

# Image of Fatherhood as a Model of Church Leadership

Lidetu Alemu Kefenie (PhD)

## Introduction

History is in the hands of organizational leaders. Whether it is organizational success or failure, much of it is attributed to leaders. When leaders lead well, organizations rise and become successful; whereas when they fail to lead well, organizations fall. Though it is difficult to posit that leaders are the panacea for all organizational dilemmas<sup>1</sup>, their place in an organization's life is indisputable. This can be seen from a number of biblical stories.

The story of the northern and southern states of Israel during the Old Testament period was dictated by their kings. When these kings lived a life commended by the Lord, the people used to follow their footsteps and led a God-pleasing life. However, when the kings went astray, the same occurred to the people. In other words, the people did not live their own lives. They lived the life of the kings as their lives were hugely dictated by their respective kings.

The same is true for the church. The triumph or failure of the church is hugely dependent on its leaders. Leaders may either take the church to the next higher level in impacting the society or they may move the church lower than the standard of its calling. This informs us that leadership is very critical for the church to be able to impact the society it is living in.

This takes us to posing these questions: *What biblical and/or cultural model of church leadership can we get that ensures the church to impact the society? And, does today's church leadership practice align with the biblical and/or cultural framework?*

With these questions in mind, this study intends to explore if the image of fatherhood is being practiced in Ethiopian churches as a biblical model of church leadership. The study brings discussions drawn from biblical, cultural, and modern leadership conceptualizations by supporting with empirical data.

## Conceptual Framework

### Essence of Fatherhood as a Biblical Model of Church Leadership

Leadership development is a process. Leaders do not develop overnight. It takes time to be and make a leader. Among an array of life experiences that a person develops his/her leadership qualities is the home. Leaders get leadership experience while leading families (See 1 Timothy 3:4-5). In this passage, the word *proistēmi* is strongly related to "the concept of leadership".<sup>2</sup> This word is traditionally translated as *overseer*, whose key feature is "to be able to handle one's own family".<sup>3</sup> Ryken pointed out leaders "get this experience at home".<sup>4</sup> Home is

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Jon Paulien, "Leadership Language in the New Testament", in *Servant and Friends: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (ed. Skip Bell. Berrien Springs; Andrews University Press, 2014), 130.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy: Reformed Expository Commentary*. (Phillipsburg: P&R Publications, 2007), 116.

the place where they emulate “exemplary”<sup>5</sup> lifestyle in managing the different family members; the term family is inclusive of parents, children, slaves, and relatives.<sup>6</sup> Household heads need to manage their family members well. The focus of this passage is children. Marshall noted that “the oversight of children becomes the main area of the householder’s task”.<sup>7</sup> In light of this passage, the father’s role is seen to be more important than that of the husband’s.<sup>8</sup>

Ryken indicated that the Greek word “*proistamenon*”, which is translated as manage, means two things: “One is to supervise, and the other is to nurture or to be concerned.”<sup>9</sup> Marshall translates it to mean “administration” where ruling and concern are implied.<sup>10</sup> Ryken further elaborated the application of this word in the father’s role: “Fatherhood brings both aspects (of this word) together. The father is the leader who governs the household, but the way he does this is by caring for the needs of each family member. Elders do the same thing in the household of God: they exercise this spiritual authority both by governing and by caring.”<sup>11</sup> Ngewa agrees with this application of the passage as church leaders are believed “to care for and protect their families and exercise loving leadership”.<sup>12</sup> Ngewa infers the leadership style that should be exercised in the church: *loving leadership*. Such loving leadership cannot be seen in the church if it is not practiced at home. In line with this discussion, Marshall emphatically noted why such leadership is sought in the church: “There is an analogy between caring for an ordinary household and caring for the household of God, which makes a working knowledge of the former a condition for success at the latter, and *implies that the same qualities are required in both spheres*” (italics mine).<sup>13</sup> Ngewa also stated the necessity of such leadership to be the hallmark of church leaders: “A church led by someone with this attitude will be characterized by loving concern for all the members”.<sup>14</sup>

In order for us to suggest fatherhood as a model of church leadership, we need to answer this question: *How are fathers expected to supervise and care for their children?* Though the traditional practice that comes to one’s mind is strict discipline, including forceful persuasion and punishment, Paul exhorts that it should be “with all gravity” (1 Tim 3:4, KJV) or “with all dignity” (NAS) or “in a manner worthy of full respect” (NIV). This implies “respect or reverence . . . (treating children) like people made in the image of God . . . being fair, consistent, sympathetic, and merciful”.<sup>15</sup> Ryken concluded: “A man who cares for his own children well is ready to care for all God’s children. He already knows how to instruct, nurture, discipline, and deal patiently with rebellion”.<sup>16</sup> Such leadership is paradigmatic in a “strongly patriarchal culture”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> I. H. Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, (London : T & T Clark, 1999), 479; Samuel Ngewa, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/HippoBooks, 2009), 67.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 480.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ngewa, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 68.

<sup>13</sup> Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 481.

<sup>14</sup> Ngewa, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 69.

<sup>15</sup> Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 116-117.

<sup>16</sup> Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 117.

<sup>17</sup> Marshall, *A critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 479.

Based on the above discussion, one can clearly see that the essence of fatherhood is stipulated in the biblical model of church leadership. As fathers exhibit exemplary lifestyle at home and manage their homes well by supervising, nurturing, caring, respecting, and showing all kinds of concern for their children, they are expected to lead the church with the same leadership qualities. As they show sympathy and mercy to their children, they are expected to be the same for God's children in the church. This makes fathers to exercising loving leadership.

## Ubuntu

In addition to the biblical mandate of exercising loving leadership that is characterized by concern and care towards God's people, African church leaders also have another source of wisdom to determine their style of church leadership. This source is Africa-based philosophical concept. As any other context, Africa is rich in cultural heritages from which its people can draw lessons on a variety of subjects. Among diverse cultural features, one can get Ubuntu – an African philosophical concept of caring leadership.

Ubuntu is the traditional African philosophical concept that informs an array of community life and practices within African communities.<sup>18</sup> Salawu defined Ubuntu as “the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual caring”.<sup>19</sup> Ubuntu also portrays collegiality, camaraderie, and collectivism.<sup>20</sup>

After analyzing the concept of Ubuntu, Kefenie noted that Ubuntu “conveys the notion of caring for one another.”<sup>21</sup> In addition, Kefenie also noted that the concept of such care and communitarian attitude towards another fellow-citizen is strongly related with one of the six global leadership dimensions.<sup>22</sup> This will be further discussed in the following section.

## Humane-Oriented Leadership Dimension

A group of scholars that have come together from across the globe engaged in a 10-year longitudinal study to find out the preferred leadership dimensions in different parts of the world. These leadership dimensions are preferred leadership dimensions as they contribute to effective leadership to a particular context. After 10 years of work, the study indicated six global leadership dimensions; one of which is humane-oriented leadership dimension. Though these leadership dimensions are named differently, this study will refer to them as global leadership dimensions.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> R. Bolden & P. Kirk, “African Leadership: Surfacing New Understandings through Leadership Development” *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 9(2009).

<sup>19</sup> A. Salawu, “The paradigm of ethical development for civilized leadership in Africa” *Leadership*, 8(2011), 18.

<sup>20</sup> U. Nwagbara, “Leading a postmodern African organisation: Towards a model of prospective commitment” *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(2012), 76

<sup>21</sup> Lidetu Alemu Kefenie, *The Search for Good Leadership Behaviors: A Study of the Relationship between Second-Order Global Leadership Dimensions and Ethical Ideologies* (PhD dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (ProQuest Number: 10105458)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> P. Dorfman, M. Javidan, P. Hanges, A. Dastmalchian & R. House, “GLOBE: A Twenty Year Journey into the Intriguing World of Culture and Leadership” *Journal of World Business*, 47(2012).

The humane-oriented leadership dimension “reflects supportive and considerate leadership but also includes compassion and generosity”.<sup>24</sup> It is characterized by community spirit, which is strongly related to the “humaneness”<sup>25</sup> of Ubuntu concept. Northouse posited that humane oriented leaders are “modest, compassionate, and sensitive to the people”.<sup>26</sup> According to Dorfman et al., humane-oriented leadership dimension is ranked as the highest leadership dimension that contributes to outstanding leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa, and it is also the second highest globally.<sup>27</sup>

In light of the foregoing discussion, African churches have the privilege of tapping to different sources to reflect on the model of leadership they might be exercising in their churches; namely, the model of fatherhood as stated in the Bible, the philosophical concept of Ubuntu, and humane-oriented leadership dimension as one of the highly preferred leadership dimensions in Sub-Saharan Africa. The portrayal of leaders as fathers is not only discussed in biblical approaches to studying leadership, but it is also indicated in the discussion of modern leadership approaches. Northouse noted that an element of Blake and Mouton’s leadership grid is paternalism/maternalism. This is a leadership style that is characterized by graciousness.<sup>28</sup>

The common threads among these three different approaches are compassion, care, and concern; and these are expected to dictate African church leadership. This means that the image of fatherhood as a model of church leadership can be supported by the salient features of Africa’s philosophical concept (Ubuntu) and the highly preferred global leadership dimension in Africa (humane-oriented leadership dimension).

Therefore, the issue that appeals our discussion is the extent by which church leaders are exercising the roles of fatherhood, which is a lifestyle of fatherhood to God’s people. Perhaps, they may be practicing such leadership; however, it needs to be supported with empirical study. The intent of this study is to explore if the image of fatherhood is being practiced in Ethiopian churches as a biblical model of church leadership.

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<sup>24</sup> R. J. House & M. Javidan, M. “Overview of the GLOBE” in *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* (eds. R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P. W. Dorfman, & V. Gupta. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Gupta, V., & P. J. Hanges, (2004). “Regional and climate clustering of societal cultures” in *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* (eds. R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P. W. Dorfman, & V. Gupta. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 187.

<sup>26</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007), 318.

<sup>27</sup> P. Dorfman, P. J. Hanges, & F. C. Brodbeck, (2004). “Leadership and Cultural Variation: The Identification of Culturally Endorsed Leadership Profiles”, in *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* (eds. R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P. W. Dorfman, & V. Gupta. Thousand Oaks: Sage).

<sup>28</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 81.

## Methodology

This study employed mixed method; more specifically, it used a type of mixed method approach called concurrent embedded strategy.<sup>29</sup> In such a strategy, the researcher collected data using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. According to Creswell, one of these strategies could be primary data collection strategy while the other is secondary. This means that concurrent embedded strategy had “a primary method that guides the project and a secondary database that provides a supporting role in the procedures”.<sup>30</sup> This strategy is necessitated “to integrate the information and compare one data source with the other”.<sup>31</sup> Based on this, the primary data collection strategy employed in this study is the qualitative method and the secondary method is quantitative method. In doing so, the secondary approach (quantitative data) is “embedded, or nested”<sup>32</sup> within the primary approach (qualitative data).

The embedded secondary data were collected using a simpler form of quantitative method. That is, quantitative data were collected using survey questionnaire that contained one cardinal question with seven metaphors. These metaphors were shepherd, minister, father, boss, breadwinner, teacher, and indifferent. These metaphors are chosen from the observation of the researcher in his 33 years of Christian life and 23 years of ministry. Respondents were asked to rate these metaphors from 1 to 7, 1 being strong representative of today’s church leaders, and 7 being weak representative. The intent of this instrument is to identify the three top strong metaphors that represent today’s church leadership. In this procedure, 35 respondents participated and they were asked to rate the seven leadership metaphors. It took 8 minutes to fill out the survey and the data were analyzed using frequency. Though this procedure was secondary, it necessitated to be filled out first so that respondents may not be biased by the contents of the primary data collection strategy, which is qualitative data collection strategy.

To collect qualitative data, a research instrument, which is a set of standardized open-ended interview questions and some closed questions, was designed by “carefully and fully wording each question before the interview”.<sup>33</sup> In this procedure, all the 35 research participants received the instrument. However, only 24 of them responded to the questions and returned to the researcher after a week’s time. The intent behind this instrument is to collect as many images of fatherhood as possible that are being practiced in the church. Qualitative data analytic procedure was employed that looks for emergence of themes.

Both instruments were prepared in Amharic (Ethiopia’s national language) and the responses were later translated into English. The participants of this study, to whom both instruments were distributed, were church ministers who have been participating in a leadership development program. The church is one of the oldest evangelical churches found in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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<sup>29</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002), 344.

## Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore if the image of fatherhood is being practiced in Ethiopian churches as a biblical model of church leadership. To this effect, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed and the findings are presented below.

### Demographic Profile

Who participated in this study? As indicated in the methodology section, the participants of this study were 35 church ministers that take part in a leadership development program organized by a local church. All of the participants (i.e., 35) have filled out the survey, and only 24 of these responded to the standardized open-ended interview questions. The latter instrument collected demographic information, the result of which is presented below.

Out of the 24 respondents, the majority of the respondents (21) were male, 2 were female, and one respondent did not indicate his/her gender. This shows that women are less represented even in such leadership development programs.

Age-wise, the majority of the respondents are between 36 to 55 years of age. This shows that the participants are mature adults while the young are less represented, only 1 person in the age category of 26-35 years of age.

*Table 1. Age of Respondents*

Age	Frequency	Percent
26-35	1	4.2
36-45	8	33.3
46-55	12	50.0
56-65	3	12.5
Total	24	100.0

When it comes to Christian experience, the respondents were asked to indicate when they came to Christ. The findings indicated that the youngest, in terms of living life as a Christian, is only 5 years, the second youngest is 18 years, and the oldest is 43 years. And, 90% of the respondents came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ 21 years ago. This indicates that the participants of this study have many years of Christian experience in evangelical churches.

Not only that the participants of this study have many years of Christian experience, but they also have a variety of and years of ministerial experience. Except one of the respondents, all of the participants are involved in some sort of ministry such as being member of a prayer team, leader of Bible study groups, choir member, Sunday school teacher, member of an outreach program, church planter, youth coordinator, women's fellowship committee member, deacon, and elder.

Out of the 24 respondents who were asked to indicate their ministerial involvement, 2 participants are not involved in any ministry, and 5 respondents did not indicate the number of years they have been in ministry. The remaining 17 participants indicated for how long they have been in the ministry. Years of ministry expands from 1-26 years.

The average number of years of the participants involved in ministry is 10.3 years; and the median is 9 years. This means that the participants have been involving in ministry for several years.

### The Three Top Leadership Metaphors

As discussed in the methodology section, 35 participants involved in rating seven leadership metaphors. They were asked to rate the seven leadership metaphors from 1 to 7, 1 being strong representative of today's church leaders, and 7 being weak representative. These leadership metaphors were shepherd, minister, father, boss, breadwinner, teacher, and indifferent.

Table 2 shows that 34 respondents rated today's church leaders in the images of a shepherd. Out of 34 respondents, the majority of the respondents (15 = 42.9%) ranked shepherd as the second top image or metaphor of church leaders.

*Table 2. Shepherd*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	First	11	31.4
	Second	15	42.9
	Third	6	17.1
	Fourth	1	2.9
	Sixth	1	2.9
	Total	34	97.1
Missing	System	1	2.9
Total		35	100.0

Thirty five respondents rated today's church leaders in the image of a minister. According to Table 3, equal number of respondents (11 = 31.4%) ranked minister as the first and second image of metaphor of church leaders. Since equal number of respondents ranked minister as the first and second image, the researcher decided this to be the first image.

*Table 3. Minister*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	First	11	31.4
	Second	11	31.4
	Third	9	25.7
	Fourth	2	5.7
	Fifth	2	5.7
	Total	35	100.0

Thirty five respondents rated today's church leaders in the images of a father. Out of these, as indicated in Table 4, the majority of the respondents (12 = 34.3%) ranked fatherhood as the third top image or metaphor of church leaders.

*Table 4. Father*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	First	11	31.4
	Second	7	20.0
	Third	12	34.3
	Fourth	5	14.3
	Total	35	100.0

Table 5 shows that 34 respondents rated today's church leaders in the images of a boss. Out of 34 respondents, the majority of the respondents (19 = 54.3%) ranked boss as the fifth top image or metaphor of church leaders.

*Table 5. Boss*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	First	1	2.9
	Third	3	8.6
	Fourth	7	20.0
	Fifth	19	54.3
	Sixth	4	11.4
	Total	34	97.1
Missing	System	1	2.9
Total		35	100.0

Thirty one respondents rated today's church leaders in the images of a breadwinner. According to Table 6, the majority of the respondents (20 = 57.1%) ranked breadwinner as the sixth top image or metaphor of church leaders.

*Table 6. Breadwinner*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Fourth	3	8.6
	Fifth	4	11.4
	Sixth	20	57.1
	Seventh	4	11.4
	Total	31	88.6
Missing	System	4	11.4
Total		35	100.0

There were 34 respondents who rated today's church leaders in the images of a teacher. According to Table 7, the majority of the respondents (16 = 45.7%) ranked teacher as the fourth top image or metaphor of church leaders.

*Table 7. Teacher*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	First	1	2.9
	Second	1	2.9
	Third	5	14.3
	Fourth	16	45.7
	Fifth	6	17.1
	Sixth	5	14.3
	Total	34	97.1
Missing	System	1	2.9
Total		35	100.0

Thirty two respondents rated today's church leaders in the images of an indifferent person. According to Table 8, the majority of the respondents (27 = 77.1%) ranked indifference as the seventh top image or metaphor of church leaders.

*Table 8. Indifferent*

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Second	1	2.9
	Fourth	2	5.7
	Sixth	2	5.7
	Seventh	27	77.1
	Total	32	91.4
Missing	System	3	8.6
Total		35	100.0

Based on the above frequency tables, research participants rated today's church leaders in the following order (See Table 8). According to the summary of this table, the three top metaphors or images of today's church leaders are represented by minister, shepherd, and father.

*Table 8. Rank of Images of Church Leaders*

Rank	Image/Metaphor	Population (N)	Frequency	Percent
First	Minister	35	11	31.4%
Second	Shepherd	34	15	42.9%
Third	Father	35	12	34.3%
Fourth	Teacher	34	16	45.7%
Fifth	Boss	34	19	54.3%
Sixth	Breadwinner	31	20	57.1%
Seventh	Indifferent	32	27	77.1%

The frequency of these responses indicates that the first three images of church leaders, as put in their order of rankings, are shepherd, minister, and father; whereas, the last three images

are being a boss (5<sup>th</sup>), breadwinner (6<sup>th</sup>), and indifferent (7<sup>th</sup>). These two categories are positive signs as to where today's church leaders are positioned in their respective churches. One concern is there, of course. Church leaders are not that much positioned as teachers. If church leaders do not teach, who does the teaching? If church leaders do not indicate the way that their flock should take, who does show the path? Teaching is one of the criteria of appointing church leaders (1 Timothy 3:2). Paul writes that church leaders should be able to teach. However, if church leaders do not teach, how do they practice the role of a minister and shepherd?

### Degree of Emulating Fatherhood

One of the benefits of mixed research method is that it can be used to triangulate data obtained from either of the data collection strategies.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the respondents were asked, based on their perception, to rate the degree at which church leaders could be said to emulate fatherhood. As Table 9 shows, the majority of the respondents (62.5%, 15, N=24) think that church leaders emulate fatherhood to some extent. This means that the respondents cannot certainly portray church leaders as having characteristics of a father. This is more or less in line with the preliminary baseline survey on the images of church leadership. That study indicated that fatherhood was rated as the third metaphor of church leaders in Ethiopia. This positions fatherhood somewhere in the middle among seven metaphors indicated. In other words, church leaders may not be that much portrayed by the metaphor of a father to the highest degree. In the same way, the follow-up standardized interview question indicated that the majority of the respondents think that church leaders emulate fatherhood to the same extent. Hence, the two results are somewhat consistent.

*Table 9. Degree of Emulating Fatherhood*

	Frequency	Percent
No, I don't think so	4	16.7
Yes, but to some extent	15	62.5
Yes, I think so	5	20.8
Total	24	100.0

A follow-up question was asked on the rationale behind rating church leaders the way they rated. A number of respondents indicated why they rated church leaders to be somehow father-like. Their reasons were the absence of church leaders who rebukes the people when they go astray, the inability of knowing the people they lead thereby hindering them from exhibiting fatherhood to the people they don't know, the desire of the leaders to be feared instead of being approached as fathers, and the fact that they were not loving from the outset.

One respondent specifically said that "the majority (of church leaders) lead with force, anger, and coercive speech. This is cancerous to the church." And, another respondent emphatically stated: "Had they possessed fatherhood, they could have sought for the lost and be concerned for their (spiritual) children. When a child is missing from the table, a father would ask, 'Where did he go?' Leaders do not know the flock they are leading. They know their tithes instead of the people themselves." And, another respondent also explained that "the majority of leaders seek places of honor, are directive, and find it difficult to keep their promises".

<sup>34</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*.

## Leadership Style of Church Leaders

The respondents were asked to describe the leadership style of church leaders. In this regard, a variety of responses were obtained from the respondents. The responses of the respondents were coded and the following themes emerged.

**Character-based:** Most of the respondents indicated how church leaders are leading the church. They indicated that their leadership style is noted for their good character. A number of characters were listed, among which the following can be mentioned as examples: Authenticity, humility, fear of the Lord, honesty, integrity, love, respectfulness, prayer, tolerance, impartiality, sacrificial, developmental, and transparency.

On the other hand, some respondents indicated the unwanted characters that are exhibited in the leadership style of church leaders. These unwanted characters are indifference, leading with “unchanged mentality . . . not with prayer but with information, not by uniting but by dividing”, “leading by coercion”, leading with “pride and carnality”. As a result, the leadership is rife with “(inconsistencies), irregularities, and unevenness”. In this regard, one respondent apologized to use the opportunity to “vent”. He wrote: “It seems to me that it is an indifferent leadership style, if there is such a thing. It seems like the time of the Judges. We are in a time where everyone does what is good in his own eyes, where God is not feared, and daring to partake of the Lord’s communion in the midst of division”.

Looking into the characters listed under both categories (good and unwanted characters), it is worth noting that some features of fatherhood, such as love, respectfulness, tolerance, sacrificial, and development are also reflected. This implies that there are incidences whereby church leaders lead in the spirit of fatherhood to their congregations. Paradoxically, there are leadership styles not suitable for church leadership. This negates what has been stated regarding the image of fatherhood in church leadership. This confirms the fact that fatherhood is not that much practiced by all church leaders; hence, the presence of “irregular and uneven” style of church leadership.

**Coordinating:** Another leadership style indicated by the respondents is the leaders’ capacity of coordinating and organizing the people. Respondents noted that church leaders “try to divide the people in fifty’s and ten’s” and assign them coordinators for these groups. The role of these coordinators is to bridge the gap between the too many members of the church and church leaders in conveying pieces of information and concerns to and from the church leaders. It appears that this is noted from the experience of the local church. As some of the respondents noted, such task of organizing the church members “makes full-time workers to engage in visitation” and “serves in spiritual and administrative matters”. This is another quality of church leaders, as presented by the respondents. One of the roles of fathers, actually household heads, is to administer and supervise their family members very well. This includes proper guidance, disciplining, and coordination.

**Bossy:** One of the emerging leadership themes was bossy. A respondent indicated that church leaders emulate bossy leadership style as they want to maintain “superior-subordinate relationship instead of servant-like commitment”. Another respondent also reflected the same attitude towards church leaders that they appear to be bossy “while the Bible wants us to lead

with servant leadership”. Such inclination towards bossy attitude, according to one respondent, is seen as some church leaders “seek fame and honor instead of giving others the opportunity to lead, and maintain power among a few”. One respondent noted, they want to be re-elected because of their desire for positions.

As the leaders are consumed with their position rather than for the well-being of the people, they show minimal concern for the people. They don’t want to know where the flock is. One respondent said, “Whereas, the Lord’s commandment was ‘Take care of my lambs; take care of my sheep’”. They seem to eschew such commandments that should have been adhered to as faithful shepherds of the flock. As a result, they couldn’t stick to Jesus’ model of leadership who “descended from the heavens to the manger and they have to serve this way”.

### **Comparison of Spiritual and Biological Fathers**

The respondents were asked to mention what is expected of a spiritual and biological father. The intent behind these two separate questions was to examine if respondents perceive similar characteristics of fatherhood as stipulated by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

Spiritual fathers are consistently identified with numerous attributes such as transparency, humility, wisdom, confidentiality, love, showing Christ, visionary, compassionate, being concerned for the family, loving, merciful, and attentive. When it comes to biological fathers, they are perceived to exhibit paradoxical attributes. On one hand, they are perceived to provide protection, love, compassion, and being confident towards children. One respondent noted, biological fathers “will do anything they would assume benefit their children”. On the other hand, they are supposed to underestimate children. Respondents expressed such attitude in such a way that biological fathers posit to maintaining their own power, underestimating children, being indifferent to children, and never allowing children to associate themselves with adults. Such dealings have robbed children from being assertive, confident, and relational. A striking statement was stated by one respondent: “Fathers used to think that children and shoe should be under a bed, implying that they (children) shouldn’t sit together and speak with adults ... Fathers used to think that the dough children prepared was not sufficient for dinner”.

If one considers developmental processes that spiritual and biological fathers do to their children, still there are huge differences. While spiritual fathers engage in nurturing and caring for their spiritual children, biological fathers focus more on disciplinary and punitive approaches to helping them grow into adulthood. This does not mean that biological fathers always engage on such matters with their children. It is intended to show what most characterizes biological fathers. One respondent noted: “Biological fathers discipline their children, based on what they thought to be good, by thinking of tomorrow and for earthly gain. As a father told me once, he used to hang a whip on the wall and his children tremble whenever they did something wrong. And, they used to submit with fear.”

Space wouldn’t suffice if I continued comparing spiritual and biological fathers. What can be derived from this discussion is that the respondents have a consistent higher perception of spiritual fathers while they viewed biological fathers with paradoxical understandings. While respect, care, compassion, and love are unswervingly identified with spiritual fathers, these attributes are inconsistently mentioned about biological fathers.

## Proverbs on Fatherhood

The respondents were asked to write a proverb that talks about fatherhood in Ethiopian culture. The rationale behind asking this question was that proverbs, as one of the many expressions of culture, convey the underlying assumptions about the subject. So, out of the 24 respondents, 10 of them wrote a total of 9 proverbs. Actually, one of these proverbs was repeated 10 times! The proverbs are spoken in four different languages of Ethiopia.

The messages conveyed in all of these proverbs are strongly positive and emphasize the role played by fathers in the positive self-development of their children. This section presents four proverbs spoken by four different ethnic groups in Ethiopia:

1. “Ornate yourself while your father is alive, and run while the sun is not set. (አባት ሳለ አገጥ ጀንበር ካለ ሩጥ)” (Amharic Proverb). This is the most repeated proverb.
2. It will be rested under the shadow of a father and an oak tree (በአባትና በዝግባ ጥላ ይታረፋል) (Oromo Proverb)
3. A father to his child, by his chest (አባት ለልጁ በደረቱ) (Sebat Bet Guragie Proverb)
4. Poor is a child who doesn't have a father (አባት የሌለው ልጅ ምስኪን ነው) (Hadiya proverbs)

The question, therefore, is as to how biological fathers acted against the backdrop of such rich cultural heritage. While they grew up in such a context, it is puzzling why they failed from emulating a lifestyle dictated by these and other cultural ethos on being caring and concerned fathers. It can be summarized that church leaders failed from fully exhibiting fatherhood in the church since they could not exercise such ethos of fatherhood at home!

## Conclusion and Recommendation

Among an array of challenges that the church is facing today, leadership should be given much attention to ensure the global impact of the church. This demands that theologians and Christian scholars engage in providing alternative biblical models of church leadership to meet this demand. While Jesus taught His disciples the model of leadership that they would adopt (Matt 20: 25-27), what we witness in today's church is far from this reality. Today's church leaders are self-serving leaders and are not concerned for the well-being of their congregants.

This study showed that the practice of church leadership is not that much influenced by the image of fatherhood as a biblical model of church leadership. This, in turn, shows us what needs to be done to help the church rediscover the alternative model of church leadership, which is the image of fatherhood.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. More research should be undertaken in different parts of the world that integrate biblical lessons on leadership together with cultural and modern conceptualizations of leadership,
2. Designing character-based leadership development to forge ideals of Christian values, and
3. Teaching and encouraging parents to adhere to biblical ethos of raising children thereby exercising leadership at home.

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**Dr. Lidetu Alemu Kefenie – Short Biography**

Dr. Lidetu is the Program Leader of Master of Arts in Leadership and Management, and Lecturer in Organizational Leadership at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Dr. Lidetu holds a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) from Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia), Master of Divinity (MDiv) (*summa cum laude*) from Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (Ethiopia), and PhD in Organizational Leadership from Eastern University (Pennsylvania, USA). His PhD dissertation, which aims at searching for good leadership dimensions, is a cross-sectional survey of four Ethiopian governmental organizations. Dr. Lidetu can be reached at: [lidetualemu@yahoo.com](mailto:lidetualemu@yahoo.com) or [lidetuak@gmail.com](mailto:lidetuak@gmail.com).

