



Charles Spurgeon and Followership

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Roundtable: Followership

The paper examines the exemplary followership of Charles Spurgeon while pastoring at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. It may appear odd at first to ascribe followership attributes to such a high-profile leader, but Spurgeon's correspondence between himself and the deacons displayed courageous followership behaviors. Followership is a mutual reciprocation of communication, compensation, and collaboration that concurrently forms and re-forms between both parties, furthering the organization's primary cause. Over the last few years, the Christian industrial complex has seen the downfall of many of its most prolific figures. Given the pitfalls of power many leaders face, the need to study exemplary followership is critical. The paper's methodology is a bounded case study in the field of pragmatic qualitative research utilizing primary (autobiographies), secondary (biographies), and tertiary sources (followership theory). Additionally, Spurgeon's sermons underwent syntactic concordancing to determine what the Prince of Preachers thought and taught about leadership. The paper's underlying theme is that Christian leadership is paradoxically followership, and Spurgeon's life exemplified it.

Keywords: Charles Spurgeon, followership, qualitative research, case study, biography

The resignation or removal of Mark Driscoll, James MacDonald, and Steve Timmis came about because those pastors abused their authority within the church (Shellnutt, 2019, 2020; Shellnutt & Lee, 2014). In the salacious scandal involving Carl Lentz, there was widespread mistreatment of volunteers who catered to the hype-priest's lavish lifestyle at the expense of church donations (Lee, 2021). A recent investigation into Ravi Zacharias resulted in the entire organization's restructuring and an apology for the apologist's ignominious behavior (Sillman & Shellnutt, 2021). According to Trull and Carter (2004), any unethical behavior between a superior and subordinate is an abuse of power. Unfortunately, within the church, there is a "strong, 'pastor-centric ecclesiology,' where there is too much power in the hands of too few people. It is time we realized that 'spiritual abuse' in the church is rearing its ugly head, and it is devastating" (Diehl,

2020, para. 9). According to Bligh et al. (2007), scholars and practitioners need to examine the processual construct between leaders and followers to avoid abuses in power.

Social scientists identified power dynamics in numerous follower typologies, from those who want to control their leaders to those who want to be controlled by them (Zaleznik, 1965). Once scholars began questioning the overreliance and romanticism of leadership (Meindl et al., 1985), being a follower was no longer a pejorative term (Kelley, 1992). Healthy followership demonstrates self-abnegation as empowering surrender (not disempowering submission) to a trustworthy leader, especially those serving as one's spiritual guide (Caplan, 2011). However, given the power abuses and moral failures of many pastors within the Christian industrial complex, the need to reframe biblical leadership as followership is paramount.

History is also replete with examples of neo-charismatic figureheads using their hegemony to harm others (Conger, 1990). Leaders fail to consider the dark side of their influence, and followers are also susceptible to the shadow side in the transference of power (De Vries & Balazs, 2011). Increased pay and privileges bestowed upon leaders create a power imbalance making it more difficult for followers to challenge unethical behavior (Kaiser & Craig, 2014). While Kellerman (2012) declared the end of leadership because of countless corporate and government officials' moral failings, followership studies continue to be a prevalent topic in scholarly studies contributing to organizational development and positive prosocial interactions (Xu et al., 2019). Despite this growing field of study, a unified definition of followership is nonexistent and continues to focus on behavioral typologies (Crossman & Crossman, 2017) – the sine qua non being courageous, exemplary, or star followers who aid charismatic leaders (Chaleff, 2009; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Kellerman, 2007; Kelley, 2004).

However, the past decade saw an expansion of the traditional leadership definition whereby positional power dynamics morphed into a dyadic dynamism of reciprocal identity between the leader and the follower (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Leadership is co-created as a social process between the leader and the led, and that relationality reverses the lens and strengthens the threads of the interconnectivity of influence (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The liminal space provides followers an active role in influencing their superiors' cognitive, emotive, and performance outcomes (Oc & Bashur, 2013). Ruben and Gigliotti (2019) averred, "Leadership, followership, and context intersect in a complex, fluid, and often unpredictable manner. [The roles] revolve and rotate so quickly [that they] are difficult to isolate" (p. 8). Followership is a courageous choice to commit to great leaders and challenge infective ones as they steward the organization's resources together (Chaleff, 2017).

The power abuses by many leaders have caused practitioners to examine diverse fields of study, including the field of theology, to find workable solutions to organizational issues (Hamel, 2009). After a meta-analysis of the current research, Oh and Wang (2020)

concluded, "We need more studies using different methodologies and methods. For example, researchers may consider using the case study approach to collect stories of exemplary spiritual leaders" (p. 18). Charles Spurgeon is one such exemplar of a courageous follower. According to Chaleff (2009), the original five followership behaviors are (a) the courage to share in a common purpose, (b) the courage to serve in new areas and assume more responsibility, (c) the courage to challenge the leader and speak out against lapses in integrity, (d) the courage to participate in transformation, and (e) the courage to take moral action. Even though Spurgeon was a highly charismatic leader, his reciprocity as a follower is truly commendable and worth examining.

This paper's methodology is a bounded case study focusing on one prominent figure from Christian history (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). Pragmatic qualitative research is becoming more common because it allows a researcher to complete a study quickly by placing it into the hands of practitioners who need it the most (Caelli et al., 2003). Creswell (2014) posited that the pragmatic researcher asks *what* and *how* questions based on the intended consequences of a problem. Given the ousting of high-profile Christian leaders, how can exemplary followership behaviors sustain a leader's longevity by avoiding the pitfalls of power?

It is significant to examine Charles Spurgeon's life from a follower's perspective. Although Spurgeon was a high-profile leader, his autobiography, biographies, sermons, and books reveal the reciprocation of communication, compensation, and collaboration between himself and his directorate, creating an untarnished legacy worthy of emulation. Any hagiography will come with half-broken halos, but very few Christian figures stand out in history for their moral acuity postconversion. Saint Augustine and Billy Graham are other such luminaries (Shelley, 2008). Therefore, the article examines Charles Spurgeon's life, the exemplary followership behaviors he displayed, his sermons on leadership, and two applications for practitioners and one area of future research for scholars.

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Followership studies must address the context in which the story takes place (Benson et al., 2016). The context for this case study is New Park Street Baptist Church in Southwark, England (later renamed the Metropolitan Tabernacle), where Spurgeon became the pastor at 19 years of age (Spurgeon, 1898/2013). Spurgeon's leadership lasted for 38 years, and the church grew from 232 members to over 14,000 (Piper, 2018). During that time, Spurgeon would preach to 6,000 congregants in the morning and 6,000 in the evening (Lawson, 2012). Spurgeon's 3,800 sermons fill 63 volumes, and his commentaries equal 49 volumes, which stands as the most extensive bounded set in the history of Christian literature (Rippe, 2019). Spurgeon is known as the *Prince of Preachers*, and his persona grew to national and international notoriety (Breimaier, 2020).

The pinnacle of prominence does not come without criticism. Some biographers called Spurgeon a *potentate* (Kruppa, 1982). One observer noted that "every line of his face and figure of speech spoke power" (as cited in Bebbington, 2005, p. 41). If that assertion is assumed, then the argument of this paper is deadened. It is accurate that Spurgeon was referred to as *The Governor* by his congregants (Michael, 2003). Even Spurgeon's wife called him *Tirshatha*, the Hebrew variation of a *governor*, but it was a term of endearment (Wiersbe, 1993). Additionally, Spurgeon's amanuensis, Fullerton (1920), wrote, "It was not for nothing that he was known as 'The Governor,' but the title was more an indication of love than of authority" (p. 204). Recent biographies have rightly contextualized that Spurgeon was a loving leader willing to abdicate authority and generously sacrifice at great cost to himself (George, 2009; Murray, 2009; Nettles, 2013; Reeves, 2018; Rhodes, 2021).

A few examples corroborate this point and display the dependability, loyalty, and cooperation ranked highest among desirable followership behaviors (Agho, 2009). During the first year of his pastorate, Spurgeon (1898/2013) personally visited church members suffering and dying from cholera. The action displayed Spurgeon's dependability. Spurgeon wrote:

Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten . . . I felt . . . like I was sickening like those around me . . . though I had many engagements in the country, I gave them up . . . to visit the sick and the dying. (The Cholera Year in London section).

Secondly, the longevity of Spurgeon's ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle is a testament to his loyalty. The diaconate never considered removing Spurgeon because of any abuses in power but shared a mutual love for one another (Fullerton, 1920). Spurgeon wrote:

The deacons] consists of loveable, active, energetic, warm-hearted, generous men, every one of whom seems specially adapted for his own particular department of service. I am very thankful that I have never been the pastor of a dead church controlled by dead deacons. I have seen such a thing as that with my own eyes, and the sight was truly awful. (Deacons and Elders; Pastors and Teachers section)

Lastly, Spurgeon instituted the office of presbyter after arriving at the church, displaying the lengths to submit to more authority even as the prime member of the prelacy (Wills, 1999). As the church grew, the elders worked together, meeting each member's spiritual and material needs through regular visitations (Chang, 2018). Spurgeon (1898/2013) wrote, "Each district, with its elder, should be a regiment with its officer; and then all the different bands, when called to united action, would be ready to achieve an easy victory" (Pastoral Epistles section). The subsequent section provides a

few examples of Spurgeon's reciprocity in communication, compensation, and collaboration as a follower and leader within the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Reciprocation in Communication

There would not be a Prince of Preachers if it were not for Thomas Olney, a longstanding deacon at the church who heard about Spurgeon and invited him to speak in London (Fullerton, 1920). Spurgeon's first sermon was a success, and the deacons tried to procure him to stay at the church for 6 months (Spurgeon, 1898/2013). Spurgeon (1898/2013) agreed to 3 months to ensure a proper candidacy period. In the corresponding letters between the deacons and Spurgeon, the young pastor would hold out for a unanimous vote among the congregation instead of rising to the pulpit prematurely. Spurgeon wrote, "Enthusiasm and popularity are often the crackling of thorns, and soon expire. I do not wish to be a hindrance if I cannot be a help" (Letters Concerning Settlement in London section). In the interim, the deacons wrote Spurgeon reassuring him that they would get the votes, even defending the accusations that he was too young and not very prayerful (Spurgeon, 1898/2013). In 1854, Spurgeon accepted the unanimous invitation asking the congregation to remember his youth and inexperience and to forgive any mistakes or unguarded words that he may utter (Spurgeon, 1898/2013).

One of the first gifts Spurgeon received from the deacons was a box of white handkerchiefs (Fullerton, 1920). The gesture was a subtle power display signaling to Spurgeon that his blue handkerchief with white polka dots had to be retired (Fullerton, 1920). Spurgeon (1898/2013) also voiced dissent to the diaconate when they wanted to ordain the young pastor. In this instance, the leaders of the church dropped the matter per Spurgeon's request. Exemplary followers make it a healthy habit to voice their concerns upwards while faithfully performing their duties within the organization (Carsten et al., 2018). Spurgeon worked tireless hours and preached over 600 sermons before his 20th birthday (Hayden, 1991).

Consequently, the boy-preacher who never went to seminary or was ordained became the most prominent theologian at the time (Thielicke, 1963). At the height of Spurgeon's popularity and pressing time constraints, he increased his communicate with people worldwide by reading and replying to their letters (Spurgeon, 1898/2013). Spurgeon exemplified reciprocation in communication with his overseers and onlookers and made himself available to people except during sermon preparation.

Reciprocation in Compensation

One of the powerful pitfalls plaguing leaders today is their lucrative salaries (Riggio et al., 2008). For a recent example, it has been 6 years since Dan Price, the CEO of Gravity Payments, capped his executive compensation and raised every full-time employee's minimum salary to \$70,000 (Hegarty, 2020). While the business and, surprisingly, babies

are booming at Gravity Payments, the systemic societal changes Price sought at the beginning of the experiment have not come to fruition (Hegarty, 2020). Currently, executive compensation is 278 times higher than their average worker (Mishel & Wolfe, 2019). When Duin (2008) examined the salaries of pastors in America, many were six figures and higher than that community's median household income.

When The Spurgeon Center (TSC, 2016b) totaled the sales of Spurgeon's sermons, books, and speaking fees, they generated \$26 million. However, Spurgeon stopped taking a salary from the church after his first year and began divesting the royalties he earned into various ministry endeavors (TSC, 2016b). Fullerton (1920) wrote, "Literally he gave away a fortune" (p. 160). For instance, Spurgeon covered every student's tuition at the college he founded (Lawson, 2012). Spurgeon and his wife, Susannah, pooled their resources to send aid and books to pastors overseas (Rhodes, 2018). Spurgeon (1900/1972) viewed money as belonging to the Lord, declaring to his students, "You are not to make a fortune for yourself" (p. 274). Another example of exemplary followership is the reciprocity of generosity Spurgeon shared between his deacons. Spurgeon (1898/2013) journaled:

During a very serious illness, I had an uncontrollable fit of anxiety about money matters. One of the [deacons] came to me . . . bringing all the stocks and shares and deeds and available funds that he had. [He said,] "take whatever you need, and do not have another moment's anxiety." Of course, as soon as I got better, I returned to my dear friend, all that he had brought to me. (Deacons and Elders; Pastors and Teachers section)

The communicative and remunerative reciprocity of Spurgeon made him a beloved pastor. During Spurgeon's (1989/2013) 50th birthday, the church commemorated the jubilee ceremony with a sizable love offering. However, Spurgeon donated the money to the many charities he founded (Fullerton, 1920).

Reciprocation in Collaboration

Finally, Spurgeon's impact as a leader and follower comes from reciprocation in collaboration with others. Spurgeon was not a domineering leader but divested power in people even if they did not share his doctrinal convictions. Spurgeon was a Calvinist but would allow Arminians from the Baptist Convention to preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle (Bebbington, 2005). Spurgeon appointed George Rogers as principal of the Pastors' College even though Rogers was a paedobaptist (Morden, 2014). Spurgeon founded the Stockwell Orphanage with an investment from a widow from the Church of England (Gatewood, 2019). The principal of that orphanage was another paedobaptist (Morden, 2014). The Metropolitan Tabernacle was eponymously named because donations poured in from millions of people worldwide who were not even church members (Fullerton, 1920).

Organizations must understand how leadership and followership are intertwined to create social change (Wyper, 2014). One can follow their convictions without restricting another from prolific positions because both can share the same primary cause (Hamlin, 2016). Spurgeon was doctrinal, but he was not dogmatic and left many matters to personal conscience (Bebbington, 2005). Spurgeon's ecumenical empowerment expanded social services in London and throughout the world. Spurgeon created 66 parachurch organizations serving orphans; women in abusive situations; and others needing shelter, care, and education (Gatewood, 2019). Nicholls (1992) counted 53 of the 62 Baptist churches in London planted by graduates of Spurgeon's college, which trained over 700 seminarians (Thielicke, 1963). Numerous college graduates went on to plant churches in Australia, New Zealand, North America, and the West Indies, receiving translated sermons, outlines, and ongoing financial support from Spurgeon's estate (Rhodes, 2018).

During the jubilee ceremony, Spurgeon (1989/2013) deferred any credit to his prowess and gave all the glory to God. Spurgeon was committed to the primary cause of Christ and willing to partner with anyone who shared the same conviction. Fullerton (1920) wrote that Christianity "was always the prevailing and mastering idea of his life. . . . This spirituality is so rare in men of great powers that it is invariably the way to influence. It inspires a kind of awe" (p. 204). Spurgeon's influence as a follower and leader should inspire readers to imbue that same reciprocation of communication, compensation, and collaboration into their organizations. The subsequent section describes the methodology for examining Spurgeon's sermons and comparing them with the extant literature on followership.

Methodology

Technology has increased the digitalization of texts that allows researchers unlimited lexical exploration (Sretan & Wehrli, 2013). A keyword search is necessary to search Spurgeon's voluminous sermon archive, ensuring the most relevant information appears (Barnbrook, 1996). Utilizing the framework of co-occurrence and collocation, the researcher studies syntactic word combinations found in the text (Evert, 2005). This methodology gives the researcher a better understanding of a word by the company it keeps (Firth, 1957). Therefore, the text's analysis and interpretation oscillate outward from a hermeneutic circle towards heuristic interpretation (Scott, 1990). The content becomes agentive as the reader gains more understanding (Prior, 2003).

The database of Spurgeon's sermons came from The Kingdom Collective (<https://www.thekingdomcollective.com/spurgeon/list/>). The researcher searched all of the database titles with the keyword *lead* and its derivatives (leader, leading, leadership) while excluding words such as *pleading*. The initial search resulted in 13 sermons that match the inquiry. Upon closer inspection, two sermons were duplicates and combined, forming a sample size of 12. The sermons chosen for this study follow:

1. #74 A willing people and an immutable leader (Spurgeon, 1856)
2. #509/1402 Lead us not into temptation (Spurgeon, 1863)
3. #1220 The leading of the Spirit, the secret token of the sons of God (Spurgeon, 1875b)
4. #1248 The choice of a leader (Spurgeon, 1875a)
5. #1735 The doctrines of grace do not lead to sin (Spurgeon, 1883)
6. #2348 The Lord leading – David following (Spurgeon, 1894)
7. #2456 The Lamb our leader (Spurgeon, 1896c)
8. #2465 Our omnipotent leader (Spurgeon, 1896a)
9. #2491 Shame leading to salvation (Spurgeon, 1896b)
10. #2857 God's goodness leading to repentance (Spurgeon, 1903)
11. #3370 Our leader through the darkness (Spurgeon, 1913)
12. #3545 Our glorious leader (Spurgeon, 1917)

After opening each sermon, the researcher conducted another keyword-in-context search with the words *lead* (and its derivatives), *follow*, and its derivatives (follower, following, followed). The researcher copied and pasted each paragraph containing the keywords into a separate document to create the initial dataset. The document contained 32,898 words and was ready for the first round of coding.

Friese (2012) suggested that a large dataset is reducible to 120-300 codes. Moreover, the code list should contract with each successive coding cycle (Saldaña, 2016). During the first cycle of coding, the researcher counted the paragraphs with *lead* or *follow* (and its derivatives), placing the tabulations into a spreadsheet arranged by the sermon number. The initial codes totaled 201, and while frequency does not necessarily mean primacy (Saldaña, 2016), the list was organized and ready for the second cycle of coding.

The second cycle of coding grouped the list into two categories devised by the researcher (Patton, 2015). The categories were hermeneutic and heuristic. The hermeneutic category contained duplicate paragraphs with both *lead* and *follow* (and its derivatives) to provide the optimal context and syntax to understand Spurgeon's meaning of the concept (Sretan & Wehrli, 2013). The heuristic category allowed the researcher to choose additional quotations containing *lead* or *follow* (and its derivatives), aligning with Chaleff's (2009) followership framework. A heuristic inquiry is highly recommended as a research methodology, especially when examining spiritual leaders' text (Moustakas, 1990). The final dataset contained two categories with 30 hermeneutic codes and 22 heuristic codes used for data analysis. The researchers eliminated paragraphs that did not make it into a category, and the remaining text was read and re-read, allowing saturation to occur (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The results reveal what Spurgeon thought and taught about leadership and how followership theory can be applied to high-profile leaders today.

Results

The seminal sermons are #1248 and #2456, with the salient theme being that Christian leadership is paradoxically followership. Spurgeon (1896c) preached:

First, then, we are to follow the Lamb. Some men spurn the idea of following anybody . . . They are followers of nobody. . . . But of the true people of God, it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb." These are not they who follow their own leading, striking out a path of their own. These are not the great eccentrics or the wonderful originals, but these are they which follow—they are content to be merely followers—they do not aspire to be anything more than followers. But they are glad, however, to add that they are followers of the Lamb! "These are they which follow the Lamb." (p. 7)

According to Spurgeon, following the Lamb means leaders gently draw people while not harshly driving them towards something. Spurgeon (1875b) preached:

The Spirit of God is gentle! He does not drive but leads. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God; they are the sons of God." The Spirit treats us honorably in this working. He does not deal with us as with dumb, driven cattle or soulless waves of the sea. He treats us as intelligent beings, made for thought and reflection. He leads us as a man guides his child, or as one leads his fellow—and we are honored by subjecting our minds and wills to so Divine a Spirit. Whatever it is, the will is truly free until the Holy Spirit sweetly subdues it to willing obedience. (p. 3)

Blom and Lundgren (2019) devised a scale between full voluntary followership on one end and other forms of subordination that are not genuine followership on the other. Due to either dominant elements of compulsion or minimal coercion elements, a follower assumes a particular identity with a certain kind of leader (Blom & Lundgren, 2019). Given the research into destructive charismatic leaders and their effects on follower dependency (Howell & Shamir, 2005), Spurgeon exemplified courageous followership behavior while avoiding charismatic leaders' negative characteristics (Conger, 2015). Spurgeon (1896c) preached, "If you follow the Lamb, you must grow more and more lamb-like—and that means being more gentle, more meek, more self-sacrificing, more ready to submit to the Divine will" (p. 7). The imagery of shepherd and sheep is prevalent throughout all of the sermons.

Interestingly, in the analysis of Spurgeon's sermons, he never referred to himself as *your leader* but was content to view his role as a follower of Christ. "The blood-spattered footprints of my Master shall receive mine! Not with equal strides, but still with gladsome footsteps, I will follow in His track, let that track lead where it may" (Spurgeon, 1896c, p. 7). Moreover, in Spurgeon's autobiography, when referencing the church's leadership, it is mentioned as a shared construct, a very humbling omission for someone with world-renown fame. Spurgeon (1898/2013) wrote, "Rally round your leaders. Pray with double earnestness. . . . May the Lord uphold the Co-pastor, deacons, elders, and every one of you, for Jesus' sake (Unabated Affection Between Pastor and

People section)! The loving Governor viewed Christ as the ultimate leader in a plurality of faithful followers. Wilder and Jones (2018) concurred that "Godly leadership is followership . . . for the good and guidance of a community for which God has given us responsibility. Any power we possess has been divinely delegated to guide the flock towards his purposes and peace" (p. 122). Therefore, the subsequent section examines Chaleff's (2009) exemplary followership behaviors and how Spurgeon enacted them.

The Courage to Share in a Common Purpose

Part of what made Spurgeon a courageous follower was the shared purpose he had with his superiors (Rolle, 2020). Spurgeon (1889/2010) once told his students, "When a laborious, ox-like minister comes to be yoked to a deacon who is not another ox, it becomes hard work to plow" (p. 311). Both Spurgeon and the trustees were equally yoked and committed to furthering God's kingdom together. During Spurgeon's candidacy, the Superintendent of the Sunday School wrote the young phenom and said:

I hope and pray that you will be a blessing to thousands, that God will give you a great number of souls for your crown of rejoicing. [Furthermore,] if it shall please God . . . for you to come among us [I will] do all that I can so far as my influence is concerned, for your temporal and spiritual happiness. (Spurgeon, 1898/2013, Letters Concerning Settlement in London section)

Spurgeon's ministry did reach thousands, and the organization grew exponentially. Rather than falling into destructive leadership patterns that plague prolific leaders when they experience success (Einarsen et al., 2007), Spurgeon continually fought the battle of pride in himself (TSC, 2016a) while advancing organizational objectives together. Spurgeon (1875a) preached:

I may say, never, for when the one who is led goes beyond his leader, he is not, in truth, led any longer—rarely enough does it ever come to that. Men, if they outstrip their leaders, generally do so in the wrong direction. (p. 4)

The Courage to Serve in New Areas and Assume More Responsibility

Chaleff (2009) asserted developing as a follower requires assuming personal responsibility in learning. Riggio et al. (2008) observed that discipline shares the same root as disciple, and the most dependable follower learns to learn continuously. The discipline required to stretch the limits of one's ability is how personal growth occurs (Suda, 2013). A proper growth mindset understands that learning, unlearning, and relearning is challenging work and one applies oneself accordingly (Dweck, 2006). That is why researchers have focused on autotelic activities because participants guided by their agentive resourcefulness can persist amidst various adversities (Ponton & Rhea, 2006).

Spurgeon developed competency as a follower by assuming responsibility in autonomous learning. Even though Spurgeon did not have a formal education, he was "obliged to remain an autodidactic [a] self-taught man" (Thielicke, 1963, p. 5). Through his initiative, Spurgeon read numerous books a week (Harmon, 1997). Spurgeon's library contained over 12,000 volumes (Reeves, 2018), and even in the dark, Spurgeon could select any book from the shelf (Lawson, 2012). For fun, Spurgeon would quote lines of Homer verbatim and journaled witticisms and axioms from everyday observations (Bebbington, 2005). Spurgeon's erudite ability only aided in his ministry's output for someone who preached twice on Sunday while lecturing at numerous events throughout the week (Thielicke, 1963).

An exemplary follower in today's information economy should make autonomous learning the very flow of their workload (Bersin & Zao-Sanders, 2019). Driven by a natural curiosity and the inherent challenge to grow, exemplary followers assume responsibility for their learning without relying on corporate training programs (Pink, 2009). Spurgeon (1875a) preached:

I am glad to be a seeing man following a seeing Leader and I endeavor to be an intelligent scholar learning of a wise and sympathetic Teacher. . . . Come, dear Brothers and Sisters, you that are scholars of Christ, let us sit at His feet! Let us follow in His ways more closely than ever! And you, dear Friends, who as yet are not in His school, He says to you, "Who is simple let him turn in here." (p. 4)

The Courage to Challenge Leaders and Speak Out

Spurgeon was not afraid to challenge hierarchies and heresies based upon his convictions (Drummond, 1992). As Murray (2009) noted, three significant controversies marked Spurgeon's ministry: (a) Spurgeon challenging his fellow parishioners in London for preaching a diluted gospel; (b) condemning the Church of England for proliferating baptismal regeneration; and (c) the Down Grade Controversy, resulting in Spurgeon's resignation from his denomination (Murray, 2009). An amusing little anecdote during all this was when Spurgeon placed an Anglican baptismal in his garden as a birdbath, which he lovingly referred to as his "spoils of war" (Drummond, 1992, p. 486).

Speaking truth to power is often difficult, and the balance of supporting good leaders and challenging the bad ones will inevitably come at a cost (Bryman et al., 2011). However, upward feedback is necessary to keep high-profile leaders from becoming toxic and destructive (Chaleff, 2009). Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2013) discovered that followers who romanticized their superiors were more complicit in the leader's unethical requests. Spurgeon confronted the power structures of his day and refused to follow bad leaders. Spurgeon (1875a) preached:

The most solemn truth remains to be noted. When a man chooses a bad leader for his soul, at the end of all bad leadership, there is a ditch. . . . You do not see it yet, but there it is, and into it, you will fall if you continue to follow your leader. At the end of error, there is often a moral ditch, and men go down, down, down—they scarcely know why—till presently, having imbibed doctrinal error, their moral principles are poisoned, and like drunken men, they find themselves rolling in the mire of sin. (p. 4)

The Courage to Participate in Transformation

Followership styles adapt and accrue based on the interactions with particular leaders (Bastardo & Vugt, 2019). Leaders engender follower buy-in to meet personal and organizational challenges by moving through a continuum of five zones (Hayes et al., 2013): (a) zone of indifference where followers accept directives unquestioningly, (b) zone of acceptance, (c) zone of trust contingent upon the trustworthiness of the leader, (d) zone of commitment, and (e) zone of stewardship where followers are willing to make personal self-sacrifices for the organization's primary cause.

However, willful and volitional self-surrender is risky, especially when spiritual leaders abuse their authority. Johnson and VanVonderan (2005) observed that spiritual abuse occurs when congregants cannot question the clergy's authority and when noncompliance to directives becomes an underlying sin issue within the congregant. Nevertheless, even modern psychologists have shown that active acceptance to follow a spiritual leader can be a transformative experience (Freimann & Mayseless, 2021). Spurgeon understood the spiritual journey involves following a trustworthy leader through challenging circumstances while that leader remains committed to each individual's care. Likewise, "the Christian teacher is destined not only to be an imitator of Christ himself but also to take the position of the imitable" (Sloterdijk, 2012, p. 286). Spurgeon (1875a) preached:

Without considering whether the guide is a seeing man or blind, or the teacher an instructed and qualified instructor, the credulous yield themselves up to priests or leaders and are sorely misled. . . . Such self-sufficient boasters will not, therefore, condescend to sit at the feet of a master or follow the track of a guide—and, consequently, they frequently become erratic, singular, lawless, and unreasonable in their modes of thought and action. . . . Happy is that man who, in the pride of intellect, determines not to be a guide to himself—and so to be guide to a fool! [Oh Lord,] You take the blind in the hand and lead them by a way that they know not and by paths which they have not seen. . . . Having chosen his tutor, the student gradually becomes more and more like his master or, having taken his guide, the tendency is to tread more closely in his footsteps and obey his rules more fully every day. We must be all conscious that we imitate those whom we admire. Love has a strange influence over our nature, to mold it into the form of our beloved. (p. 4)

Sacrificial love was the transforming power of Spurgeon's ministry. The reciprocity to share power and money directly fulfills the biblical qualifications for ministers (English Standard Version, 2001, 1 Peter 5:1-4). Spurgeon's rhetoric from the pulpit matched the reality of his life. There was congruency in reciprocity between word (communication) and deeds (compensation and collaboration). Spurgeon (1883) preached:

Love has a great constraining power towards the highest form of virtue. Deeds to which a man could not be compelled on the ground of law, men have cheerfully done because of love. . . . Look how men have thrown away their lives for great leaders. That was an immortal saying of the wounded French soldier. When searching for the bullet, the surgeon cut deeply, and the patient cried out, "A little lower, and you will touch the Emperor," meaning that the Emperor's name was written on his heart! (p. 5)

The Courage to Take Moral Action

Moral action is one of the teleological characteristics of followership (Van Vugt et al., 2008). During the zenith of Spurgeon's ministry, a pamphlet began circulating asking why Spurgeon was so famous (Fullerton, 1920). Directly addressed to Spurgeon, the author of the pamphlet penned, "Your ministry has attained the dignity of a moral phenomenon. . . . You have raised up a church from obscurity to eminence, perhaps I might add . . . from spiritual indigence to affluence" (as cited in Fullerton, 1920, p. 89). In analyzing Spurgeon's sermons, he displayed exemplary followership behaviors because he followed the moral exemplar of Jesus Christ. Spurgeon (1917) preached:

Let us be up and doing, for Jesus goes ahead of us in the matter of Providence. May He help us to keep always near Him. What He would have us do, oh, may we do it! Word for word, what He would have us speak thought for thought what He would have us think, act for act what He would have us do! Let us never have a glorious Leader and be a laggard people. Oh, for the grace that is in Him to bedew us plenteously, that as He goes ahead of us, we may follow Him in the path of service! (p. 12)

Christian leadership, at its core, is followership. Tenth Avenue North's worship song summed it up best, "So many leaders, you ask for followers" (Donehey et al., 2016). Additionally, Wilder and Jones (2018) wrote, "Christ-following leaders must never pretend that they possess sovereignty above or separation from the people they serve. . . . For the Christian leader, followership means that everyone, even the leader, is always being led" (p. 21). It is evident from the life of Charles Spurgeon that the renowned Prince of Preachers cast down his crown before the King of Kings to exalt Christ alone. Spurgeon and his co-laborers created an equally and equitably yoked partnership that advanced the Kingdom of God together in one accord (English Standard Version, 2001, 2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

Application and Future Research

The closing section discusses two applications for practitioners and one area for future research.

Application 1: Implement Followership Training

The first application for practitioners to consider is implementing followership training instead of leadership development programs. In many leadership articles, books, conferences, and training resources, followership is often entirely nonexistent (Akhilele et al., 2021). Research has shown that followership training increases multiple performance metrics by 17% to 43% (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2015). The researchers also discovered that teaching followership fundamentally altered the way students engage with leadership theory and praxis (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2020). Increasing the interplay between followership and leadership studies will hopefully create more ethical exchanges in reciprocal relations. Spurgeon (1913) preached:

We all desire to rule, and we all feel that we could do it far better than the present leaders are doing! He who has the least wisdom and has failed in business half a dozen times is the very person who believes himself to be the most fitted to be Prime Minister! We do not love obedience, but we have to learn it. (p. 11)

Application 2: Refuse to Follow Greedy Leaders

The second application for practitioners is refusing to follow any leader who is unwilling to reciprocate equal and equitable compensation. While Spurgeon lived in London simultaneously as Karl Marx, another keyword search of his sermons reveals Spurgeon did not share many of the same sentiments as the socialists. However, the Metropolitan Tabernacle demonstrated sacrificial generosity and financial subsistence for its members at home and overseas. The lavish lifestyle of pastors today is supported in part by parishioner donations. For systemic and societal changes to occur, church practitioners need to explore new economic structures. When Jesus Christ detailed the parable of the workers who were all paid equally, the employees hired first objected (English Standard Version, 2001, Matthew 20:1-16). When Dan Price, the CEO of Gravity Payments, tried the same thing, many of his employees quit (Hegarty, 2020). Spurgeon (1898/2013) journaled:

Under the impression that I am a very rich man, many hunt me perpetually; but I wish these borrowers and beggars to know that I am not rich. They argue that a man is rich if he gives away large sums, but in my case, that is the reason why I am not rich. (Marvelous Increase Facts and Figures section)

Area of Future Research: Study Shared Leadership Models

The past few years saw critical leadership studies emerge, questioning neo-charismatic leaders' modality and morality (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014). The current nexus in theoretical studies examines meta-paradoxical leadership between hierarchical and shared structures (Pearce et al., 2019). Future researchers need to examine the processual and reciprocal hybridity of leader-follower relationships integral to organizational success (Schweiger et al., 2020). Spurgeon was a *primus inter pares* (Greenleaf, 1977) among the deacons, elders, and congregants of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Hopefully, scholars and practitioners can gain valuable insights by further studying case studies from the past.

Conclusion

After the removal of pastor Steve Timmis from his church in London, an independent investigation concluded:

The imbalance of power now was such that no one ever questioned the charismatic preacher who had rescued their church from extinction. [Trustees said,] that in practice they had no oversight of safeguarding and did not receive regular financial reviews . . . Participants consistently reported that [Steve Timmis emphasized a] very strong teaching on submission to the authority of leaders. People . . . felt there was a misapplication of this teaching and that, biblically, submission should be a two-way process. . . . [The Report recommended] that leaders themselves should be accountable, and the leadership model should be one of distributed leadership instead of allowing so much power to be invested in one person. (Thirty-one: Eight, 2020, pp. 32, 42, 57, 84)

Charles Spurgeon managed to avoid the pitfalls and perils of power by enacting exemplary followership behaviors. Scholars and practitioners today can benefit from Spurgeon's reciprocity in his communication, compensation, and collaboration, ensuring leaders and followers hold each other accountable to a higher moral standard. Spurgeon elevated the responsibility of Christian to follow the example of Christ, the leader par excellence. Imagine Spurgeon's (1875a) sonorous voice declaring these words at the Metropolitan Tabernacle as he preached:

If you do not wish to be led into errors of heart and practice, beware of men, and follow none but Jesus! Follow no footprints but the footprints of that flock which follows at His heel. You will do best not even to follow the sheep, but to follow the Shepherd, only, and to do that even if you walk alone! (p. 4)

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