judgment or accusing them of idolatry, Paul “embraced the desires for reason and intellectual stimuli by using abstract ideas that his listeners identified with in order to build his argument about God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Newton, 2018, p. 220). Paul’s method was to consistently have as much common ground as possible with his audience (Bruce, 1988).

When communicating spiritual truth in a cross-cultural context, one should look for points of contact and not be afraid to use the host culture’s own religious words, at times, in order to make the message intelligible for those listening (Hale, 1995). Paul connected his message with the host culture throughout his speech by referring to their own philosophers and poets with rhetoric they would understand. This utilization of Greek philosophers is “an especially important example of contextualization” (Osborne, 2006, p. 413). Contextualization connects the message to the listener. It is “true apologetic, and also true evangelism, where the content of the gospel is preserved while the mode of expression is tuned to the ears of the recipients” (Green, 2004, p. 182).

In using pagan quotes, Paul continued to address the audience in their terms, as the Scripture as proof would have been meaningless to them (Green, 2004; Polhill, 1992). In his speech at Lystra, Paul used a similar argument from creation to build a bridge and connect his message with the pagan hearers (Acts 14:14–18; Polhill). In Paul’s speech to the Athenians, he began by expressing empathy to their search for meaning in their religious practices, recited their known literature to “draw a sense of appeal to the listeners’ interest,” and validated their desire for divine knowledge (Acts 17:16–34; Newton, 2018, p. 220).

Paul’s cross-cultural strategy, in part, was to find common ground. He did so in the synagogue and in cross-cultural contexts that stood out in stark contrast (Lokkesmoe, 2017; Longenecker, 1981). The common ground allowed Paul to connect with his listeners so he could proclaim a message grounded in Christ regardless of his context.

FOUNDATION-GROUNDING

Paul is grounded in his foundation, and he firmly sticks to his message. Regardless of his audience, his contextualized message was always about the gospel. In the major contrasting speeches in Acts 13 and 17, his message was about the resurrected Jesus. Paul is a “model missionary who crosses cultural boundaries and contextualizes his unchanging message to the particular contexts of his hearers” (Plummer & Terry, 2012, p. 202). He did not waiver in this message even when ministering in cultures very different from his own. His appeal was always to repentance and faith in Christ, the resurrected Messiah (Polhill, 1992).

To the Jews and those in the synagogues, Paul preached the gospel of Jesus and his resurrection (Acts 13:27–32; 17:3; Bock, 2007). The goal of his speech in the synagogue in Acts 13 was to show how Christ fulfilled the promise of a savior through the Davidic descendant (Polhill, 1992). When Paul proclaimed the truth to the Israelites, he relied on the Holy Scriptures as the foundation of his remarks. Among the Jews, Paul tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Law

and the Prophets (Acts 17:2, 28:3). He reasoned that Jesus was the fulfillment of these Scriptures and was the Messiah the Jews were seeking. Even on trial, Paul stood firm in his message about Jesus the Messiah, the resurrection, and the need for repentance (Acts 26:20–29).

When speaking to the Greek philosophers in Athens, Paul made certain his message remained Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18, 30–31; Longenecker, 1981; Peterson, 2009). He reasoned with them in a manner they would understand, adapting his message contextually, yet remaining grounded in his foundation. Paul used Greek poet quotations and language his Greek audience would understand while remaining entirely biblical in his doctrine of God (Green, 2004). Paul adjusted his Judean identity to accommodate Gentiles without giving up his Judeanness, a decision rooted in theological conviction of being in Christ and pedagogical strategy of adaptability (Hodge, 2005).

This conviction was rooted in the gospel of Christ and the direct call to make disciples of all nations (Acts 1:8; 22:15; 26:16–20). Paul “saw his cultural dexterity as a necessary function of sharing the gospel. Incarnation required accommodation” (Capes et al., 2017, p. 31). His statements were rooted in Old Testament thought as even in his language using Greek philosophy, the underlying thought remained thoroughly biblical (Polhill, 1992). This regular pattern to his reasoning focused on Jesus and his resurrection (Acts 17:3; Larkin, 1995). He reasoned with them to persuade them to accept the resurrected Jesus as Messiah and called them to repent and believe (Acts 17:3–4, 17, 30–31; 18:4; 26:20; Longenecker, 1981).

Paul’s firm grounding in Christ allowed him to continue toward the goal of disciple-making regardless of his situation. Paul was tenacious and did not let trials, tribulations, or maltreatment keep him from his mission to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 14:19–22; 16:22–33). He did not back down from his message among trials or plots against him, even continuing to teach publicly (Forrest & Roden, 2017). Paul stated he “did not shrink back” (Acts 20:20, 27) but “testified to both Jews and Gentiles” with a single message that was “about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:21). While he changed and adapted his style of discourse, he was faithful to his unchanging message.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

As people responded to the message of Christ in repentance, Paul intentionally built strong relationships with those whom he discipled. He loved them and kept in contact with them. Their mourning of his departure shows this love and strong relationship between Paul and those he led (Acts 20:36–38; Howell, 2003; Toussaint, 2018). The author in Acts 20:37 says, “they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him” (NASB). They were grieving that they would not see him again (Acts 20:38). The word *odunaōmai* (ὀδυνάομαι), translated “grieving,” which can most literally mean suffering pain, is used to show their “deep sorrow” for his parting and possible coming death (Hauck, *TDNT* 5:115).

While Paul wrote letters to those he had discipled, he also made a point to go back to strengthen the disciples in many of the churches (Acts 14:21–22; 18:23; 20:21–22). His compassion and love for those in the churches he had led moved him to make a point to revisit them in order to “see how they are” (Acts 15:36). He showed that he had a love and a great concern for the churches with whom he had a relationship (2 Cor 11:28). That they regularly warn him to keep him safe reflects this strong relationship (Acts 21:4–5; Toussaint, 2018).

The significant relationships he built with those he disciplined continued throughout his ministry. An example of these long-lasting relationships is the relationship with Lydia, whom he disciplined, with whom he spent time in her house, and who continued to support Paul's missionary endeavors (Acts 16:14–15; Phil 4:15–18; Polhill, 1992). Part of Paul's method in making and teaching disciples was relationship-building and a genuine care and love for others. Through these relationships, Paul shared the ministry and developed disciple-making disciples.

MINISTRY-SHARING

Finally, Paul was in the habit of sharing the ministry. He did not set out alone; instead, he worked with others, developed others, and handed off leadership responsibilities to others (Peterson, 2009; Plummer & Terry, 2012). Paul appointed elders to lead the churches he planted (Acts 14:23). He handed over responsibilities to others on his team like Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:15). After this leadership development, he sent out leaders like Timothy and Erastus to minister (Acts 19:22; Schnabel, 2016).

Leadership development was a cornerstone of Paul's model of ministry, and leaders fulfill the fundamental purpose of leadership to glorify God by developing others (Plueddemann, 2009). This ministry-sharing leadership development is central to Christian leadership and fulfilling the Great Commission. In fact, the central responsibility of a disciple is to reproduce oneself (Turner, 2008). As soon as he could after planting a church, Paul appointed local leaders and left the ministry to them (Elmer, 2006). He led, disciplined, and developed leaders for the church and turned over the ministry for them to carry it on (Acts 20:28; Bock, 2007; Osborne, 1999; Polhill, 1992).

IMPLICATIONS OF PAUL'S CROSS-CULTURAL METHODS

If one attempts to lead cross-culturally without adapting to the cultural context, connecting with the audience, and building relationships with those whom one attempts to lead and develop, failure is inexorable. Understanding cross-cultural contexts and being willing and able to adapt to the context leads to greater leadership success (Livermore, 2015). While it is essential to understand the cultural values of a context (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), one will not be cross-culturally effective without implementing Paul's methods. The cognitive dimension is not enough, as one must adapt one's behaviors in order to properly connect (Livermore; McConnell, 2018; Plueddemann, 2009).

Examples abound in organizational culture literature (Hofstede et al., 2010; Schein, 2018) and missions books (McConnell, 2018; Plueddemann, 2009; Storti, 2001) on how not adapting and connecting in cross-cultural contexts can be detrimental to a leader's effectiveness. Cross-cultural leaders may find clashes regarding power-distance, for example. Power in high power-distance cultures is unequally distributed to the few, while power in low-power distance cultures is more equally distributed and linear (Hofstede et al.; House et al., 2014). A leader exhibiting high power-distance by taking charge with authority to command those in a low power-distance culture will likely be alienated and lose respect from followers.

My American missionary friend, who comes from a low-context culture, leads a team in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is a high-context culture. The two cultures differ greatly in time-orientation. He has learned the need to adapt to the way time works in Africa, namely in a polychronic

orientation that tends to function more slowly with a value on relationship rather than in a monochronistic fashion with precise schedules and task-orientation (Hall, 1989; Livermore, 2015; Plueddemann, 2009). He is able to find common ground in his interactions within the culture, even in other cultural values like the shared value of future-orientation where they share the emphasis on short-term thinking and outcomes (House et al., 2014). His firmly established values grounded in the gospel compel him to build relationships for the cause of Christ—relationships which started because he was first adaptable and found common ground through which to connect. His disciple-making purpose keeps him on track to evangelize within these relationships and then disciple and teach his African brothers to develop them into disciple makers.

I have often caught myself exhibiting the direct communication of my low-context culture with my Mexican friends and colleagues who are indirect communicators from a high-context culture. My culture tends to be to-the-point and concentrates on the task rather than relying on non-verbal communication and focusing on relationship (Elmer, 2002; Livermore, 2015). They have regularly extended grace and forgiveness for my rude, to-the-point, information-driven communication style. I have enjoyed adapting and being more relational in order to connect and build relationships for more effective ministry outcomes. Through these relationships, then, I was able to influence towards gospel principles and purposes in order to share and work together in ministry.

A firm biblical foundation strengthens the leader when times are hard and when inevitable clashes of worldviews occur. This foundation grounds the leader in the bigger vision and purpose. It provides the basis for understanding what parts of the leader's identity and message one can and should adjust, while firmly establishing an unchanging goal to achieve. With the ultimate goal of influencing others towards a full relationship with Christ, the cross-cultural Christian leader stays firmly planted in the gospel message. Akin and Pace call this philosophy of ministry "incarnational" when one "lovingly engages people where they are, humbly sacrifices to meet their needs, and intentionally delivers the gospel" (2017, p. 80). Following this method of Paul is following the philosophy of ministry of Jesus.

The cross-cultural leader must know and adapt to the context in order to connect with others in a way that leads towards building a relationship. Through this connection and relationship, the leader has the credibility to influence one in a positive direction. Cross-cultural Christian leaders who exemplify Paul's cross-cultural methods will develop local leaders to whom they can pass on the ministry. These developed disciples, who know best the culture and needs, can then carry on the disciple-making process. Furthermore, this developing stage is also a sending tool as those whom the effective cross-cultural leader has developed can themselves lead cross-culturally as they have seen context-adapting, witnessed connection-making, benefited from foundation-grounding, experienced relationship-building, and received ministry-sharing.

CONCLUSION

Like leadership, evangelism cannot take place in a vacuum, but is always a proclamation "to people and the message must be given in terms that make sense to them" (Green, 2004, p. 165; Bennis, 2009). As Paul exemplified in his Athenian address in Acts 17, the Christian leader must present the unchanging message of Jesus in a way that is understandable and still true to the Bible (Bredfeldt, 2006). Acts provides a biblical foundation and guide of one of the great cross-cultural

leaders of the early church, Paul. His methods are transcendent as they are timeless and cross cultures. Christian leaders will do well to utilize his principles of being adaptable, making connections, being grounded in Truth, building relationships, and sharing the ministry.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Mark L. Atterson – a Ph.D candidate in Organizational/Ecclesial Leadership at Regent University. He currently serves the needs of pastors and churches providing consulting, support, and mentorship to churches with Ascend Leadership Consulting and as president of Propulsion Evangelistic Ministries. His education includes an Advanced Graduate Certificate in Leadership from Regent university, a M.A.T.S. from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, and a B.A. in Bible/Pastoral Ministries from Central Bible College. He previously served in various ecclesial roles including church planting, revitalization, missions aviation, and pastoral leadership.
matterson@mac.com

R. Mark Bell - Assistant Professor of Management at Wayland Baptist University and serves as a faculty member in WBU's Doctor of Management program. Mark holds an M.B.A. and a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership. Mark's research interests include effective followership and ineffective leadership.
bellm@wbu.edu.

Joshua Broward - serves as the Director of Missional Development for the Church of the Nazarene's Northern California District, where he helps pastors and churches live into God's mission more deeply. Over the past twenty years, he has helped with Nazarene missions in more than a dozen countries, including nine years in South Korea. In 2015, Josh co-edited *Renovating Holiness: Global Nazarenes Revision Sanctification for the 21st Century*. In 2017, Josh co-wrote *Edison Churches: Experiments in Innovation and Breakthrough*. Josh is pursuing his PhD in Organizational Leadership at Eastern University, where he is studying how to help pastoral leaders develop the adaptive capacities to guide churches to missional effectiveness in a rapidly changing world.
joshua.broward@eastern.edu

Kevin S. Hall - a life-long learner of leadership with the desire to encourage and develop cross-cultural leaders. He completed his B.A. in Comprehensive Bible at Cedarville University. He holds an Advanced M.Div. from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where he also served as Assistant to the Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Ministry. He is currently pursuing the Ph.D. in Christian Leadership from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Kevin previously served as a full-time missionary in Mexico. He is married to Bethany, and they have three kids.
havtorun@gmail.com

Norlan Josué Hernández - is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Biola's Cook School of Intercultural Studies. He holds a Master of Arts in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary. His research interests include Latin American identity, theology, contextualization, leadership, and diversity and inclusion.
Norlan.J.Hernandez@gmail.com

W. Brian Shelton - has served as Provost, School Dean, and Associate Vice-President of a Christian college. He holds the M.Div. from Covenant Theological Seminary and the Ph.D. in historical theology from Saint Louis University. He is a Fellow of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) Leadership Development Institute for Emerging Leaders. His leadership includes serving on the board of PHōS Studies Abroad Program and the educational board of Honduras Outreach International (HOI). Brian is Adjunct Professor of Theology at Asbury University.
wbrianshelton@gmail.com

Alina Wreczycki – a Regent University School of Business & Leadership doctoral student in the dissertation phase.
alinwre@mail.regent.edu