

# Adaptive Leadership Skills

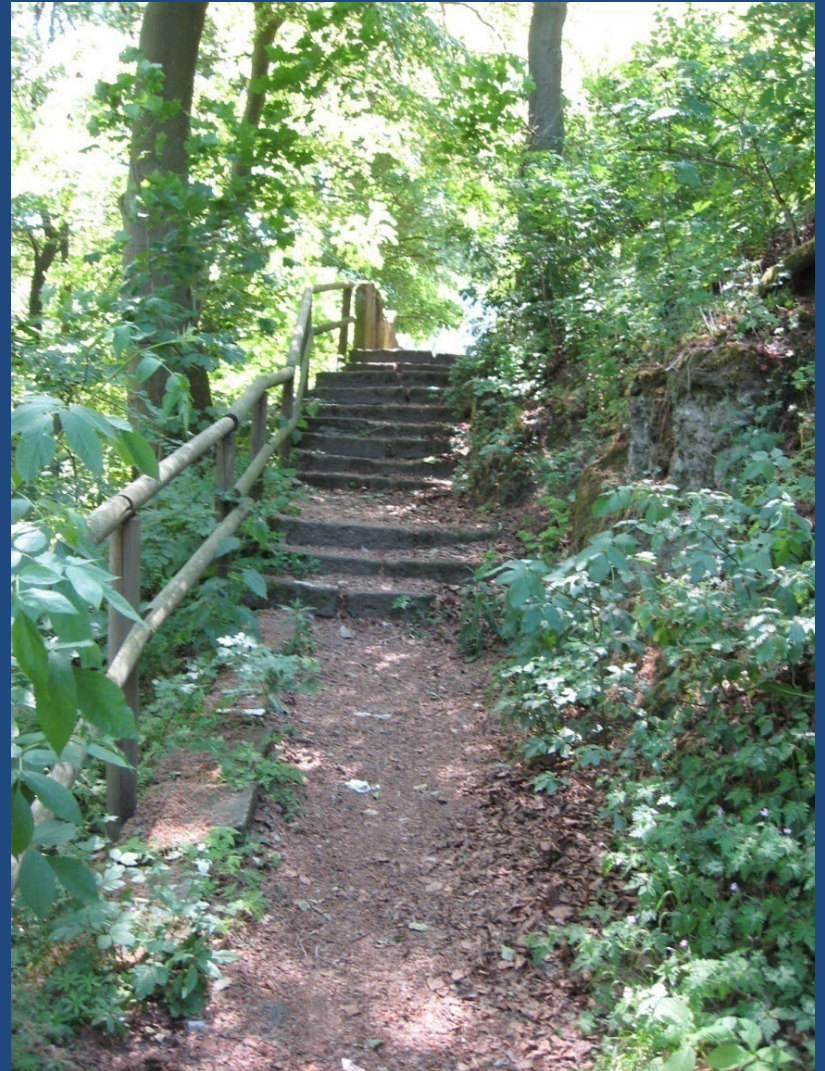
Archdiocese of Houston

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# The Sower and the Seed

## Matt 13:1-23



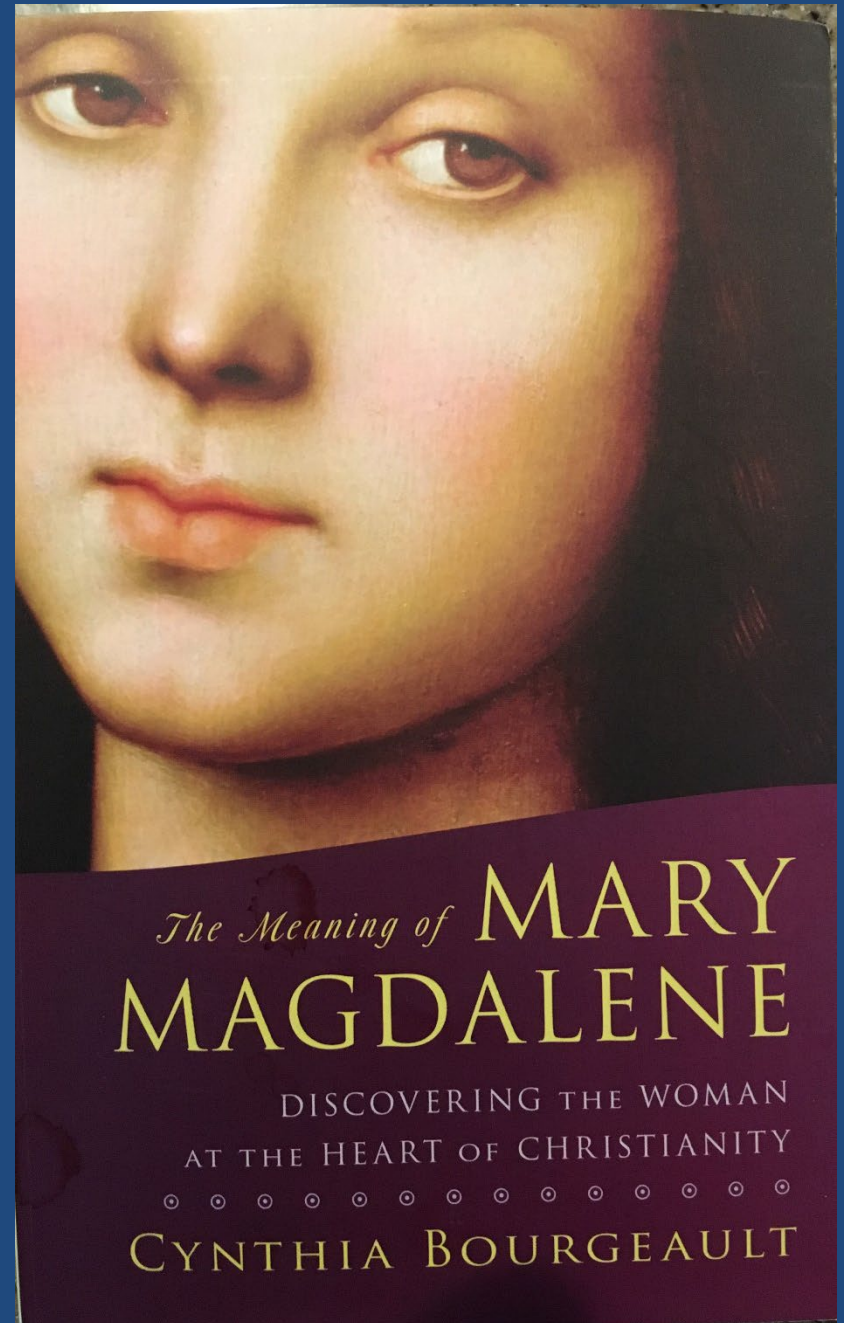
- Fell on the Path
  - Fell on Rocky Ground
  - Fell on Thorny Ground
  - Fell on Fertile Ground
- 
- Too Busy
  - Too Shallow
  - Too Distracted
  - Generative Listening



# Resilience and Emotional Intelligence

Think of Mary  
Magdalen...

... holding vigil  
from Good  
Friday  
to Easter Sunday



# Leadership



I say Leadership

What do you say?.





- The world desperately needs change.

- And a new model for leading change.

# Leadership

# Leadership... for the Greater Good



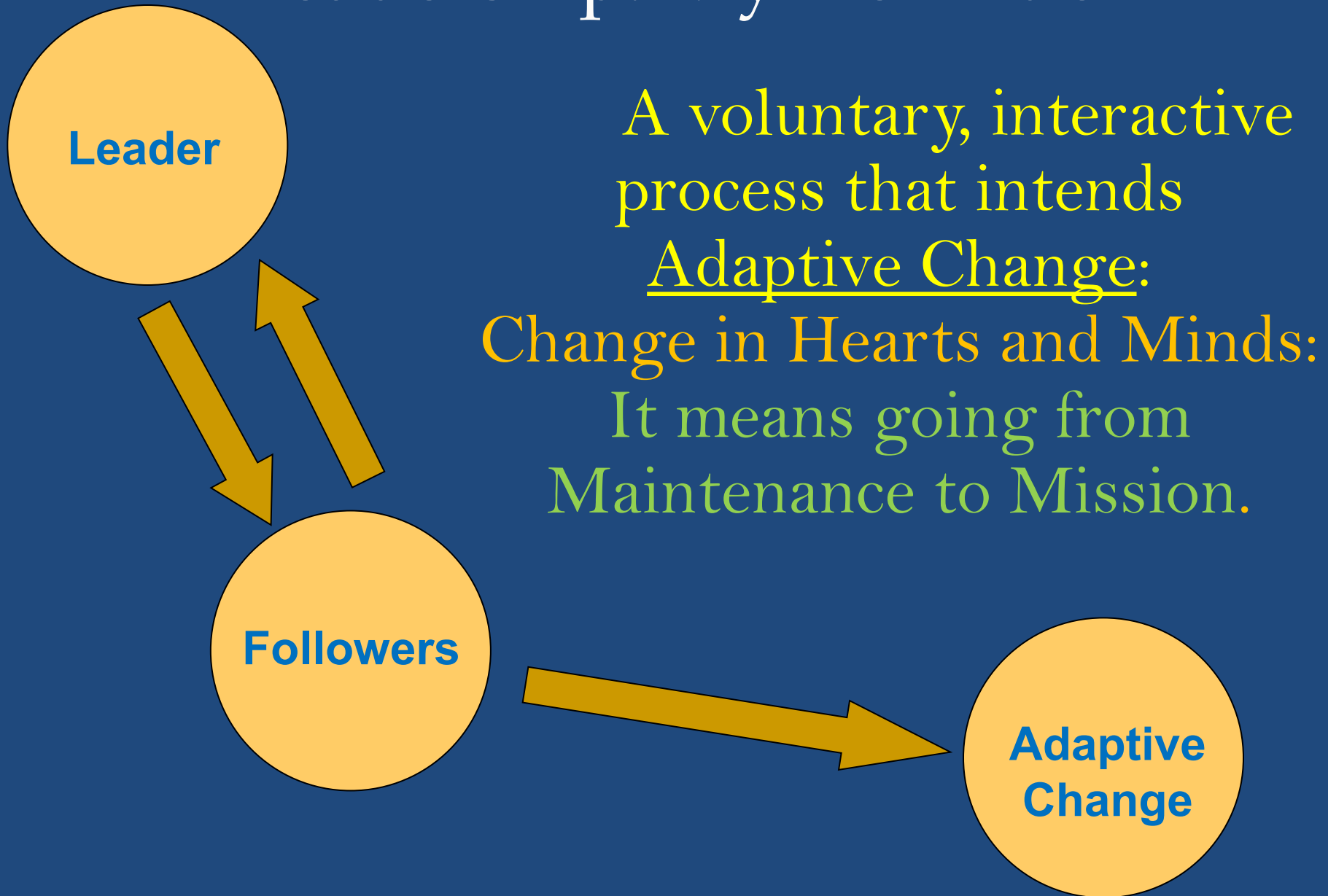
Anyone can lead !!

- with or without authority

– Leadership is an Activity

- Not a position
- Not a title
- Not a promotion

# Leadership: My Definition





# Adaptive Challenges

How we adapt to the changes in the world

Usually, leading adaptive change means  
changing the Culture of an Organization:

Attitudes

Behaviors

Customs

Strategies

Structures

# The Industrial Era

- People were working in factories.
  - They needed to be “supervised”.
  - Their opinions were not important.
  - The boss had all the answers.
- Leadership was confused as “good management”.





# The Post-Industrial Era

- The landscape has changed:
  - Globalization
  - Complexity of Problems
  - Generational Shifts
  - Technology/ Distractions
  - The Decline of Family and Religion
  - The Rise of Business as a Social Institution
- Pace of change itself has changed !





# White Water Rafting

## The Speed of Change in our World



- The landscape has changed...  
... yet Organizations have not
- Our Challenges are more Adaptive
- We need more “leading change”
  - Less “managing change”





# Adaptive Challenges

They require more  
“Leadership”



Ask more, Tell less

Listen to those  
closest to the  
Challenges

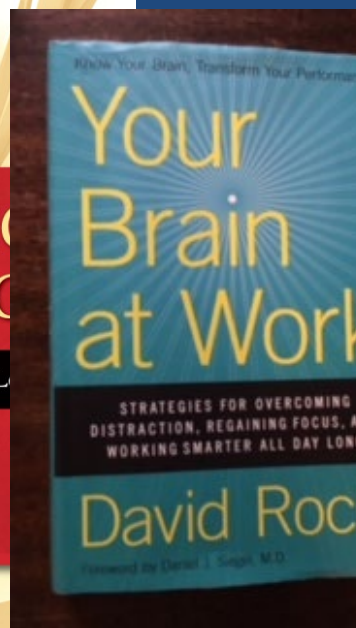
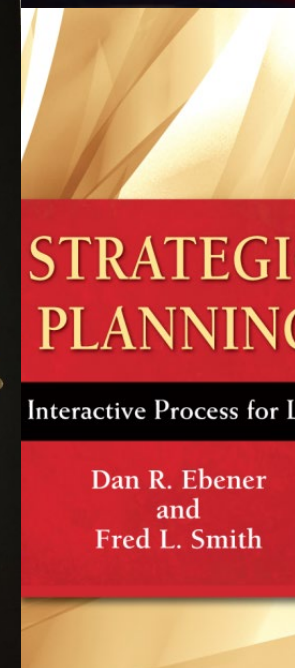
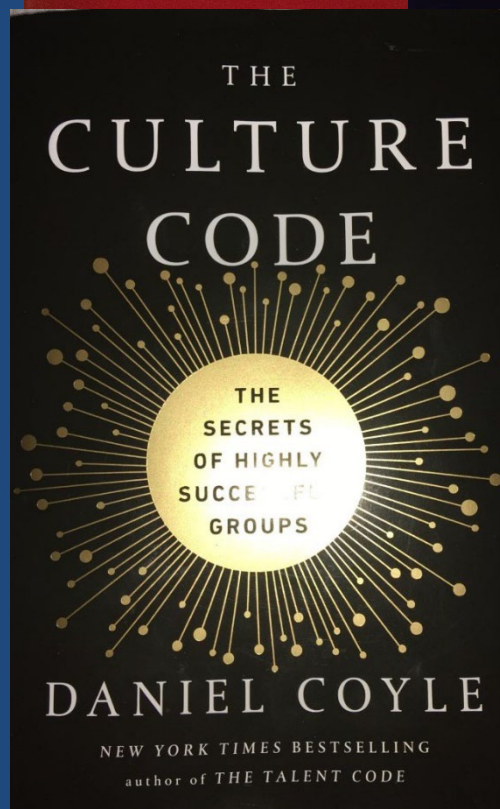
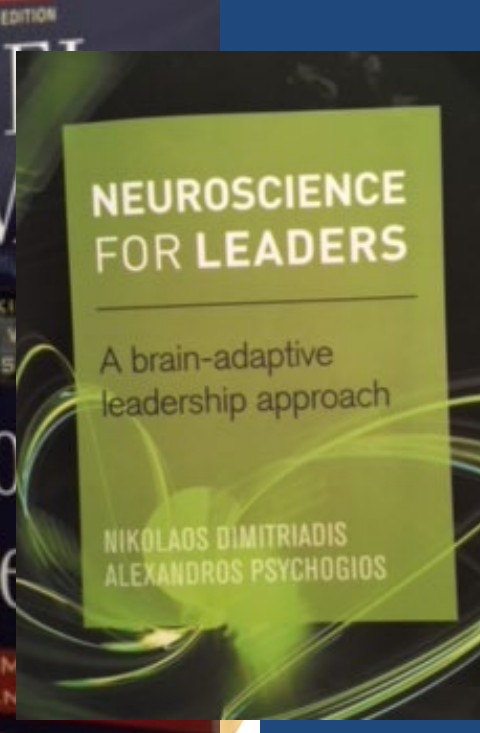
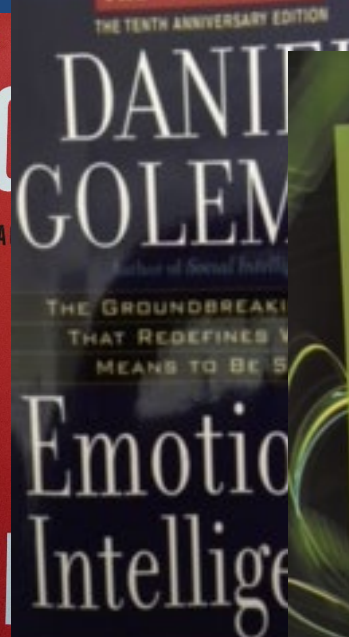
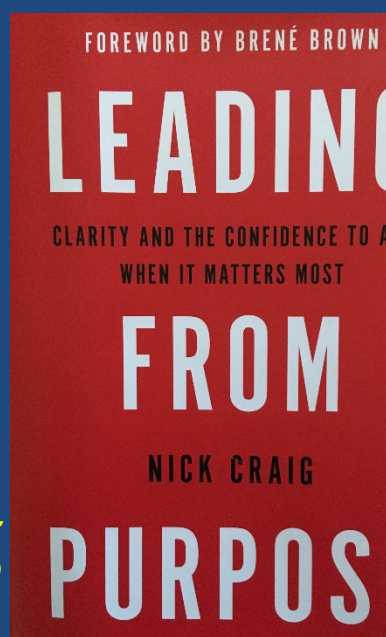
Changing the  
culture

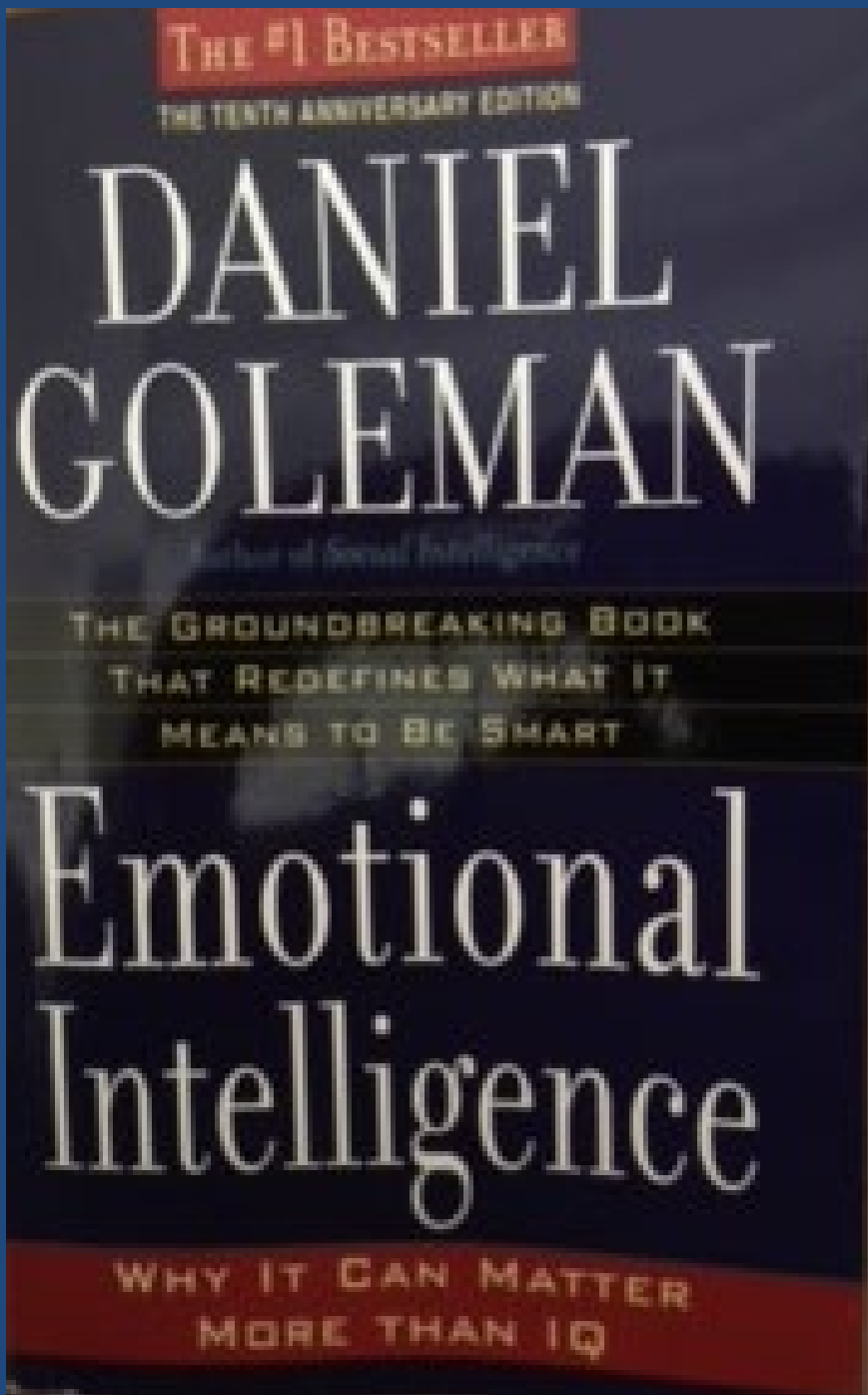


For example:  
Employee  
Engagement

People are longing  
for a sense of:

1. Purpose
2. Direction
3. Connection





To Reach  
Engagement

People long for a  
sense of:

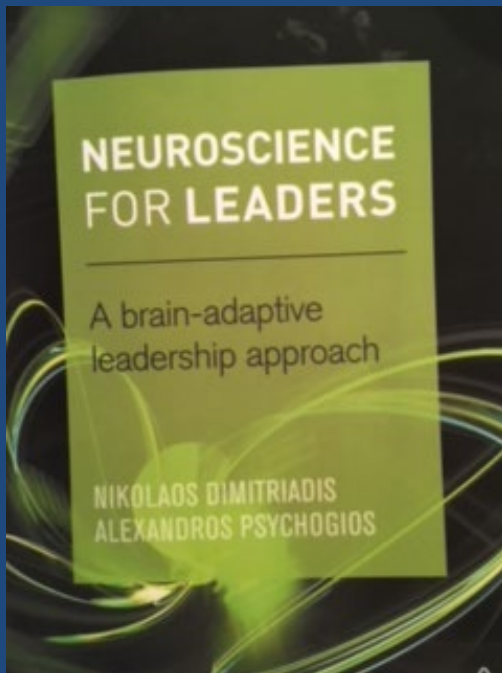
Connection and  
Belonging

=> Relationships

# “Hyper-pro-sociality”: The brain as a social organ

Social relationships have dramatic impact on brain function.

- Cooperation is a genetic trait.
- Unique ability of humans to collaborate.
- Human potential for social awareness and social skills.





# In My Research: Servant Leadership → Engagement

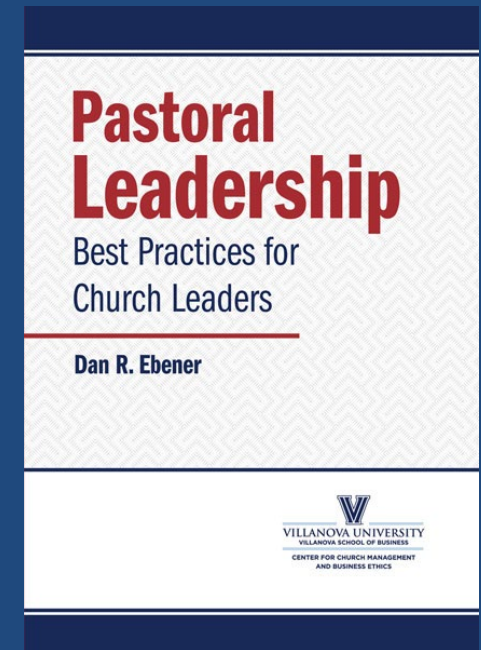
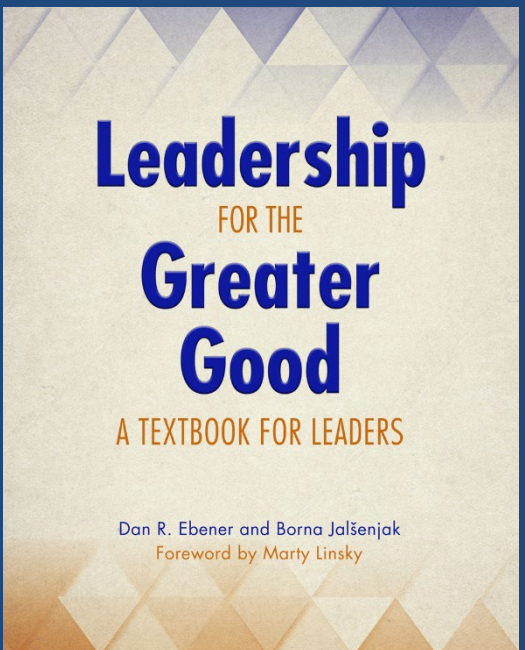
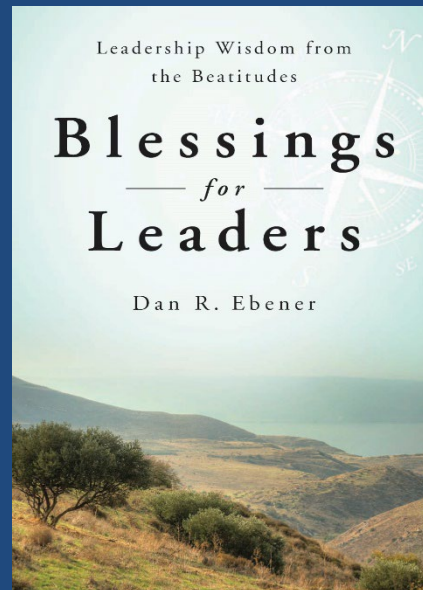
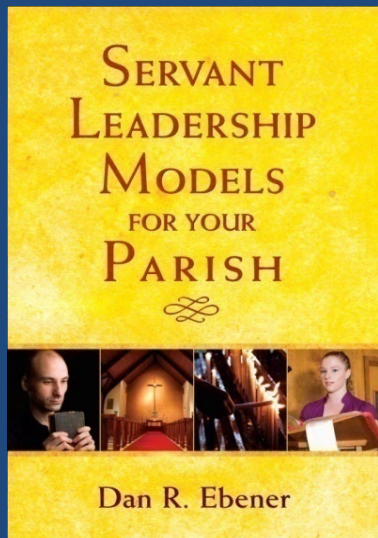


- Recognizing the gifts, talents and efforts of others.
- Serving the needs and interests of others.
- Empowering others to get the job done.

# Servant Leadership: What is it, Anyway?

Greenleaf:

“Motivated first  
to serve, then to  
lead.”







Jesus on  
Leadership: “You  
know that the  
rulers of the  
Gentiles *lorded*  
over them... Not  
so with you.  
Whoever wants to  
be great among  
you must be your  
servant.”

(Matt 20: 25-27)

# Words of Jesus

- “The greatest one must be a servant”  
(Matt. 23:11).

“Whoever wants to  
be first must  
become the servant  
of all”  
(Mark 9:33-36).



Last Supper  
reminder  
(Luke 22:24-27).



# Servant Leaders



- Ultimate test of the servant leader:
  - Are those being served healthier, wiser, freer – and more likely to become servant leaders?

# Effects of Servant Leadership

- Social Capital:
  - Trust
  - Commitment
  - Cohesion
- Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs)
  - Helping
  - Participating
  - Initiating
  - Self-developing



# Four Direct Keys to Servant Leadership



- Invitation:
  - The Voice
- Inspiration:
  - The Spirit
- Modeling:
  - The Hands and Feet
- Affection:
  - The Heart



# Three Organizational Keys to Servant Leadership

- The Servant Culture
- The Servant Structure
- Servant Strategies



# Parish Leadership

## Pastoral Leadership

Best Practices for  
Church Leaders

Dan R. Ebener



In the post-industrial era  
Challenges in the Church  
also tend to be more  
*Adaptive.*

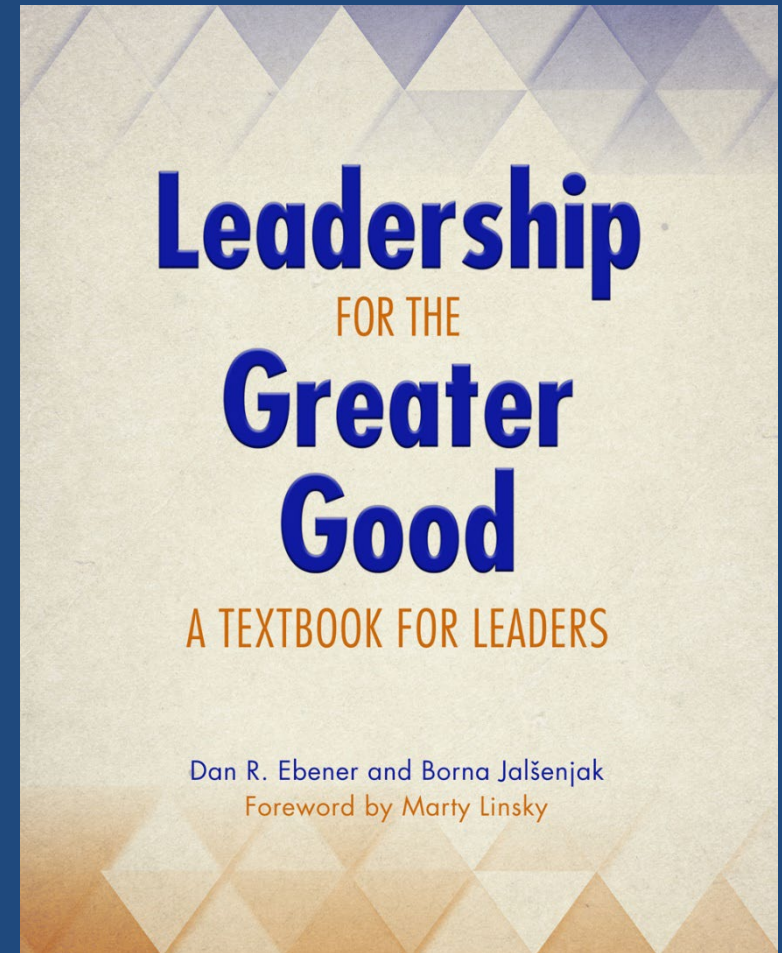
Yet we continue to be  
over-managed and  
under-led.

What is needed:  
Emotional and Dialogical  
Skills

# Adaptive Leadership

How to lead the change  
that parishes need to adapt  
to the ways that the world  
is changing

“Outside the Box,  
Inside the Circle”





# Adaptive Challenges in Today's Organizations

- Worker Shortage
- Customer Loyalty
- Work Life Balance
- Engagement/ Intrinsic Motivation
  - Changes in Technology
  - Generational Shifts
- Globalization/ Diversity of Workforce
  - Siloes/ Divisions
- Recruiting and Retaining Top Talent
  - Supply Chain Issues
  - Over-Managed/ Under-Led

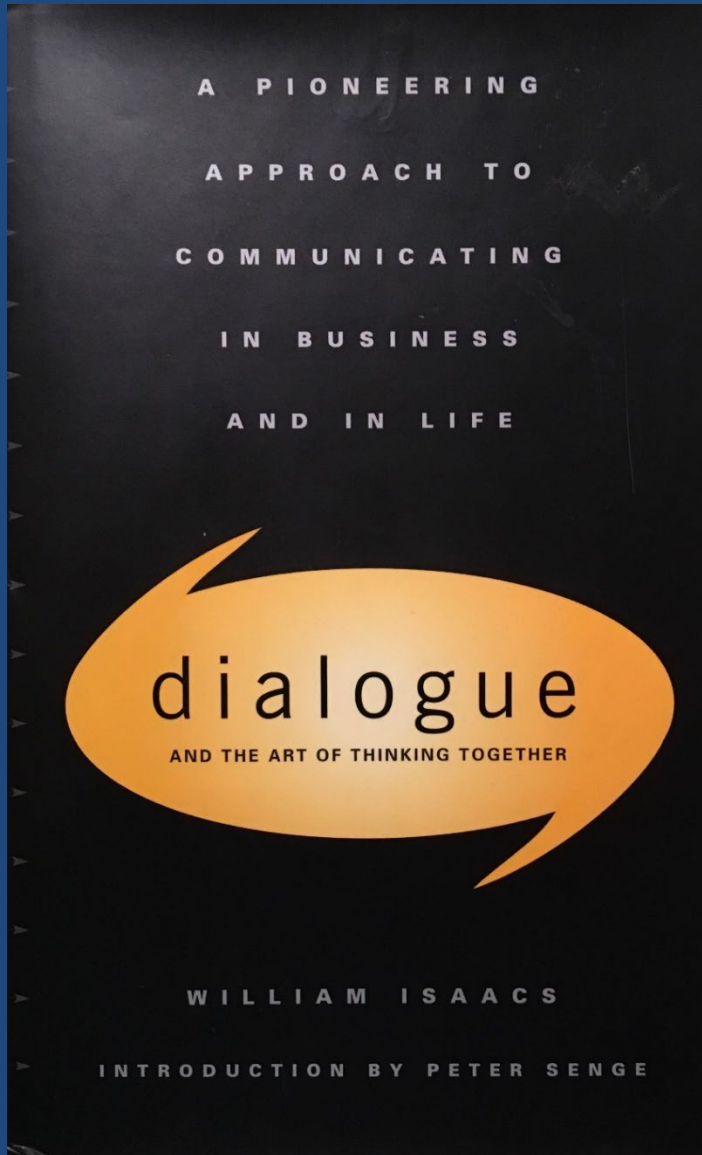
# Adaptive Leadership:

## Today's Adaptive Challenges in a Parish



- Examples:
- Lay Engagement and Leadership
- Parishioner Retention and Recruitment
- Generational Shifts/  
Over-Played

# Dialogue



- Mutual influence... two-way exchange
- Opens up opportunities
  - Builds trust
  - Uncovers multiple perspectives and solutions
- Increases engagement by gaining buy-in



# Dialogical Leadership

Moving away from:  
Command, Control  
(Compliance)

Moving toward:  
Invite, Influence,  
Engage, Inspire  
(Collaboration)

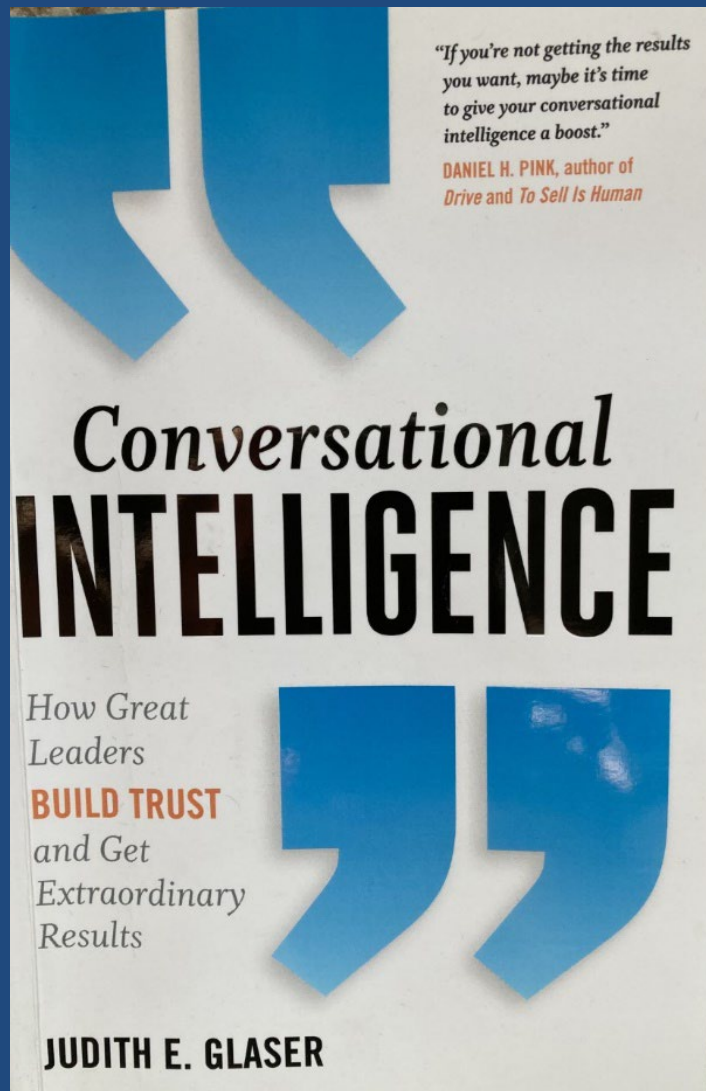




## Relationships of Inter-Dependence

Trust -> Collaboration

Collaboration -> Trust



# Conversational Intelligence

## Leading with Questions

Listening to those closest to the problem

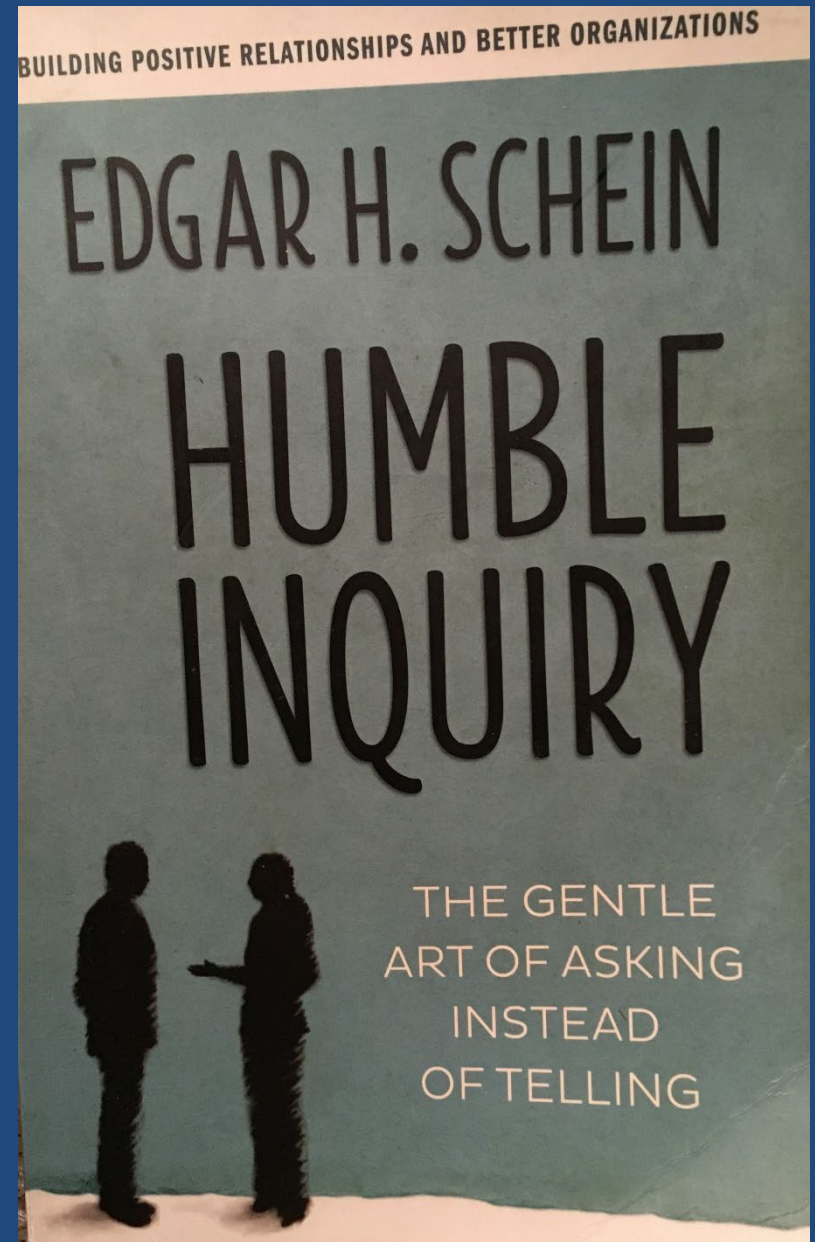
Giving the work back

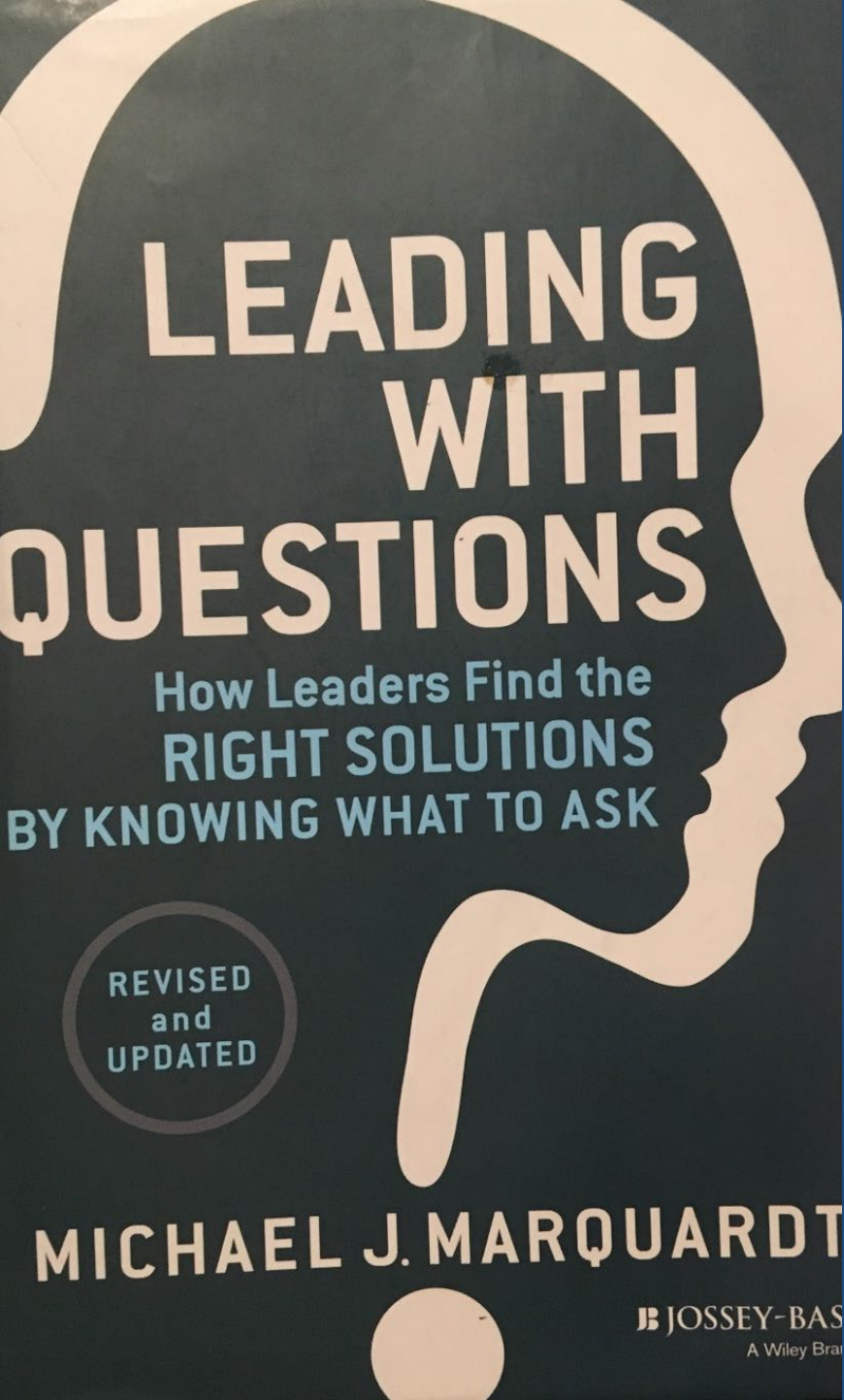


# To Identify Adaptive Challenges and their Solutions:

## Humble Inquiry

- Curiosity
- Humility
- Empathy





# 1. Curiosity => Being Mindful

- Open Questions...
  - Wake people up.
  - Prompt new ideas.
  - Discover new ways.
- Help us admit we don't have all the answers.
  - Create a climate of curiosity and openness.



## 2. Humility => Being Fully Human

- Grounded in the reality of your own human strengths and weaknesses.
- Knowing yourself with an honest perspective.



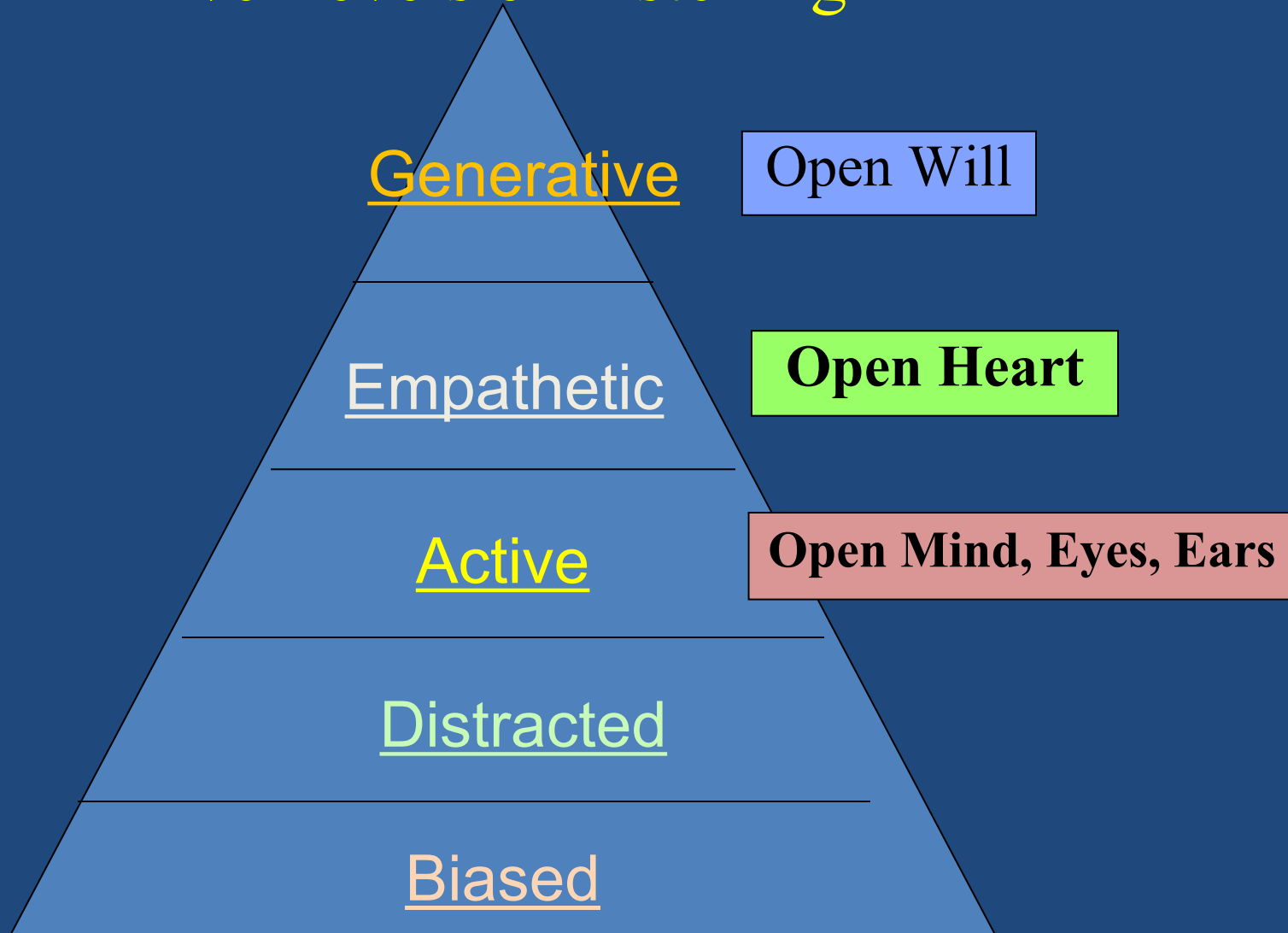


### 3. Empathy

- To “feel inside”
- Take on someone else’s pain
- Identify with others
- Reflective probes

And then we Listen...

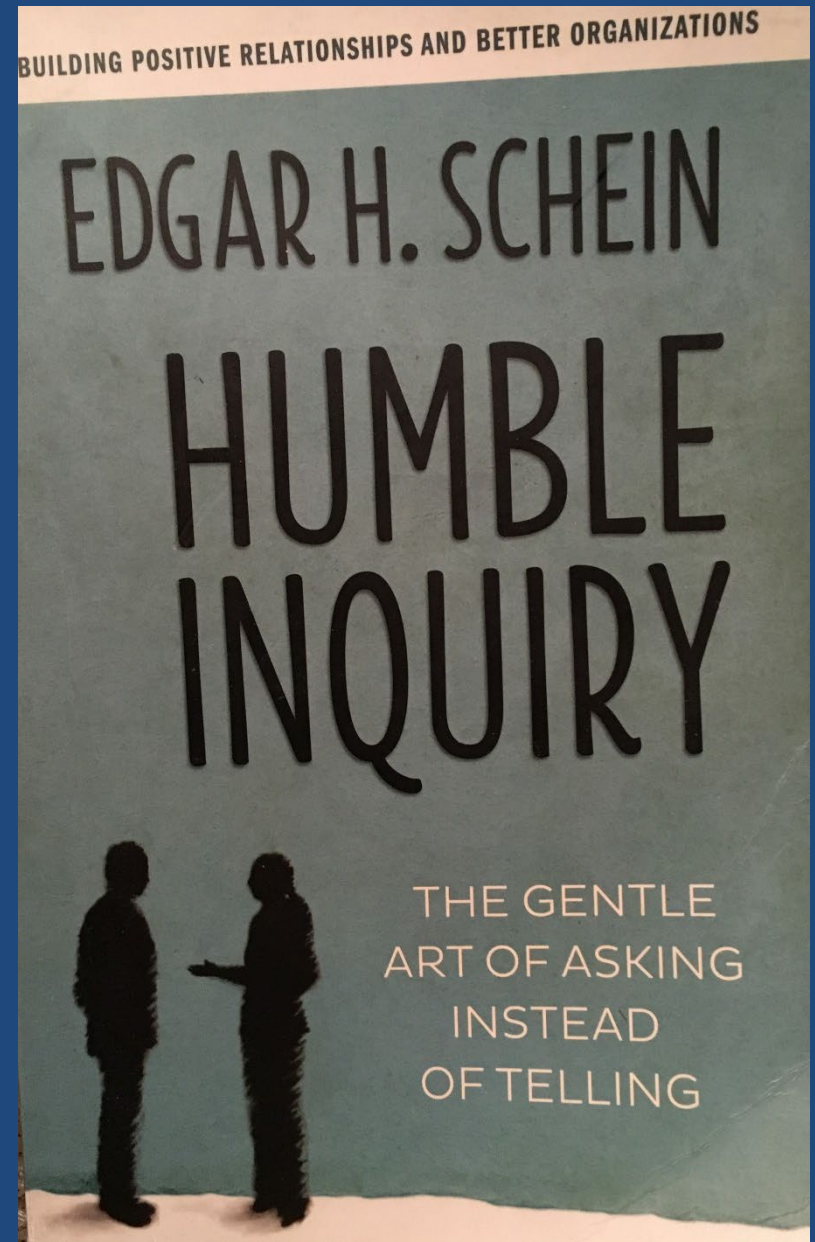
## Five Levels of Listening



## My Research Question:

What are the  
Adaptive Challenges  
facing the Catholic  
Church?

As we move **from**  
**Maintenance to Mission**, in  
what ways will the Church  
need to adapt to the new,  
missionary landscape?





1. What Adaptive  
Challenges Do  
Catholic Parishes  
Face?

2. What Adaptive  
Strategies Might  
Work?



# Pope Francis



Read the  
Beatitudes.





# Blessings for Leaders:

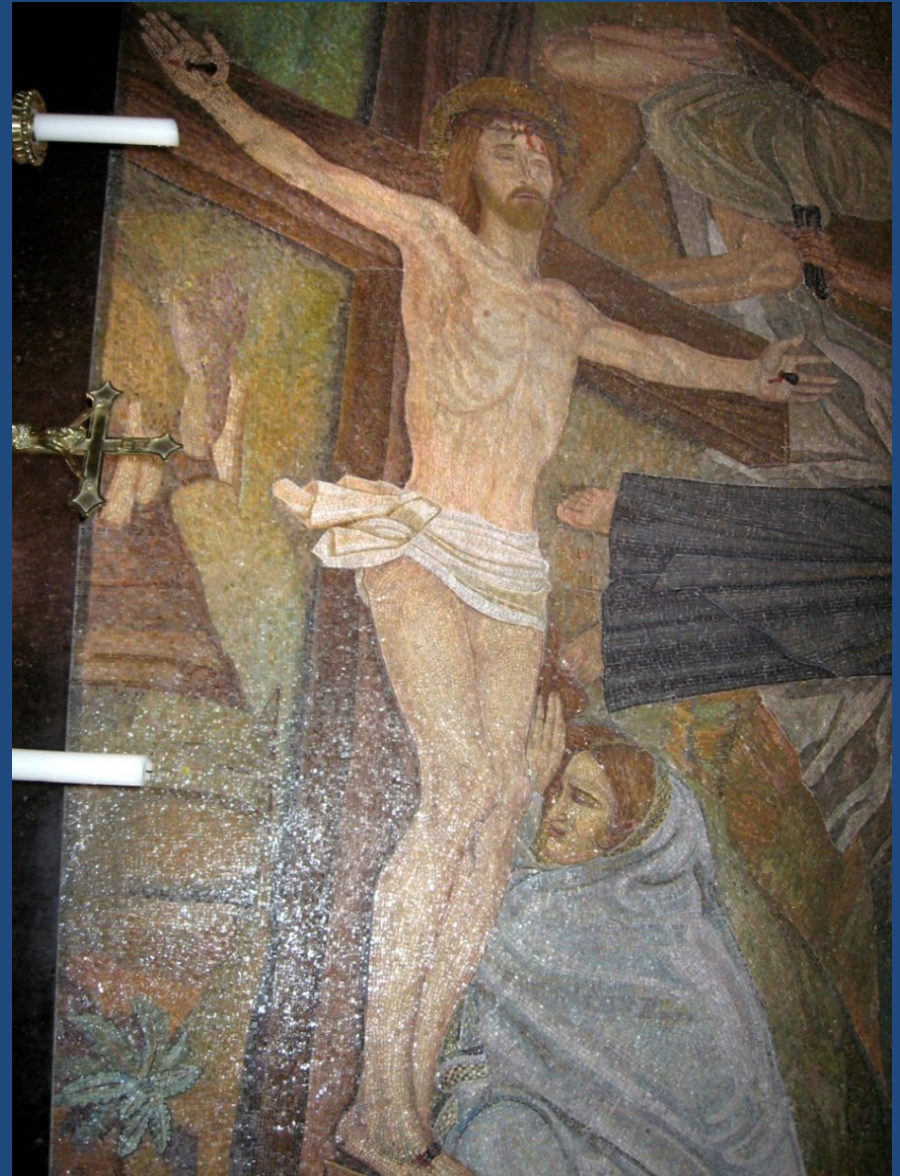
## Leadership Wisdom from the Beatitudes



Blessed are the  
Poor in Spirit:

For theirs is the  
Kingdom of  
Heaven.

Wisdom



# Blessed are they who Mourn



- For they shall be comforted.
- Empathy



# Blessed are the Meek

- For they shall inherit the earth.
- Humility





# Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for Righteousness



- For they shall be satisfied.

- Justice

Blessed are the  
Merciful:  
For they will be  
shown Mercy.





# Blessed are the Pure of Heart



- For they shall see God.
- Service



# Blessed are the Peacemakers



- For they shall be called Children of God.

- Peace



# Blessed are they who are Persecuted for the sake of Righteousness

- For theirs is the  
Kingdom of  
Heaven.
- Courage





Dr. Dan R. Ebener

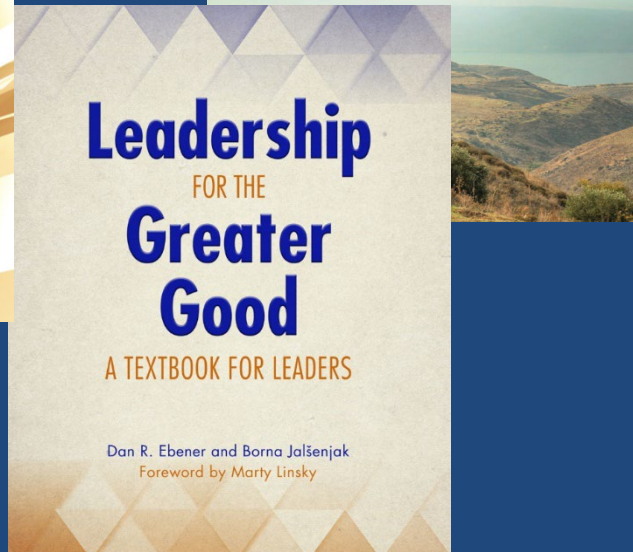
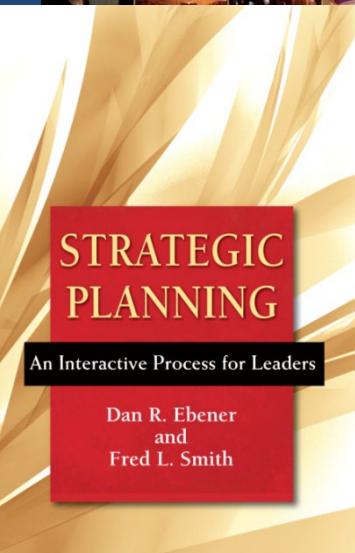
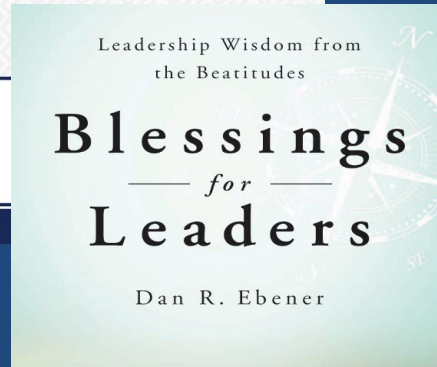
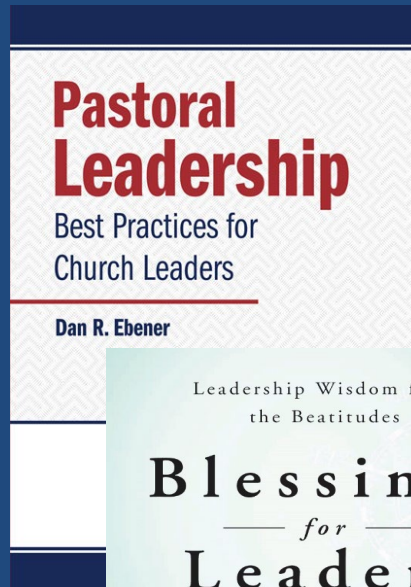
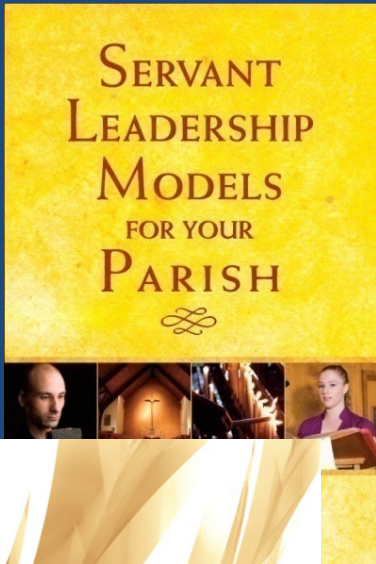
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The church  
needs  
leadership ...

... From the  
pulpit and the  
pews



# My Research Methods



## In the Past Ten Years

1. Prayer and Discernment
2. Study: e.g. CARA Reports
3. Listening

## In the Past Three Years

200 Focus Groups  
300 One-on-Ones

# My Research Methods (cont.)



Strategic Planning in 100  
Catholic organizations:

- 40 parishes
- 4 dioceses

... and various schools,  
religious communities,  
health providers, retreat  
centers and Catholic  
charities



# Catholic Leadership Institute: Research

2022-23

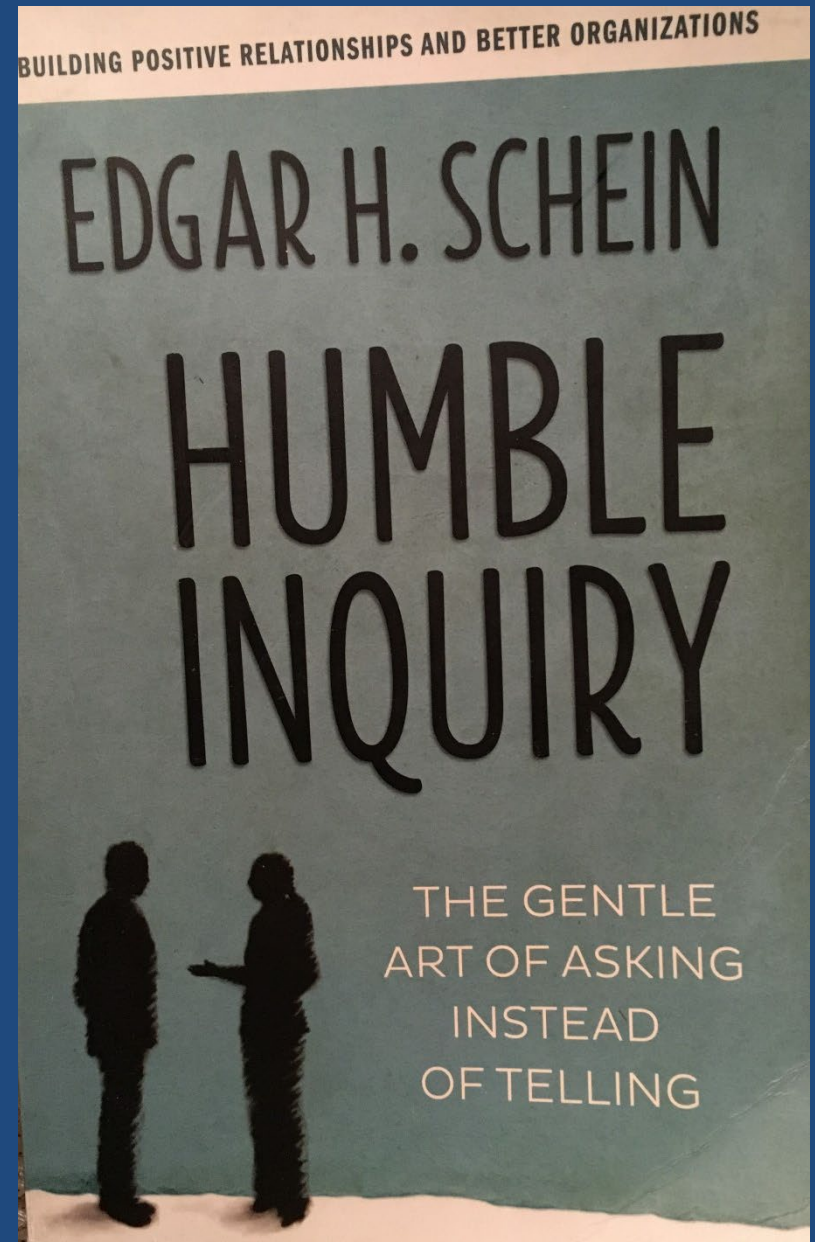


## Pastoral Leadership in 40 Parishes:

19 were Hispanic  
8 African American  
5 Vietnamese  
8 Anglo

Research Partner: Dr. Marti Jewell

My Second Research  
Question:  
What are some  
Adaptive Strategies for  
the Catholic Church?



1. What Adaptive Challenges Does Your Parish Face?

2. What Adaptive Strategies Might Work?

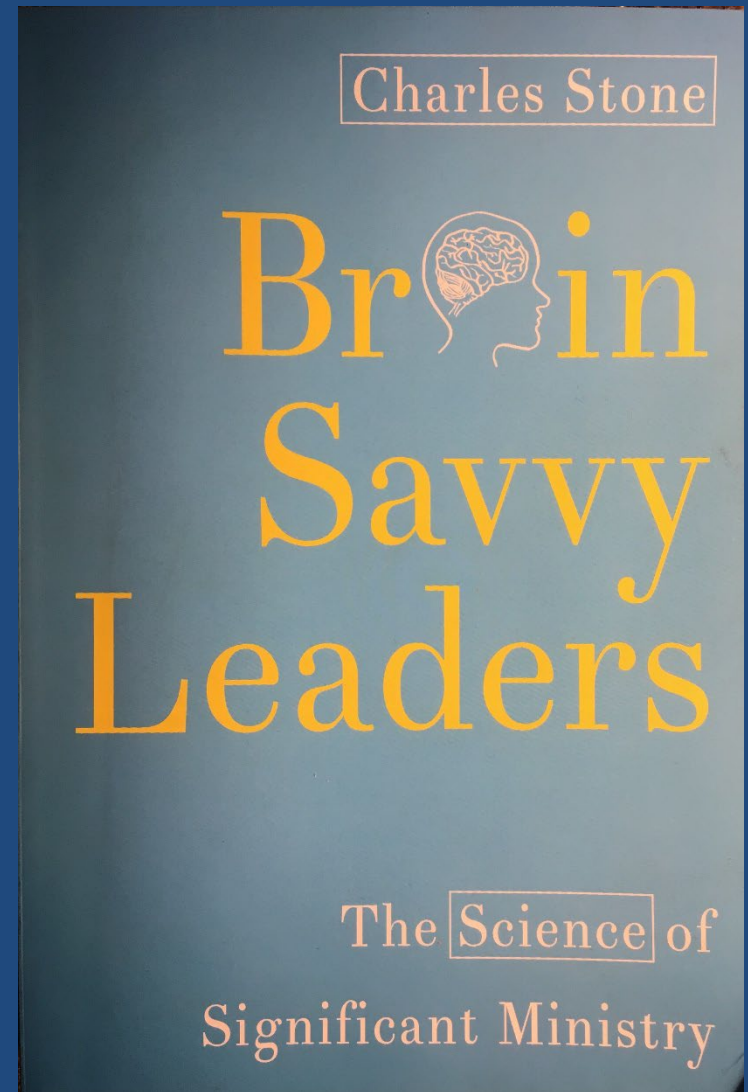




# 1. To Take on “The Mind of Christ”

“Be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is” (Romans 12:2).

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Phil 4:8)





## The “Mind of Christ” Cares: Empathy

- To “feel inside”
- “Blessed are they who mourn”
- Identify with the “least of these”





The “Mind of Christ” is **Humble** =>  
Being “Fully Human”



# The “Mind of Christ” has Courage: Go to the Peripheries

Be ready, willing and able to serve when the  
opportunity presents itself

...“Be Not Afraid”



# The “Mind of Christ” is Ever-Mindful of Opportunities to Evangelize

- Be mindful of opportunities and ready to evangelize when the moment comes.





## 2. Place Jesus at the center of our Church lives

Restore the priority of evangelization

To “Go and make disciples” is our mission

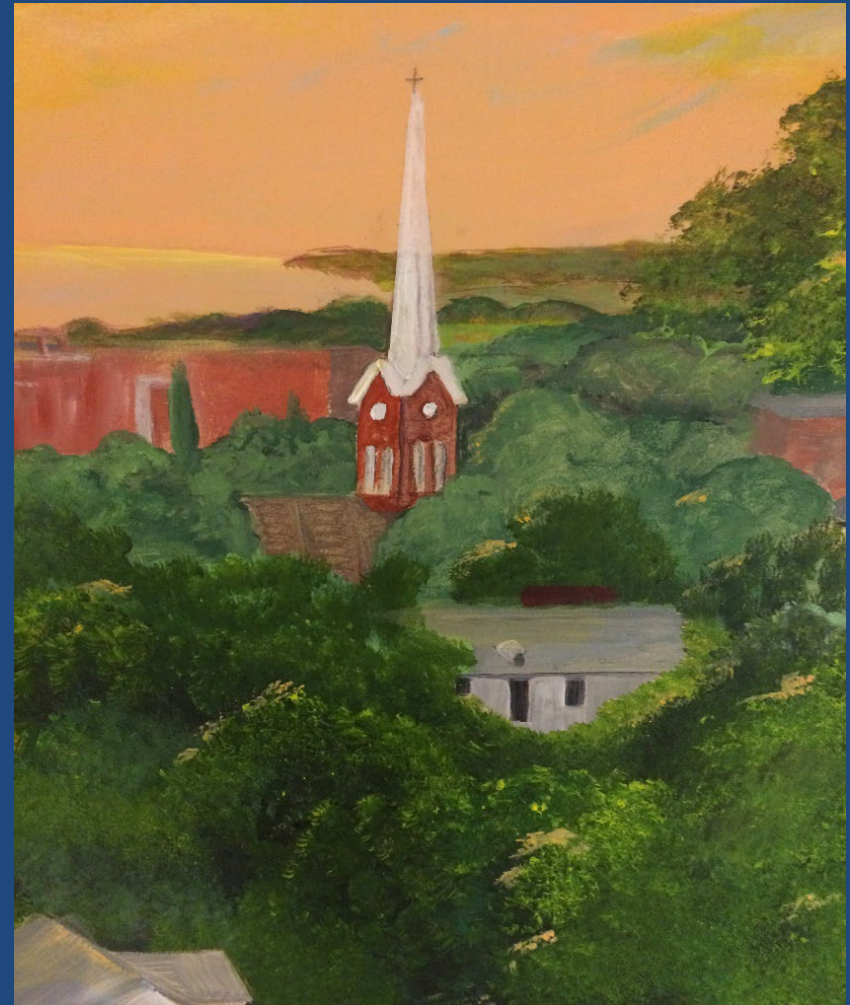
Come and see... Go and tell...





# Parish Evangelization

- Old Paradigm:
  - Evangelization was “Father’s Job”
- New paradigm:
  - All hands on-deck.
  - We are all disciples.
    - We are all stewards.
    - We are all evangelists.
  - We are all apostles.
    - We are all leaders.



### 3. To listen with synodality

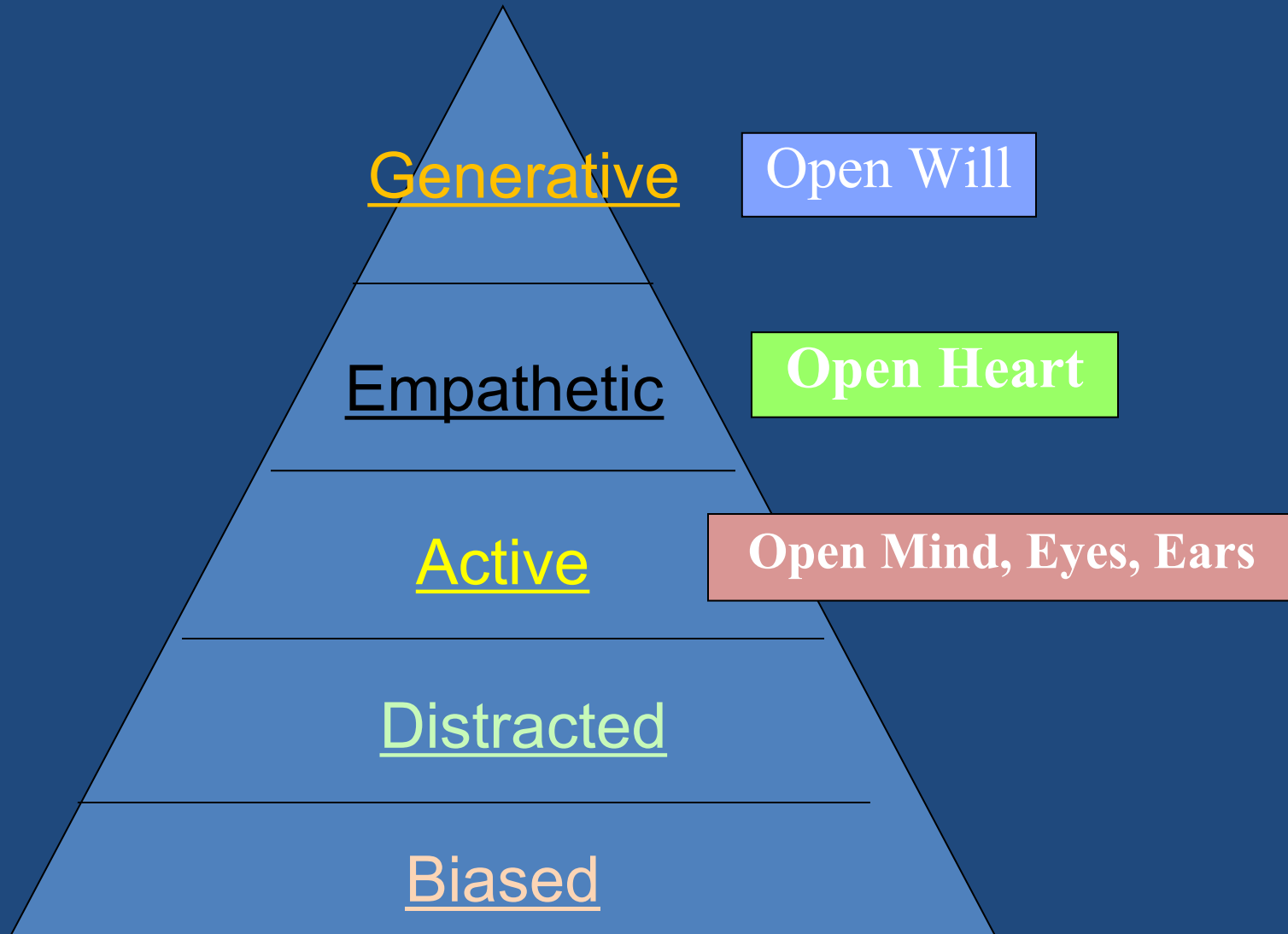
Listen at the margins

Listen to our youth and young adults



# Five Levels of Listening

(Borrowing from Scharmer, Thomas and Jesus)





# Generative Listening

Generative listening requires engaging: (1) the brain, (2) the mind, (3) the heart, and (4) our neighbors (Luke 10:27)

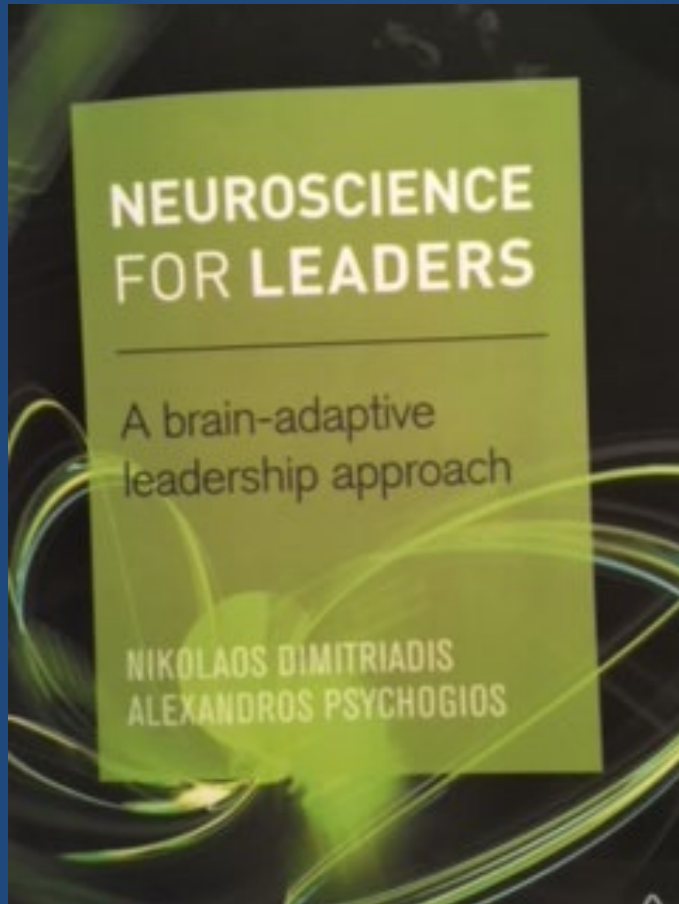








# The Brain and Cell Phones



Obsession with technology is having negative impact:

- Very addictive.
- Heightens narcissism.
- Attention deficit.
- Obsessive-compulsive behavior.
- Fewer human interactions.



## 4. Create a “Culture of Love”

- Exude the Joy of the Gospel
- Welcome the stranger
- Extend our welcome to those on the margins:
  - Non-practicing
  - Divorced
  - Gays and lesbians



# Outward Signs of Missionary Discipleship

## *The Joy of the Gospel*



- Joyful celebration of the Eucharist
- Newer, younger, diverse members of the community
- Authentic hospitality
- Lay engagement
- Shared leadership
- Grateful stewardship
- Hearts for social justice

# 5. To Rebuild the Domestic Church

- Evangelize
- Catechize
- Sacramentalize





To develop the  
connections  
between the heart  
and the prefrontal  
cortex, spend time  
in “mindful”  
behaviors – prayer,  
liturgy, meditation,  
Eucharistic  
adoration





To excel at the “**Sunday Experience**”

To reach “**full, active and conscious participation**” in prayer and liturgy, we must develop the connections between the heart and the prefrontal cortex.

# Neuro-theology

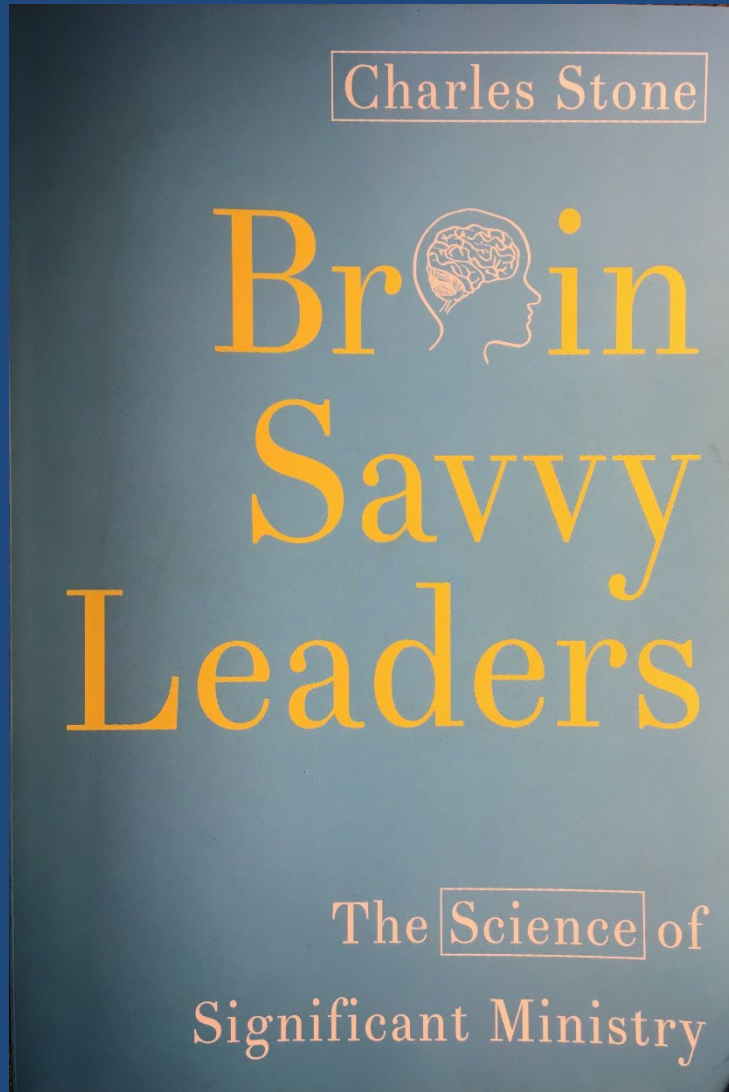


**St. Teresa of Avila:**

“Authentic prayer changes us – unmask us – strips us.”



# Neuro-theology



God can change how we think,  
how we behave and how our  
brains are structured.

Our bodies and our brains  
embody our souls, of which one  
component is our mind.

By practicing free will, we can  
change the wiring in our brains.

# “Meta Noia” = Change

(from the Greek)



- Meta = After
- Noia = Thought
- “On second thought”
- A change of heart and mind, a spiritual transformation, or conversion, based on reflection, regret, repentance.



- 6. To communicate more boldly and clearly our teachings
- Re-Capture the narrative:
  - Live simply
  - Act justly
  - Walk humbly
  - Reverence life
  - Practice nonviolence
  - *Laudato Si*



7. To engage our lay people to step up and lead.  
Invite and encourage leadership  
Focus meetings on mission and vision



# Meetings to Tell Meetings to Sell Meetings to Problem Solve





# 8. Let Our Priests be Priests



Let the lay people Manage



# Management can create the Conditions for Leadership

- Leadership at the top can encourage leadership from elsewhere.
- Delegation

# Leadership FOR THE Greater Good

A TEXTBOOK FOR LEADERS

Dan R. Ebener and Borna Jalšenjak  
Foreword by Marty Linsky

Prayer can change our self-talk, and prepare us for discipleship and leadership



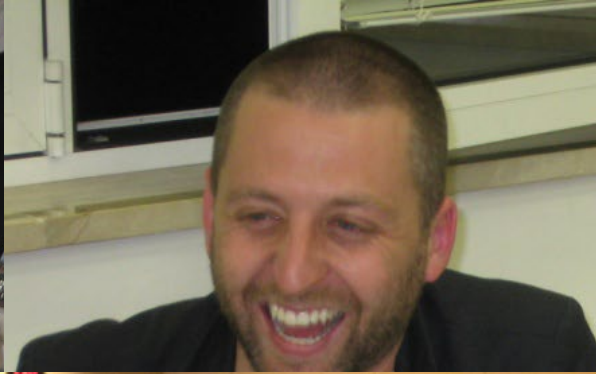


## 9. Heal our Divisions Dialogue





To exude the positivity (joy) of discipleship, we must nurture positivity in our brains.



## 10. To live as “Missionary Disciples”



- “Called forth” to “come and follow” Jesus
- Our mission as disciples is to take on the mission of Jesus, and in the process, to be transformed by our relationship with Christ.

# Stewardship: The Disciples Response

To follow Christ:  
Give generously.  
Live gratefully.  
Serve humbly.  
Grow in faith.





# 11. To Lead as Apostles

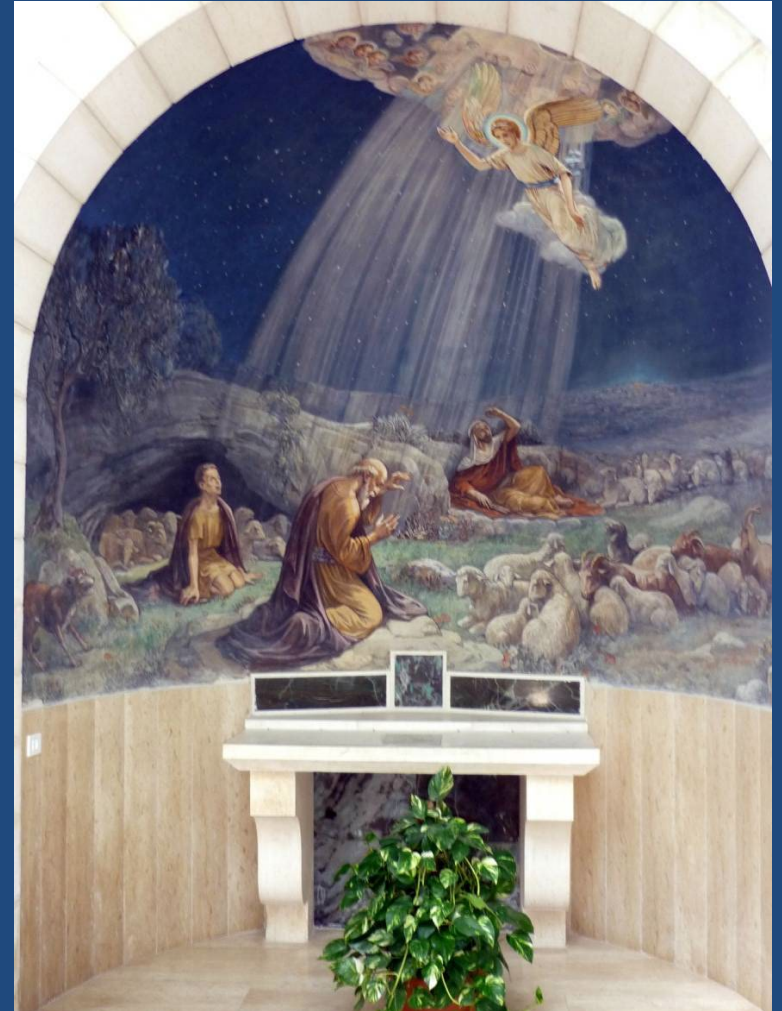
- From the Great Invitation to the Great Commission:

From Students to Teachers.

From Followers to Leaders.

From Disciples to Apostles.

From Stewards to Evangelists.





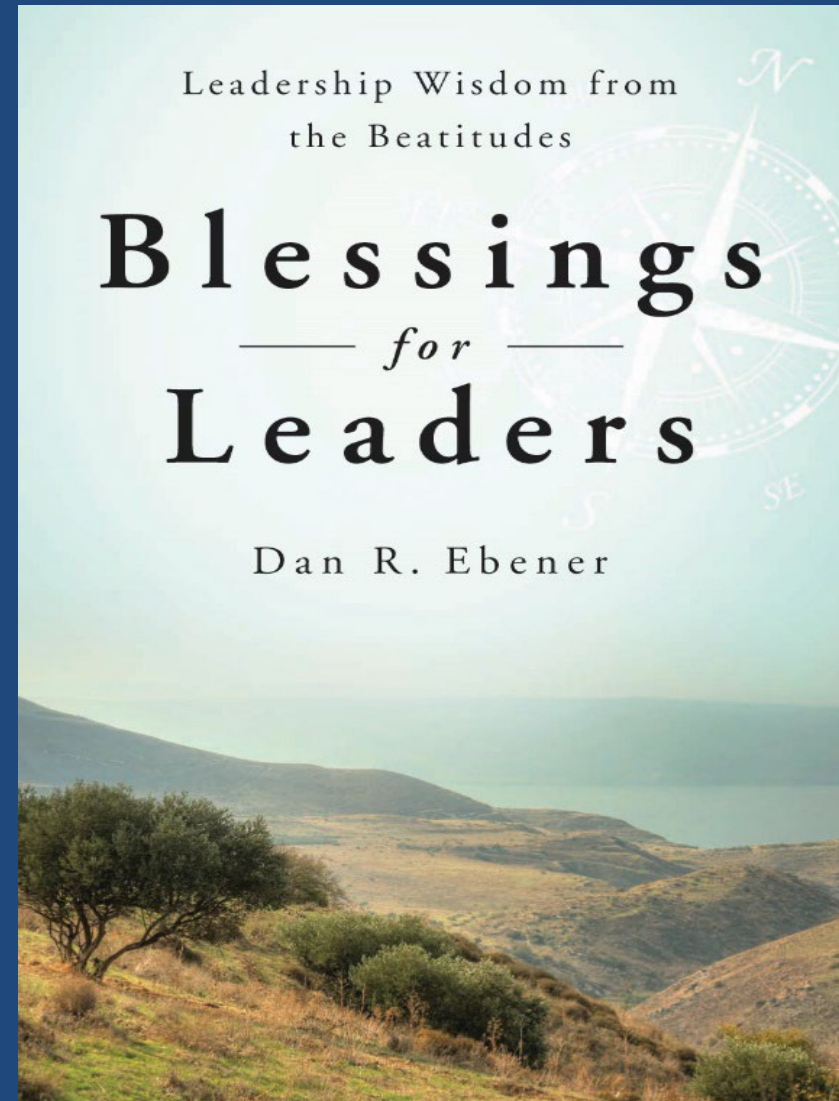
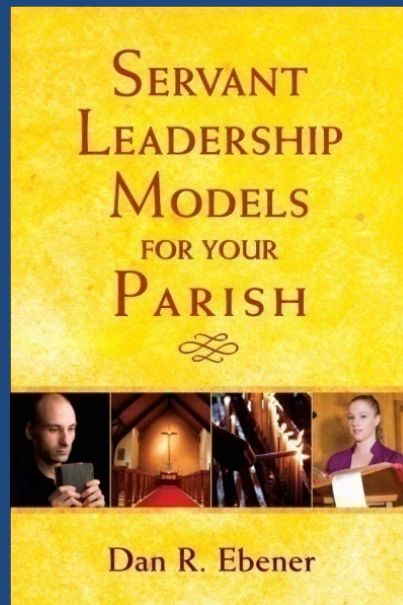
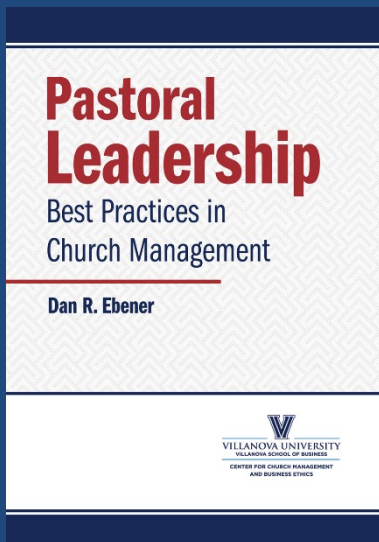
# Visionary Apostles

- We are also called to become “apostles” – those who are “sent forth” as leaders, teachers and evangelists.
- When we practice leadership, we share in the vision of Jesus to build the Kingdom of God “on earth as it is in heaven.”

# 12. To practice Servant Leadership

- What is it anyway?

Greenleaf: “Motivated  
to serve, then to lead”.





# Servant Leadership

- It has to be Leadership...  
Or it cannot be  
Servant  
Leadership.



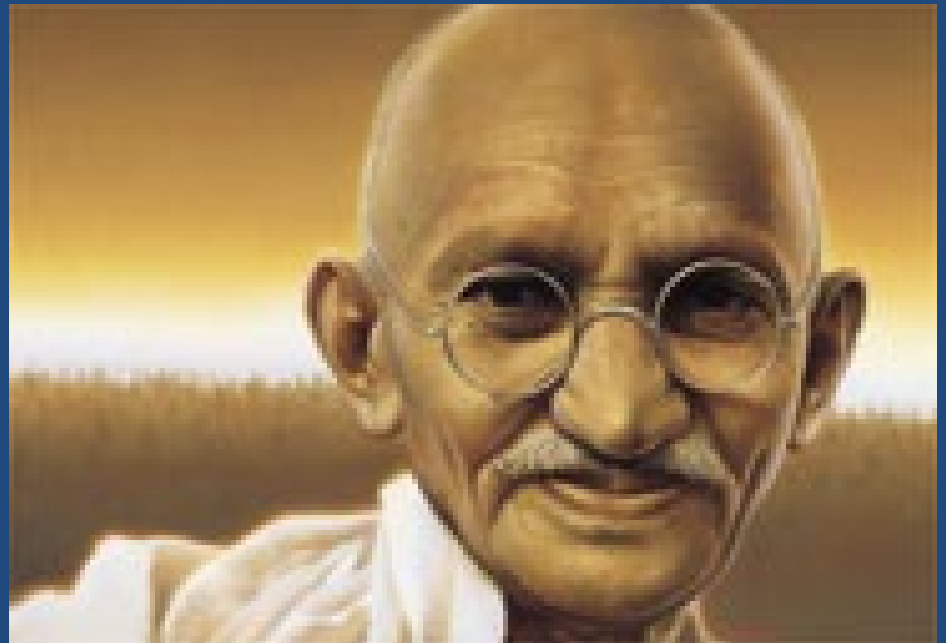
Builds Trust

Connects to Mission  
and Vision

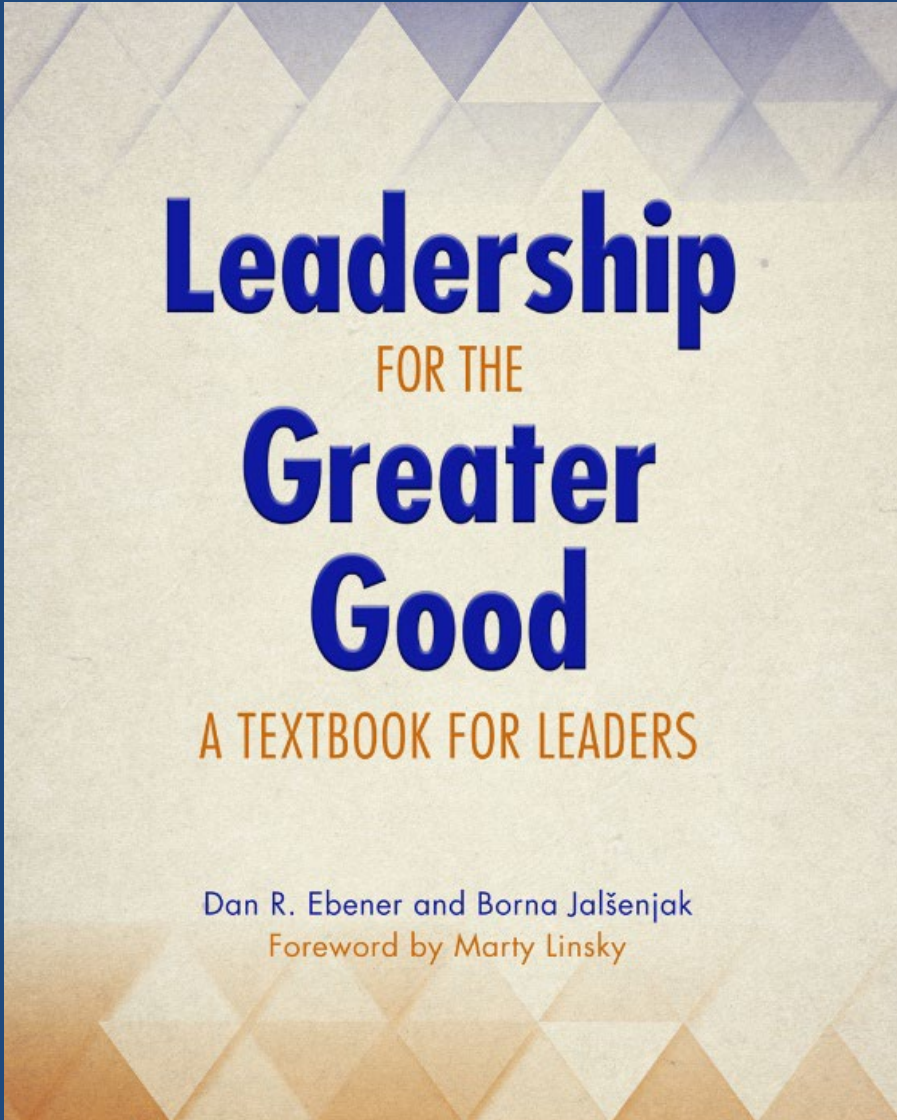
Intrinsically  
motivates

Increases  
organizational  
citizenship

Research on Servant  
Leadership - > Connects  
to Engagement



At Your Tables:  
What are some  
Adaptive  
Strategies you  
could attempt in  
your Parish?



# Leadership FOR THE Greater Good

A TEXTBOOK FOR LEADERS

Dan R. Ebener and Borna Jalšenjak

Foreword by Marty Linsky



# Parish Adaptive Leadership Strategies



Strategies

- Free Up Your Best People: Hire Business Administrators
- Inter-Parish Collaboration: Team Models of Ministry
  - Give the Work Back: “It’s not Father’s Job”
  - Invite, invite, invite/ Personal Relationships
- Engage Young Adults outside the Context of Parish
  - Change your Meetings (Agenda to Ask, not Tell)
- Get Smaller: Utilize Small Groups/ Faith Communities
- Capitalize on the Power of the Sacraments/ Hispanics
- Bridges between the Cultures: Hispanic/ Asian/ Af. Am.
  - Ex: Offer translation in Parish and Finance Councils
- *“We are not a church with diversity, we are a diverse church”*



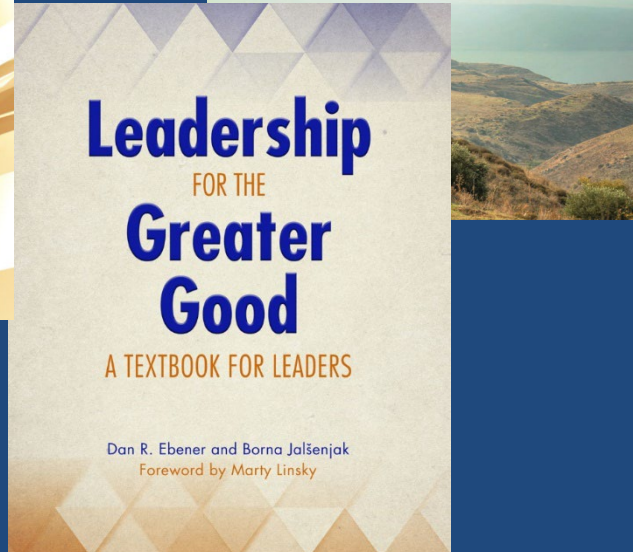
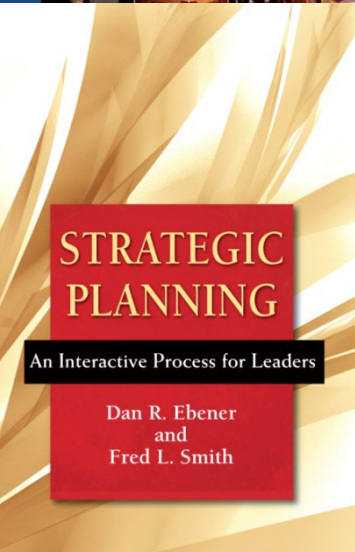
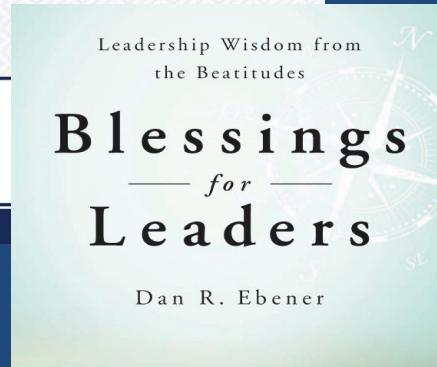
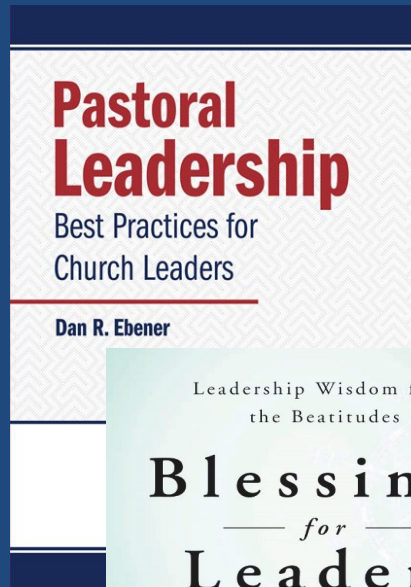
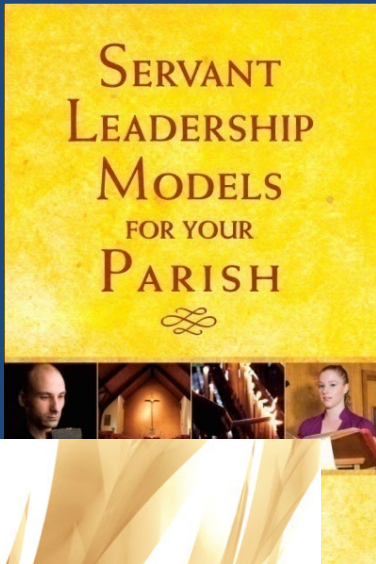
- The world desperately needs leadership...

- ... And a new model for leadership.

# Leadership

The church  
needs  
leadership ...

... From the  
pulpit and the  
pews



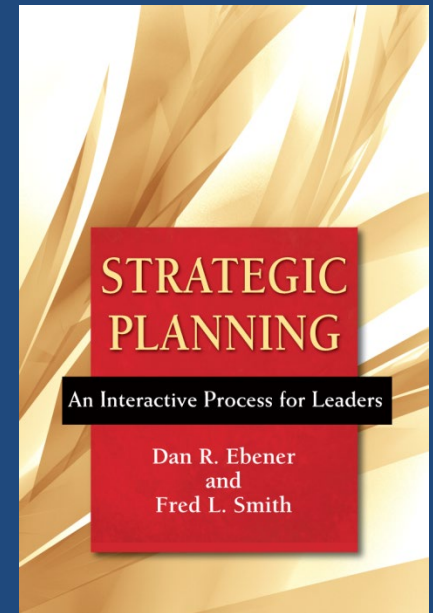


# Goal Setting

1. What two or three lessons have been most valuable to you today?
2. What would you like to change about the way you approach your parish?
3. What goals can you set for yourself over the next 3 months?
4. Identify someone you need to have a conversation with - using what you learned today – and how that conversation will be different this time.

# Thank YOU !

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