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Chapter 5

Toward Spirit-Empowered Leadership: An Old Testament Foundation (Wonsuk Ma)

Abbreviations

CEO Chief Executive Officer
NT New Testament
OT Old Testament

Introduction

From the beginning of the modern Pentecostal Movement, the crucial role of leaders has generally been acknowledged. Thus, in seeking the best leadership model, charismatic leadership – already prevalent in the industrial, social, and political sectors – has naturally emerged as a viable option. Insiders and observers of Pentecostal Christianity have subsequently adapted this model to analyse and explain the extraordinary leadership capabilities of selected Pentecostal leaders. Also, several unfortunate downfalls of Pentecostal “stars” have prompted scholarly interest in leadership studies. This enduring scar in the Spirit-empowered movement exists not only as a scandal on its claim of extraordinary spirituality but also presents a continuing quest for spiritual and practical solutions.

My inquiry represents this ongoing interest in leadership issues within the movement. In this study, I assess the suitability of the charismatic leadership model for Pentecostal Christianity and propose Spirit-empowered leadership as an alternative. As a first step, I study relevant Old Testament (OT) evidence to elucidate key elements of this leadership model.

Charismatic vs. Spirit-Empowered Leadership

A leadership model should serve as a tool not only to analyse and assess one’s leadership abilities but also to enable one to identify the nature of a problem and to point to solutions.

Religious leadership studies should look beyond giftedness and performance and also investigate motivation, values, and attitudes.

Charismatic Leadership

Initially popularised by Max Weber¹ and widely adapted for diverse sectors, Christian leadership theorists include charismatic leadership as a Christian leadership type. Applying Weber's leadership theory has had wide implications in economics, politics, and religion.² My Google Scholar search on "Max Weber charismatic leadership theory" yielded a large number of academic studies, with "authority" as one frequently appearing keyword. One may then ask: how Christian is this leadership model, especially since Weber first espoused it in the context of Protestantism? He focused on work ethics shaped by the Protestant faith; thus, his theory related to business. The word *charisma*, a biblical term, appears frequently in Pauline literature, referring to spiritual gifts (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:7). Many widely use its derivatives today, for example, the "Charismatic Movement". However, these usages do not make the concept of charismatic leadership biblical.

To play with the fast-emerging generative AI technology, I asked ChatGPT to "compare Max Weber's and a biblical model of charismatic leadership." It lists four areas of similarities: extraordinary qualities, inspiring vision, emotional connection, and transformational influence. It also generates four areas of differences: the source of authority, religious foundation, ethical

¹ The first introduction to charismatic leadership is found in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Auckland, NZ: Pantianos Classics, 1930) based on the 1904 original.

² See the informative assessment of this book's impact: Mervyn F. Bendle, "Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism* (1905): A Centennial Essay," *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 18(2), (2005): 235-250. Also, for example, M. Rainer Lepsius, "Charismatic Leadership; Max Weber's Model and Its Applicability to the Rule of Hitler," in C.F. Graumann and S. Moscovici (eds), *Changing Conceptions of Leadership* (New York: Springer, 1986): 53-66.

framework, and succession and stability.³ Although ChatGPT's accuracy remains a subject of debate, these lists prove illustrative.

Despite the "Christian" language found in Weber's model, it is soon evident that the concept does not adequately describe or serve religious leadership. Picture the leader of a Christian congregation or ministry as I explore the differences between these two models. The first difference has to do with the single focus on gifted leaders in the charismatic model. Their authority comes from their extraordinary ability to perform well, convince followers, and lead an organisation. This presents problems for religious leadership as their mandate and authority come from outside. Thus, their role gets its definition from the one who elects and commissions them. Sometimes, their extraordinary giftedness originated from elsewhere. Structurally, therefore, secular charismatic leadership model is bilateral, a relationship between the leader and followers, while the religious model organises a trilateral relationship: the commissioner, the leader, and the followers. Imagine in a Christian organisation, a leader ignoring God's authority, lordship, and commissioning, but staying solely mindful of his or her followers, e.g., congregants. This makes the charismatic leadership model secular.

The second difference addresses the areas of concern, related to the first. The charismatic model evaluates a leader's effectiveness by personal capabilities and performance, such as a company's board would assess its CEO by organisational control and the company's profits. In the political world, we have seen an increasing tendency for voters to prioritise performance over morality. The very nature of charismatic leadership contains an inherent "dark side".⁴ The

³ This chat is found at "Charismatic Leadership Characteristics," Chat Open AI, 24th August 2023, <https://chat.openai.com/share/c833561b-be24-4aab-abf6-bc8172303ab3>.

⁴ For example, K.A. DeCelles and M.D. Pfarrer, "Heroes or Villains? Corruption and the Charismatic Leader," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 11(1), (2024): 67-77.

priority of outcome can easily sidestep more fundamental values, such as motivation, ethics, fidelity to the community's identity, etc. One cannot imagine that a local church can evaluate its senior pastor by performance alone, such as annual income, new members added, and new building projects. However, due to the church's nature and mission, the leader's relationship with God, spirituality, ethical life, integrity, and passion for the congregation will prove foundational and, thus, more critical.

Also, this leadership discourse completely assumes individuals as leaders. However, the biblical tradition also expands to include God's people as a "leader". This communal dimension of leadership includes Israel (for example, "my servant," Is. 41:8),⁵ the Church, a nation in a given period, and a local church.

Pentecostal Leadership Studies

Naturally, Pentecostal scholars have steadily produced studies on Pentecostal leadership, fully aware of leadership challenges within the movement. Two examples may help. Truls Åkerlund undertook a phenomenological study among Scandinavian Pentecostal leaders and concluded that his respondents identified the following characteristics as essential for Pentecostal leadership: (1) motivated by a sense of higher, divine purpose;; (2) derived leadership (from God); (3) human and divine agency in a seamless interaction between rationality and spirituality; (4) pragmatic and eclectic stance toward the Pentecostal tradition; (5) persuasive communication; (6) dialectic relationship between structure and agency; (7) adaptive to context; and (8) involving a leader's entire life.⁶ The charismatic leadership model will not adequately meet this leadership demand by contemporary Spirit-filled Christians.

⁵ All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.

⁶ Truls Åkerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018): 95-128.

Stephen Fogarty's study on the dark side of charismatic leadership⁷ also sheds some helpful light. Following R.J. House and J.M. Howell, who subdivided charismatic leadership into personalised and socialised charismatic leadership,⁸ Fogarty characterises personalised charismatic leaders as prioritising their personal interests over the organisation's, often exhibiting the need for power, negative life themes, and narcissistic tendencies.⁹ The consequences of such a leader's unethical and destructive behaviour without self-regulatory mechanisms can prove detrimental to the self and the organisation.¹⁰ To address this negative leadership potential, Fogarty advocates socialised charismatic leadership, which prioritises the organisation's interests over personal gains. Recognising charismatic leadership's "risky" nature, he also proposes several safeguards for Christian leadership.¹¹

“Spirit-Empowered Leadership”

Pentecostal scholars have used several expressions for the full spectrum of the contemporary Spirit movement. Among them are “Pentecostal-Charismatic,” “Renewal,” “Pentecostal,” “Apostolic,” “Full Gospel,” and others.¹² “Spirit-empowered” has been popularised by the Empowered21 Movement, a global relational network, tracing back to the 2006 Azusa Revival Centenary.¹³ Oral Roberts University, which serves as its institutional base,

⁷ Stephen G. Fogarty, “The Dark Side of Charismatic Leadership,” *Australian Pentecostal Studies* 13 (2010), [Available at: <https://aps-journal.com/index.php/APS/article/view/104>], [Last accessed: 13th March 2024].

⁸ R.J. House and J.M. Howell, “Personality and Charismatic Leadership,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 3(2), (1992): 81-108, [Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843\(92\)90028-E](https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(92)90028-E)], [Last accessed: 13th March 2024].

⁹ Fogarty, “Dark Side,” 12.

¹⁰ Fogarty, “Dark Side,” 12.

¹¹ Fogarty, “Dark Side,” 14-16.

¹² “Have Pentecostals Outgrown Their Name?” *Christianity Today*, 29th May 2020, [Available at: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/may/holy-spirit-empowered-christian-global-pentecostal-study.html>], [Last accessed: 13th March 2024].

¹³ Vinson Synan and Billy Wilson, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: The Story of Empowered21 and the Movement It Serves* (Tulsa, OK: Empowered Books, 2021): 59-61.

has adopted this expression, for example, in its mission statement: “To develop Holy Spirit empowered leaders through whole-person education to impact the world”.

When it comes to leadership, “Spirit-empowered” appears more appropriate over “Spirit-inspired” or “Spirit-motivated,” considering the Pentecostal distinctive belief in Spirit-empowerment. Eric Newberg of Oral Roberts University recently published a study on the paradigm of Spirit-empowered leadership, following the five-fold ministry models.¹⁴ He aptly illustrates these paradigms by five case studies of Opoku Onyinah,¹⁵ Pope John Paul II,¹⁶ Jimmy Swaggart,¹⁷ Reinhard Bonnke,¹⁸ and S.B.J. Oschoffa.¹⁹

My study thus proposes “Spirit-empowered leadership” as an alternative to charismatic leadership. Building upon my descriptive studies of Spirit-empowered leaders in the Old Testament (see below), I identify four key characteristics of ideal Spirit-empowered leadership initially from the Old Testament texts. The New Testament (NT) provides a fuller picture of Spirit-empowered leadership in the life of Jesus and the apostles. Therefore, this serves as a theological study based on closely reading relevant passages.

Cruxes of Spirit-Empowered Leadership in the Old Testament

In elucidating key qualities of Spirit-empowered leaders in the Old Testament, I utilize here findings of two previous studies. My first study examined Samson and Saul as tragic cases

¹⁴ Eric N. Newberg, “Paradigms of Global Spirit-Empowered Leadership,” *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 7(2), (2022): 169-98.

¹⁵ David Osei-Nimoh, “Profile of a Spirit-Empowered Leader: Opoku Onyinah, the ‘African Paul’,” *Spiritus* 7, no. 2 (2022): 199-210.

¹⁶ Tomasz Bialokurec, “John Paul II: A Role Model of Participative, Transformative, and Empowering Leadership,” *Spiritus* 7(2), (2022): 211-26.

¹⁷ Robert D. McBain, “Jimmy Swaggart: The Conflict between Spirit-Empowerment and Human Weakness,” *Spiritus* 7(2), (2022): 227-41.

¹⁸ Charles Morara Obara, “A Critical Analysis of Reinhard Bonnke’s Charismatic Leadership Paradigm,” *Spiritus* 7(2), (2022): 243-55.

¹⁹ Samuel Olamiji Akibu, “S.B.J. Oschoffa (1909-85): The Miracle of a Shared Life,” *Spiritus* 7(2), (2022): 257-69.

of Spirit-empowered leaders,²⁰ while my subsequent study portrayed the ideal Spirit-filled and empowered leader as “prophet-servant”.²¹ I also place my studies in conversation with several Pentecostal leadership studies, such as Fogarty’s socialised charismatic leadership model and Åkerlund’s leadership qualities among contemporary Scandinavian Pentecostals.

Call: Enduring Consciousness

Call narratives are a distinct OT tradition, and many OT characters have details of their call experience. For example, Saul had a surprise but distinct call experience. Unknown to him, Samuel had been instructed by God to anoint him as the first king of Israel. The prophet announced his election to be the leader (“Has not the Lord anointed you ruler over his inheritance?” 1 Sam. 10:1), followed by three signs that subsequently appeared. The last sign was the coming of the Spirit as he was met by a group of prophets (v. 10). Indeed, immediately, “God changed Saul’s heart” (v. 9). Samuel predicted that the Spirit’s presence would also turn him “into a different person” (v. 6). These compounding affirmations of God’s call upon Saul suggest the life-changing impact of the call experience.

On the other hand, there is only a passing reference to the Prophet Amos’ call experience. When confronted by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, about the legitimacy of his prophetic activity in the northern kingdom, he replies, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel’” (Amos 7:14-15). The call became the very motivation for his courageous prophetic ministry: “Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing

²⁰ Wonsuk Ma, “Tragedy of Spirit-Empowered Heroes: A Close Look at Samson and Saul,” *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 2(1-2), (2017): 23-38.

²¹ Wonsuk Ma, “Prophetic Servant: Ideology of Spirit-Empowered Leaders,” *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 5(2), (Fall 2020): 217-34.

without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared – who will not fear? The Sovereign LORD has spoken – who can but prophesy?” (3:7-8).

However, the call experience does not ensure the success of the called. Despite the multiple layers of affirmation of God’s call and subsequent experience with God’s Spirit (1 Sam. 11:6) and splendid “Spirit-empowered” victory, Saul failed miserably, almost immediately. The called must internalise the call, with it affecting every aspect of the receiver’s thoughts, words, and actions. This should involve a conscious and repeated decision so that the call becomes an enduring lifestyle. The Prophet Jeremiah, for example, has a distinct call experience, characterised by God’s word, “Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘I have put my words in your mouth’” (Jer. 1:9). God’s call and commission shape his life and ministry. Some time into his ministry, Jeremiah’s prophetic utterances invite harsh opposition, ill-treatment, and imprisonment. Amidst the repeated and painful cycle of Jeremiah’s obedience and persecution, he complains to God about his “deception” (20:7), and yet pours out his dilemma: “But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot” (v. 9). Only the internalised and enduring awareness of God’s call sets the whole life to be consumed by passion. Thus, I argue that the ideal leadership is better reflected by prophets and kings.²²

Åkerlund’s research places more prominence on the “higher and divine purpose” than a call experience per se. Noticing the difference in call experiences among missionaries, the sense of one’s call can be subjective: some perceive it by an external authority (that is, God) while

²² Ma, “Prophetic Servant,” 229-31.

others by “obligation to one’s authentic self”.²³ Regardless of the mode or process, Åkerlund observes that Pentecostal leaders in Norway are motivated by a sense of God’s call.²⁴ Applying this trait of Spirit-empowered leadership, one can attribute the failure of Samson and Saul to their personalised charismatic leadership, which prioritises personal interests over corporate ones, resulting in unethical leadership behaviour.²⁵ Thus, the true mark of empowered leadership, in contrast, involves a call or purpose-directed life.

Human and Divine Alignment

My study on the tragic heroes argues that their initial encounters with the Spirit of God were intended as (semi-)private. After Samuel’s anointing of him, Saul experienced the Spirit as he met a group of prophets in their Spirit-inspired procession. Then, he experienced inner transformation: “You will be changed into a different person” (1 Sam. 10:6). The core of this internal transformation and the fulfilled signs is an intuitive and complete alignment of his heart or thoughts to God’s, and he could “do whatever [his] hand finds to do, for God is with [him]” (v. 8). Although less explicit, Samson’s first encounter with God’s Spirit also appears personal and thus, intended for an inner realignment with God’s purpose and character development.²⁶

Isaiah 11 presents the ideal ruler, upon whom rests the abundant presence of the Spirit. That ruler’s particular qualities include “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, and the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Is. 11:2). With unmistakable wisdom language, the text portrays the ideal king as more of a sage²⁷ or prophet

²³ Åkerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, 95.

²⁴ Åkerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, 97, identifies the process “through their relationship with God and an understanding of his purpose [for their lives]”.

²⁵ Fogarty, “The Dark Side,” 12.

²⁶ Ma, “Tragedy of Spirit-Empowered Heroes,” 26-27.

²⁷ Patricia K. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2010): 228.

than a military warrior. The foundation has to do with the king's alignment with God's demand and mission, by submitting to the inner working of his Spirit:

As the “fear of the Lord/God” sums the characteristics of the ideal king, the Spirit's endowment is predominantly moral and spiritual [...] the “internalisation” of the Spirit's endowment. The Spirit of God works through the recipient's heart and character, resulting in the qualities desired for the ideal king. [...] His righteous and just rule, therefore, is the manifestation of his inner disposition endowed by the Spirit.²⁸

The outer demonstration of the Spirit's empowerment is a natural consequence of the internalised Spirit's presence and transformation.

Åkerlund ranks “human and divine agency” as the second characteristic of Pentecostal leadership. Although this stresses the critical role of the human leader, he places the primacy on the divine by referring to Grant Wacker's expression, “The otherworldly legitimates the this-worldly.”²⁹ In this one-sided alignment, the human must align to God's will but not the other way around. Naturally, the leader's entire life embodies this close alignment.³⁰ When the human leader deviates from this relationship, tragedy happens. Under this discussion, Åkerlund also observes a “seamless interaction between rationality and spirituality, against dichotomy between the two”.³¹ The ideal king possesses both spiritual/moral qualities and rational or executive functions (e.g., “the Spirit of counsel and might”). In leadership studies, related to this is the routinisation of charismata, or the tension between charismatic leadership and institutional structures.³²

²⁸ Ma, “Prophetic Servant,” 219. Aubrey R. Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961): 2, refers the Spirit of God to the “undeniable extension of his personality; thus, the presence of God.

²⁹ Åkerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, 101.

³⁰ Åkerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, 126-28.

³¹ Åkerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, 101.

³² The entire book of Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) studies the challenge of the historical process of institutionalisation as an expression of “routinisation.”

In a biblical reflection of charismatic leaders, Catholic Charismatic scholar, Tomasz Bialokurec, contends that the relational nature of leadership remains essential and is based on the leader's affinity with God.³³ Fogarty also suggests that the Trinity can serve as a model for Christian leadership, especially in the relational nature of the three persons in one.³⁴ The Spirit-empowered leader must retain the attitude of "God in me and me in Him".

Serving Two Entities

While leadership studies focus on the relationship between the leader and follower, Christian leadership has a third party – God. The two characteristics of Spirit-empowered leadership explore this fundamental layer, the leader's relationship with God. Take Moses' leadership role; God called him, empowered him, and sent him to lead his people out of the bondage of Egyptian slavery. This positioned him as leader between God and the people or nation God sent him to lead. God calls the ideal king in Isaiah 11 to bring just and righteous rule to his people and judgement to the wicked. Similarly, he calls the Spirit-anointed servant in Isaiah 61 to minister to the marginalised: "to proclaim good news to the poor [...] to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Is. 61:1). Throughout the Old Testament, care for the weak and powerless stands as the hallmark of God's leadership.

However, serving the sender (God) takes priority over those the leader is sent to when interests conflict. The narrative of Ahab's four hundred prophets and the lone prophet Micaiah (1 Kgs 22) illustrates this dynamic well. God called Micaiah to bring his message to Ahab,

³³ Tomasz Bialokurec, "Charismatic Leadership Redefined: Transformed by Servanthood," *Pentecostal Education* 6(1), (Spring 2021): 16.

³⁴ Fogarty, "Dark Side," 16-17.

confronting the crowd of royal prophets. He resolves to speak “only what the Lord tells [him]” (v. 14) and conveys the message of defeat and death of the king. When Zedekiah, the leader of Ahab’s prophets, challenges the source and authenticity of Micaiah’s message, Micaiah confidently replies, “You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room” (v. 25). This incident demonstrates Micaiah’s affinity with God, through which flowed genuine revelation, the ability to discern, and courage to confront the authority. However, the prophet felt motivated by his loyalty to the Lord and his deep concern for the fate of God’s people.

In this triad relationship, priorities remain clear: God, the people Micaiah was sent to, and the self; the leader takes the last priority. When this order is not heeded, even an empowered leader fails. Take Saul again. In his first campaign after the public coronation of Saul (1 Sam. 11:12-15), he violates Samuel’s specific command to wait for him (13:8). He offers a burnt offering under pressure from his people, even though he is not a priest (v. 9). Samuel harshly condemns him, saying, “You have done a foolish thing” by not keeping the Lord’s command (v. 13). As a consequence, Saul’s kingdom will not endure, and another man “after [God’s] own heart” will replace him (v. 14). The violated priority is quite clear: Saul had placed his own position first, by pleasing the people (second), and taking God as the last priority. The result was deadly: failed Spirit-empowered leadership.

Åkerlund highlights this relational dynamic under “derived leadership”.³⁵ The leader is also a follower of God’s call, as much as serving as the leader of those to whom they are called. Åkerlund rightly points out that the unique Pentecostal worldview conditions believers to

³⁵ Åkerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, 97-101.

experience the power of the living God through his Holy Spirit.³⁶ In this worldview and leadership orientation, Christian leadership centres and integrates “everything around God,” who is “the ultimate source of authority”.³⁷ This makes relating with God the leader’s priority. Because of this orientation, Spirit-empowerment can exhibit itself in superhuman performance, such as Samson’s feat, or sacrificial suffering for others, as in the Suffering Servant (Is. 53).

Empowering Others

God elected his servants to guide his people through covenant relationship with him. He called prophets to admonish the people to return to the Lord. In this restored relationship, Israel, God’s servant, would experience the flourishing of life: “For I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants [...] like poplar trees by flowing streams” (Is. 44:3-4). This work of the Lord, in turn, would bring nations to God’s reign (v. 5). God’s Spirit empowers Israel to empower the nations.

On an individual level, Moses and his seventy elders illustrate the cycle of empowerment. To share his administrative and leadership burden, Moses chose seventy as instructed by God. Then God “took some of the Spirit that was on him [Moses] and put it on the seventy leaders” (Num. 11:25, Complete Jewish Bible). Although Moses played a passive role, his Spirit-empowered experience multiplied in the seventy through the election and empowerment of the same Spirit.³⁸ They were then to serve the people as well as Moses. In a study on the Spirit in Isaiah, I argue that “the emphasis on power or empowerment [...] has to do with the well-being

³⁶ Åkerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, 98. Also, Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Formation, Theology, and Praxis* (Oxford: Regnum, 2023): 94-95.

³⁷ Karl Inge Tangen, *Ecclesial Identification beyond Late Modern Individualism? A Case Study of Life Strategies in Growing Late Modern Churches* (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 334.

³⁸ Bialokurec, “John Paul II,” 16-17 contends, “The Spirit-empowered Leader Empowers Others.”

of God's people."³⁹ In the first Servant Song, the single mission of this Spirit-empowered leader was to "bring justice to the nations" (Is. 42:1, 3-4). Despite various interpretations of "justice," the outcome of the Servant's mission is for the nations (or "islands") to "put their hope" in the servant's teaching (v. 4).

In the Old Testament, this continuing cycle of empowerment would ultimately result in the Spirit's empowering presence on everyone in God's community. Joel predicts this universalised outpouring: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29). This "democratisation" of the Spirit makes everyone in God's community equally empowered, creating an egalitarian community.⁴⁰ The Spirit-empowered community then exercises its God-endowed leadership to the nations. As God called Israel to serve as a Spirit-empowered community to empower others, so too has he called the Church.

Closing

The space limitations here do not allow me to explore other key qualities/characteristics of Spirit-empowered leadership, such as moral authority, bold vision, signs and wonders, and a strong appeal to the followers. I hope this initial proposal encourages others to join the conversation to expand the list of Spirit-empowered leadership traits.

As a closing remark, I address a pressing question: if the chosen leader is only good for sacrifice and hard work, do they enjoy anything in life? So far, my discussion may have

³⁹ Wonsuk Ma, "Isaiah," in Trevor J. Burke and Keith Warrington (eds), *A Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit* (London: SPCK, 2014): 44.

⁴⁰ Fogarty, "Dark Side," 16, stresses egalitarianism as a key characteristic of Christian leadership, based on the Trinitarian relationship.

inadvertently portrayed the Spirit-empowered leader as living a life that all other humans want to avoid as much as possible. However, the chosen ones in Scripture I have described here lived and served with a deep sense of privilege and honour despite a hard life for many. This paradigm runs throughout the Bible, including the very creation of humans.

First, the elect are God's own. The first humans were distinguished from the rest of creation by carrying God's image (Gen. 1:26) and breath (or "Spirit," 2:7). The call experience closely relates to this intimate relationship. Elsewhere, God called these individuals his "treasured possession" (Ex. 19:5), "my son" (Ps. 2:7), "my servant," and "my chosen" (e.g., Is. 42:1). This intimate relationship is also expressed in various declarations and actions. God knew them before they were formed (e.g., Jer. 1:5); he will never leave or forsake his chosen (e.g., Dt. 31:6); and he has written their names on the palm of his hands (Is. 49:15). God's relentless pursuit of his people, despite their rebellion, depicts his commitment to his own.

Second, the presence of the "God matter" in the chosen servants sets them apart. As "image" and "breath/Spirit" in humans distinguish them from the rest of the creation,⁴¹ so did the Spirit upon the leaders separate them from the people. While this affirmed their special relationship with God, as seen above, the Spirit's presence also came with God-given authority and empowerment. God unmistakably upheld Moses' authority as he took "some of the Spirit from upon Moses and placed it on the seventy elders" (Num. 11:25, my translation). The decisive military victory of Gideon over the Midianites through the empowerment of the Spirit

⁴¹ I have argued in several places that the "breath" in Genesis 2, often used interchangeably with the Spirit, has a unique role referring to Adam's status in relation to God and the animal world. For example, Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010): Chapter 2: "Spirit, Creation Theology, and Mission," especially pp. 21-22.

set him apart from the whole nation (Jg. 8). The very word *servant* was often used for God's elected leaders to imply God-given authority.

Third, relatability is another special privilege of the elect. Although this closely relates to the previous points, it nonetheless remains significant. Again, reaching out to the creation record, God relates with the humans: when Adam and Eve hid from God who "was walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8), the Lord calls to Adam, "Where are you?" (v. 9). This incident indicates God's desire to relate with his image/breath/Spirit bearers. God's reluctance to hide his plan from Abraham reveals this relationship: "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" (Gen. 18:17). This intimate relatability gave Abraham the boldness to "negotiate" with God over the fate of Lot and his family in Sodom (vv. 23-33). Thus, God identified Abraham as "my friend" (Is. 41:8). Similarly, God spoke to Moses "face to face as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex. 33:11). This ability to relate with God intimately became the highest reward as the psalmist cried out with joy, "the Lord himself is my inheritance, my prize. He is my food and drink, my highest joy!" (Ps. 16:5).

Fourth, the elected servant became God's close partner in fulfilling his plan, primarily due to the calling and the intimate relationship with God. They particularly worked to keep God's people in the covenant relationship. In this process, the Lord revealed his plan unknown to others. This revelatory experience took different forms. One of them is the heavenly court scene: God's chosen servant was invited to view what took place behind the divine curtain. Isaiah saw the Lord in his glory and heard his sermon, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Is. 6:18). After this call and God's commission, Isaiah relentlessly warns the nation to turn to the Lord, rebuking the kings when necessary and advising them about how to make godly decisions (e.g., Nathan confronting David, 2 Sam. 12:1-14). In the face of judgement, Isaiah also

admonishes the people with the ultimate hope of restoration through the Spirit (e.g., Is. 32:15-18; cf. Ez. 37). Through the revelatory experiences and faithful proclamation of Spirit-empowered servants, the fate of a nation was changed.

This close partnership between God and Spirit-empowered leaders can bring success and fame, but also hardship and even death. However, any rewards in life were insignificant; we remember these leaders as men and women after God's own heart. After all, God is the ultimate reward for his Spirit-empowered servants and leaders.

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Abstract

The study begins with the challenge of the charismatic leadership model in explaining Pentecostal leadership, and the Spirit-empowered leadership model is proposed as an alternative. As the first step, the study explores four essential characteristics of the Spirit-empowered leaders from the Old Testament. This biblical examination also takes two Pentecostal leadership studies to bring the contemporary issues of Pentecostal leadership.