

Nurturing Healthy and Thriving Executive Leaders

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Drawing wisdom from the Bible, contemporary leadership theory, and the insights of over 200 executive leaders, this session will explore common challenges and relevant recommendations for pursuing health and effectiveness as organizational leaders.

Part 1: A Biblical Vision for Healthy Leaders, Thriving Organizations, & Flourishing People

1. Biblical Perspective: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration

“When language of ‘the good life’ is used, images of power, wealth, and riches might come to mind. But flourishing gets at more basic and meaningful life issues. One source argues that flourishing, at its core, ‘means being in right relationship with God and neighbor. It means becoming the person God made you to be and achieving the fullest use of your potential to the glory of God by loving him, loving others, and making the world a better place.’” (Irving, pp. 25-26)

“Create contexts within which organizational members may develop and flourish in a manner consistent with their design as people created in God’s image.” (Irving, p. 2)

2. Healthy Leaders

“A leader is not the only important aspect of a thriving organization, but the leader’s health and character do have significant consequences for an organization’s ability to thrive in a healthy and effective way.” (Irving, p. 39)

“For better or worse, organizational leaders have a disproportionate effect on organizations and on the people they lead. The question is not whether they affect others but whether they bring health and effectiveness or dysfunction and ineffectiveness.” (Irving, p. 37)

3. Thriving Organizations

“Organizational leaders have a unique and important responsibility to nurture thriving organizations within which humans may thrive and flourish.” (Irving, pp. 1-2)

“Generally speaking, organizations do not thrive and people do not flourish when unqualified and unhealthy leaders are at the top.” (Irving, p. 49)

“Institutions give us an opportunity and a mechanism, a means, to invest in something much larger than ourselves and to make a contribution that we would never be able to make individually and on our own” (Smith, p. 4)

4. Flourishing People

“Organizational cultures can be brutal, or they can be life-giving. Good and godly leadership contributes to human flourishing when it creates cultures and environments that are fair, just, and caring.” (Stearns, p. 18)

“Human flourishing is present in an organization when leaders and followers alike are part of a network that not only allows them to make a living but also helps them draw out the potential for flourishing in others.” (Irving, p. 25)

“But the story of work in organizations is not valuable merely for its utilitarian purposes (what we get out of it). Organizations also provide a context for contribution that is valuable to others.” (Irving, p. 32)

Part 2: Pressing Challenges That Christian Organizational Leaders Face

1. What are the most pressing (or most significant) challenges/issues you face in your leadership responsibilities?

2. Top Five Themes

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Other Areas

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Part 3: Insights and Recommendations for Nurturing Healthy and Thriving Executive Leaders (Focusing on Our Character and Commitments as Leaders)

Commitments: Spiritual, Emotional, Relational, Physical, Intellectual, & Practical

“God is not simply a means to a flourishing life; the fullest expression of the flourishing life is found in relation to him.” (Irving, p. 31)

“Wise leaders go about their work understanding that dependence on God is our necessary posture.” (Irving, p. 163)

“Anxiety can be an early detection system that we’re depending on something other than God for our well-being.” (Cuss, p. 17)

“Leadership vision cannot be carried out by an isolated individual. Leadership is done through a network of aligned people and resources within the organizational context.” (Irving, p. 13)

“Character really does matter in our lives as leaders. We must lean into this process of gospel renewal as God continues to form us into the image of his beloved Son.” (Irving, p. 49)

Character & Courage

“We cannot faithfully and effectively care for and pay attention to others without also caring for and paying attention to our own character and health as leaders.” (Irving, p. 21)

“Effective leadership is much more about one’s being than one’s doing.” (Irving & Strass, p. 49)

“When leaders compromise their character, organizations and the people connected to them are harmed and human flourishing is violated.” (Irving, p. 43)

“Prioritizing character and integrity over competence and charisma is not only wise for leaders, it also tends to translate into effective bottom-line performance.” (Irving, p. 45)

“If leadership is more about influence than control, the positive example and model of a leader is essential.” (Irving & Strauss, p. 17)

“Integrity and character provide a foundation for leader confidence and courage.” (Irving, p. 42)

Character, Humility, Trust, & Purpose

“Although humility runs counter to fallen human nature, when we step into a posture of humility and service we are returning to our nature as those made in God’s image.... Humility and service to others find themselves in the very heart of God.” (Irving, p. 46)

“The steady and persistent building of trust over years of faithful service is what is needed for both leaders and followers to flourish in their work and service.” (Irving, p. 44)

“Followers need to understand that their leaders actually believe that what the organization does matters.” (Irving & Strauss, p. 32)

Quoted Resources:

1. [*Healthy Leadership for Thriving Organizations: Creating Context Where People Flourish*](#) (Irving, 2023)
2. [*Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leaders*](#) (Irving & Strauss, 2019)
3. *Institutional Intelligence: How to Build an Effective Organization* (Smith, 2017)
4. *Lead Like It Matters to God: Values-Driven Leadership in a Success-Driven World* (Stearns, 2021)
5. *Managing Leadership Anxiety: Yours and Theirs* (Cuss, 2019)