

## The Role of Christian Ethics in Corporate Leadership by Implementing the Leader Model - Shepherd

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Submitted: 0-04-2025	The decline in ethical behavior in corporate settings, coupled with the misuse of social media (Wawaru et al., 2020; Leobisa et al., 2023), underscores the need for Christian leaders to model Christ-like ethics. This study examines how the leader-shepherd model, rooted in biblical principles of love, service, and integrity, can transform secular corporate leadership. A qualitative literature review synthesizes biblical texts, leadership theories, and case studies to analyze challenges (e.g., ethical relativism) and strategies (e.g., balancing innovation with faith). Christian ethics, when applied through servant leadership, fosters trust, employee welfare, and organizational success, while talent development (Matthew 25:14) and integrity (Kouzes & Posner) are critical for adaptive leadership. The research advocates for integrating Christian ethics across sectors, offering a framework for leaders to act as "salt and light" in secular workplaces, with future studies recommended to quantify its impact.
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### Introduction

Christian ethics is based on the teachings of Jesus as stated in the Bible. The most basic teaching is love, how the church applies love to God and love for fellow human beings, regardless of who that person is, even enemies must be loved (de Villiers, 2018; Gałecki, 2022; Kreider, 2019; Melé & Fontrodona, 2017; Woo, 2023). Christians are commanded to live by imitating Jesus, who always places high ethics. This is shown by loving sinners, helping the sick, and even wanting to wash His disciples' feet as a sign of humility. His teachings often contradict the concepts of the world, for example, to be great and prominent, one must be a servant. Unlike the world of teaching, to be prominent needs to be pioneered by building an image and closeness to great people. Christians are equipped with wisdom to discern what is good and bad and to decide what is of value according to His will. The goal to be achieved is to be a man of God because he was created in the image and likeness of God.

The rise of social media has contributed to the decline of Christian ethics, according to Mesirawati Wawaru, et al. in the research The Role of Christian Ethics Education in Social Media in the Era of Disruption that believers can fight moral deterioration caused by the misuse of social media by studying the era of disruption because of the ethical problems that arise when people

abuse social media (Wawaru et al., 2020). In line with that, Jonathan Leobisa et al., in their research on the Challenges of Social Media Use in the Era of Disruption and the Role of Christian Ethics Education, concluded that one of the aspects of this disruption period is the rapid advancement of various technologies, including social media. If abused, social media will have a bad impact on the development of ethics, morals, and even spirituality and its users (Leobisa & Baun, 2023).

Meanwhile, the spotlight on Christian ethics in the school environment was conveyed by Giofany Junetri and Isaiah Adhi Widjaya, in the study *Christian Teacher Leadership: An Overview of Christian Ethics*, based on Christian ethics, every teacher can show their children the right way of life. A Christian teacher who leads will be able to show their children how to deal with today's problems in the right way (Junetri & Widjaya, 2020).

The results of the research of Remegises Danial and Yohanis Pandie, in the research *Philosophy of Stoicism in the Perspective of Christian Ethics*, conclude that every day in every joint of human life, stoicism (the teaching of self-mastery) helps a person to achieve the goal of their transformation. In this case, the size of the change depends on the standards of each person who lives their life (Danial & Pandie, 2023).

This research is intended to complement previous studies on Christian ethics, which the researcher considers important because Christians in the marketplace must be exemplary in the way they think, will, and behave by upholding the ethics of the teachings of the Bible. The research aims to provide followers of Christ with an understanding of the importance of practicing Christian ethics, especially Christian leaders in companies, by adopting a leader-pastor model.

The current research distinguishes itself from prior studies by integrating the leader-shepherd model into corporate leadership, emphasizing its practical application beyond traditional church or educational settings (Ronda, 2016). While existing literature explores Christian ethics in social media Wawaru et al. (2020) Leobisa & Baun (2023) and education Junetri & Widjaya (2020), this study uniquely addresses the challenges of implementing biblical servant leadership in secular corporate environments, combining theological insights (e.g., *Imago Dei*, Matthew 25:14) with modern leadership theories (e.g., transformational, adaptive leadership). It also critiques the neglect of talent development and integrity in workplaces and proposes measurable strategies for ethical leadership impact, bridging a gap left by earlier works focused on theoretical or community-based ethics (Siregar, 2019).

## Materials and Methods

The research in this article uses a qualitative method by analyzing data through literature studies. To comprehensively understand the problems in this study, data were obtained from data sources related to Christian ethics and leadership in companies. Documents and data were drawn from Bible texts, books, journals, articles, and other sources that supported the research theme. The presentation began by discussing ethics in general, Christian ethics, company leadership, and the leader–pastor model.

This research begins its exposition of ethics and morals, which often gives rise to different opinions from theologians, some of whom think that ethics and morals are the same, but there is also a view that ethics and morals have the same substance. How does the position of Christian ethics compare to general ethics? Of course, Christian ethics has a higher degree than general ethics; this will be explored in depth. This research introduces the concept of Christian leadership in a secular environment with the concept of a leader-shepherd that places the Christian leader as the shepherd and the employees as the flock of sheep to be lovingly shepherded.

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## Results and Discussion

### Morals, General Ethics, and Christian Ethics

The meaning of ethics and morality is almost the same, according to Siregar (2019) the word ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos* (singular) or *ta ethics* (plural), which means a person's morals, habits, feelings, or sincere nature when doing something. The word ethics was later changed to *terminus technicus*, a technical term for studying human rules, behavior, and actions. The words *ethos* and *etikhos* mean morality in Latin. Both are also known as *mos* and *mores*, therefore, ethics are sometimes called morals. Ethics means something deeper than morality. The two words don't have the same meaning, but they are almost the same. This is true both in theory and in reality. Ethics is the study of morality, or what is right and wrong, as well as moral duties and rights (Siregar, 2019).

The parallel understanding between ethics and morals is affirmed by Eka Dharmaputra, who states that ethics and morals are essentially the same thing. That is because morality comes from Latin, and ethics comes from Greek. In Cicero's writings, *ethikos* means moral. Protestant theology means ethics, which is called moral discipline in Roman Catholicism. He said that the terms can be distinguished by how they are used to avoid confusion. If that is the case, ethics can be used to talk about more specific rules, such as morals, which are good and bad. Ethics is a moral concept, which means philosophy or basic critical thinking about moral beliefs and teachings.

It is interesting to see how Paul Ricoeur uses the words morality and ethics in a new way. He associates the two words with two different ways of thinking about philosophy. The word moral is associated with how Emmanuel Kant thinks about philosophy or deontological views. Morality includes duties, rules, and guidelines of behavior, as well as commands or categorizations, meaning rules or guidelines that come from common sense and state that those rules or guidelines are necessary. In contrast, ethics comes from Aristotle's school of thought, which is more teleological, meaning it has an ultimate goal or reason. Paul Ricoeur says that ethics is the goal of living a good life with and for others in a fair system.

Ethics are the values of life, good or bad, that are the standard for humans. Soegarda Poerbakawatja argues that ethics is a philosophy of values, the science of values, the science that studies good and bad in all human life, especially regarding the movement of thoughts and feelings, which are considerations and feelings toward the goal of the form of action. Ethics is a discipline that can function as a performance index or reference for our control system (Martin, 1993). In this way, ethics will establish some boundaries or standards on how people should act in a social group.

The ethical process starts with understanding and continues with action. Aristotle divided ethics into two parts, the first is *terminus technicus*, which means that ethics is the study of the problem of human actions or deeds, the second is manner and custom, which means that ethics is the study of procedures and customs that are natural to humans and are based on our understanding of what is good and bad in human behavior or actions. As the highest good in life, Aristotle created a philosophical teaching on ethics that aims to lead people to happiness.

Ethics is an issue that has emerged in the current digital era. Ethics are inherited from predecessors and passed down from generation to generation, and they color the practice of life. Ethics that eventually become a habit have positive values that are taken to be applied and developed. However, in this digital era, ethics have been eroded by the massive proliferation of social media that displays unethical content, for those who do not have a foundation of faith will be easily affected. Christian ethics based on the teachings of the Bible have a clear reference and norms that need to be followed.

The law of love is an important foundation in Christian ethics, as Steven D. West has stated, Christian ethics seeks to love God and neighbor in every moral and ethical issue directed by God's

revelation in Scripture above any other system of thought. Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor; this is the highest ethical obligation of a Christian, which is more precisely a commandment. As with theology, scripture is the source of Christian ethical guidance. This is because God is our ultimate strength and benchmark, and He is a personal goodness. From reading the scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christians know God's nature; unbelievers may only partially and not quite understand what is good through the order of creation and their conscience.

Furthermore, even if Christians eventually get their ethics from scripture, different parts of scripture, such as the law of Moses, must be understood in the historical context of their redemption and not simply applied from one distant society to another. Although scripture always needs to be the authority for any Christian ethical endeavor, philosophical systems that attempt to offer ethical standards may be beneficial to Christian ethical perspectives. Finally, although the Bible does not specifically address many of today's problems, there are reliable Bible values to guide moral decisions.

Loving God with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength is their highest ethical responsibility. Loving others is like loving oneself, and it is second in terms of ethics. Fulfilling this moral responsibility for a Christian is done by the law of Christ and as outlined in God's Word. Honoring God in all that is said, done, thought, and felt is the ultimate goal. Another more general ethical goal is to develop oneself personally as a virtuous person and be a blessing to others.

With this picture, it is unfortunate that many people, including Christians and non-Christians, view believers as legalistic and condemnatory. Those who uphold God's moral principles must shine a light on the darkness and warn against the evil behavior that may be generally accepted in the world's society that rebels against God. However, the Bible offers more than just moral guidance with rules and prohibitions. Granted, there are things to avoid, however, the scriptures also demand many great moral obligations. Forming an ethical opinion properly from the Bible will help us realize that we must reject evil and do good works. The choices of good and evil, right and wrong, have categorical differences. Christian ethics should be fun because the Christian life can be a valuable experience in doing good.

Christians live their lives according to the rules of God's Kingdom. God's Word in Genesis 1:26-28 says that man is the Imago Dei of God. This is what God wants man to do. It is thought that the idea of Imago Dei means a return to the infinite, omnipresent, and omnipotent person. Imago Dei encourages people to re-experience and think about who they are and find meaning in their lives that aligns with God's plan. Because Christian ethics is based on the Bible, it shows that material things do not measure success, but rather by how much a person fears and reveres God.

### **Christian Leadership in the Company**

The presence of Christian leaders is expected to bring change in a positive direction. Becoming a transformative leader by becoming an agent of change is one of the foundations of good Christian leadership (Ronda, 2016). Transformative shows that if leaders want companies to remain relevant for the times, they must be ready to bring change to the companies they oversee. It is certain that the company they run will cease, and may lead to a decline in business without the ability to think and act creatively (Barrois, 2017; Cabodevila, 2020; Tedjo et al., 2023; Thomas, 2018; Wolor et al., 2021). In addition, good leadership is active, largely in line with its vision and goals; he took the initiative to develop his company. Companies must be adaptive to change and be able to anticipate dynamic business changes with endless creativity and innovation by asking for wisdom and the help of the Holy Spirit.

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**Model Leader - Shepherd**

The relationship between the leader and the led can be analogized to the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, according to Anthony D'Souza, the product of the leader-shepherd is the followers, not about profit and not about market share. The efforts of the shepherd-leaders produce the followers themselves, which are the end and the end result. And this is why the shepherd obediently performs his duty when the flock survives the challenges of the journey and grows stronger. The flock needs direction, encouragement, and motivation to achieve maximum performance.

However, it is this flock that the shepherd-leader first sought when the morning sun rises to welcome each fresh day, and they fill his heart when he sleeps at night. To his flock, the shepherd is truly a servant. His work and agenda for achieving his goals are development and maintenance. A shepherd-hearted company leader will treat his subordinate employees like a shepherd tending his sheep. He will pay attention and care about employees. They provide solutions when facing problems, encourage when weak, give full attention to their performance, help when experiencing suffering, and are even willing to sacrifice for their employees.

The leader-shepherd is a model for leaders in all types of businesses, including commercial and industrial businesses. Leaders must be true shepherds for their companies and, first and foremost, the human community. By doing this, those leaders will win the devotion and dedication of staff and customers, and thus, they will fulfill what other leaders cannot demand.

Another thing that can be used as a reference for Christian leaders is to serve others, as Jesus affirmed that He came to the dunia to serve not to be served. The calling of a Christian leader in every action is to serve and serve, not a leader who wants to be served. Like a crazy boss who respects and demands people to follow his personal best, which can appeal to an authoritarian leadership style. Other teachings of Jesus were weakness, meekness, humility, and self-control. This is also true for Christian leaders who are implemented in companies and all aspects of life.

A leader's activities cannot be separated from what is called a relationship, as Kouzes and Posner assert in their research on leadership, that leadership is a relationship. Leadership is the relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. Sometimes relationships are one with many people. Sometimes the relationship is one-on-one. However, leadership is a relationship regardless of whether the number is one or a thousand. Two-way relationships and mutual influence can be something positive, establishing closeness and avoiding mistakes in capturing communication messages.

Actually, followers of Christ already know how to be a successful leader as stated by Stacy Rinehart in her book *Upside Down* which says most believers are familiar with Jesus' teachings to achieve success in leadership, anyone who wants to be great and prominent must be a servant and a servant (Mark 10:43-44), but when it comes to practicing it, many leaders feel that it is enough to abandon Jesus' counsel and follow the ways of the world. They prefer to build personal branding by maximizing their potential and performance and establishing closeness with influential people to gain trust. This is not entirely wrong, but if the motivation is not sincere and there is a personal agenda, it feels contrary to Christian ethics.

If Christian leaders can realize integrity, trust will automatically be formed between superiors and subordinates. Trust is the capital to move a business organization so that it can be directed to achieve organizational goals. Warren Bennis emphasizes that trust is built on integrity in his book *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*. Accuracy is closely related to trust. By showing that his decisions and actions are predictable in the face of moral challenges, a leader with integrity builds trust with others. Unfortunately, integrity is also a rare trait; many people consider it to be almost extinct. John C. Maxwell, who agrees with this, stated, "Unfortunately, integrity is a



commodity that is beginning to disappear in our time." In a world that is panicking in search of personal pleasure and shortcuts to success, personal standards are collapsing. Maxwell also emphasized that effective leadership is a leader who can apply 360-degree feedback. An effective leader can influence subordinates, peers, and superiors. In principle, he needs to influence anyone around his position 360 degrees, even those outside the organization, such as business partners, distributors, suppliers, and other stakeholders

Christian leadership values must continue to be developed, as Robert Clinton observed, that we are entering a university of life, where the application of leadership values never stops. These principles must be constantly investigated and applied in life (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020; Thomas, 2018; Tkaczynski & Arli, 2018) Learning not only through the books we read and study but also from the events of life is essential to gaining new values that can be used to develop Christian leadership ethics.

### **The Competence of Christian Leaders**

Leading with competence means having the ability, knowledge, and expertise. According to Dr. Yakob Tomatala, competence includes many things, especially knowledge, experience, and character qualities. Technical knowledge and interpersonal relationship skills are two competencies that support strengthening pastoral leadership. First, it relates to interpersonal relationships, which are sometimes known as social skills or skills. A good leader understands that they need others and can responsibly create positive relationships with others for effective cooperation and professional achievement. Second, the ability related to the relationship of the execution of tasks, where an expert knows and can carry out their work appropriately. Technical or practical expertise can also be referred to as a skill or expertise because both are closely related to practical issues of a technical nature. This knowledge has to do with how to carry out tasks, which must be completed correctly. Leaders must have unique abilities, especially those related to their leadership style (Siahaan et al., 2022; Solihin Bin Nidin, 2023).

In harmony with this, as instructed in the Bible, believers must be able to develop the talents that God has given. Even in the development of talents, it is likened to the Kingdom of God (Matthew 25:14). Whoever can develop talents will be multiplied and enter into happiness with God forever. Meanwhile, those who are lazy and do not develop their talents will always be thrown into darkness. Here, Christian leaders are required to develop potential, knowledge, and expertise to make a real contribution to the company and improve the welfare of employees.

Currently, the world of work is experiencing an integrity crisis; it is easier for companies to recruit competent employees than employees who have integrity. Honesty is a rarity; the practices of mark-up, price deposit, and getting a success fee from a project are considered reasonable and generally applicable. However, believers must be different from the world's ways and not get carried away in that unethical practice, even a violation of the rules. James Kousez and Barry Posner, two researchers, report in their book *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*, that the most important factor for a leader is integrity. The nearly two-decade study included surveys of thousands of professionals from four continents and hundreds of case studies. Christians must possess credibility as a form of the call of believers to be the salt and light of the world, their lives to be a blessing and a witness to many.

### **Conclusion**

Christian ethics, rooted in the Bible and Christ's teachings, hold a distinctive moral authority, shaping leaders who reflect Christ-like character through servant leadership (the shepherd model), integrity, and selfless care for employees. Beyond prayer, Christian leaders must

cultivate talents and innovation to thrive in the technological era, ensuring their ethical influence extends beyond the church into corporate, educational, and community spheres—acting as "salt and light" by rejecting unethical practices and fostering trust. Future research should explore the integration of Christian ethics in secular workplaces, examining challenges (e.g., ethical relativism), strategies (e.g., balancing faith and innovation), and measurable impacts (e.g., employee morale) through qualitative case studies, quantitative surveys, and theological-practical analysis, while comparing Christian models with other ethical frameworks in global business contexts.

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