A Virtue-based Wholistic Values Model
And Its Relationship to Grace

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness (Heb –hesed or ~ loyal love, ~devoted love), and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8 (NAS)

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I. Introduction -

Why Consider Virtues (Once more)?
For any organization the importance of virtues-based values and ethics and an effective construct or system that captures all the key ingredients of a values system useful in both a personal and organizational context cannot be over emphasized. Well-defined ethics (virtue-based values of conduct) are vital to a healthy organization, or a family. They establish the plumb line against which the organization measures its behavior and the behavior toward which it strives. Its desired behavior, in this context, determines its self-vision (what kind of organization it wants to be). Its internal or self-vision, coupled with its desired behavior, determine its style. Its style is what its employees and the public see. If values are vague or unstated, the vision is incomplete and inadequate, and the organization will wander in its behavioral style and probably even its basic day-to-day ethics. With such wandering it will invariably get into trouble, even possibly serious trouble.

Furthermore, and perhaps personally more important, is that rectitude is essential to the Biblical view of wisdom, and wisdom is core to biblical leadership. So, to grow in wisdom, one must understand and grow in Biblical virtue. It is the beginning of wisdom. And wisdom is the beginning of leadership. No understanding and growth in virtue, no wisdom, no wisdom, poor or inadequate leadership.

This author has served 25 years in top management in a large local government organization, managing a $50 million organization, has been in community and Christian leadership, consultant to organizations, and a board member, committee chairman, and/or chairman to perhaps thirty boards of directors, local, state and national. He chaired the government Ethics Committee of his city government and served on the Midwest Bioethics Advisory Board for several years. He currently chairs his church board and the Avant Ministries board, an international church planting mission (the old GMU). He has been formally trained in management science and has been a student of leadership and management throughout his career. He has seen many ethics models over his career, both religious and secular ones, none have had the comprehensive power of the following model. He terms it a virtue-based value system. These values can be equated to what would be called ethics or rules of conduct.

The Problem with Customary Approaches to Values (or virtues)
When reading or creating values, whether one reads Aristotle or Bennett, Moses or James, Ben Franklin or John Maxwell, we encounter virtues (or values) as a list. We humans tend to think in terms of lists. It is part of our natural linearity in thinking. Unfortunately, the list of the things we can think of as good or virtuous is very long. So writers shorten their list - to their favorite list. But no two lists are the same! This variability of lists from person to person leads, or could lead, to the impression or conclusion that virtues are relative - depending on the person, fitting in with postmodern thinking.

If lists don’t work, what is going on? What is going on is that biblically transcendent, virtue-based values are really not a list! The list approach doesn’t work and hasn’t worked for 2500 years of human literature. There must be something other than a list. If a set of activities doesn’t work using a linear or list approach, one likely possibility (much more likely to be recognized these days) is that we are dealing with a
conceptual system. – A systems approach to values, how novel.

But if a system, what would that values system look like and how would it be shaped or constructed to provide comprehensiveness and integrity (wholeness)?

**Our Search and Discovery**

The author began a search with friends and colleagues several years ago for developing or discovering a coherent, systemic ethics or values construkt or framework, one that would capture conceptually all the sought after virtues (ethics), could be applied broadly, easily remembered, easily taught, and that would pertain to a range of situations, from individual behavior (including within marriage) to that of organizations, governments and agencies. Although we were acquainted with the contemporary Christian and secular literature, (and some ancient) concerning ethics and values, we found it universally list-based and dissatisfying. (Virtually all modern writings on values or ethics are lists, sometimes quite long in an attempt not to miss anything.) Every writer has his favorite list of virtues or ethics. They appear on walls, ancient frescos, in articles, in corporate literature, annual reports, on plaques, even computer monitor backgrounds. And, unless short, are never remembered. A list of over three or four is not remembered by employees. All organizations claim ethics of some sort, usually in terms of some relation to integrity. Integrity was one of Enron’s four key values! The problem is that people do not remember the list! Much less do they know how to apply it to the everyday situations they encounter. The problem is magnified when we realize that the lists are not the same from “expert” to “expert.” What are we to use as our list?

We found our answer in the Bible, most clearly in Micah 6:8 where God expresses the fundamental, elemental, or cardinal virtues He expected or desired for Israel. (Ravi Zacharias has pointed out that this passage seems to be God’s consolidation of all He had taught Israel in terms of right living.) They are three, a trinity. But what is special about these three? Why did God reduce His principles to these three?

It was from this trinity that we discovered an unfolding system of all the other virtues we believe in. The core virtues are a.) devotional love (Heb chesed or hesed), or loyal (or covenantal) love - translated by several different words, usually “lovingkindness,” which suggests difficulty in capturing the richness of hesed, b.) justice (Heb. mishpat) or the idea of rectitude (justice is the corporate or collective effect of rectitude, for the believer righteousness the ultimate state), and c.) a humble walk before God.

This paper is not an exegetical study, but we note that these three virtues are elsewhere found together frequently in Scripture, but are, perhaps, not quite so obvious. (However, see, for example, Hosea 12:6 where mercy (hesed) and justice (mishpat) are again listed combined with “waiting on the Lord.” While “waiting” is the expressed virtue here, it is closely related to the idea of a humble, expectant walk - both are relate to our view of ourselves under God (the essence of our humility). We continue to prefer humility as the best practical fundamental expression of the idea, that is, knowing who you are before God. Another common, related idea addressing man’s proper position before God, which leads to, or enables “the fear of the Lord” expressed frequently in Proverbs as the foundation of wisdom.)

An example of a more cryptic development of these core virtues would be found in Proverbs 3 (where both truth (emeth), a closely related attribute of rectitude, and mercy (hesed) are concatenated while trusting in the Lord is the capping idea (note the close conceptual relationship between trusting and an expectant, patient walk). Two of the three virtues frequently appear together: devotion (hesed and its many renderings such as mercy or lovingkindness) and a virtue expressing the values surrounding the idea of justice or rectitude, such as righteousness, justice (at the organizational level), truth, truthfulness, etc.

Putting all this together a systems view of virtue or ethics emerges. This construct or model, unlike models rooted in Greek thought which are generally bi-modal with balance seen as the virtue, hubris as the failure, is tri-part, based around a core set of these three virtues. They are core values or virtues in the sense that all others seem to grow from them and depend on them. This occurs when the core values or virtues are synthesized or combined with each other. (Think of different atoms combining to create a molecule with yet different attributes or the (three, interestingly) primary colors combining to create the rainbow.) The three cardinal points, the core virtues, of the model are to be held firmly and in marriage or union with
each other (concatenated - a slightly different concept from balance). Furthermore, they need each other to work. They are interdependent. They, in fact, are a system, not a list. When synthesis is achieved, the model reveals an unfolding and flourishing flower of personal and organizational attributes that surprises with its comprehensiveness, complexity, beauty, and effectiveness or power for what we deem success by any definition.

This systemic relationship of the virtues shouldn’t surprise us. God is a God of systems after all. His world works because it is systemic. We need only look at our universe, ranging from the vast macrosystems and interplay of galactic gravitational forces to the beauty of incredible molecular design and irreducible complexity within the nucleus of the cell. Interestingly, the universe is built up from very few fundamental forces, particles, laws, constants, etc. God seems to take joy in creating beauty and complexity from the simple. Moral values/virtues are likewise interdependent and craft the principles, not only for our relationship with God, but with each other. They are a system of principles, not a list, for successful living. You can’t pick and choose among them and expect the others to work.

The author has used and taught these principles in his own organization and has taught these principles in academic settings, government settings, and other organizational settings across a wide variety of audiences, both Christian and secular (and multicultural), including international audiences. They have been discussed with lawyers, ethicists, and philosophy professors. They remain unchallenged in their power. He has become increasingly convinced of the model's comprehensive applicability and dynamic.

This paper is targeted primarily at those who would lead, and lead in an organizational context. The following development and explanation of this is expressed in organizational terms and references.

An organization’s values system affects everything it does, i.e. it affects organizational conduct in all program aspects, including such important components as:

1. **Financial management**
   Does it manage its finances with integrity and conscientiousness? Does it honor its stewardship on behalf of the owners? Is it appropriately transparent with all its financial affairs? Does it pay its bills when due?

2. **Information management**
   Will information be managed with integrity? How transparent will the organization be? On the other hand, will privacy be respected? Will information and data be evaluated with truth-seeking in mind and not a preconceived agenda or intent to use the data to satisfy an already determined end or finding? Will it attempt to use information processing resources to optimize the value stream and not special interests that may have more control?

3. **Maintenance**
   Will the organization treat its plant and equipment as resources being stewarded for the ownership? Will it treat maintenance staff with respect and recognition of their role in stewardship?

4. **Marketing and media relations**
   Is the organization honest in its marketing? Does it deliver what it promises? Is it willing to listen to its customers to hear the bad news as well as the good? In fact, does it welcome complaints? Is it thoughtfully honest and as transparent as possible with the press?

5. **Crisis management**
   Does it respond with integrity and teachability to crisis? Does it always put those at greatest risk first, rather than its own interest…unhesitatingly? Does it show compassion through the crisis?

6. **HR policies and treatment of employees**
   What is its attitude toward its employees? Is it capable of blending compassion, loyalty and integrity, building trust? Does it develop its employees? Is it sensitive to the workplace environment? Does it do a good job of showing tough love when required? Does it model healthy
interpersonal relationships and enforce standards of behavior? Can it make wise equity decisions? Does it protect the safety and performance capability of its employees? Even in terminations does it find as much grace as possible for the situation?

7. **Inter-organizational relations**
   Are other organizations treated with respect? Is attention given to sustaining healthy relationships and attitudes toward other organizations, even competitors? Does it approach partners and vendors with a sense of fairness, keeping its word? Does it pay its bills when due? Does it abuse its power in the marketplace or elsewhere?

8. **Quality improvement efforts**
   What is the organization’s attitude toward excellence? Is it always seeking how to improve, and is it teachable? Does it admit that someone else may have found a better way? Is it open to new ideas? What is its attitude toward creativity? Is it unafraid of creativity, welcoming it where needed? Does it quickly face up to product flaws, especially those affecting safety? Is it open to admitting it may be wrong or in error?

9. **Customer or beneficiary relations**
   Does the organization respect its customers? Is it willing to learn from its customers? Does it keep its promises? Does it apologize?

10. **Supervision and leadership**
    Do supervisors and managers respect their people and strive to equip, enable, and empower them to achieve to their fullest potential? Do they engage their cooperation to the extent possible? Do they nurture their personal development, and to think and execute? Are they considerate and do they communicate so that employees do not say, “We don’t know what is going on around here. We are never told anything.”

**This values model has applicability —**

1. **Up the organizational ladder,** (the attitude toward, and the way that people treat, superior authority (e.g. even the way Management treats its governing body)
2. **Down the organizational ladder,** (the way that supervisors treat subordinates)
3. **Horizontally -** the way peers treat each other and their capacity to interrelate effectively,
4. **Outside the organization,**
   a) The way customers, clients, patients, etc. are treated
   b) The way suppliers are treated
   c) The way citizens are treated (especially if the organization is a government)
   d) Relations with the press, regulators, etc.

**It determines the capacity of the organization to improve and learn, indeed, to survive.**

**II. The three cardinal virtues of Micah 6:8 – orientation to the values framework** (Fig. 1)

A. **Justice/Integrity** – broadly this is the idea of rectitude, doing the right thing.
   In employee surveys, repeatedly this virtue ranks highest in traits desired for a manager/leader. At the level of government this attribute manifests itself as justice and rectitude (doing the right thing) or integrity at the individual level. It includes the idea of doing the right thing under God’s principles whether corporately, governmentally, or between individuals. It essentially is behavioral. Often it is this virtue people have in mind when referring to “ethics.”
B. Loyal love or caring loyalty, devotion (the Hebrew word used is Hesed, not “mercy” or “kindness” as is usually translated in Micah 6:8.)

The Hebrew’s, ‘hesed, represents this concept of committed love or loving loyalty, devotion, or a commitment of/to love, even covenantal some would argue. It is an extremely important word in Old Testament usage. God uses it repeatedly regarding His relationship with Israel, translated usually as lovingkindness - even that word is inadequate to convey the richness of the concept. A single word would be very useful. In English, we, too, have a similar concept but no single word. “Devotion” or devoted love may come close. The idea is associated with strong friendships or, for example, marriage. Nevertheless, this core virtue is what bonds human beings and is an important ingredient of trust as we shall see. We are told in Proverbs 19:22 that “that which is desired in a man is hesed.” There is, in fact, a lot of hesed in the characterization of agape by Paul in I Cor. 13.

C. Humility - the amazing key to unlocking growth, improvement and synergy with others (or other organizations)

Fundamentally, humility is an attitude, not an initiatory (proactive) virtue as are the other two. The Bible tells us to “clothe ourselves with humility” (1 Peter 5:5) (It is the only such virtue mentioned in this manner) and to humble ourselves (vs 6) as an act of will. Humility, coupled with courage, is an absolutely essential enabler for the other two virtues. It activates or enables the other primary (and secondary) virtues. God promises grace to the humble believer. It is the key to our spiritual growth and capacity to show grace to others.

Concerning humility and the fear of God: It is important to note that humility always has a reference – humility toward or in relationship to something, ideally a personality. Humility without an object is just feeling small without reference – no scale – meaninglessness. Nihilism. God always provides the reference for our humility as the phrase in Micah 6:8 indicates, (humility… “before your God”). Our fear of God or our humility toward Him is always reassured in His love and provides reassurance of our meaning, our value or significance to Him, unlike Carl Sagan’s humility before a vast, meaningless universe. God repeats that relationship in 1 Peter 5:6, telling us to humble ourselves “under the mighty hand of God.” Humility is always in relationship to something, even if only the unimaginable vastness of an impersonal universe.

III. Two other key elements to keep in mind

A. Faith-based Courage (or “moral courage”) - Trusting God is the fundamental call, motivator, or energy for the believer, which in turn enables the courage for the behaviors. (Fig. 2) (Note that courage, faith(fullness) & trust-based obedience have closely related roles here. For the believer, our moral courage ultimately derives from our trust in Him. One could also use the expression “faithful courage,” or “courage based in faith.” C.f. Heb. 11 for a “cloud” of witnesses to that principle!)

Knowledge is not enough. Trusting God and the resultant courage to do it is what counts, whether it is doing what is right (integrity), admitting one is wrong (humility), or caring when ignoring would be easier (caring loyalty). The reason courage is not a primary virtue (and not seen as one in the Bible) is that it, by itself, is morally neutral. It is vital to either positive virtues or evil actions such as pulling off a great heist or spying for the enemy (& we frequently admire such courage as much as

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1 The constant message to the believer in the NT is to walk in trust in God. Everything flows from that - our obedience and even pleasing Him (Heb. 11:6). That becomes, perhaps clearest in the book of Hebrews, where the call to persevering faith in God is repeated over and over, coupled with warnings against abandoning our faith.
we fear it). Courage is always in service some other value. It is in that context it is treated as a virtue - the courage to resist evil, for example, or the courage to tell the truth.

Furthermore, it can be proposed that perhaps the virtues play a role in producing courage. James Bradley, The author of the best selling book on Iwo Jima, Flags of Our Fathers, made the observation during an interview with Charlie Rose (6/6/00) that the Iwo Jima Marine War Memorial plaque states, “Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue,” and that his initial search started with studying the valor displayed. But during his research it dawned upon him that he “was looking at the equation from the wrong end. It was common virtue that resulted in uncommon valor.” These young men had been raised with common virtue and they displayed uncommon valor when called upon.

It could be validly argued that the virtues working together produce courage as well as depend on it.

B. **Attitude, one's chosen outlook** - the heart's barometer

"Your want-to has to want to." An excellent measure of where your heart is to ask yourself, “What is my attitude toward this?” As we saw above, the fundamental proper attitude behind all others, God tells us, is humility - a correct view of who we are under God and our relationship to Him. This attitude enables our teachability and willingness to submit to the rigor or discipline of learning (Heb. *Musar*—one of the five components of wisdom in Proverbs 1.)

**IV. Exploring the three cardinal values (fig.3)**

A. **Integrity** – the idea of rectitude – has proximate virtues closely related to and deriving from it.

The following characteristics, and other similar ones, relate to and emerge from this value. They “surround” it or derive from it.

1. Truth-seeking and truth telling (incl. the full truth), an intolerance for mendacity
2. Respect for and obedience to the law
3. Keeping our word, honoring our promises, the significance of oath-taking, reliability
4. Diligence
5. Excellence
6. Doing the right thing
7. Avoiding "perverting the ways of justice," which includes avoiding bribes, either the giving of or the taking of.
8. Desire for and skill at equity judgment, justice at the organizational level

B. **Loyal caring or compassion** (~devotion (see above)) – The following example characteristics related to and emerge from this value as proximate or immediately derivative virtues:

1. Respect for people (who are created in God’s image)
2. Thoughtfulness, protection
3. Gentleness
4. Kindness
5. Courtesy
6. Politeness, civility
7. Avoidance of destructive interpersonal behavior (e.g. gossip)
8. Desire to see people grow & improve, provides the motive and basis for proper delegation
C. **Humility** - the key that unlocks both personal and interpersonal growth.

*Humility is the fundamental basis for trusting God. (It is humility that enables our trust in God and others. Through humility we receive His grace and love which enables our trust in Him.)*

It also enables...

1. The capacity to forgive,
2. Gratitude, an attitude of thankfulness,
3. The capacity to confess and ask for forgiveness,
4. The capacity to express appreciation and encouragement,
5. The willingness to be accountable,
6. The ability to be transparently vulnerable,
7. An important element for patience (both in learning and toward people) and for avoiding impatience and anger (temper),
8. Meaningful listening, the desire to truly understand another,
9. Learning and teachability,
10. Enables obedience,
11. Enables selfless love (sacrifice), charity, and generosity (Note that humility is actually an enabler for both integrity and the attributes of loyal compassion or caring.)
12. Provides the capacity to be an example and serve others,
13. Motivates curiosity,
14. Enables self-doubt - the ability to say, “I may be wrong.”

V. **Exploring interactions and the results of tensions or syntheses set up between the Cardinal Values** (see fig. 4)

This section explores what happens when the primary virtues are blended or combined with each other. We’ll consider them in pairs starting with integrity and devotion (hesed) or loyal love, then love and humility, and finally integrity and humility. This exercise takes conceptual imagination. For example, imagine an individual having both high integrity with the attributes we have described associated with that virtue and possessing loyal caring or love. New attributes emerge from this blending.

These interactions are the result of blending, combining, or melding, the virtues in one’s character, not balancing them. We have used the term “concatenate” as another way of expressing the idea at work here. Concatenate is a database term of art that means to combine two different sets into a new one without losing or sacrificing any of the content in the original two. This is the idea.
A. Combining Integrity and Loyal Caring (Fig. 4) results in virtues surrounding the ideas of ...

1. **Trustworthiness**

   When an individual or organization is both honest, (keeps their word), and loyally cares, a vital attribute emerges, trustworthiness. We trust another because that individual (or organization) has demonstrated trustworthiness in both caring commitment and integrity. *Both must be present.* We tend to think that trustworthiness depends on integrity, but it also depends on a sense of loyalty or commitment between two or more parties to be complete.

3. **Guilessness, authenticity (transparent and vulnerable), or purity**

   This is the attribute of not having any mixed motives or hidden agenda, pure of hidden motives. Naturally, an individual like this is trustworthy. It is the attribute referred to in the Beatitudes as purity – *Akin to sincerity or transparency, unalloyed or unmixed with any contamination.* By the way, such a person is characterologically equipped for peacemaking – can forge win-win solutions between people.

2. **Trust**

   Trust in someone, or an organization, derives from his or her (or the organization’s) trustworthiness. Trust is the glue for all healthy productive relationships and is what keeps an organization (or a nation) functional. Machiavelli argues that fear is more controlling than love or its derivatives; however, fear simply compels behavior; it does not promote trustworthiness. Where fear does not reach trust can. Organizations are too complex and our individual liberties these days too strong to successfully govern for long by fear, even in a private organization. Furthermore, for decades human behavioral research has repeated demonstrated the power affirming trust plays in promoting self-motivated improvement in the performance of people.

4. **Nurturing**

   When an individual or an organization builds a trusting relation and adds an additional dose of loyal caring/love, a nurturing relationship results. Mature nurturing is the desire and ability to promote beneficial growth. An organization should have a healthy nurturing relationship with its employees and suppliers to achieve optimized performance for all parties.

5. **Equity in human relations**

   Equity in human relations includes assuring equal opportunity and fair use of rewards and discipline, if necessary.

B. Combining Loyal Caring and Humility (Fig. 5) …
Results in such proximate virtues as:

1. **Magnanimity or generosity of spirit, a generous attitude**
   
   When an individual or organization synthesizes both loyal caring and humility several important virtues emerge. A key one is the virtue of magnanimity or generous thinking, (which Covey calls “abundance thinking”), which, in turn, results in generosity. The Greek word, *macrothumia*, long or large spirited, mild toward irritations, addresses this virtue.

2. **Respect for the needs and issues of others**
   
   When one cares for others and has no ego problem, the capacity to truly respect people is enabled. This, in turn, facilitates the attribute of genuine listening and understanding, (on the left of the diagram), and such other attributes as thoughtfulness, courtesy, etc., (on the right of the diagram).
   
   It is commitment to this value that also assures policies against mistreatment, profanity, abusive language, violence, sexual harassment, etc. It is also this value that assures respect for confidentiality and privacy in human service organizations such as medical care.

3. **Openness or transparency regarding receptivity toward cooperative arrangements**
   
   When one's ego is not in the way receptivity and openness are enabled. The organization and individuals are open to seeking cooperative arrangements with others. People and organizations are released to be transparent. Transparency is essential for growth and optimized productive relationships.

4. **Abundance Thinking**
   
   A spirit of magnanimity and generous thinking opens one to what Covey calls *abundance thinking*. Abundance thinking is the mental attitude that sees the world in a way that is not restrictive, but always able to add more when people cooperate. Restrictive thinking sees life and resources as “zero sum,” what I win, you lose, often called win-lose thinking.

5. **Win-win and the art of cooperation and peace-making**
   
   The capacity to build, creatively and collaboratively, synergistic solutions between people and organizations where both parties win (win-win) depends on sufficient magnanimity, transparency, and lack of fear of loss from a collaborative arrangement. The nature of relationships can be changed dramatically. Constructive relationships lead to better, less expensive products and services.

6. **Synergy**
   
   Synergy is the highest form of a collaborative working relationship. Synergy is the phenomenon of being able to produce an outcome that exceeds what the simple sum would have been, hence be additionally rewarding to each partner.

C. **Combining Humility and Integrity (Fig. 6)…**
Results in:

1. **Meekness or Restraint of Strength**

We have come to believe that the leading attribute that emerges from the blending or synthesis of humility and integrity (which, recall, includes diligence and excellence) is unrecognized and not discussed very much any more; that is the self-restraint of strength, power, or competence, in service to a higher purpose than self, such as a principle or another person. It is a critical attribute of leadership.

The attribute is called *meekness* in older English usage. Meekness was used for the old English understanding of the characteristic of self-restrained (controlled) strength often perceived as calm or gentle confidence (based on strength). The strength or assurance side of the attribute comes from one’s excellence (competence) and integrity (or at least believing one knows what is correct) but is moderated by humility. The Greek word translated into meekness is *prautēs* and was used to describe a well trained and responsive war horse - strong and powerful but self-restrained, disciplined and responsive and submissive to its rider no matter the fearful circumstances it found itself in. Meekness is always submissive strength in relationship to something higher - a duty or another person, for example.

Our society honors assertiveness and forthrightness. We believe one must toot his own horn. We see this as grit. But grit actually is the opposite. Grit is, in fact, restrained (patient) excellence (competence) combined with tenacity. Consider several movie heroes in the last few years still honoring this meaning of grit, *True Grit*, *Iron Will*, and *Wyatt Earp, Walker, Texas Ranger*, and *Jesse Stone* on TV are not bad examples that come quickly to mind. Chief Mannion of the past TV series, *The District*, or Agent Gibbs of *NCIS* appear to be of this cloth. Americans like this attribute in their heroes. We just don’t name it.

2. **Teachability**

The capacity to wisely obey authority and be teachable derives from this synthesis. If a person (or an organization) lacks this synthesis he or it will not be teachable. An organization, to achieve excellence and continuously improve must possess teachability. Lack of teachability in leaders is fatal to the organization.

3. **Temperateness**

Another characteristic emerging from the combination of humility and integrity and closely tied to the resulting restraint is patience and freedom from a temper; that is, getting destructively mad at circumstances or people. The capacity for restraint enables an organization to respond thoughtfully to circumstances and nasty surprises.

The quality improvement literature has demonstrated (and the estimates keep rising!) that most failures in an organization are failures of the system in some manner, not an individual's problem, per se. This is a profound conceptual shift away from reactively blaming people and, instead, looking analytically for ways to improve the systems of the organization. This, in turn, banishes fear from the organizational culture and opens it to admitting problematic areas and then setting about to fix them. Fear, deriving from the blaming view of the world, drives problems underground, preventing the ability to honestly face and fix them. This is also a profound change from a political environment (and the media) that reactively often looks for someone to blame. The worst-case consequence of the blaming culture is scapegoating, the compulsion to blame someone innocent, anyone, for something gone wrong.

VI. **Full Circle – possessing it all – the capacity for grace & servant leadership**

Grace, both in Greek (*charis*) and later greatly enriched in Christian thought, was (became) essentially
transformational in its capacity to create beauty out of the unfortunate, evil, or untoward, i.e., the love, initiative, creativity and capacity to rescue, beautify and bring joy. This developed in thought as a complex attribute that enabled its possessor to bring to human situations, not only the usual elements of aesthetic beauty or of mercy, kindness, favor, joy, etc., but to actually transform or rescue (or save) a situation to a good or beneficial outcome while not violating any virtue such as integrity or justice. It is, in fact, energetically virtuous. (In fact, even in Greek thought grace had an aspect of power or dynamic. It was not a passive attribute.) Consequently, it required initiative, energy and creativity on the part of its possessor.

But it also required the capacity to creatively possess, simultaneously, all the cardinal virtues noted above. It required humility, since forgiveness and/or sacrifice is frequently, if not always, part of (this enriched idea of) grace. It required integrity/rectitude since it requires honesty and transparency and could not resort to evil or dishonest means. Finally, its fundamental “engine” or motivational force was love or caring for the individual graced, and from which we observed the attributes mentioned earlier, mercy, kindness, thoughtfulness, etc. But it is not simply those secondary action elements; they are, in a way, its consequences and the effects one sees when one observes grace in action.

Thirdly, grace is unconditional. The recipient is graced without conditions. When conditionality is added, it is no longer grace. If grace can be taken back when conditions are not met, or not given unless conditions are met, it is not grace. It is something else, but not grace.

Consequently, grace is multifaceted. It is both a verb and a noun. It is the motive, capacity, creativity, and initiative to give or provide grace that resides within the person doing the gracing, in their character. It is the beauty of the character producing the grace; it is the act creating the beauty, and it is the beauty created by the result. It is transformational in the recipient and it is motivational. It also has an effect on the motivations of the recipient. It transforms the recipient’s motive from obligation to love.

Furthermore, grace must be received as a gift, for that is what it is. It also must be received with faith in the giver. If the giver is not trusted, the grace is mitigated if not nullified. If one attempts to “earn” the gift or fix the problem oneself, the grace is nullified. And when the grace is nullified, the motive changes to one of striving to earn or please (striving for approval in order to be accepted). Grace is always free and must be accepted without sense of obligation. In fact, it removes the sense of obligation. It’s “on the house,” as Phillip Yancy says. You’re off the hook because of grace.

Grace enables the safety to be authentic and transparent. Authenticity enables growth in character (including being honest with oneself), opening your Johari Window ever wider. Build a safe place and relations within your organizations. If you wear a mask, as you must in a graceless, judgmental culture, the less able you are to be guiless and authentic. Grace should perfuse all human (esp. Christian!) relationships.

“Safe environments generate integrity, because integrity is developed when I am free to declare who I am and who I am not.”…. “The degree to which I wear a mask in key relationships is the degree to which my integrity will be thwarted.” (Thrall, Lynch and McNicol, Leadership Catalyst Newsletter, 9/06) Living in the Light requires us to feel safe in grace relationships.

When I was director of the agency mentioned earlier I had the good fortune for several years to have a deputy director who was a Christian. We talked often of applying these principles to our leadership and management. We explored their implications and ramifications over coffees or breakfasts. Like any large governmental agency with fairly sweeping enforcement powers, we dealt with situations that required thoughtful judgment in light of the law. But we also learned to struggle with the question, “How can we best grace this situation, or person, or employee as well?” Finding solutions of grace that did not inappropriately compromise integrity, legality, loyal love, or humility was hard work we discovered; not unlike designing good strategy that confront a difficult challenge to achieve an objective. But when we succeeded we were gratified with knowing we had crafted a solution that optimized all our requirements. We came to believe that grace, as with any of the virtues, was vital to wisdom in leadership.
VII. The role of leadership - assurance, clarifying, and promoting

A. Modeling

The value system, and the grace it enables, that constellation of virtues by which the organization measures its behavior and toward which it strives, must be established at the top, by the CEO or pastor and sustained and supported by the Board. The behavior must be emulated to the best of the pastor’s or CEO’s ability, (and the model accommodates mistakes as well, provided they are admitted; any good model must recognize the capacity for human failure and provide for improvement).

The CEO will assuredly be tested by the organization for consistency, tenacity, and weakness. All the tough issues will initially rise to the top for testing. It is in these situations that the true behavior and style of the organization will be confirmed and demonstrated. It is from those situations that all employees will take their cues. However, once those issues have been decided, those decisions that were once thought to be tough will be, from that point on, decided within the organization following Management’s cue (there are no questions about how to decide those anymore), and the CEO can go on to new challenges. Of course, this does not mean the organization does not need day to day correction and disciplining mechanisms, but the basis for those expectations have been established.

B. Crafting organizational policies and systems that ratify, facilitate, and enforce the values and ethics of the organization.

An organization is, of course, composed of humans. On their own, human beings, especially any large group of them, do not naturally follow consistently all the values and virtues presented here. Some follow some aspects well, others follow other portions well. A small group of them couldn't care less. Optimistically, many agree with and would like to follow all or most them, some or many are model employees. (The author has come to believe that the vast majority of employees want to do well at their job, feel good about it, and are willing workers. It is the organizational culture that systematically robs the employee of motivation and enthusiasm, and this, too, is management's responsibility.)

Nevertheless, the vast majority of employees, in fact, virtually all, certainly want their organization to consistently follow these principles, even if they as individuals find it difficult, especially where they personally are affected. So, too, do our customers and citizens. Thus, the desire, if not the expectation, of virtually all stakeholders and citizenry is that the organization must do its best to follow them. It is a serious error to excuse the absence of corporate values and ethics on the basis that “they are personal.”

The good news is that humans have an amazing ability to control their behavior under motivating conditions. Even people with temper problems, a notoriously difficult behavior to reign in, can restrain their temper under certain conditions. However, no motivation, no behavior change. But the motivation, interestingly, thrives best in an environment of trust. The leadership literature ranging from Drucker, Deming, and Blanchard to Senge and Lebow repeatedly stresses the power of trust. Giving trust is an attribute of grace and is, not surprisingly, transformational. This is behind the modern idea of empowerment. Fear is the opposite of trust in an organizational context. We fear when we cannot trust.

Management, by designing behavioral frames or fences, can provide sufficient external support and enforcement when needed, using organizational behavioral and sound supportive supervisory principles, in ways not controlling, opprobrious, or draconian to the vast majority to assure organizational conformation to its values and ethics. Indeed, if it fails to do this it can find itself in serious trouble. The vast majority of employees will applaud. But they will watch to see if the organization is consistent and equitable it its administration and whether it is also able to show flexible compassion under certain circumstances, the capacity for grace, a very "high level" judgment ability in terms of wisdom.
C. Vigilance in maintaining the value system – fighting entropy

Management will always have the responsibility for maintaining the ethics and value system it believes in and desires for the organization. Employee turnover, forgetfulness, and the shear passage of time all contribute to a sort of social second law of the thermodynamics of organizational value/ethics systems, their dissolution or dissipation. Only Management can ensure their maintenance. No one else will. If Management fails that, the organization will slide backwards, and its speed of deterioration may be surprisingly rapid.

May it be true of you and your organization.

Since this model was originally developed additional evidence has emerged that there are further hidden attributes within this model.

Team Performance:

One is the constellation of three attributes of a high performance team, published in an article in Harvard Business Review in March of 2001. These are essentially, or closely related to, the secondary virtues of a.) trust, b.) effectiveness of the team, (very closely related to the virtue of restrained competence – prima donnas don’t make for an effective team), and c.) group cohesion, derived from caring and sharing (“generosity” as the Gator’s coach termed it). These are illustrated in the diagram on the next page.

Organizational Performance:

A second is the work of author Jim Collins as published in both Harvard Business Review in 2001 and later in his book Good to Great, concerning the discovery of the importance of the nature of the leadership associated with companies that became great (from simply being good) and dramatically outperformed their peers. That attribute, called level five leadership by Collins, is basically humble tenacity – a selfless commitment to the company and its employees. The leaders of equivalent companies but who had egos that were manifested in a variety of ways, did not bring their companies to the point of comparable excellence. This is a fascinating study in the role that humility and restraint must play in achieving superb leadership. Sound familiar? Studies continue to be published (e.g., HBR 2007) revealing that leadership arrogance prevents receptivity to advice. If the executive is feeling very successful, he is much less open to new information, particularly information contrary to his views.

Servant leadership:

A third, and more obvious one, is the growing secular interest in servant leadership, originally (in our day) expounded by Robert Greenleaf. The servant leader as developed by Greenleaf and his successors depends on the blended attributes of the model just as grace does. This should be no surprise to Christians, of course. Nevertheless, Greenleaf’s writings are powerful, and to the extent they are based in these truths, they have validity and authority. If the reader is interested in servant leadership, Greenleaf should be among his books (e.g., The Servant as Leader, and Servant Leadership).

We are confident that further research into leadership and performance, both of individuals and organizations will continue to ratify this Biblical virtue model.
Virtue-Based Values Model
Showing core and core-related virtues and secondary and tertiary virtues

Justice/Integrity
- Competence Improvement
- Teachability
- Temperateness
- Curiosity
- Truthfulness
- Truth seeking
- Excellence
- Diligence
- Equity
- Tough love
- Trust
- Trustworthiness & Authenticity

Humility
- Thankfulness
- Listening
- Forgiving
- Saying, “I’m wrong” or, even “Maybe I’m wrong.”
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Obedience
- Generosity
- Respect
- Openness
- “Abundance thinking”
- Service to others
- Win-Win
- Capacity for Synergy (teamwork)

Loyal Caring
- Magnanimity
- Respect
- Thoughtfulness
- Kindness
- Courtesy

Magnanimity
- Trustworthiness & Authenticity
- Trust
- Excellent orientation
- Truth/truthfulness
- Accuracy, Transparency, “Full & open Disclosure”
- Truth orientation
- Excellence
- Diligence
- Truth seeking
- Equity
- Tough love
- Trust
- Trustworthiness & Authenticity

Second-level Discoveries

Justice/Integrity
- Excellence
- Diligence
- Curiosity & openness to truth
- Teachability
- Restraint or meekness
- Patience
- Tenacity
- Perseverance & Tenacity
- Cooperate
- Patience
- Organization or group style

Humility
- Thankfulness, Listening, Forgiving, Saying, “I’m wrong” or, even “Maybe I’m wrong.”
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Obedience
- Generosity
- Respect
- Openness
- “Abundance thinking”
- Service to others
- Win-Win
- Capacity for Synergy (teamwork)

Loyal Caring
- Magnanimity
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- Excellent orientation
- Truth/truthfulness
- Accuracy, Transparency, “Full & open Disclosure”
- Truth orientation
- Excellence
- Diligence
- Truth seeking
- Equity
- Tough love
- Trust
- Trustworthiness & Authenticity

Note: Humility is an enabler; it permits the nexus between excellence and caring. It empowers or enables the other two & their synthesis.