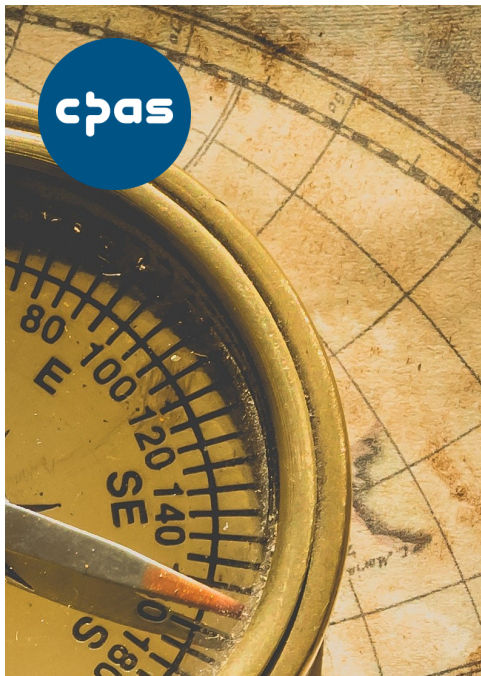




A BRIEF HISTORY OF LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

For as long as there have been people there have been leaders. Reflection on leadership can be found in writings of the Greeks and Romans and in Western literature of the last 2000 years.

Whilst the words 'leader' and 'leadership' are not commonly used within the Bible, we can all think of Old Testament leaders – Moses, David, Deborah, Nehemiah – as well as New – Jesus, Peter, Paul, Junias, Priscilla and Aquila. In recent years there has been interest in different approaches to leadership through Church history (for example the sixth century Rule of Benedict). Indeed, in *The Gift of Leadership*, Steve Croft suggests:

'The Judaeo-Christian tradition provides the longest continuous source of reflection on questions of leadership in the whole of human history.'

However, research on leadership is relatively new, starting in the early 20th century. Here is all an too brief summary of the main theories. For more on this see *Writers on Leadership*, John Van Maurik (Penguin 2001).

'GREAT MAN' / TRAIT THEORIES

The earliest studies (1920s) assumed that effective leaders were born, not made, and set out to identify certain characteristics. So research looked at what characteristics are shared by great leaders, so that these factors could be used when selecting leaders. Leaders were seen as exceptional men who possessed innate characteristics such as intelligence, energy and dominance.

BEHAVIOURIST

Attention turned in the 1940s from 'who leaders are' to 'what leaders do'. Research asked subordinates questions about their bosses' behaviour, and identified two essential aspects of leadership:

- Providing clear instructions and directions (task-oriented leadership behaviour), and
- Giving personal support and encouragement (relationship-oriented leadership behaviour).

Focusing on these two behaviours was believed to make people good leaders.

CONTINGENCY/ SITUATIONAL

In the 1960s and 1970s thinkers on leadership went in another direction. Perhaps effective leadership involves doing the right thing at the right time. The most widely-used of 'contingency' approaches, 'Situational Leadership', was developed by Dr Paul Hersey and Dr Kenneth Blanchard (1988).

By using a model to assess the willingness and capability of followers to do a job, managers can determine what combination of task and relationship behaviour will be most effective in a particular situation (see *Relational Leadership*, Walter Wright p.36-41).

Another example is John Adair (1973) whose model identifies three strands of leadership: task, team, and individuals; good leaders need to focus on all three, but may need more emphasis on one of these according to different situations.



REGION 2: LEADING AS A FOCAL MINISTER
SITE 1: CLARIFYING WHAT LEADERSHIP INVOLVES

TRANSACTIONAL TO TRANSFORMATIONAL

A political historian, James McGregor Burns studied great leaders in politics and history (e.g. Napoleon, Churchill, Martin Luther King) and what it was that made them successful. In his 1978 book, *Leadership*, Burns explains the difference between leaders who create visions to transform followers and societies, and leaders who get followers to do as the leader wishes by means of a transaction, i.e. money, praise or some other reward (or punishment). At best, transactional leaders get what they expect, while transformational leaders get performance beyond expectations.

Transformational leadership is a strong element in the understanding of leadership today. Transformational leaders inspire those around by providing meaning, optimism and vision. They encourage their followers to question assumptions, reframe problems and be creative and innovative. They try to understand their followers' needs and desires and see it as their duty to help their followers realise their potential. This is very different from the more hierarchical 'command and control' model which it has replaced in most spheres of leadership.

STRANDS OF LEADERSHIP THINKING TODAY

Over the last 30 years there has been an explosion of research and new strands of thinking on leadership, including work on women as leaders. For example:

- *Leadership and the New Science*, Margaret Wheatley (Zerrett-Koehler, 1999).
- *Good to Great*, Jim Collins (Random House, 2001).
- *One Thing You Need to Know*, Marcus Buckingham (Simon and Schuster, 2005).

- *Enlightened Power: How Women are Transforming the Practice of Leadership*, Linda Coughlin, Ellen Wingard, Keith Holliham (eds) (Jossey-Bass, 2005).
- *Executive Intelligence: What All Great Leaders Have*, Justin Menkes (Collins, 2005).
- *Leadership Next*, Eddie Gibbs (IVP, 2006).
- *Through the Labyrinth*, Alice Eagly and Linda Carli (Harvard Business School Press, 2007).
- *The New Psychology of Leadership*, Haslam, Reicher and Platow (Psychology Press 2011).

More recently there is a focus on adaptive (or agile) leadership:

- *Canoeing the Mountains*, Tod Bolsinger (IVP 2015).
- *Dare to Lead*, Brené Brown (Vermillion 2018).
- *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where you are Going*, Susan Beaumont (Rowman 2019).
- *Uncharted Leadership*, Angie Ward (Zondervan 2023).

For recent reflections on Christian Leadership:

- *Understanding Christian Leadership*, Ian Parkinson (CPAS 2020).
- *Powerful Leaders?* Marcus Honeysett (IVP 2022)



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