



Reading the text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 as inspirational teaching on leadership to the modern church: A hermeneutical perspective

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Abstract

The present study critically examines the text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 in order to present its concepts as inspirational teachings on leadership to the modern church. From a hermeneutical perspective, the research attempts to discuss the chosen text not necessarily as panacea to good leadership but more so as inspirational teachings for individuals occupying leadership positions in a modern church. It is shown that Solomon ascends to the throne of kingship of a united monarchy after his father King David. The text depicts King Solomon in his prayer to God that "...I am a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties" (v.7). As if to suggest that God does not know, Solomon informs God that Israel is "...a great people, too numerous to count or number" (v.8). The above assertion by Solomon will be analyzed in view of a previous census by King David. The study will exegete the text in order to establish the contextual meaning of the metaphor "little child" used by King Solomon. In addition, King Solomon is metaphorically requesting Yahweh's provision of a "discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong" (v.9). The study is guided by *symbolic interactionism* as a theoretical framework. A case study model is employed as a research method in which previous contributions on hermeneutics and leadership in the Bible will be explored.

Keywords: Bible, case study model, church, David (King), hermeneutics, inspirational teachings, symbolic interactionism, leadership, Solomon (King), Yahweh.

Introduction

The title *Reading the text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 as inspirational teaching on leadership to the modern church: A hermeneutical perspective* was conceived out of both a struggle for economic survival and noticeable irregular leadership styles in the sacred institution. In my familiarization with academic discourses on leadership from biblical texts that prefigured examples of governance (whether good or bad), Solomon's leadership style was also explored. Meanwhile, in cases where narratives of leadership as depicted in the biblical text were presented, kindergarten plots of squeezing texts of Scripture to play a superficial salvific function in a contemporary situation without justification for the original context could apparently be detected. Also, palpable occurrences in some biblical interpretations on leadership is a continuous and common appendage of impressing colleagues who towed an identical thrust in their discourses. While it is vital and unavoidable for one to acknowledge scientific findings already rationalized in terms of



critique, it is appropriate to proffer a picturesque of biblical leadership as pertinent to the sacredness of the church and its functionality (see Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard, 2017:14). Such a synthesis does not only appeal to the regular readership, but also invites both existing and latent leaders of the church to participate in both formulation and implementation of the procedures toward leadership luridness. This contour of thought forms the basis for a distinctive feature of a thesis that engages the church and society to review its leadership styles in light of the perceived guidelines extracted from a critical analysis of 1 Kings 3:7-9. The term “church” is discussed here in general terms and not in a patrician deportment. Besides its deficiencies in view of critical arguments raised particularly on incoherencies, the Bible is widely read and feeds its readership into leadership positions in various career occupations such as pastorate, politics, social work, human rights activism, teaching/lectureship and many more. In the context of the text under investigation, the following three concepts are problematized and contextualized:

- 1) God appoints individual leaders for vacant positions;
- 2) “I am a little child”: admittance of inadequacy;
- 3) Acknowledgement of citizens as God’s people: they deserve good governance.

The above three concepts will be appropriated in a contemporary church situation. In addition to Solomon’s response to God by asking for wisdom in order to serve Israel as leader, the study will also draw some examples from the biblical text in which confirmation of availability was made by using the Hebrew term *הִנְנִי* (*hinéni* meaning “Here I am”). These individuals include the following examples: Abraham, Jacob, Samuel and Isaiah, to name but just a few. As already noted, the study is punctuated by a hermeneutical thrust in which a case study model is the approach adopted. In its entirety, the scope of this research is premised on *symbolic interactionism* as a theoretical framework (see for example, Blumer, 1936:518; 1937:153).

Theoretical framework: Symbolic Interactionism

Edward Laurence Fink (2015:1) presents Herbert Blumer as the father of symbolic interactionism. According to Fink (2015), symbolic interactionism is a term coined by Herbert Blumer (1900–1987) for his theory of self, interaction, meaning, and joint social acts (1936:518; 1937:153). Symbolic interactionism is a “micro-level theoretical framework and perspective in sociology that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals” (Carter & Fuller 2015:1; see also Shott 1979:1317-1334). Carter and Fuller (2015) add that “Central to symbolic interactionist thought is the idea that individuals use language and significant symbols in their communication with others” (p.1). Stryker (2001:14409-14413) maintains that: “Interactionism developed under the early influence of the Scottish moral philosophers, George Herbert Mead (1934), Charles Horton Cooley (1902) and William Isaac Thomas (1923). Other proponents of symbolic interactionism also known to Sheldon Stryker include Herbert Blumer (1969), Erving Goffman (1969) and Larry T. Reynolds (1993). Stryker concludes:

Subjectively held meanings are central to explaining or understanding social behavior. Meanings are products of persons’ communication as they seek solutions to collective problems, and humans’ capacity for symbolization. Of particular importance are meanings attached to self, others with whom persons interact, and situations of interaction; these guide interaction, and are altered in interaction. Implied is that who persons interact with under what circumstances is critical to the development of, and changes in, meanings and thus to interaction processes.



Baghdadi (2009:1) opines that: “Symbolic interactionism is one theoretical framework that is useful in exploring the origins of conflict.” Baghdadi (2009) further writes that: “Interactionism speaks to how parties can reach consensus, through a humanistic approach and willingness to see actions via the eyes of the actor carrying out the action, the receiving party can better interpret intentions and motivations” (p. 2). For Baghdadi (2009), “Symbolic interactionism presents a commonsensical approach to analyzing how two parties interpret each other’s actions” (p.3).

Having stated the rise and popularization of “symbolic interactionism” as a theory, the readership can now expect the appropriation (application) part in a discourse concerning the biblical Solomon (1 Kings 3:7-9) in light of the leadership in a contemporary church. As explained in this section, symbolic interactionism is a sociological theory that focuses on the way people interpret and give meaning to their interactions with others. In the light of 1 Kings 3:7-9, King Solomon’s interactions with God shapes his understanding of the situation which influences his decision-making. The interaction between Solomon and God began in 1 Kings 3:5, when God appeared to Solomon in a dream. God offered to give anything Solomon desired. It appears Solomon interpreted the engagement and interaction with God as a sign of favour and wisdom which led him to ask God for an understating heart to govern Yahweh’s people, Israel. In my view, the fact that Solomon is regarded as a wise and just king in the Bible is a portrayal that God granted Solomon what he had asked.

A few examples of Solomon’s demonstration of wisdom will suffice. In 1 Kings 3:16-28, we read of two women who had a dispute over the death of a baby. Solomon had suggested that the cutting of the baby in two halves. While the other woman had consented to the suggestion, the true mother did not buy the idea; rather she showed willingness to give up the baby in order to save life. For Solomon, the woman who did not agree with his suggestion was the mother of the baby. A rereading of 1 Kings 4:29-34, indicates that Solomon had become popular for his wisdom and ability to answer any question that was asked. It appears the entire kingdom was celebrating Solomon’s wisdom. Other texts that show Solomon’s wisdom include: 1 Kings 5:12; 10:1-13; Proverbs 1-29, among others. Wisdom to govern a nation cannot only be derived through interaction with God (technically known “vertical communication”) but also through interaction with local people, “horizontal communication” (see Terzić, 2018:110-118). It is noted elsewhere that vertical communication refers to the “flow of information and messages between different levels of an organization, typically from higher levels of management to lower levels or from supervisors to subordinates.” Representative examples of vertical communication include:

- 1) Instructions from a manager to an employee;
- 2) A memo from the CEO to all employees;
- 3) A report from a department head to the board of directors;
- 4) A directive from the human resources department to managers regarding new policies;
- 5) Performance evaluations from a supervisor to an employee.

Interaction also facilitates horizontal communication. Horizontal communication refers to “the flow of information and messages between individuals or groups at the same level within an organization. It involves the exchange of information and ideas between peers and colleagues” (see Terzić, 2018:110-118). Representative examples of horizontal communication include:

- 1) Team meetings and discussions among team members
- 2) Email or instant messaging exchanges between coworkers
- 3) Collaboration between departments or teams on a project
- 4) Brainstorming sessions among employees
- 5) Sharing of best practices between different departments or teams



In view of the above notations, one would argue that when an interaction ceases to exist either between two parties or among societies or any organization, it naturally invites polarization and consequently becomes detrimental to coexistence. In that sense, inclusion and discussion of symbolic interactionism in this study on the biblical Solomon attempts to vindicate the applicability of the theory in both the ancient near eastern narrative about leadership and the modern-day form of leadership, especially in the church. It can further be problematized that in order to fully comprehend a biblical text an interaction with the historical context and cultural setting from which the text/narrative emerged needs a serious consideration. This later view constitutes the milieu and the core for adopting a symbolic interactionism as a theory. In this study, interaction is stimulated by the task of exegesis of the text under investigation.

Methodology

The present study utilizes a *case study model* as an approach. A case study is a research method in which an in-depth examination of a specific situation or event is conducted. It is often used in the social sciences, such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology, as well as in business and education. Case studies can be single or multiple cases, and can use a variety of data collection methods, such as interviews, observation, and document analysis. Scholarly proponents of the case study method argue that it allows for a rich, detailed understanding of a complex phenomenon and can provide insights that would not be possible through other methods.

Previous contributions on a case study model are numerous to mention. Some notable examples include: Creswell (1998;2002;2007), Merriam (1998), Patton (2002), Sanders (1981), Stake (1995), and Yin (2014/2009/2003), among others. Robert K. Yin is considered one of the foremost experts on case study research. Yin is credited for the authorship of several books including *Case study research: Design and methods* (2014) and *Case study research: Design and methods* (2009), respectively. A contemporary of Robert K. Yin is John W. Creswell. Creswell also wrote several books on qualitative research methods, including: *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2003) and *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2007), among others. Merriam (1998) maintains that: "A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (p. 19).

A contemporary of Merriam, Creswell (1998) concurs that a case study involves "detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61). Creswell (2002) adds that a case study is "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system...based on extensive data collection" (p. 485). For Creswell (2002), a case study "relates to developing an in-depth understanding of a 'case' or bounded system...an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (p. 496).

In that sense, Yin (2003) recommends that: "You would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions-believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (p. 13). Both Merriam (1998), Creswell (1998) and Yin (2003) might have understood Sanders (1981)'s position for previously stating that: "Case studies help us to understand processes of events, projects, and programs and to discover context characteristics that will shed light on an issue or object" (p. 44). The present research scrutinizes Solomon's leadership as depicted in the text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 as a case study and appropriates the concepts from a hermeneutical perspective in our church today.



Exegesis of 1 Kings 3:7-9

The text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 reads:

Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. 8 Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. 9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?

The text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 correlates in every detail a similar narrative found in 2 Chronicles 1:7-13. They both talk about Solomon, son of David, becoming king over Israel. In developing a conversation of this study, an interface between 1 Kings 3:7-9 and 2 Chronicles 1:7-13 will be facilitated. By rereading 1 Kings 3:7-9, the focus is to establish how Solomon became a king over Israel and how the concepts can be appropriated in a modern church. As indicated previously in this study, Solomon is made king after his father David (v.7). Let us begin from the beginning of the narrative. Of special importance is the build-up to the appointment of Solomon as king which is found in 1 Kings 3:3-6. Verse 3a talks of Solomon as one who loved the Lord, and that he walked in his father's (David's) statutes. In view of the idea of verse 3a, it is presented that when one is obedient to his father's "statutes" (teachings/instructions), he is fundamentally obeying Yahweh's command as well. However, Solomon is presented as someone who played the priestly role because "he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places" (v.3b). Although Leviticus 1 offers instructions on sacrifices and burnt offerings, it appears ordinary individuals would voluntarily perform the ritual to show their complete allegiance to Yahweh (see Leviticus 1:3). For example, Abraham obeys Yahweh's instruction to offering his son Isaac as burnt offering on the mountain called Moriah (Genesis 22:2). In Genesis 22:16-17, God vows to bless Abraham for not withdrawing his son. At Mount Gibeon, Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings (v.4).

In my view, by leading the whole assembly of Israel to congregate at Mount Gibeon for sacrificial and burnt offering rituals, Solomon also won the hearts of the people in terms of identification and association with them. In fact, the act itself indirectly acted as an inauguration and validation of his position as king over Israel. Thus, the trajectories of both 1 Kings 2:12 that: "Solomon's kingdom was firmly established" and 1 Kings 2:46 that: "So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon", suggest an era of euphoria in the kingdom during the reign of Solomon. Meanwhile, the following night, Solomon had a dream in which God appeared to him and said: "Ask what shall I give thee"? (v.5). In view of both cases (Abraham and Solomon), it appears that a burnt offering had a tendency of attracting Yahweh's blessing. It appears also that sacrifices and burnt offerings at high places (Mt Horeb/Mt Sinai/Mt Gibeon/Mt Moriah) functioned as "points of contact" between humans and the divine (see Theron 2008:222). For example, Abraham went to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son Isaac where the angel of God revealed Himself to him; Moses was commissioned for the liberation of Israelites in Egypt at Mount Horeb; he also received the Decalogue at Mount Sinai; Solomon made sacrifices and burnt offerings at Mount Gibeon. It seems that without these points of contact, as Theron (2008) asserts, God would neither reveal Himself in any form nor grant individuals their requests. Perhaps, the concept of believers congregating at a shrine (e.g. church) might have originated from the practice of the OT. Nevertheless, in a modern church, the physical and material objects that used to impress God in ancient Israel to "appear" to and "bless" some individuals are no longer important parts of the "points of contact."



In fact, the point of contact is now acceptance of Jesus as the *Imago Dei* (the image of God) in which the idea of Trinity (God, Jesus and Holy Spirit) plays a central role (see Theron, 2008:222). Hence, Van Ruler (1947:200) agrees with the idea of the identification of Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Verse 6 is an affirmation of Solomon's kingship in which God is depicted as having chosen Solomon as successor to his father, David. The last part of verse 7 is interesting and I am persuaded to focus more on it. It reads: "...and I am a little child; I know not how to go out or to come in". Previously in this study, I mentioned about Solomon describing himself as a "little child". At the twilight of his lifetime, David told his son Solomon: "I go the way of all the earth; be thou strong therefore and shew thyself a man..." (1 Kings 2:2). The biblical text is not clear whether David either regarded his son Solomon as still young and had not reached manhood or he intended to encourage him to demonstrate his manhood.

There are assumptions that suggest that Solomon was 20 years¹ old when he reigned as king over Israel. Other scholars say he was aged 15 (Wiersbe, 2003:496). However, Solomon's statement "I am a little child" does not relate to age; the phrase "little child" is a metaphor which inferred Solomon's inability like a small child to perform the task of leading a nation as king. By saying this, Solomon demonstrated his humility. Verse 8a of 1 Kings 3 correlates with 2 Chronicles 1:10 which says: "Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people that is so great?" Both verses also express the idea that the king recognizes his own limitations and acknowledges that he needs wisdom from God in order to lead effectively. Proverbs 2:6 also carries the idea of 1 Kings 3:8a and 2 Chronicles 1:10. It states that: "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6). It can therefore be interpreted that both verses epitomize wisdom and understanding as emanating from God. My opinion is supported elsewhere that wisdom and understanding are highly valued qualities for leaders in the Bible, and the idea of seeking wisdom from God is a recurring theme (see also Noordmans, 1980:299).

Still on verse 8b, Solomon says the Israelites were "...too numerous to count or number". Unlike his father David, Solomon had not yet had a census to establish the population of the nation. Previous three (3) censuses showed the following figures:

- (1) By David (2 Samuel 24:9): 800,000² in Israel and 500,000 in Judah= 1,300 000
- (2) By Saul (1 Samuel 11:8): 300,000³ in Israel and 30,000 in Judah= 330,000
- (3) By Moses (Exodus 12:37): 600,000⁴ at the time of the exodus = 600,000

¹ David was 70 when he died. This means that David was about 50 when Solomon was born. This would explain the time needed for all the events that occurred between 2 Samuel 12 - 24, including: Amnon's rape of Tamar (2 Sam. 13); Absalom's murder of Amnon 2 years later (2 Sam. 13:23); Absalom's return to Jerusalem after 3 years (2 Sam. 13:38); Preparations for Absalom's Conspiracy of 4 years (2 Sam. 15:7); Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15-19); Sheba's rebellion (2 Sam. 20); 3 years of famine (2 Sam. 21:1); David's census (2 Sam.. 24); Preparations for rebellion of Adonijah (1 Kgs. 1). That is, about 20 years of events. For further reading on this aspect, see "Biblical Hermeneutics: How old was Solomon when he became king?" Available online at: <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/51218/how-old-was-solomon-when-he-became-king>. Accessed 24 January 2023.

² The assertion that this figure consists of men alone (women and children not counted) is a debate for another research. As far as the depiction of the biblical text is concerned, the above figures of population could have been much larger.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.



According to Saul's census, it seems the population of the Israelites declined when they settled in Palestine from 600,000 who left Egypt to 330,000. However, a census by King David doubled the number of a census by Moses. Perhaps, by the time Solomon became king over Israel, the number had increased tremendously. Hence, Solomon's statement about the Israelites that: "...too numerous to count or number" (v.8b). Verse 9 of 1 Kings 3 can also be found in verse 11 of 2 Chronicles 1 which states that:

And God said to Solomon, because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king.

The above two verses describe God granting wisdom which Solomon had requested from Yahweh. Meanwhile, it can be noted that in the above verses there is no mentioning of Solomon asking for wealth, honour or power over his enemies. Instead, Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge to govern the people justly. One can also read of "humility" in 1 Kings 3:9 with a hindsight of the Psalter's notion of God "makes wise the simple" (Psalms 19:7) and that: "The lips of the wise spread knowledge" (Proverbs 15:7). However, John L. McKenzie opines that the Israelite scribes "affirmed God himself was the original and primary wise one, from whom all wisdom was derived and imitated" (1974:209).

In Scripture, the Hebrew term for wisdom is חֵכְמָה (*hikma* meaning "wisdom") and it "is more closely associated with the skill of the woodcutter than the ecstasies of the mystic" (see Leithart, 1999:43). Leithart further writes that: "The Hebrew word for wisdom means 'artistic skill' (Exodus 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; 1 Kings 7:14) ... Proverbs is a book of instruction concerning skillful living, teaching how to construct a life that is attractive, fitting, and beautiful" (p. 43). Kruger (2015) says Jesus is pictured as Wisdom incarnate. Kruger's opinion further problematizes the old argument against the notion of Wisdom literature as making an indirect reference to Jesus. Meanwhile, Noordmans (1980) writes:

Here, in the street, He is the triumphing general who takes possession of his Kingdom ... Here Jesus is at home and here we see his glory totally. This is the true atmosphere of the Gospel ... The mysteries of the parables have now broken out and manifest themselves before everybody's eyes ... One must pay attention to who comes out in public and one will know who God is and what the Gospel is. (p. 299)

The Solomonic concept of wisdom is also captured in the New Testament (NT) book of James 1:5 which reads: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." It can further be problematized that the author of the book of James (1:5) was a reader of the Hebrew Bible who familiarized himself with the wisdom literature, especially the Solomonic narrative. In the 1 Corinthians 1:27-28, the Apostle Paul writes of wisdom as follows:

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are.

Hence, Brian S. Rosner was not in the wrong for stating that: "The OT plays a rather subsidiary role in Paul's ethics" (2013:129). A deduction from Paul's view of wisdom suggests that worldly



wisdom is not proper wisdom. Pauline theology comprises various inclinations which depict that wisdom and insight derive from God through the Holy Spirit (e.g., Ephesians 1:17-21; 1 Corinthians 2:14).

1 Kings 3:7-9 as הִנְנִי [“Here I am”]: A hermeneutical perspective

In Solomon’s prayer (i.e. 1 Kings 3:7-9), the readership is presented with a leader professing his availability for a task in which God is the master-planner. With some examples drawn from the biblical text itself, I will discuss Solomon’s prayer to God above in relation to the Hebrew term הִנְנִי (*Hannī* meaning “Here I am” or “I am here” or “Here am I”). It is used as a response to a call or summons, and is often used in the Bible to indicate a willingness to serve or obey. Some examples from the biblical text will suffice. In my opinion, it is envisaged that Solomon’s prayer (1 Kings 3:7-9) can be situated within the broader framework of previous interactions (hence, *symbolic interactionism*) in which God is depicted as calling and commissioning some individuals for specific assignments. Examples of these individuals include: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah. In Genesis 22:1, Abraham is called by God in order to instruct him on the sacrifice that God needed. Abraham responded by saying הִנְנִי and went ahead to mount Moriah to sacrifice his son Isaac as instructed.

Although the sacrifice and burnt offering did not finally happen because the angel from God instructed him not to continue (see Genesis 22:11), Abraham once again acknowledged Yahweh’s instruction for the withdrawal by saying הִנְנִי (v.11). In Genesis 31:11, Jacob also responded God with הִנְנִי which he also said in another incident (see Genesis 46:2). When Moses had intended to draw closer to the burning bush at Mount Horeb, God “called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said ‘Moses, Moses’, and he said, ‘הִנְנִי’” (Exodus 3:4). The conversation between God and Moses at this point is interpreted as the beginning of the assignment to liberate the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage. Samuel’s response to Yahweh’s call for ministry was also followed with a הִנְנִי (1 Samuel 3:4). הִנְנִי is also found in Isaiah (6:8). In view of examples of הִנְנִי as explained above, it is highly likely that the phrase refers to the act of being present and ready, not only to answer Yahweh’s call, but also an affirmation of acceptance of a specific task of ministry. A few remarks can be made considering the concepts within the text under investigation. The following three points are under the spotlight:

- 1) God appoints individual leaders for vacant positions;
- 2) “I am a little child”: admittance of inadequacy;
- 3) Acknowledgement of citizens as God’s people: they deserve good governance

God appoints individual leaders for vacant positions

The text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 is silent about Solomon forcefully trying to seize power from his father David. The text shows that Solomon assumed the reign of kingship with the blessing from his father. In addition, God endorsed and confirmed Solomon’s kingship with His appearance in a dream. The text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 can be a valuable reminder for church leaders today. The practice of manipulation and conniving with individuals in order to be considered for a leadership position, including corruption and bribery, contradict ethical practices and moral obligations which characterize the biblical text. When Syed Alatas cites bribery as the “number one problem” in the Third World countries (Alatas, 1986:102), in my view, the church in Africa is not exonerated. It seems that in our modern African society, corruption and bribery are emanating from the church and eventually spilling over to every stratum of society. One would concur with Joseph Farragher’s observation that: “Efforts should be made to change the system which permits such action” (1979:524). Church leaders need to be appointed on merit and they should be: God-fearing,



qualified, trained in theology, skilled, with integrity and humility, focused, ideally married, and be individuals that take care of their families well. People who want to associate themselves with the church for material and monetary gains, should know that they are not doing the correct thing. Rebellion against a constitutionally and democratically elected leader is also a violation of God's principles and liturgical requirements.

"I am a little child": admittance of inadequacy

Previously in this study, it was discussed that Solomon regarded himself as a "little child". Solomon recognized that he was young and inexperienced to lead a nation. Hence, he asked God for wisdom and guidance to govern Israel justly and effectively. One would also notice Solomon's familiarization with induction and orientation as crucial components of organizational ethics to be conducted when a new employee joins the company. Daisy Raj writes that:

Welcoming new hire to the company is induction. It is a well-planned program to socialize the new joiner with the co-workers and the workplace. The term "induction" is derived from a Latin term "inducere" which refers "to bring or introduce". In this process, a person is formally admitted to the company as an employee, to take charge of a particular post (2017:481).

Because there was no human aide to assist and guide Solomon through the induction and orientation processes, he appealed to God to assist him. In view of Solomon's "I am a little child; I know not how to go out or to come in", a new employee (regardless of attainment of higher education level) who is open-minded and ready to receive ideas and suggestions from colleagues who have been in the system for much longer and who have the technical and operational experiences, will have a grand opportunity and more chances of excelling in his or her job performance. Arrogance and pompousness usually attract insubordination since people are desirous of being treated with dignity and respect by servant leaders. As shown by Solomon at Mount Gibeon, good rapport with subordinates in the church commences at the beginning when one assumes a leadership position.

Acknowledgement of citizens as God's people: they deserve good governance

1 Kings 3:7-9 describes God appearing to King Solomon in a dream and offering to grant him any gift he desires. Solomon asks for wisdom and understanding so that he can *govern God's people justly*. The text highlights the need for leaders to seek God's guidance and wisdom in order to lead justly and effectively. The text also highlights that true wisdom is not about wealth, honor or power over enemies, but about the ability to govern justly and with understanding. In other words, the church leadership must have integrity to prioritize the needs of the people they are leading over their own personal gain. This aspect can be avoided by offering sound theological training as well as equipping potential leaders with skills for self-sustaining. The above pinion may serve as a response to Nacpil (1971:120)'s argument that: "The churches do very little to equip their people for life in the real world; they train their laity mainly for participation in the activities of the church." In the same vein, let us take into perspective the age question. The text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 does not help the readership to understand Solomon's age when he began his reign as king over Israel. As already indicated in this study, some theorists proposed that Solomon was about 20 years old when he began to reign as Israel's king. Other writers suggest the age of 15 (e.g. Wiersbe, 2003:496). Nevertheless, the text shows that age does not matter in terms of assuming a position of leadership. In my opinion, age may not be a serious hindrance that prohibits someone as a possible candidate for a leadership position in the church. The biblical text presents Solomon as a good king. In Hebrew, Solomon's name is שְׁלֹמֹה (*Šālōmō* meaning "peace"). During the reign of Solomon, the monarchy enjoyed relative peace and a dispensation of euphoria. It remains a



mystery whether a name influenced behavior and thought pattern in ancient Israel. Whatever the case, Solomon is celebrated as a wise king in the OT.

Conclusion

This study employed a case study model to discuss Solomon's assumption of a kingship position over Israel (1 Kings. 3:7-9). From a hermeneutical perspective, the research analyzed the concepts from the text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 and appropriated these concepts in a modern church context. The objective of such an appropriation was to utilize the chosen text as an inspirational teaching for the modern-day church. The study utilized *symbolic interactionism* as a theoretical framework. It was shown that the biblical text depicts Solomon as a good king over Israel. Hence, the modern church was challenged to emulate Solomon's leadership style. It was argued that Solomon did not usurp power when his father was still king. It was shown that leadership should be earned and not manipulated through corruption and/or bribery. The study discussed it as a shameful practice when some aspiring church leaders would not only coerce congregants to consider them for leadership positions, but also bribe some individuals to influence the outcome of the decision in their favour. Some scholars mentioned corruption as a "number one problem" in Third World countries and in my humble opinion, Africa comes to the fore. It was shown that Solomon asked God for wisdom to govern the people of Israel well. It is in the best interest of the church congregation to be led and guided by an individual who does not lack in wisdom. The choice of a wise person as leader can be aided by gathering enough evidence about the candidate's previous roles in a leadership capacity. Unlike the text of 1 Kings 3:7-9 in which God is depicted as dictating the enthronement of Solomon, most modern churches are guided by their constitution to conduct democratic processes toward electing leaders. Such processes should be adhered to. Like Abraham, Jacob, Samuel and Isaiah who responded to God's call for duty by saying הִנְנִי ("Here I am"), potential church leaders should be readily available for the cause to serve and not for material or monetary gains. Leaders may not be materially wealthy like King Solomon; but rich in wisdom.

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