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The Ability to Lead

" 'Leadership personality,' 'leadership style' and 'leadership traits' do not exist. Among the most effective leaders I have encountered and worked with in a half century, some locked themselves into their office and others were ultra gregarious. . . . Some were quick and impulsive; others studied and studied again and took forever to come to a decision. Some were warm and instantly 'simpatico'; others remained aloof even after years of working closely with others, not only with outsiders like me but with the people with their own organization. . . . The one and only personality trait the effective ones I have encountered have in common was something they did not have: they had little or no 'charisma' and little use either for the term or what it signifies."

PETER DRUCKER, IN THE FOREWORD TO *THE LEADER OF THE FUTURE: NEW VISIONS, STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES FOR THE NEXT ERA*

The senior pastor and I walked into the church office at the same time that Tuesday morning. He had been in ministry at the large Presbyterian church for five years, whereas I had been a minister to collegians and young adults for nine months. As we opened the sparkling glass door to a new week, we were greeted in the lobby by two-silver haired women who were there to fold bulletins for the upcoming Sunday. At the sight of the senior pastor, their faces lit up and they quickly interposed themselves between him and the door to the pastors' offices. For fifteen minutes they exchanged pleasantries, the women lavishing praise on him for the previous Sunday's sermon and spinning their well-rehearsed tales of hip replacements and winter arthritis. Reluctantly, the women returned to their bulletin-origami duties, and the senior pastor paraded through the office hallway, sharing extended greetings and weekend reflections with each member of the administrative staff.

Meanwhile, I had ducked the women and made it through the door unnoticed. I gave a running hello to the

receptionist and took shelter in the haven of my office, where I was eager to delve into John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* during the half hour before our staff meeting. Through my closed, frustratingly hollow door, I could hear each conversation about vacation cabins, new outfits, the abnormally cold weather for southern California and the new brand of church coffee (which was still terrible). As I tried to concentrate on Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and how I might use it in my Sunday evening sermon, a different indwelling voice began to pepper me with familiar questions: *Is that what a pastor is supposed to be like? Does the staff think I am withdrawn or antisocial? Am I in the right business? Why is it that churches spend millions of dollars on new buildings but can't buy decent coffee?* (The last question may not be particular to introverts.)

There may be no other feature of American life that contains as much bias toward extroversion as leadership. Since our leaders epitomize our cultural values, it is no surprise that Americans want their leaders to be extroverts. Psychologist and author Marti Olsen Laney cites a study that was repeated three times with the same findings: "[Both introverts and extroverts] were asked if they would prefer their ideal leaders to be introverted or

extroverted. Reflecting the prejudices in our culture, both introverts and extroverts choose extroverts as their ideal self and ideal leader.”¹ Clinical psychologist Leonard Holmes, in analyzing American presidents from the last two centuries, found that “Great presidents were not only stubborn and disagreeable, but were also more extroverted, open to experience, assertive, achievement striving, excitement seeking, and more open to fantasy.”² The tendency toward extroverted presidents has increased in recent decades, as the role of media and the importance of knowing how to utilize the media have become central to winning elections.

“IDEAL” LEADERSHIP TRAITS

Richard Daft, author of the business textbook *The Leadership Experience*, cites numerous studies that have sifted out five attributes of successful leaders, called the “Big Five personality dimensions”: openness to experience, emotional stability, conscientiousness, agreeableness and extroversion. Although Daft insists there is no one leadership model and that people of all personality types can lead effectively, he cites the findings of one leadership study: “One recent summary of more than seventy years of personality and leadership research did find evidence that

four of the five dimensions were consistently related to successful leadership. The researchers found considerable evidence that people who score high on the dimensions of extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability are more successful leaders.”³

Though leadership paradigms practiced both in the corporate world and in the church have shifted in the last twenty years, leadership stereotypes endure. Our collective cultural subconscious holds to a particular mold of leadership, so many of us either disqualify ourselves or others based on the following four criteria.

Charisma. For many people charisma is the preeminent trait that distinguishes a great leader from ordinary people. It is an intangible quality—perhaps better described than defined—that attracts others to a leader like a magnet. Charismatic leaders have a theatrical quality to them, and they relish playing the lead role amidst other actors on the stage. Public attention is an intoxicating force that brings out their best qualities. They are able to inspire and captivate others with their passion and presence.

President John F. Kennedy was laced with charisma. An article written a few years ago recalled Kennedy’s visit and speech to the people of Tampa Bay in 1963: “Though he

spoke on the economic conditions of the country for 20 minutes instead of the scheduled five, no one really heard what he said—only how he said it. The audience was mesmerized.” A motorcycle officer who escorted the presidential motorcade gushed: “I remember as he shook our hands he looked us in the eye and said each of our names. It was thrilling. I didn’t wash my hand for a week.”⁴ People with charisma have the uncanny ability, as my friend describes them, “to speak to millions but make you feel like they’re speaking just to you. You don’t know them, and you’ll never meet them, but they feel like your friends.” A truly charismatic leader has a mystical ability to mix the appearance of an untouchable, larger-than-life persona and an accessible, sympathetic friend.

Dominance. People who are dominant are hard-charging, persuasive and directive. They can motivate people and accomplish their goals by the sheer force of their will. This trait is primarily *positional*, meaning that dominant leaders rely on the authority of rank or title to compel others.⁵ Their understanding of leadership “assumes that humans are naturally still, at rest, and that they need some motivating force to get them going.”⁶

When I think of a dominant leader I think of an

extroverted pastor I once met who has built a large and successful youth ministry. He has positioned himself at the heart of the program, to the point that people cannot conceive of the ministry without him. He is constantly pushing things forward, starting new programs and rallying people around his ideas. He will not take no for an answer, and will debate and persuade until the other person relents or ends the conversation.

Gregariousness. Gregarious leaders relate comfortably with people of different personalities and backgrounds. They are able to initiate and prolong conversations and are at home among strangers. They have the capacity to disarm people and assuage conflict with their warmth and charm. Gregarious leaders in the Christian community are the face of a welcoming, friendly, inviting church. They set the tone for hospitality and openness among the congregation. They are skilled in the ministry of chat, filling awkward silences with engaging conversation, and people feel quickly at ease around them.

In a highly verbal culture, words carry power. The person who wields words with the greatest fluency, or even just uses the most words, is invested with authority. In group contexts people often give leadership to those

who are most willing to present their opinions, even though their solutions may not be the right or best ones. Speaking is construed as confidence whereas reserving one's opinion, or only speaking up on topics one has previously considered, is interpreted as timidity or deference to others.

J. Oswald Sanders, in his popular book *Spiritual Leadership*, describes the apostle Paul in a strikingly extroverted way: "You can measure leaders by the number and the quality of their friends. Judged by that measuring rod, Paul had a genius for friendship. He was essentially a gregarious man."⁷ Sanders goes on to ask potential leaders if they "are at ease among strangers" as a gauge for determining whether a person has a leadership gift. Rick Warren says that preaching effectively is directly related to the accessibility of a pastor outside of the pulpit: "Be approachable. Don't hide out in your study. . . . One of the best ways to warm up a crowd is to meet as many people as you can before you speak to them. Get out among the crowd and talk to people. It shows you are interested in them personally. Many pastors like to gather their staff or key leaders in a private room before the service and pray while the people are coming in. I believe you ought to pray for your service at some other time. Don't miss an

opportunity to be with people when you have the chance.”⁸

Superstardom. The superstar leader is one who excels at everything. Anyone with church leadership experience knows that the tasks of leading are manifold, even to the point of contradiction. Those in charge are called on to provide visionary, intellectual, administrative, financial, social, spiritual and emotional leadership. Superstar leaders are able to successfully address both the large needs of the organization and the particular, more delicate needs of the individuals who comprise the organization. They have a rare combination of skills, which are often bolstered by intangibles like charisma and high energy, and are able to assert those qualities in a variety of settings.

Roy Oswald and Otto Kroeger, authors of *Personality Type and Religious Leadership*, provide a dizzying list of the tasks congregations expect clergy to be proficient in

- leading in worship
- preparing and delivering sermons
- teaching both adults and children
- visiting the sick, bereaved and dying
- accepting outside speaking engagements

- administering the church office
- conflict resolution/building harmony with the parish
- visiting and recruiting new members
- counseling persons with personal difficulties
- representing the parish in ecumenical affairs
- engaging in continuing professional and spiritual development
- assisting victims of social neglect, injustice and prejudice
- youth ministry
- baptizing, marrying and conducting funerals
- leading fundraising drives
- participating in denominational activities
- fostering fellowship within the parish
- leading in parish goal setting and helping in its implementation
- recruiting and training parish leaders
- visiting people in their homes
- promoting enthusiasm for parish activities⁹

One pastor I interviewed said that her congregation expects her to be good at all things, to lead in every situation, no matter what the circumstances, and to always

be available. Another friend, who is a solo pastor in the northeast, agreed: “Most church cultures have expectations for pastors that no single person could ever fulfill. They want sermons that are biblical, deep, thoughtful and well prepared, but they also want the outgoing, extroverted, people-person, as well as the CEO mover and shaker. These seldom come in one person. This may be one reason why so many drop out of pastoral ministry in five or ten years.”

In reviewing the qualifications we look for in leaders, I’m left to echo George Barna’s question, “Who could possibly meet such a wide range of disparate expectations?”¹⁰ We set our leaders up for inevitable failure when we measure them by unreachable standards.¹¹ So this is not simply a matter of whether extroverts or introverts make better leaders, this is a question about the general soundness of our leadership models. When we explicitly or implicitly communicate that only a few people, for whom the stars miraculously align, can lead with power and effectiveness, we discourage those who do not fit our cultural ideals but have great potential to lead, thus doing harm to the body of Christ. Further, this model of leadership only validates the common, unbiblical expectation that pastors play the role of benefactor while

everyone else in the congregation is a beneficiary.

THE GOOD NEWS

While these characteristics of the “ideal” Western leader pivot around the personality of a leader and while it is glaringly clear that they favor extroversion over introversion, there is good news: the stereotypical leadership mold is breaking. Our old models are fading into obsolescence. The long-term sustainability of an organization or a church cannot depend on the personality features of the central leader, no matter how captivating or compelling that person is. In discussions in the corporate world, in classrooms and in the church, we are reconsidering the qualities that makeup a successful leader.

Level 5 leadership. Jim Collins’s book *Good to Great* is a landmark study that has shattered preexisting paradigms of executive leadership. Collins discovered that glitzy, dynamic, high-profile CEOs are actually a *hindrance* to the long-term success of their corporations. Charismatic leaders naturally attract people, but these leaders may be less effective at drawing people to the mission and values of the organization itself.¹² No one embodied the larger-than-life executive more than Lee Iacocca, Chrysler’s

icon in the 1980s. He almost single-handedly steered his car company away from disaster and put it on the road to prosperity. He reveled in the spotlight, and his celebrity status rose at times to the level of a rock star—to the point where he considered pursuing a presidential nomination. Yet after Iacocca's retirement, Chrysler's profits faltered and it was sold to a German rival carmaker just five years later. Iacocca, more concerned with personal reputation than company sustainability, had done little to invest in his successors or to ensure the longevity of Chrysler.

In sharp contrast, Collins presents the story of Colman Mockler, the CEO of Gillette from 1975 to 1991. Mockler made personal sacrifices and took substantial risks for the long-term success of the company and the profits of the shareholders, and he was so effective that \$1 invested in Gillette in December 1976 was worth \$95.68 in December 1996. Laconic and reserved, Mockler labored in relative anonymity for a big-time executive; he was a man who prioritized the success of his company over ego gratification.

Mockler and executives like him are examples of what Collins calls "Level 5 Leaders."¹³ In his key points, he

summarizes the characteristics of this type of leader:

- Level 5 leaders display compelling modesty, are self-effacing and understated. In contrast, two-thirds of the comparison companies had leaders with gargantuan personal egos, which contributed to the demise or continued mediocrity of the companies.
- Level 5 leaders display a workmanlike diligence—more plow horse than show horse.
- Level 5 leaders set up their successors for even greater success in the next generation, whereas egocentric level 4 leaders often set up their successors for failure.¹⁴

Collins also asserts that “one of the most damaging trends in recent history is the tendency to select dazzling, celebrity leaders and to de-select potential Level 5 leaders.”

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In commending humility, self-sacrifice and a commitment to the organization over personal glory, Collins finds himself in the heart of an ancient tradition of leadership: the biblical picture of the servant leader. The authors of the New Testament caution us against those leaders who are heavy on allure and light on humility. Scripture subverts our cultural tendency to identify leaders by glamorous personality features and instead points us

toward people who are faithful servants of God and others. These people are willing to become the least so that others will know the self-sacrificing love of God. Servant leaders return again and again to the model of Jesus, who on his last night, took a towel and scraped the dirt off the scaly feet of his nomadic followers. The route to his coronation as King of kings went outside the walls of the holy city to a jagged Roman cross. Jesus used his immeasurable power and knowledge of God, not for his own aggrandizement but so that others might see the glory and salvation of God.

Character over charisma. While charisma has a magnetic force to it, its power can be fleeting. Unless it is buttressed by substance and consistency, its pull fades quickly. Leadership guru Peter Drucker said “Indeed, charisma becomes the undoing of leaders. It makes them inflexible, convinced of their own infallibility, unable to change.”¹⁶ For that reason contemporary leadership discussions are elevating *character* over *charisma*.

Character in a leader is the quality that has the ability not only to draw others but also to maintain their loyalty. *Character* is more than personal integrity and ethical decision-making, though it certainly includes those

elements. The central component of character is authenticity. Someone with character acts in unison with his or her God-given nature. Characterless leaders are tossed between the waves of personal success and popularity with others, and they often lose their true selves in the process. Leaders with character find their identity from within and in harmony with whom God has uniquely created them to be.

It cannot be overemphasized that the biblical descriptions of leadership do not include references to personality type. Instead, they consistently describe leaders as people of admirable and consistent character:

I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. (Tit 1:5-8)

Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:2-7)

Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. (1 Pet 5:1-3)

True leadership is not cultivated in the limelight; it's won

in the trenches. Character is something that is built. Thus, the mark of godly leadership is not a magnetic personality; it is discipline, because discipline develops character.

We gain character by opening ourselves up to God's transforming power through prayer, through solidifying our most important relationships and by practicing the good habits that enable us to become the kind of people we want to be. True leaders don't lead out of who others want them to be; therefore, introverts with character will lead as introverts. We do not try to be extroverts or contort ourselves in ways our personalities are not able to go. While we seek to grow as leaders and as people, we are committed to remaining true, because one of the greatest gifts we can offer others is leading as ourselves. People desperately want to know that it's possible to live, act and work as they are, and introverted leaders who model authenticity will give others freedom to be themselves.

The learning organization. Another movement that is changing the face of contemporary leadership is the "learning organization." Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline*, contends that in a rapid-fire, information-driven, technology-powered world, success is contingent on our individual and corporate abilities to adjust, adapt and

learn.¹⁷ The learning organization, therefore, must incorporate processes of reflection and evaluation into their organizational systems. Leaders must commit to their own learning and to fostering an environment of learning in their organizations. Thus people who think before they act and listen before they talk can be very effective leaders. The reflective, thoughtful person may be able to learn, and encourage learning, in ways that people who can't stop talking are not able to.

Even more encouraging for introverted leaders is what Chris Argyris, emeritus professor at the Harvard Business School, calls "double loop learning." He explains that the learning trajectory must move in two directions:

Most people define learning too narrowly as mere "problem solving," so they focus on identifying and correcting errors in the external environment. Solving problems is important. But if learning is to persist, managers and employees must also look inward. They need to reflect critically on their own behavior, identifying the ways they often inadvertently contribute to the organization's problems, and then change how they act. In particular, they must learn how the very way they go about defining and solving problems can

be a source of problems in its own right.¹⁸

In the learning organization, successful leadership is wedded to introspection. The source of dysfunction and inefficiency in an organization may go beyond misdirected actions and strained relationships to internal motivations, tendencies and assumptions. Leaders must learn to scrutinize every aspect of their leadership and personality. People who are naturally self-reflective have a clear advantage, in this regard, as leaders of learning organizations.

Sensemaking. Another category for understanding the nature of leadership that cuts against the grain of traditional definitions is “sensemaking.” Wilfred Drath and Charles Palus, at the Center for Creative Leadership, explain that “most existing theories, models, and definitions of leadership proceed from the assumption that somehow leadership is about getting people to do something.”¹⁹ Instead, Drath and Palus reimagine leadership as “the process for making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and be committed.”²⁰ Leadership, in this view, is a matter of interpretation. Leaders give people a lens and a language for understanding their work and experiences in light of

larger purposes. They help shape the mental frameworks of others so that those people see themselves as making contributions to the mission and direction of their organization, working in community for a common purpose.

Scott Cormode, professor of leadership development at Fuller Seminary, applies sensemaking to leadership in the church. He explains that “pastors lead by providing God’s people with the theological categories to make spiritual meaning.”²¹ Christian leaders give people the biblical and theological tools to see their ordinary lives in the broad horizons of the kingdom of God. Sensemaking enables people to weave the disparate threads of their existence into a cohesive life of worship and discipleship. As they discover and make meaning in their individual situations, they find the freedom to think and act differently, being “transformed by the renewing of [their] minds” (Rom 12:2).

I had a difficult time understanding this idea of sensemaking until I realized that I regularly practice it with introverts who are wrestling with questions about leadership. Whether in contexts of spiritual direction, leadership training, pastoral interactions or preaching, I have worked with fellow introverts in finding a new

intellectual grid for understanding leadership. We have battled against common leadership myths and told a different story about the attributes and disciplines that help a leader to thrive—and then I've helped others see their capacities to lead and insert themselves into that story.

MAKING BIBLICAL SENSE OF INTROVERTED LEADERSHIP

Leadership is not a status or a position to be attained, but it is a gift of God. The word *charisma* (broader cultural definition notwithstanding) means “gift,” a tangible expression of God's grace, charged with the power of the Giver. All that we have, including the ability to lead others, is from God. Paul described his entire ministry as grace: “Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ” (Eph 3:7-8). God's gifts are not conditional on our worthiness for receiving them or our fitness for using them, and they are certainly not conditional on personality type. God does not make sure someone is an extrovert before he bestows

a gift of leadership, nor does he give gifts by mistake. And he sees his gifts, and their recipients, through to the end—granting the ability to embrace the gift and to use it for the blessing of his church.

In fact, God may even have a vested interest in giving gifts to people who seem ill-suited to possess them. God delights in reversing expectations, in choosing the most unexpected people to lead, prophesy and proclaim. He reversed the law of primogeniture by choosing the younger Jacob, over the elder Esau, to be the father of the nation of Israel. God passed over Jesse's more physically impressive sons to anoint David, the shepherd boy with delicate features, as king over Israel. The line of the Messiah came not through a pure bloodline of queens but through Rahab, a prostitute, and through Ruth, a foreigner. Jesus chose uneducated fishermen and traitorous tax collectors to be his emissaries to the ends of the earth. He himself did not ride into Jerusalem atop a white steed with a waving flag of victory, but he sauntered in on a beast of burden. God appeared to Paul, seething persecutor of Christians, and reversed the direction of his life to make him apostle to the loathsome Gentiles.

God has always been about the business of shattering

expectations, and in our culture, the standards of leadership are extroverted. It perfectly follows the biblical trend that God would choose the unexpected and the culturally “unfit”—like introverts—to lead his church for the sake of his greater glory. The apostle Paul marveled at this paradox: “‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (2 Cor 12:9).

INTROVERTED LEADERS

All these contemporary leadership discussions I have reviewed above point to people who are thoughtful, reflective and eager to learn. These people are skilled in observation and in listening, and they are able to detect patterns and nuances in themselves and others. They see the big picture and are able to hold together in their minds great amounts of information. In short, the door of the leadership world has been opened wide to introverts and the strengths they have to offer.

Though extroverts may continue to be seen as “ideal” leaders and introverts may have feelings of displacement in leadership positions, the fact is there are introverts leading

in the corporate world, in nonprofit organizations and in the church. And while Richard Daft sounds surprised when he recounts that “although extroversion is often considered an important trait for a leader, leaders in the real world are about equally divided between extroverts and introverts,”²² Elaine Aron is not surprised when she reports that introverts are often a part of the “advisor class”—those who counsel and instruct others—as compared to the “warrior class,” the doers of the world who receive guidance from the advisors.²³ In fact, a recent *USA Today* article reports that four in ten top executives are introverts,²⁴ and in a 2006 Barna study, 24 percent of Protestant senior pastors self-identified as introverts.²⁵

There are a variety of popular contemporary leaders who identify themselves as introverts and are honest about the struggles they encounter. Pastor and scholar Eugene Peterson confesses that it was difficult for him in his pastoral ministry to visit families in their homes because he is “introverted and shy.”²⁶ Episcopal priest and celebrated preacher Barbara Brown Taylor concedes that “it can be difficult to be an introvert in the church, especially if you happen to be the pastor.”²⁷ Postmodern pastor and entrepreneur Erwin McManus says, as an introvert, he

prefers to interact with a few people *on the sides* of social gatherings.²⁸ Emerging church leader Brian McLaren has learned to say “no” to some requests and to take a regular sabbath in order to recharge his introverted batteries.²⁹ Writer and campus ministry leader Donald Miller admits that as an “extreme introvert,” he finds community life challenging.³⁰ But all of these introverts have used their gifts to lead and edify the body of Christ. We can also look back a little further to find other introverted heroes of faith. Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr. and Jonathan Edwards are people who have led in the church and in the world . . . as introverts.

Mother Teresa: Compassion as the beating heart of mission. In March 1947, Teresa pleaded with her archbishop for his permission to go to the streets of Calcutta: “Let me go, and give myself for them, let me offer myself and those who will join me for those unwanted poor, the little street children, the sick, the dying, the beggars, let me go into their very holes and bring in their broken homes the joy and peace of Christ.”³¹ For the next fifty years, Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity sought to minister to Jesus in his “distressing disguise” of poverty and desolation. As an introvert,³² she gave tender, personal attention to each suffering person, seeing the dignity and

humanity in them where others only saw shame and death. She was convinced that if her order “brought joy to one unhappy home—made one innocent child from the street keep pure for Jesus—one dying person die in peace with God . . . it would be worth offering everything—because that one would bring great joy to the Heart of Jesus.”³³

Like many introverts, Mother Teresa led by example. Her extravagant acts of service and humility overshadowed the power of her quiet words. There was a recklessness to her courage, an audacity to her love that would not let any obstacles keep her from the people of Calcutta. She was a cheerful and enthusiastic giver, with relentless energy for caring for the sick and the poor. As she offered herself to them, she presented herself to Jesus, whom she longed to know in the most intimate ways. In the time of preparation for her ministry, she experienced mystical visions of Jesus beckoning her to be his light in the darkness. Others who saw her tender affection for him teased her as “Jesus’ spoiled bride.”³⁴

However, it has been only recently that the world has learned of the great contradictions that existed in her soul. The woman who taught us to look for the presence of Jesus in everyone and everything spent most of her life feeling

his absence. In her anguish, she wrote “The more I want Him, the less I am wanted. I want to love Him as He has not been loved, and yet there is that separation, that terrible emptiness, that feeling of absence of God.”³⁵ The saint who went into the dark holes of the poor had caverns in her own soul, and she suffered in lonely silence, not allowing those around her into her pain.

At the same time, it was within her own spiritual darkness that she found wells of compassion for the crumpled, beautiful masses of humanity that she encountered every day. She ministered out of a broken heart. She understood firsthand that, as excruciating as physical poverty could be, it could not compare to the poverty of feeling rejected and unloved. As she agonized in a tsunami of internal turmoil, she identified with lepers, orphans and outcasts, and found a love for them that rippled around the world.

Martin Luther King Jr.: Commitment to ideals as the source of true charisma. Many may be shocked to learn that Martin Luther King Jr. was an introvert. The man who dripped with charisma and rhetorical genius, his sonorous voice sounding against the walls of racial injustice, was considered “quiet” and “reserved” in his

younger days. One of his college professors reported that he was “quiet, introspective and very much introverted,” and biographer David Garrow says that “most found King to be a quiet and reserved young man, ‘just a regular student,’ who always sat in the back of classrooms.”³⁶ Others said that he was very studious, devoting “time to his books night and day.”³⁷ He described himself as an “ambivert”—half introvert and half extrovert, able to “withdraw within himself for long, single minded concentration on his people’s problems, and then exert the force of personality and conviction that makes him a public leader.”³⁸

Martin Luther King Jr. was first an intellectual and a scholar, only drawn into the spotlight by a sense of divine calling to advocate for racial justice and equality. Even though he grew up as a minister’s son, King had been wary of religion, uncertain if he could square his intellectual bent with what he called the “emotionalism” of black churches. It was a personal crisis that led to his conversion. A midnight caller threatened that if King did not leave Montgomery, Alabama, they would blow up his house and his family. As he sat at his kitchen table, he prayed and “it seemed at that moment that I could hear an inner voice saying to me, ‘Martin Luther, stand up for

righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo I will be with you, even until the end of the world.' . . . I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. No never alone." He exulted that "Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared ." ³⁹

Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideals, and his unwavering commitment to them even in the face of death, were the source of his charisma—a gift from God that compelled him into his perilous mission and enabled him to articulate the hopes and dreams of his people, and all people. His passionate and poetic rhetoric gained an audience, but his ideals were what catalyzed the black movement. The method of his protest was nonviolent resistance, which he learned from Jesus and from his fellow introvert, Mahatma Gandhi. This type of civil disobedience was the fruit of the creativity, thoughtfulness and unflinching determination often found in introverts.

Jonathan Edwards: Leading with light and heat. Jonathan Edwards's notoriety issues mostly from the terrifying image of a spider suspended over a flame, an image from his infamous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." What few know is that that sermon, as grisly as some of

its details were, was a centerpiece in the first Great Awakening, a religious revival that swept through the American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. While some decried the religious excesses of the revival, which was marked by great emotional and physical displays of mourning sin and glorifying God's holiness, Edwards was its most articulate and thoughtful defender.

Though Edwards lived 200 years before the genesis of Jung's collective unconscious theory, I have no doubt he was an introvert. Historian John Gillies said that he, in contrast to the rhetorical fire of revivalist preacher George Whitefield, was "a preacher of low and moderate voice, a natural way of delivery, and without any agitation of body, or anything else in the manner to excite attention, except his habitual and great solemnity, looking and speaking as in the presence of God."⁴⁰ His discipline in solitude, study and writing could rival the regimen of the most trained professional soldier. During his twenty-year tenure as the pastor of the large Congregational Church of Northampton, Massachusetts, he spent thirteen hours a day in his study! An early biographer marveled that "these hours were passed, not in perusing or treasuring up the thoughts of others, but in employments far more

exhausting—in the investigation of difficult subjects, in the origination and arrangement of thoughts, in the invention of arguments, and in the discovery of truths and principles.”⁴¹

Edwards’s intellectual abilities were massive. The theological treatises he penned—such as *Religious Affections*, *The Freedom of the Will* and *The End for Which God Created the World*, as well as his popular biography of missionary David Brainerd—have shaped the minds of countless scholars, pastors and missionaries. His model of pastor-scholar is one that many introverted leaders will naturally assume. Though his mind, which bordered on genius, is in itself remarkable, even more incredible to me is the passion that he had for knowing Jesus Christ in a personal, experiential way. For him the “light” of the mind was incomplete without the “heat” of the emotions. He explained the reason for his diligence in studying Scripture, “the more you have of a rational knowledge of divine things, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them.”⁴² Edwards spoke of a “sense” that was a way of knowing that transcended the intellect, that seemed to sweep him up in almost mystical experiences of God. In a

personal narrative, he recorded this experience:

Once, as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception . . . which continued as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him; to live upon him; to serve and follow him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. I have, several other times, had views very much of the same nature, and which have had the

same effects .⁴³

There was nothing in Jonathan Edwards's life that he approached in a superficial manner. He sought knowledge of Scripture and the theological issues of his day with all his intellectual might, but he also understood that his first task as a minister was to cultivate a relational, affectionate, inner knowledge of God. Introverts who follow his lead in combining a relentless, probing intellect with a powerful, personal devotion will radiate both the light and the heat of the gospel.

Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr. and Jonathan Edwards are models to those of us who are called to lead, persuading us not to shy away from our gifts as introverts but to cultivate them and use them for the transformation of the world.