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Promises of the patriarchy: a study of leadership within the Promise Keepers Movement

Daniel W. Beeman

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Promises of the Patriarchy:
A Study of Leadership within the Promise Keepers Movement

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May, 1999
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INTRODUCTION

In the study of leadership, there are a plethora of incredible opportunities to experience and understand leadership firsthand. We study great leaders and great leadership scholars. However, it always seemed that current leadership studies have missed a great mark; they have failed to adequately recognize the leadership studies potential in large groups and organizations. Granted leadership studies examines the Jack Welch of General Electric, but how often does this field look at the organization as a whole in order to understand leadership? Surely there are studies, but those arguably do not have nearly as significant a presence than those of individual leaders do. After considering this to an extensive degree, it was concluded that the study of leadership of a large group or movement would be a beneficial contribution to the field of leadership studies.

In leadership studies, the numerous contexts that must come into the study of any person, group, or theory are recognized. In order to understand a particular group or organization, it was important to select one that had specific contexts with it that could be included in the study and analysis. For that reason, the examination of leadership within a men’s religious movement, in this case,
the Promise Keepers (PK), brings interesting application of leadership to specific but understandable contexts. By looking at the roles that gender and faith play in an organization and their leadership, this paper will make a significant advance in leadership studies that is not overwhelmingly present. The field of leadership studies will be able to use this as a way to understand those two contexts in addition to being able to see one more way to look at the leadership of an entire movement.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Promise Keepers is an organization founded in 1990 with the intention of calling men to what they believe to be biblical responsibilities. With that interest in mind, they determined their mission:

Promise Keepers is a Christian outreach aimed at building men of integrity. Through stadium conferences, ongoing local small groups, educational seminars, resource materials, and local churches, Promise Keepers encourages men to live godly lives and to keep seven basic promises of commitment to God, their families, and fellow men. Promise Keepers seeks to unite Christian men of all races, denominations, ages, cultures, and socio-economic groups, believing that accountable relationships among men are critical in helping one another become promise keepers in their relationships with God, their wives, their children, each other, and their communities.

The growth of the organization is something that is widely documented in available literature. The way that the movement has taken on a life of its own is something worthy of study since it will greatly affect the leadership and followership and the dynamics of those in leadership positions in the organization:

Call it a movement, an awakening, a revival, or a phenomenon. Whatever the handle, "We've got a tiger by the tail, and it's pulling us, we're not pulling it," says Randy Phillips, president of Promise Keepers, the burgeoning men's ministry based in Denver, Colorado.

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In 1995, the “tiger” drew 727,000 men to 20 athletic stadiums to sing, pray, and hear what popular media has deemed the “gospel of guyhood.” It has called hundreds of thousands of men—many from groups other than Promise Keepers—to form mentoring groups in their local areas to support brothers who have committed to reclaim leadership roles in the family, church and community. Those roles and the key tenets of the Promise Keepers movement come in their Seven Promises:

1. A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.
3. A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.
4. A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection and biblical values.
5. A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources.
6. A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
7. A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (see Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19-20).

The PK promises are the key beliefs of any man wishing to become a Promise Keeper. Upon making the pledge to uphold the Seven Promises, one is deemed a member of the

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*A term used frequently in Christian religious movements to denote their relationship as brothers incorporate in the “Body of Christ” or the worldwide universal church.*
organization and a follower of the movement, according to Promise Keeper literature.

Because of the massiveness of the PK movement and because of the explosiveness with which the movement has grown since its creation in 1990, the amount of media attention that it has received has been phenomenal. From the secular media, academic journals, religious journals, and even books written on the movement, there is a great deal to learn about what the Promise Keepers do and how they do it.

Much of the literature will be covered in the analysis section; nevertheless, an initial glance at that literature is important in the literature review. The information was readily available in common print—as much in secular print as in faith based articles. In fact, in a literature search for “Promise Keepers” on the Internet, over 200 sites return, with 128 of them being “testimonies” of how PK changed their lives. That is an important part of the Promise Keeper movement.

One non-academic writer, Ken Abraham authored a book titled, Who Are the Promise Keepers? in which he shares countless stories of men who have begun to live a life completely different than before due to the Promise Keepers. They are attempting to make men responsible to
each other, themselves, their wives, and their God. Again, one can find infinite sources of Promise Keepers who have been transformed by these messages, embracing people of a different race when they would never have even considered it before. Another book of the same nature, titled What Makes a Man?, exhibits the same testimonies while another author took the same title and added a workbook and study guide.

Various periodicals and newsmagazines have published information regarding PK and their movement. Some of the articles have been in reaction to anti-PK attacks, while many have documented the movement's growth and dynamics. Articles have appeared in Time, "Man Trouble: Broken Promises"; Christianity Today, "McCartney on the Roubound"; People Weekly, "Bill McCartney: A Onetime Coach Exhorts Men to Tackle Their Spiritual Duties"; and America, "Promise Keepers: How Should Catholics Respond?" and endless other sources.

The organization has also seen incredible growth in "spin-offs" of the group, including magazines such as New Man, as well as books with masculine titles, Strong Men in Tough Times, Standing Tall, Strong Men, Weak Men, Man to and Reclaiming Manhood, among others. These different spin-offs are all attempts by authors to reach
the 'man of men' using the current presence of masculine leadership and theology which seems to be accepted more now than ever," wrote one secular writer\textsuperscript{13}.

The organization's actions and leadership have caused many academic areas to heavily study the group and publish their findings. PK is the subject of various chapters in books on men's movements in the realm of sociology, as demonstrated by Sociologist Michael Messner, who dedicated a substantial part of his book, \textit{Politics of Masculinites: Men in Movements}\textsuperscript{14}, to the study and understanding of the Promise Keepers. Further studies have been done since and have resulted in over 39 studies of the Promise Keepers as a sociological movement worth considerable study\textsuperscript{15}.

One such study extensively visited the use of masculinity and sports as an attraction to followers. The study by sociologist Becky Beal, "The Promise Keepers' Use of Sport in Defining 'Christlike' Masculinity", analyzes how the Promise Keepers uses sports as a means of promoting a specific masculinity in its faith\textsuperscript{16}.

Another study was shown to analyze the use of faith as a means to support racial reconciliation among men\textsuperscript{17}. This study demonstrates that the Promise Keepers have also done extensive work in reaching beyond denominational and racial barriers. On the racial issue, Promise Keepers went so far
as to form four main points to change their followers regarding racism. These four points challenge the typical Christian to move beyond his own race and seek to understand and embrace people of other races.

Because this paper attempts to look at the PK movement in the realm of leadership studies, it is important to acknowledge the literature sources available on leadership studies. However, those sources are beyond number and in order to narrow those resources only to things specifically applicable to the study of the PK movement, they will be discussed in more detail in the analysis section of the study.
**Methodology**

In order to examine the impact of leadership on a major social movement, the research began with a series of important questions. It was necessary to obtain a solid working knowledge of the details of the organization. To do this, the first step was to understand the movement and uncover as many aspects of the group as possible, from the group’s methods, goals, practices, policies, and particularly its leaders.

The literature review demonstrates a lot of the things that are made known about the Promise Keeper movement. It demonstrated the background of the group, its origins, its public leaders, and its structure. In addition, several sources went so far as to look at the leadership structure of the group. Those insights were important and quite useful in the study; however, they drew very few conclusions and failed to substantially look at contemporary leadership theories.

Those gaps in the literature search and study of the PK movement prompted the deep analysis of the information. As seen in the analysis section, there were questions that remained unanswered in currently available information. In order to fill that gap, it was necessary to look at the information available and apply current leadership theory.
based on contemporary leadership scholars and what information was available.

The research for the PK organization was not difficult, but very time consuming in obtaining. A study of the popular media delivered a very superficial look at the group with occasional commentary on the leadership that could be seen. In addition, because the group makes very solid stances in the area of gender roles, there was a great deal of counter media coverage that had to be sifted through in order to find substantive information—articles written in the interest of a woman’s perspective or in the interest of feminism were abundant. In order to find substantive information, a thorough literature review was made of scholarly materials in theological journals as well as other noteworthy newsmagazines. Those articles gave both unbiased and critical examination to the Promise Keeper movement.

In order to achieve an insider’s view of the organization, several attempts were made to understand what both a group member and a professional member of the organization experience. The first step to do this was to actually participate in one of the organization’s events. To achieve this goal, an event in the style that almost all group members initially become involved, one of the Promise
Keepers’ annual stadium events, was attended. Attending the event at The Metrodome in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, July 23-25, 1998, gave an overall understanding of what takes place as well as the ability to obtain initial information about the group.

The next step was making contact with a member in the organization. Contact was made and interviews were conducted with a member of the staff in PK’s regional offices in Colorado. Several electronic mail correspondences as well as phone conversations gave an insight into the organization and helped narrow down the information available. Further, it provided an opportunity to understand PK from an insider’s perspective—someone who not only had made a commitment to the group’s tenets, but who had made them his professional career.

Finally, information was gathered that would discuss PK for their standing as a prominent social movement in the United States today. That information came in sociological journals and studies of movements, particularly those that were based on both gender and faith. Those studies offered a great deal of insight as to what the groups valued and how they operated in relation to society.

From that stepping point, a solid grasp was obtained on how leadership affected the PK movement both from the
inside and from the outside. Their leadership styles had been experienced first hand in addition to primary and secondary sources that all understood the leadership from its own perspective. From that point, the overwhelming amount of leadership that the group was using, aspired, or should use, began to filter itself out into a few clear definitions. The remaining work came in seeing where PK was already using healthy and productive leadership and where they may need to begin looking to change that leadership in order to maximize their potential.
ANALYSIS

The Promise Keepers show a strong lesson in how leaders are sometimes faced with more than they intended to lead:

"What would it be like," wondered McCartney, "if a stadium full of men in each state across the country..." In 1991, 4,200 men showed up in Colorado for the first Promise Keepers Conference. In July, 1992, bolstered by the support of other evangelical groups..., attendance swelled to 22,000. In 1993, more than 50,000 men fulfilled McCartney's goal of "packing out" the University of Colorado football stadium. Promise Keepers estimates its 1994 events in California, Idaho, Oregon, Indiana, Texas, and Colorado attracted more than 230,000. McCartney's [fulfilled] vision for 1996 [was] putting a million men on the Capitol mall18.

If one considers that the original vision of McCartney and the other PK founders was only to have a men's Christian movement begin, he can easily see how this movement has spun out of control. In other words, the "tiger by the tail" that is pulling the movement is its followers and believers as much as its leaders.

The Promise Keeper movement brings to the Leadership Studies arena far more than it ever promised. Because of the massiveness of the organization, the sociological specificity of the organization (its purpose, membership, and design), and the leadership styles of the administration, one can see that the information about PK offers a wealth of analysis into leadership implications.
In order to understand those different leadership implications in a more cogent manner, three areas will be examined in this section of analysis: The contexts of both spiritual and gender based leadership, the leadership of the organization as a whole, and the leadership of the founder and director, Bill McCartney. All three areas prove to demonstrate a great deal of the leadership lessons that the PK movement offers, both in theory and in practice.

**Contexts of Spiritual and Gender Based Leadership**

Leadership studies will lend a great deal of knowledge about the workings of the PK organization. However, before understanding the different leadership styles and formations that the Promise Keepers have used, it is important to understand the different contexts that come into play when discussing a group of this nature. Those contexts are the conditions of both the male gender and Christian spirituality.

Michael Messner, a sociology professor at the Program for the Study of Women and Men in Society at the University of Southern California, writes extensively of these two variables in *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*. In this book, he discusses the mythopoetic men’s movement in America. Defined in layman’s terms, the “expressive
men’s movement” attempts to allow men the freedom to express their “spirit, heart, and feelings” while still maintaining their masculine and fatherly roles in society. This movement has caused a great deal of men to feel that it is now, for the first time, acceptable to have more free, open relationships with other men without crossing out of the “respectable man’s traditional role”\textsuperscript{19}. The mythopoetic movement that America is facing is likely traced to the feminist movement as of recent decades and is an attempt to allow men to regain a sense of gender definition. Messner describes that the movement finds the “retreat ritual” to be necessary—congregating in a “male” environment such as a football stadium, for example—in order to allow men to truly experience their gender roles.

To substantiate his thoughts, he refers a great deal to another sociologist who has written extensively on male Christian movements, Michael Kimmel, of the University of California at Berkeley. Kimmel writes that not only is there a movement for men’s spirituality in this “mythopoetic” era, but that it is embraced by men, particularly when paired with typically macho men’s experiences, what he calls Muscular Christianity:

The goal of Muscular Christian was to revitalize the image of Jesus and thus remasculinize the Church. Jesus was “no dough-
faced, lick spittle proposition," proclaimed evangelist Billy Sunday, but "the greatest scrapper who ever lived." Look to Jesus, counseled Luther Gulick of the YMCA, for an example of "magnificent manliness."

The Promise Keeper movement has played on this part of male spirituality in many forms in their leadership styles. They encourage their leadership to "play to the man in the men's movement," according to PK spokesman Steven O'Toole. And the leadership does just that. The remasculinized image of Jesus has become a central focus of the PK attempt to gain men's attention and keep it. Promise Keeper keynote speaker Tony Evans, noted:

I am convinced that the primary cause of this national crisis is the feminization of the American male. When I say feminization (emphasis his), I am not talking about sexual preference. I'm trying to describe a misunderstanding of manhood that has produced a nation of "sissified" men who abdicate their role as spiritually pure leaders, thus forcing women to fill that vacuum.

PK almost fulfills their oxy moron. They want to encourage men to break down the need to be "macho," so they do it by reassuring men of their machismo, and then encouraging them to move beyond it. This is a profound way to encourage them and to lead them. By showing them a clear way to embrace typical masculinity—having events in stadiums instead of churches, singing hymns an octave lower than sensible, and not allowing women to attend events—they can allow men to be comfortable expressing themselves in front
of each other. This leadership is contextual and creative, but lacks one specific style of leadership. Because of this it is important to look at the actual leadership styles of the group.

After already discussing the different ways that men as a gender group differ from women in a spiritual and group experiential setting, some other ways that PK targets men in particular can be contemplated. The first and most obvious is their insistence in what some would describe as a “military” style of leadership. Swomley, a critical writer for The Humanist, discusses this, “The concept of a Christian nation or a theocracy ruled from the top is based on fundamentalist ideology or selected verses from the Bible which justify such rule.” He discusses how the PK movement has attempted to reach men through this structure:

Now, however, there is a mass movement—Promise Keepers—that not only speaks of organizing an army of men but has hired retired military officers to help it organize in [and out of] the armed forces.... Another is Jim Pack, a retired Green Beret colonel who was a psychological warfare specialist at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and is now PK manager of the Texas region. PK has found this use of these military men to be quite successful. “Men are more comfortable dealing on a level that is structural and has less emotion. So, we can hit them with leadership that is traditional and less emotional and then once the stadium event comes, we can let the
emotion free”\textsuperscript{24}. Addressing a 1996 conference of military chaplains in Atlanta, Chuck Stecker, a retired Special Forces lieutenant colonel, said:

I believe with all of my heart that the military structure that we know and love so well is perfect for the accountable relationship God is calling us to in Promise Keepers. That same structure, whether it be at the squad level, squadron level, and so forth, is exactly what we need.... Quite frankly, and having served in a Ranger battalion, if a squad leader did not know where his soldiers were, his Rangers, he was not doing his job. And in order to be able to know those things, he had to be in accountable relationships with them in order to develop that [sic]\textsuperscript{25}.

The military metaphor is not just a cliché that the Promise Keeper leadership has used in order to interest men. The military structure has been used quite extensively in an attempt to play to the needs of the men involved.

**Leadership of McCartney**

The Promise Keeper movement began with Coach Bill McCartney in 1990. Football coach for the University of Colorado, he transformed the team into a successful and record breaking college football team. But as his career began to take off, he began to see his family life suffer. After a series of intense personal failures in life, ranging from his daughter’s out of wed-lock children to his wife’s depression and treatment, he had what he called a vision:
In the spring of 1990 he and his friend Dave Wardell, an official of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, were preparing to travel from Boulder to Pueblo when McCartney was struck by a vision of stadiums filled with men willing to become deeply committed Christians. “He jumped in the car and said, ‘let’s pray’,” says Wardell. We prayed for three and a half hours”

In 1994 McCartney gave up his football career—not to devote more time to his Promise Keepers movement—but to give the time to his wife. He stated, “I must lead by example first. How can I ask others to give themselves more to their wives if I don’t do it myself. I have to show the people [in the movement] that I am one of them”

Having one particular leader who began the PK movement gives us a lot to examine in the realm of leadership studies. We can see the way that one particular person affects the group or movement and how he or she does it. With McCartney, it is easy because his leadership is his life. He seeks to spread his ideas because he feels convicted to do it.

McCartney is also careful to continually ensure that he is playing to the “man in the men’s movement”. As a very well known former football coach, he has instant recognition and the respect of even the least spiritual in the nation. Further, he uses that position in order to enhance his leadership. His stationary reads, “From the
Coach...", his business cards read, "Bill McCartney, Coach," and he wears a Promise Keepers jersey to most events. This allows the followers to see that athletic and masculine side to him when looking to him for leadership.

Most every person who tries to describe McCartney gives us a classic definition of charismatic leadership. He, as the highest leader in the organization, epitomizes that concept through his actions, his speech, and his beliefs. McCartney particularly fulfills the definition brought forward by Nadler and Tushman, who wrote that charismatic leadership, "refers to a special quality that enables the leader to mobilize and sustain activity within an organization through specific personal actions combined with perceived personal characteristics"\(^{28}\).

Further, a more specific definition of charismatic leadership came from Max Weber, a German sociologist, who broke charisma down in order to understand not only what it was, but where it originated and how it affected others. Weber showed that people followed a charismatic leader because they were enamored with the leader, believing they were superhuman or extraordinary. He noted that charismatic leaders (and their followers) nearly always surface during a time of social duress or disturbance\(^{29}\). It is not difficult to place McCartney in the realm of
charismatic leader. He fits the traditional models of charismatic leadership and he has come to a place of leadership at a time of what sociologists have called, “a breakdown of masculinity” and at a time the faithful have called, “greatly in need of spiritual and faithful renewal”.

Clearly, there are times when charismatic leadership alone cannot drive a leader to success. With a movement such as this, one must look beyond the most recognized leader and his or her leadership style in order to understand how leadership works on all of the different levels of the organization.

**Leadership of the Movement**

The Promise Keepers have done a great deal in order to see that every aspect of their organization is acting in ways which will further growth, dependence, and support of their group. Because of that, they do not simply work from a top down hierarchical structure, but rather with people on all levels working to recruit, train, and educate other members of the group.

One way they have been willing to work in order to maximize support of their cause is to address the beliefs and diversity of their followers. The Promise Keepers movement attempts to be ecumenical in nature. That is,
they have realized that in dealing with Christian spiritual issues, they cannot narrow their focus. They learned early that Christianity in America takes on so many forms that they must be open minded in order to avoid alienating a great deal of potential followers. Thus they must be willing to adjust their leadership styles, beliefs, and teachings in order to maximize followership across different cultures.

PK did not learn the concept of adjusting for diversity and culture from textbook manuals, but rather from experience of failure when they refused to adjust to different situations. One classic example came when they essentially alienated all Roman Catholic men in the United States (and quite possible most other Anglican, Orthodox, and Lutheran men as well). A Catholic writer describes the beliefs challenged, "a major obstacle was removed recently when Promise Keepers agreed to change its mission statement, which said that individuals are redeemed by 'faith alone'". This theological belief was at the heart of the Protestant 16th Century split with Rome. The new mission statement emphasizes what Promise Keepers believe to be an essential belief to all Christians, that, "redemption comes through Jesus Christ."
In a study of how we look at leadership, Martin M. Chemers wrote extensively on the way leaders and followers act regarding culture:

The culture, through the processes of socialization, helps to shape the needs, values, and personality of leaders and followers.... Further, cultural norms create expectations and judgements about the appropriate behavior of leaders and their group members. The cultural expectations of the society’s members then influence the patterns of leadership exhibited.

To even further the support of adjusting for culture and diversity, PK not only found a way to change their words in order to keep Roman Catholic men (making up about 35 million believers in the United States alone) as viable prospective followers, but they also began to find ways to recruit them on their level through action. “PK organized a Roman Catholic mass as part of its Rich Stadium conference in 1997.... The mass was designed to prepare Catholic men for participation in the PK conference.” The actual practices at the PK events are somewhat more evangelical and emotional than most Catholic men are used to and PK attempts to make them more comfortable by first offering a mass in their style, “in order to ease tension and make them feel more included” in the actual stadium events.”
This level of adjusting for culture and diversity shows us that they do a great deal in order to attract and keep followers with different needs and different ideas. But does this leadership alone keep followers? Not likely, according to most researchers who have analyzed the PK movement. Instead, they must work on a level that will coerce people not only to come to one stadium event or rally, but to stay involved, recruit others, and encourage each other. To make up for that, Promise Keepers use a few different leadership styles and techniques, some of them are classic and defined, some are not.

PK leadership recognized in the earliest stages that they would not be able to keep followers based on a once a year event in a stadium. Instead, they would have to find something that would keep members involved throughout the year. Their inclusion of one of the Promises of a Promise Keeper, number two, encourages just that, “A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises”\(^38\).

In an attempt to keep lower leaders and even non-leading members in the organization, the Promise Keepers have developed a pyramid like structure to recruit and maintain followers. The system works based on members
trained to train more members. PK states in its literature dated early 1998, “Since 1996 more than 120,000 men have been trained by Promise Keepers to lead small groups of men in local communities”\(^{39}\). Each group is led by a “key man”, chosen and trained by PK on a national level. These key men then report to ambassadors, who in turn report to national headquarters, the activities within their scope of leadership.

PK states that they want to have these key men in every church in America, helping men to form the relationships and commitments that PK supports. McCartney was widely criticized for saying, “The goal is to go into every church whether they like us or not”\(^{40}\). He noted this in his auto-biography as well as stating it in many press conferences. This brings many non-PK religious to be weary of the group and their intentions. Swomley writes, “Obviously, PK does not want to alert existing churches and denominations to its intent to supplant them…”\(^{41}\). It is not clear whether or not they truly intend to “supplant” the other churches, as Swomley suggests. However, the PK leadership has been criticized extensively for attempting to recruit members away from less fundamental denominations and faiths. Though the Promise Keepers are not a religion, it is suggested that they may draw others away from
denominations that are Christian but that do not share their same theology.

One Roman Catholic archbishop, Charles Chaput of the northern Colorado Archdiocese, has publicly stated belief in the PK movement and their intentions. "The archbishop admires the fact that Promise Keepers preaches Jesus Christ effectively to men and he knows men have a deep hunger for that message," said Fran Maier, chancellor of the archdiocese. 'He wants Catholics to do a better job of that as Catholics'". However, even with such support of a high-ranking Roman Catholic in America, it does not come without a major disclaimer. The PK message outwardly attempts to seek converts to a "born again" form of Protestant Christianity. McCartney himself denied his Catholic background for the "born again" lifestyle, "A bright spot occurred in June of 1988 when I began taking our family to a new church, the Boulder Valley Vineyard. After fifteen years of living as a born-again Catholic..." McCartney has since stated publicly that while he appreciates his Catholic history, leaving the Catholic faith is what actually allowed him to be a Christian.

In response to this, Archbishop Chaput has cautioned his flock of over 340,000 Roman Catholics that they must "resist evangelical pressure to give up their Catholic
faith". Other faiths, even mainline Protestant faiths, have had the same considerations for their believers. One Presbyterian minister, after his first attendance, wrote his concerns about the movement, including that the PK movement may be based on too much emotion and not enough substance. Further, he was concerned that the more "emotional and evangelical" Presbyterian Promise Keepers may feel compelled to leave the church. DeCelle, the Presbyterian minister, stated, "It is scary that we have to worry that an 'ecumenical faith movement' could be a threat to individual faiths".

These concerns by men Religious in the United States cause us to wonder the intentions of the PK movement. If truly ecumenical, their attempt would not be to convert members to a particular faith, but to encourage them to understand, improve, and embrace their own while respecting, supporting, and embracing others'. "In an ecumenical movement, there should be no room for changing [or transforming] a follower to believe another way."

But PK doesn't say they're ecumenical in that nature. They are ecumenical in their approach to belief— in that they welcome people of all different theologies. However, their entire existence is in order to support their Seven
Promises (or tenets) and they attempt to convert people to a faith that supports belief in those tenets.

Whether or not the Promise Keepers are clearly stating their intentions is not necessarily clear. It has been argued by many opposed to the PK theology that they are engaging in unethical behavior because they are recruiting members, “based on a whim of emotion. While in that emotion, they are forcing them to make pledges and oaths.... Once a man makes a promise, he’s expected to keep it, even if he may have made that pledge under duress”46.

Even though many opponents to the PK movement argue it is unethical or immoral leadership, it is important to look to see what leadership scholars would examine in order to make such a determination. James MacGregor Burns discusses moral leadership at great length in Leadership. He notes what it takes for a leader to be moral:

...that leaders and led have a relationship not only of power but of mutual needs, aspirations, and values; second, that in responding to leaders, followers have adequate knowledge of alternative leaders and programs and the capacity to choose among those alternatives; and, third, that leaders take responsibility for their commitments—if they promise certain kinds of... change, they assume leadership in the bringing about of that change47.

In examining the PK movement and the way that followers are affected, Burns adds one final note, noting that moral leadership always involves, “leadership that can produce
social change that will satisfy followers' authentic needs."

To answer whether or not the leadership of the Promise Keepers are answering these stringent demands of Burns and other leadership scholars, one need look only at the followers of the movement. The hundreds of thousands of current followers demonstrate that their needs have dramatically been met. They have made the decision to join their fellow followers, many having made the choice to join not only the Promise Keepers but also a new local church or denomination. Their choices are free and clear over other theology or non-theology and they report overwhelming happiness regarding their decision to join the organization.

However, simply leaving the analysis of leadership as truly moral would not be enough. PK is truly changing people. In fact, most all of the information about the Promise Keepers is that they transform followers in their behavior, their belief, and their lifestyle. They do this by getting to the heart of the follower and by playing on their personal and spiritual lives. As discussed in the literature review, there is significant documentation of the way that the preaching and teaching of the PK movement changes its followers. Michael Kimmel writes:
The message has certainly resonated for large numbers of American men, who feel their lives are less deeply fulfilling, less meaningful, less animated by higher purpose than the one to which they believed they were entitled. Those men have responded in great number and have proven to not only consider themselves followers of the PK movement, but have proven to recruit other members and help the organization grow.

On this hand, they are achieving the idea of transformational leadership exactly. Jim Burns, father of transformational leadership theory, discusses this theory of leadership:

The leader’s fundamental act is to induce people to be aware or conscious of what they feel—to feel their true needs so strongly, to define their values so meaningfully, that they can move to purposeful action. Burns further explains that transforming leadership, "shapes, alters, and elevates the motives and values and goals of followers". It would be hard, after reading even the most basic of writings of a Promise Keeper’s experience, to argue that they are not transforming both the followers and their lives through their leadership. Both proponents and opponents to PK would argue that they are not only transforming beliefs and actions, but they are transforming lives.
CONCLUSION

This paper draws many conclusions in attempting to determine the leadership of the Promise Keeper movement. It demonstrates the reactions of an organization that grew exponentially, far more than it originally intended. It lends a lesson as to how leaders are sometimes dealt more than they originally planned. The massiveness of the organization and its sociological contexts made it a perfect subject for leadership studies.

The contexts of spirituality and the male gender play extensively into the Promise Keepers. From a sociological viewpoint, the Promise Keepers teach that a leader must acknowledge the contexts behind a group of followers. In this case, the PK movement realized it had to play to both the male gender as well as the spirituality of each follower. PK was able to utilize athletics and military motifs in drawing its followers—both styles that proved to be quite attention grabbing for a large audience of men.

In an examination of the founder of the PK movement, Bill McCartney, the analysis uncovered a great deal of leadership lessons. Mainly, McCartney demonstrated a great level of charismatic leadership. Evidence was provided that showed that the followers all looked to him for something dynamic—something he offered with great charisma.
and enthusiasm. Further, his attempt to lead by example has been dramatic. His followers have seen him adjusting in his personal life in order to practice exactly what he preaches. This helped him establish credibility as a leader, as well as an understanding of the needs of his followers.

Arguably the most dramatic of leadership lesson is seen in the analysis of the actual Promise Keeper movement. From the group, we see how the Promise Keeper organization maximized followers through effective leadership. Their first and most prominent use of effective leadership came when they realized they needed to establish a system whereupon members would all work to recruit more followers. Their establishment of the "key man" system helped them organize on a grassroots level and encouraged their members on all levels to attend events and stay involved in the organization.

A further lesson came when the organization saw that they had many potential followers who were concerned with certain parts of their key beliefs or tenets. By adjusting for different cultural and theological needs, they were able to be more inclusive of a larger group of people, thus magnifying their ability to draw followers from many different demographics.
PK anticipated that they would have a difficult time maintaining their followers with only annual stadium meetings. For that reason, they made regular attendance at meetings with other PK members one of their key tenets—a lesson in how to maintain followership and keep followers involved and interested in the activities of the organization.

Finally, PK makes use of two forms of leadership that are discussed in detail by leadership scholar James MacGregor Burns. First, the information given makes a solid stance that PK is practicing moral leadership. They are actively working to please the followers, catering to their needs and offering them not only what they want, but what they need. PK is honest about what comes with membership in the organization and they seem to make information about their organization, recruiting practices, and beliefs readily available so their followers can make educated decisions.

Secondly, we are able to see the way that the Promise Keepers, as an organization, seek to be transformational. Their attempt and their entire mission seeks to find men who can make a transformation in their lives and become a “man of integrity,” according to their beliefs. Myriad literature suggests that men who become involved in the
Promise Keeper organization are not only transformed to their beliefs and practices, but that their lives change. After that transformation, the literature and information available makes substantial claims that the transformation is not simply temporary, but life changing.
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