



Leading with a Creative and Innovative Design

A Sacred Texture Analysis of 1 Peter

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In our global world with an increasing number of cross-cultural and counter-cultural contacts, leaders and organizations face constantly changing cultures and values coming from other countries, their own country, and even from within their own organization.¹ How can today's leaders prepare their organizations for continuity through whatever the unknown future brings? This paper examines that question through Peter's first letter to the culturally buffeted believers in the first century.

Drawing from 1 Peter, this paper presents foundational creative² and innovative³ leadership design principles to take an organization through turbulence to survive and thrive. To aid us in ferreting out the principles, we use Robbins' sacred texture analysis, which encompasses social, cultural, and psychological textural lenses. We also learn from a number of authors to gain insights into the times. From our effort and resources, this paper posits three creative and innovative principles useful to twenty-first century leaders to prepare and lead today's organizations through current turbulent times to survive and thrive.

Three Creative and Innovative Design Principles:

1. For an organization to flourish in turbulent times, its members must be able to reconfigure or recontextualize what they know to apply to emerging conditions.
2. For an organization to flourish in turbulent times, it must hold a values-based identity and purpose that its members own with honor.
3. For an organization to flourish in turbulent times, it must have members fully committed to the organization and to other organizational members.

¹ Stanley S. Gryskiewicz, *Positive Turbulence: Developing Climates for Creativity, Innovation, and Renewal* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 5-7.

² *American Heritage College Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997). *Creatively* is characterized by originality and expressiveness: imaginative.

³ *Ibid.*, *Innovation* (noun) is the act of introducing something new (noun). *Innovate* (verb) is to begin or introduce (something new) for the first time.

Finally, this paper challenges organizational leaders to take the lessons learned from Peter and leverage them into creative and innovative designed organizations able to adapt to the future emerging world.

The times – then and now

The individuals in Peter’s first-century audience living in the area now referred to as Turkey⁴ were accustomed to the world forced on them by their Roman conquerors.⁵ McKnight believes that they were “aliens and strangers” within the Empire, disenfranchised by the elite who benefited from the Roman system.⁶ Before their commitment to Christ, most of Peter’s audience probably lived normal quiet lives, adapting to the Roman occupation, and staying unnoticed by paying their obligations – both taxes and required religious rituals⁷. Their conversion placed them in a more public position opening them to victimization by the dominant cultural groups.⁸

These first-century believers lived in a world of diversity – diverse religions, ethnicity, ethics, native languages, cultures, values, and economic classes. Meanwhile, their world was experiencing relatively safe and rapid travel and an ease of communication via the universally recognized Greek language.⁹ As a result many people were quite cosmopolitan – comfortable in their multicultural world.

Today, around the world many people live in countries with diversity – the same diversities found in the first century Roman world, except rather than a universally recognized Greek language we find a widely-recognized English language. Today, we are experiencing relatively safe and increasingly rapid travel and an ease of communication via worldwide communication technology systems. As a result, like the people in the Roman Empire, many today have become quite cosmopolitan.

A new community in a pool of cultures

The group addressed by Peter was a fictive family kinship group brought together by their common beliefs as proclaimed by Jesus and his disciples.¹⁰ As seen in the Gospels, the foundations of God’s new family began when Jesus started preaching about the Kingdom of God – which the Mediterranean world would have seen as a new theocratic political structure.¹¹ When Jesus’ followers responded to Jesus’ call to take up the cross and follow, their response was not an individualistic action; it was taken as a member of a dyadic community¹². When they denied

⁴ 1 Peter 1:1 NASB.

⁵ David G. Horrell, “Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliott Debate Towards a Postcolonial Reading of First Peter,” in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter*, eds. Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2007), 116.

⁶ Scot McKnight, *1 Peter: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 25-26.

⁷ Horrell, 128.

⁸ David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2000), 43-47.

⁹ Howard F. Vos, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs: How the People of the Bible Really Lived*. (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1999), 489, 383-384.

¹⁰ Bruce J. Malina, *The Social Gospel of Jesus: The Kingdom of God in Mediterranean Perspective*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 159.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 126-131.

themselves, it meant they denied their previous kinship group and formed a new group as the family of God.¹³ Under Jesus, the initial insular thrust of these new “kinship” groupings focused only on the Jews of Galilee and Judea.¹⁴ Malina supports this argument, as he writes that the believers’ commitment to their fictive family and their close following of Jesus’ teaching provides a good picture of the early church.¹⁵

After the resurrection and Jesus’ command to make disciples of the entire world (Matt 28) came a new innovative expansion of the fictive family to the Jews beyond the borders of Judea and Galilee.¹⁶ But even that was not the final innovation: the believers’ fictive family continued to expand to include Gentiles which opened the entire population of the Roman Empire as a mission field.¹⁷ Led by the Holy Spirit, the community of believers began to disperse and expand into new geographical locations. During this time, through teaching such as Peter’s and the work of the Holy Spirit, the community of God expanded to form communities with the potential power and influence necessary to become a global social and religious force. God Himself, through the work of the Holy Spirit, changed these groups into a “fictive kinship religion expressed as a ‘household of faith’ (Gal. 6:10).”¹⁸

Principles for change

What innovative and creative principles did Peter use to influence his audience from people who were inward, narrow, and limited in spirituality to a body of believers impacting the known world as a social and spiritual force? To answer this question, we will examine 1 Peter and Peter’s use of various literary devices to communicate his important message and principle – beginning with the principle drawn from 1 Peter.

Principle: For an organization to flourish in turbulent times, its members must be able to reconfigure or recontextualize what they know to apply a creative and innovative design to emerging conditions.

Creative and innovative intertexture use

To communicate clearly with his audience, Peter reconfigured or recontextualized text drawn from Old Testament sources familiar to his audience.¹⁹ In both his speech at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40) and in 1 Peter, Peter creatively reconfigured and recontextualized certain Old Testament texts to make his argument. In Acts 2, Peter proclaimed the coming of God’s Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises from Joel and Psalms – God initiated Spirit empowerment to His people.²⁰ In First Peter, Peter innovatively recontextualized the Old Testament texts identifying Israel as the people of God to apply the Old Testament promises to first-century believers.²¹ Bauman-Martin posits that what started out as an insular movement to the Jews in Jerusalem and Galilee, grew into a hybrid identity of the family of God and applied

¹³ DeSilva, 73.

¹⁴ Malina, 94-95.

¹⁵ Ibid., 139.

¹⁶ Acts 2:22-36.

¹⁷ Acts 10:1-11:18.

¹⁸ Malina, 159.

¹⁹ Horrell, 130-131.

²⁰ William H. Willimon, *Acts. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1988), 37-39.

²¹ Horrell, 129-131.

the promises given to the Old Testament Jews to the new community of believers.²² The first-century believers needed to break through the barriers of traditional interpretation of data to fully appropriate God's promises into their communities.

Creative and innovative use of existing knowledge

Today's organizations may build barriers to creative use of their existing knowledge base. Organizational stories, procedures, and company paradigms that once defined and inspired may now stifle adaptation needed to adapt to the future.²³ By dismantling these barriers, creativity and innovation can flow in ways that build on past knowledge, yet incorporate continual, dynamic change to meet the challenges of emerging conditions.²⁴

Principle: For an organization to flourish in turbulent times, it must possess a values-based identity and purpose that its members own with honor.

Peter created his letter to influence his audience from their former culture and values system to a new perichoretic fictive family of God based on God's prescribed culture and values.²⁵ This new fictive family was a big leap from what the new believers had known, immediately requiring an immense adaptation on the believers' part.²⁶ They would have a new culture and new values to make their own while living and doing business in a world of people still clinging to the plethora of differing cultures and values.

Peter used metaphors, similes, contrasts, and comparisons to help his audience grasp the innovations in relationships brought by the Holy Spirit to transform the family of God. 1 Peter begins by contrasting his audience's earthly identity as socially disenfranchised "aliens" (1 Peter 1:1)²⁷ and to new identity as "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God ..." (1:1-2). He further pushes the contrast by calling them "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (2:9). They were no longer disenfranchised but held an honorable position that would bring God's reward as they remained faithful to their new values.

Peter is creatively exhorting his audience to respond honorably, in a way that builds their reputation as a fictive family that is truly representative of Christ.²⁸ They are called to behave in accordance with who they really are as the redeemed of Christ²⁹ – they are not victims; they are on the winning team.

²² Betsy Bauman-Martin "Speaking Jewish: Postcolonial Aliens and Strangers in First Peter," in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter*, eds. Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2007), 176.

²³ Georg Von Krogh, Kazuo Ichijo, and Ikujiro Nonaka. *Enabling Knowledge Creation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22-25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 257-258.

²⁵ David Crump, "Re-examining the Johannine Trinity: Perichoresis or Deification?" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Volume 59, No. 4 (November 2006), 395-412. <http://ejournals.ebsco.com.eres.regent.edu:2048/direct.asp?ArticleID=4212896D62368B16E41A> (accessed September 7, 2007), 412.

²⁶ DeSilva, 43-44.

²⁷ McKnight, 29.

²⁸ DeSilva, 35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

In organizations leaders need to understand those they are leading, including the behaviors that the group values.³⁰ The strongest leaders are actually able to “shape what the followers want to do”³¹ and to use their commitment to the group as a starting point for behavior.³²

Principle: For an organization to flourish in turbulent times, it must possess members fully committed to the organization and to other organizational members.

Peter had seen believers grow from a political entity under the structure of the Jewish religion during the Gospel period to a separate kinship family of believers after the coming of the Holy Spirit³³ – from an insular religion to a perichoretic cosmopolitan family of God.

Peter wrote to Christian believers struggling with differing cultures and values from the world around them as well as their own previously held values. His challenge lay in moving his audience from the surrounding cultures and value systems into a new culture and a new set of values. Peter needed to teach his audience the necessary concepts for them to pull together and withstand the onslaught of struggles with courage and heart.

Peter had learned well how to creatively and innovatively use metaphors to change the paradigm of his audience. One of the metaphors Peter used was “living stones” (2: 4-8). Believers need to see themselves as “living stones” in a spiritual house built on the foundation of “The Living Stone” (Christ).³⁴ To help them Peter re-applied the Old Testament titles to them, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (2:9).

The believers are a new group, a spiritual house, a chosen race, the family of God (4:17). The help them grasp the significance of being part of the family of God, Peter created a simile within a comparison of the old and the new redemptive model. He creatively helped them see how they were not redeemed by the old method of sacrifice of gold and silver but with the precious blood of God’s lamb, the blood of Christ.³⁵

The immense feeling of community within this family and the strong desire to not dishonor the family gave them the power to withstand outside persecution. In a familial culture the core attributes of the in-group were faith as it has to do Christ and love as it relates to the group³⁶.

According to Huntsman, “Life is not a game of solitaire; people depend on one another.”³⁷ What one member of an organization does reflects on and affects all the other members. Organizations are a type of family.

How might leaders apply these creative and innovative design principles today?

³⁰ Stephen D. Reicher, S. Alexander Haslam, and Michael J. Platow, “The New Psychology of Leadership,” *Scientific American Mind* Aug/Sept (2007): 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

³² *Ibid.*, 24.

³³ Malina, 149-150; 153-155.

³⁴ McKnight, 106-107.

³⁵ Barth L. Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 73; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

³⁶ Malina, 133.

³⁷ Jon M. Huntsman, *Winners Never Cheat: Everyday Values We Learned as Children (But May Have Forgotten)* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton, 2005), 90.

The similarity between today's organizational problems and the problems during the first century may surprise people. But the difficulty leading an organization through the current turbulent times surprises few. Fortunately, the Apostle Peter provides us an example of creativity and innovation. From Peter's example, this paper infers three principles to apply to your organization. Whether your organization is a religious organization, a school, a non-profit organization, or a for profit organization, these principles will apply.

1. Whether the people in your organization are members, employees, volunteers, or leaders, when they experience organizational turbulence or rapid change, you the leaders need to help them begin with what they are familiar, then reconfigure or recontextualize that experience or knowledge into the current or emerging situation. Turbulence and change scares people, so they need to go back to the familiar. You can lead them forward from that point.
2. For your organization to flourish in turbulent times, it needs people who identify themselves with the values and identity of the organization. There is always a tendency for people to become self-defensive or self-protective and thereby lose their concern for the organization. Your organizational family must be proud and honored to be part of the team. If your organization possesses values and a purpose worth sacrificing for, your members will be proud of their family and honored to be part of it.
3. For your organization to flourish in turbulent times your people must see themselves fully as part of a fictive family. You need to provide more than just a paycheck or saying "thank you" a few times. You need to be a servant-leader; you need to build a family within your organization where people care about the organization and about one another.

Peter knew that life is tough and that people need to belong to a family where they can find identity and sense of purpose – a family committed to one another as a fictive family. As an organizational leader, you need to build a feeling of family. As a family, you need the people you lead to serve the purposes of the organization and they need you to serve them.

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