



Bridge-Building Leadership and Human Flourishing in Galatians: Traversing Ethnic, Socioeconomic, and Gender Barriers

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Abstract

Most contemporary delineations of human flourishing lack the theistic assertion grounding humanity's thriving in the Creator's design. A holistic biblical definition of flourishing accounts for humanity's psychological, physical, existential, moral, and social health as God's image-bearers and stewards of his dominion on earth. The book of Galatians presents one of the New Testament's most compelling explanations of human flourishing. This paper examines the Apostle Paul's subclaims in Galatians 3:28 on ethnic (Jew/Greek), socioeconomic (enslaved/free), and gender (male/female) division in view of the theme of bridge-building leadership. My argument begins with a survey of the historical and literary background of the verse, proceeds to its implications for leadership theory, and then discusses the present-day applications of the bridge-building paradigm.

Introduction

Human flourishing (or "well-being" or "thriving") underscores a holistic state of health. Empirical studies of human flourishing frequently focus on psychological and physical well-being (Joseph, 2015). In cooperation with the Harvard Institute for Quantitative Social Science, VanderWeele's (2017) definition of human flourishing encompasses mental and physical health but also includes "happiness and life satisfaction, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships" (p. 8148).

VanderWeele presented a more inclusive approach; however, what is still lacking is the theistic assertion grounding human thriving in the Creator's intentions for humanity. Fashioned in God's image (*imago Dei*), humanity is purposed to fill and have dominion throughout the earth. A holistic theist definition of flourishing thus accounts for humanity's psychological, physical, existential, moral, and social health as God's image-bearers and stewards of his earthly dominion.

The biblical foundations for human flourishing trace to the first chapter of scripture. According to Genesis 1 (unless otherwise noted, all scripture in this paper is from the *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*, 2001), God gave the only facet of creation bearing the divine “image,” humanity, “dominion” over the earth to “fill” and “subdue” it (vv. 26–28). The writer of Psalm 115 elaborated on the same theme, pointing to humanity’s “increase” and that they would “be blessed” as stewards of the earth (vv. 14–16). In arguably the New Testament’s foremost affirmation of human flourishing, the Apostle Paul admonished the church in Galatia, for “There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Jewett (1975) described this verse as the “magna carta of humanity” (p. 142). Drawing from the precedent of liberties granted in the 13th century by the English royal charter under the threat of civil war, Jewett discerned in the apostle’s words the basis of the gospel’s freedom.

This paper examines the theme of bridge-building in Galatians 3:28 in light of Paul’s subclaims on ethnic (Jew/Greek), socioeconomic (enslaved/free), and gender (male/female) division. Some have interpreted this verse strictly in terms of individual rights, while others have construed it as a reference to an abstract spiritual status such as justification. Notwithstanding, Paul is making a rudimentary statement about the path to human flourishing rooted in collective, prejudice-transcending identity in Christ. I proceed by uncovering the historical and literary background of the verse and then assess its implications considering leadership theory, underscoring its contribution in view of the principles of bridge-building leadership. Finally, I consider present-day applications for the Galatians bridge-building model.

Human flourishing is at the heart of Pauline theology. Foster (2024) applied Paul’s 1 Corinthians 13 teaching on Christian love to nurturing an emotional climate favorable to flourishing in the healthcare workplace environment. Galatians provides an incisive claim for theological egalitarianism as the bedrock of flourishing in Christian mission and business. In the 21st-century globalized world, advances in communications technology and transportation have opened new avenues for the exchange of ideas, services, and economic resources. Nevertheless, deep-seated ethnic, racial, class, and gender barriers endure.

Studies have highlighted the significance of cross-cultural leadership from the perspective of global missions (Franklin, 2017; Plueddemann, 2009). Alongside the missions field halfway around the world, today more than ever Christian leaders have a platform to engage the cultural “other” at home in everyday life and places of business. Studies have concentrated on reconciliation leadership from the standpoint of resolution after international conflict (Bargal & Sivan, 2004; Nelson & Gizzi, 2021). This paper pursues a holistic, biblical paradigm for bridge-building, bringing together the

resources of cross-cultural and reconciliation leadership with strategies addressing the broader concerns of race, class, and gender.

Galatians 3:28 in Context

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, we are confronted with one of the foundational interpretive principles of the Epistles – the first Christians were Jewish and therefore thought the ceremonial observance of the law would continue. Gentiles coming into the fold challenged this assumption (Silva, 1994). Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal. 2:8), penned the letter (ca. AD 55) to address the concerns of the newly established churches in the Greek city of Galatia (corresponding to the Asian portion of modern-day Turkey).

The Galatians were confronted with a peculiar false teaching. A group identifying as Christians was pressuring Greek Christ-followers into accepting the many obligations of the Law of Moses – “special days and months and seasons and years” (4:10), and especially circumcision (2:12, 6:12–15). Paul's Galatian opponents were likely of Jewish background, given their preoccupation with the law and tie to Jerusalem (4:24–31) and James (stationed over the Jerusalem church, 2:11–12). They insisted one must belong to the Jewish nation to receive the benefits of justification (2:14–16) and emphasized continuity with Hebrew monotheism, diminishing the significance of the crucified Christ (Boice, 1994; Martyn, 1997). Paul wrote to alleviate the burden the false teachers had placed on the Gentiles in the interest of promoting harmony between them and the Jewish Christians (2:14–3:21). The argument in Chapters 3 and 4 hinges on the contrast between the old covenant of “flesh” (based on “works of the law”) and the new covenant of “faith” (based on the “Spirit”). Chapters 5 and 6 outline the path of the faith-filled life, consisting in Christian freedom, the Spirit's fruits, and burden-carrying love.

Paul's discourse on the contrast between the old and new way is elaborated in Chapter 3 as redemption from the law's “curse” – death – through the Cross: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (v. 13). God's promise to Abraham of blessing and inheritance unites the old covenant of the law with the new covenant paradigm encompassing the Gentiles so that the Greeks might also “receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (v. 14). Before the way of faith was revealed, the law brought subjection, placing its adherents “under the law” (*hypo nomos*, v. 23). Humanity was “subject to the law” as our “disciplinarian” (v. 25; the phrase *hypo nomos* is also found in 4:21 and 5:18). The law subjects to three dire realities: first, to futility, since no matter how hard one tries, it is impossible to uphold the entire law (v. 10); second, to death, implicit in the “curse” of verses 10–13 (an allusion to the curse of the Fall in Gen. 2:16–17 and 3:19); and third, subjection's tangible effect in the present life is the social hierarchy and subordination assumed in 3:28.

While 3:28's erasure of boundaries encompasses spiritual status (e.g., justification and the nature of salvation benefits), it also applies within a social framework. Hove (1999) insisted that "the principles Paul has provided do have behavioral ramifications" (p. 121). The freedom expressed in 28a presupposes a three-tiered axis of subjection characterizing ancient Judaism. Under the law, subjection was driven by spiritual privileges allotted to the Jews over the Gentiles, the free over the enslaved, and men over women. As God's chosen people and keepers of the law and sacred rites (especially circumcision), Jewish identity was frequently tied to religious superiority. Earlier in Galatians, we read that Peter, the apostle to the Jews, had succumbed to the Jewish legalists, separating himself from the Gentiles (2:11-12). The Pharisees embodied Jewish religious haughtiness, lording rigid adherence to the law over their students to be praised by others (Matt. 23:1-36). As Keener (2014) suggested, Christianity "formed the only bridge between Jews and Gentiles" (p. 532).

Paul's next subclaim pertains to socioeconomic discrimination, hinging on the master-servant structure of first-century society. While it is possible that Paul implied the abolishment of the institution of slavery, at the very least, he was declaring it irrelevant (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:21-24). In Galatians 5, Paul enshrined the attitude of a "servant": "Through love serve one another" (5:13; *English Standard Version*, 2016). In the preface of the Ephesians household code, Paul upended the social hierarchy of his day in the summons for mutual subjection (5:21), implying that even the household head (*paterfamilias*) is to subject himself to servants.

The third form of inequality is that of gender. Under ancient Judaism, only men participated in the spiritual sign of the old covenant – circumcision. Moreover, only men had direct access to God – as priests. The gender equality inherent in 3:28 is closely rooted in the *imago Dei* of the Genesis creation account. Paul's usual way of referring to gender couplings was with the terms "man" and "woman" (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:2; 11:9-12) or "husband" and "wife" (1 Cor. 7:2; 11:2-7; Eph. 5:22-33). In 3:28, he used the nouns "male" and "female." His language is an exact match to Genesis 1:27: "So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; *male and female* [emphasis added] he created them" (cf. 5:2).

Moreover, of the three distinctions (Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female), only the last uses "and" (*kai*): "male *and* [emphasis added] female." The others take "or" (*oude*). Paul's use of "and" for the male/female couplet once again mirrors the language of the creation narrative, presupposing the principle of gender parity premising scripture. He envisaged parity rooted in a renewal of the primeval harmony that existed before humanity's judgment depicted in Genesis 3 (Fee, 2011; Keener, 2019).

The salient tie to baptism (Gal. 3:27) and prevalence of parallel formulas in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:11 has led some scholars to surmise that verse 28 is

Christianity's "oldest creed," exhibiting the raw material of a baptismal confession. Regardless of whether the verse's content predates Paul, by including these words, the apostle was making a foundational claim reiterated with each new entrant into Christ's body (Dreyer, 2019; Patterson, 2018). The climax of Chapter 3 (and the whole of the letter) in this verse means that the full realization of God's cosmic reconciliation does not stop with the joining of Jew and Greek but extends to class and gender reconciliation.

Bridge-Building Leadership, Galatians 3:28, and Renewal of the *Imago Dei*

Graves (2024) described the value of a leadership model that sees the beauty in diversity, ever reaching for "a bridge of inclusivity" (p. 244). Bridge-building leadership pivots on a cross-cultural and relational paradigm that welcomes the cooperation of men and women of diverse backgrounds working in tandem to stem the tides of discrimination and abuse. Such a model hinges on the renewal of the *imago Dei* exemplified in Adam and Eve's primeval beauty. Genesis 1 depicts the triune God crafting humanity in the *imago Dei*, "Let us make humans in our image" (emphasis added; v. 26). The eternal Three-in-One, embodying beauty in diversity, fashioned human beings in the same likeness. Humanity exhibited diversity in the coupling of male and female to conduct their creational mission to extend God's dominion throughout the earth (vv. 26 and 28). As the supreme human expression of divine beauty, gender diversity in the *imago Dei* foreshadowed the revelation of God's beauty throughout creation. Adam and Eve filled and subdued the earth, reconciling all creatures of land, sky, and sea under God's exclusive rule. Bridge-building leadership seeks to recover the prelapsarian harmony of the Garden of Eden. The sin, curse, and the Fall of Genesis 3 dislodged humanity from seamless union with the divine, corrupting God's perfect image in us and destining us to toil, perverted desires, and division. Although defaced, God's image has not been lost. Biblical bridge-building leadership provides an avenue to renewing the portrait of flourishing in Genesis 1–2.

At the heart of bridge-building leadership is reconciliation first to the Creator and then to one another, supplying the peace, virtue, and unity embodied in human flourishing. The three-pronged contour of reconciliation depicted in Galatians 3:28 – ethnic, class, and gender – constitutes the conditions for our flourishing. According to Barentsen (2024), foundational to bridge-building is acknowledging the multidimensional differences responsible for the divisions ("gaps"). Ethnoracial, socioeconomic, and gender-based divisions create the need for reconciliation and cannot be resolved until they are confessed.

Barentsen (2024) outlined four foundational presuppositions of bridge-building leadership: (a) "Gaps can be bridged," (b) "bridging the gap does not eliminate it," (c)

“bridges require continual maintenance,” and (d) “social gaps are socially constructed and thus open to leadership influence” (p. 9). The first presupposition underscores the optimism of bridge-building leadership. Whatever the division is, it is conquerable. The second and third imply the ongoing attention the gaps require after the bridge is erected. The fourth suggests that the cause of the gaps is a systemic social one, residing in humanity’s nature (e.g., on account of sin and the Fall) and as such demands a communal response. In summary, while our divisions are surmountable, bridging them requires diligent upkeep according to biblical leadership principles.

Barentsen (2024) suggested that bridge-building leadership “connects intuitively with many leadership experiences and scholarly disciplines” enabling “lively interdisciplinary dialogue” (p. 11). Still, as evident in its metaphorical meaning, bridge-building implicitly contrasts with other leadership models, including the “transformative,” “authentic,” and “servant” approaches (Barentsen, 2024, p. 11). I would suggest that servant leadership, because of its foundational significance biblically, is highly commensurate with the bridge-building model. Despite the methodological difference – the latter concentrates on gaps to be reconciled – being a Christian leader who serves first means representing the Cross – God’s cosmic act of reconciling the world to himself in all of life.

The Cross embodied the self “emptying” (*kenoō*) demeanor of a servant – God divested of dignity and status to span the chasm of humanity’s sin through sacrificial death. Jesus taught bridge-building that pivoted on *kenotic* (self-emptying) servant leadership. He enshrined the one who gives of (empties) themselves to better others:

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. (Matt. 25:35–36)

While one might be inclined to give food, drink, accommodation, clothing, treatment, or companionship to the high and lofty in earnest of status advancement, Jesus lauded those who do so for the “least of these” (vv. 40, 45). The self-giving ethic Jesus prescribed encompasses overcoming the ethnic (the “stranger”) and socioeconomic (the materially deprived) gaps characteristic of bridge-building. The founder of the contemporary servant leadership movement, Robert Greenleaf (2002), described Jesus’ instruction here as a “test” of “humanity” (p. 337). Meeting this test’s demands through biblical (servant first) bridge-building promotes human flourishing. Such flourishing does have advancement in view, although that of a qualitatively different kind – the complete renewal of the *imago Dei* for the inheritors of “eternal life” (Matt. 25:46).

Bridge-Building Leadership in Action Today

The traversing of ethnic boundaries in Galatians through the uniting of Jews and Greeks prefigured Paul's culminating assertion of flourishing in 3:28. Freedom from the law's subjection is all-inclusive, encompassing class and gender reconciliation. The true gospel's superiority is marked by the renunciation of all forms of discrimination.

Ethnoracial Reconciliation

Traversing the gap between Jews and Greeks can be realized today through cultivating multiethnic churches and developing faith-based responses to international conflict. Churches have an opportunity to sow seeds of bridge-building across ethnic and racial lines. More than a half century since Martin Luther King Jr. decried the Sunday 11 AM hour as the "most segregated hour in America" (cited in Bartlett, 2013), the nation's churches remain largely divided ethnoracially (Cooper, 2017). Although some improvement is evident, it is marginal. Lipka (2014) reported that eight in ten U.S. congregants worship at ethnoracially homogenous churches (where a single ethnic or racial group comprises at least 80% of the congregation). Cooper (2017) maintained that American churches must answer for this discrepancy as other sectors of society make immense ground toward desegregation, proposing that the path forward entails White people disavowing "their traditional privilege, power, and economic advantages" and some Black people having to give up "their privileged places in black churches" (p. 138).

In a time of warring nations and territorial disputes, Christians have an opportunity to explore faith-based international conflict resolution and reconciliation. Several such efforts are already under way to mitigate the Israeli-Hamas conflict. The Presbyterians for Middle East Peace seeks justice for both sides through a two-state solution. The organization's publication *Peace and Faith* (Nelson & Gizzi, 2021) represents an ecumenical attempt to address recent and age-old debates, bringing together Catholic, Episcopalian, Jewish, Mennonite, and Presbyterian contributors. Nelson (2021) was critical of the politically left anti-Zionist movement, which underscores human rights abuses against Palestinians while ignoring more heinous crimes by more repressive groups like the Assad and ISIL regimes. Gizzi (2021) took issue with the Palestinian-led BDS (i.e., boycott, divestment, sanctions) movement and its many restraints on Israel, noting possibilities for Christian programs (e.g., the Jerusalem International YMCA and Arab-Jewish Community Centers) to promote reconciliation and shared society.

Bar-Siman-Tov (2004) observed that the concept of reconciliation has only recently gained interest among peace studies researchers and practitioners. Conflict resolution's benefit in terminating a given conflict extends only so far. The resources of reconciliation afford stabilizing peace, prevent the emergence of new conflicts, and spur

both leaders and followers (in line with transformational leadership) onward to higher tiers of motivation and integrity (see also Bargal & Sivan, 2004; Burns, 1978). Reconciliation leads to character formation that promotes inner wholeness and an awareness of morals and values (Gomez, 2013b). Its ongoing, long-term effect fulfills the third presupposition of Barentsen's (2024) bridge-building leadership paradigm ("bridges require continual maintenance").

Auerbach (2004) suggested that the Judeo-Christian concept of forgiveness embodies the "spiritual-moral" glue of reconciliation (p. 153). The essential condition of this forgiveness is recognition on the part of one or both sides that injustice has been done. To the victims of extreme conflict (e.g., those suffering at the hands of the South African Apartheid regime), the act of apologizing may seem unrealistic. Gardner-Feldman (1999) averred that asking for forgiveness would seem "paralyzing" for many sufferers of extremely bloody conflict zones (p. 335). Nevertheless, the consensus among leaders and scholars is that asking for forgiveness to promote stable peace between enemies has vast potential (Auerbach, 2004; Cloke, 2001).

Socioeconomic Reconciliation

Several innovative initiatives extend the Galatians bridge-building paradigm to class inequalities. The concept of reconciliation is increasingly being applied beyond the arena of international diplomacy as a useful model for Christian mission (Kärkkäinen, 2016). In the global North, bridge-building often focuses on First Nation (Indigenous) and "latecomers" (immigrants from the late 20th and early 21st centuries). Habel (2013) suggested that reconciliation between Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous remains integral to the continent's spiritual fabric. The countries of North America are top destinations for migrants from around the world. Many of the United States' 1.2 million Korean immigrants, most arriving over the last few decades, have found a home among Presbyterian, Methodist, and Catholic churches (Jenkins, 2011). Some groups follow reverse and diasporan networks to renew the post-Christendom lands of the West. An example of vibrant multidirectional missions is the Brazilian Pentecostal ethnic church the Igreja da Promessa (Church of Promise) in San Jose, California. Founded by Swedish Assemblies of God ministers, the church has expanded among Brazilian migrants who chart family networks and new educational and economic opportunities to enrich the landscape of U.S. Christianity (Palma, 2022).

There are dozens of people groups from largely unevangelized countries with substantial immigrant populations (10,000 or more) across the United States and Canada (Payne, 2009). According to the Joshua Project (2024), several of the United States' most significant unreached peoples are of Arabic descent. The largest of these is the Urdu, an Indo-Aryan group numbering at 537,000. The Urdu consist of a more recent wave entering the country as refugees. Another group is the nomadic tribal

Pashtuns, primarily of Afghan and Pakistani origins, numbering at 155,000. The North American church has a strategic opportunity to build outreaches among these diasporan peoples, many of whom will venture beyond continental boundaries to impact the millions of unreached among their homeland populations.

Christianity's multiculturalism means that today almost every nation is both a mission field and a sending country as missionaries are being sent "from everywhere to everywhere." The aim of cross-cultural missions – whether in majority world nations or the global North among natives, migrants, and diasporas – is leadership development. After churches are planted, the labor of discipleship means building leaders (Plueddemann, 2009). The church depends on leaders to teach and nurture the many uniquely gifted members of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:14–26). Through ministry partnerships, those from more opulent regions have a platform to build into and train missionaries from less affluent contexts.

Alongside church networks, cross-cultural bridge-building leadership is evident in numerous parachurch outreaches. One example is developed nations reaching majority world countries through medical and humanitarian aid. In a study of Minnesota Lutheran humanitarian relief in southern Madagascar, Halvorson (2018) revealed how contemporary Christian aid contributes to the globalizing of medicine while exposing worldwide medicine's resource inequalities.

Gender Reconciliation

Despite increasing egalitarianism that has opened opportunities for female education and employment, there remains a significant gender gap in injustices toward males and females. The 20th century witnessed remarkable gains in women's rights, from the right to vote (in 1920) to equal opportunity in the workplace (in 1964). Yet, in the home, centers of worship, and places of business, women continue to confront barriers that cast them as inferiors and scrutinize their ability as leaders. Beyond the litany of arguments delineating female roles in marriage, ministry, and the workplace (Chin, 2011; Piper & Grudem, 2021), the most palpable evidence of the unfair treatment of women is the overt discrepancy in instances of physical and sexual abuse. Women are significantly more likely than men to be the victims of sexual abuse, human trafficking, domestic and dating violence, workplace harassment, and stalking.

Acts of physical and sexual violence fall disproportionately on women and girls by a wide margin. Hull et al. (2016) reported that nearly 25% of college women have been victims of sexual assault. Among women aged 15–44, domestic violence is responsible for more adverse health and premature deaths than any other single cause (Healey, 2014). According to the Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, one in four U.S. women (26% or 33.5 million), compared to about one in twenty-six men (3.8% or 4.5

million), reported completed or attempted rape victimization at some point in their lifetime (Basile et al., 2022).

The American Psychological Association reported that 70% of the over 27 million human trafficking victims worldwide are women and girls (Novotney, 2023). In addition to food and sleep deprivation and often physical and sexual violence, women trafficking victims are also at elevated risk for many sexually transmitted infections and unsafe abortions (Dovydaitis, 2010). The violation of basic human rights involved in trafficking – and, for many, the toll of losing one’s childhood – results in severe long-term psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Among trafficking survivors, a significantly higher rate of women than men will experience such lasting effects (Novotney, 2023).

Despite protections introduced over the 20th century, workplace sexual harassment remains a major concern. The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited discriminatory employment practices, establishing equal opportunity for women in the workplace. Title VII of the act banned both forms of harassment: *quid pro quo* (the promise of promotion or the threat of demotion pending the exchange of sexual favors) and *hostile work environment* (severe verbal or physical conduct that interferes with work performance). Nevertheless, Jackson and Newman (2004) suggested that both forms continue “to define the work experience of many women and some men” (p. 706). Women are three times more likely than men to be sexually harassed in a public place (Basile et al., 2022).

President Jimmy Carter (2014), an evangelical in the Baptist tradition, described the pervasive system of discrimination against women:

This system is based on the presumption that men and boys are superior to women and girls, and it is supported by some male religious leaders who distort the Holy Bible, the Koran, and other sacred texts to perpetuate their claim that females are, in some basic ways, inferior to them, unqualified to serve God on equal terms. Many men disagree but remain quiet in order to enjoy the benefits of their dominant status. This false premise provides a justification for sexual discrimination in almost every realm of secular and religious life. Some men even cite this premise to justify physical punishment of women and girls. (pp. 1-2)

The distortion of scripture to justify patriarchalism and the ontological subordination of women cannot be taken lightly. Biblical bridge-building leadership seeks to correct false beliefs about women by erecting a gender theology rooted in the parity of men and women in the creation narrative’s *imago Dei*. Biblical equality based on God’s transcendent, gender-exceeding image – inscribing male and female’s shared mandate

and virtue – is paramount to differences expressed through gender (Hanson, 2023). Biblical leadership draws from sound hermeneutics anchored in scripture’s plain teaching before broaching contentious scriptures like Paul’s gender passages. We can glean from the scriptural instances of female exemplars like Deborah, Esther, Miriam, Huldah, and the many faithful women disciples recorded in the Gospels and Epistles, which remind us of the strength and dignity accorded women leaders even from ancient history (Land & Henson, 2024).

Another notable problem Carter (2014) identified is silence. There is the silence of the men who could make a change but do not. There is also the silence of the women who are assaulted and suffer trauma and are too afraid to tell someone. According to Rennison (2002), 63% of sexual assaults are not reported to the police. This discrepancy is even more pronounced on college campuses where more than 90% of sexual assault victims go unreported (Fisher et al., 2000). Several Christian and secular humanitarian organizations are working to prioritize gender equality as a core measure in meeting their goals. Thus, at the heart of bridge-building leadership for gender inequalities is amplifying the voices of disregarded women. The United Nations’s Commission on the Status of Women (n.d.) seeks to promote women’s status by publishing relevant data. Organizations such as Kenya’s Precious Women and Cambodia’s Chab Dai are traversing barriers and amplifying female voices through biblical gender-equality training programs (Haddad, 2021). Advocating for women’s voices in business enhances productivity, ethical leadership (“Women’s Leadership and Political Participation,” n.d.), and organizational effectiveness (“Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment,” n.d.).

Conclusion

The Galatians bridge-building leadership paradigm establishes the foundational freedoms of the gospel, supplying core resources to recognize and surmount ethnoracial, socioeconomic, and gender gaps. Such an approach seeks to alleviate these gaps at their roots and restore those who have suffered discrimination, providing a holistic, egalitarian framework for human flourishing. Biblical bridge-building encourages actively seeking out marginalized voices while opening space for their voices to be heard.

Although the Galatians 3:28 bridge-building model is methodologically unique in its starting point, it is compatible with a range of other leadership approaches. It is consistent with the servant leadership emphasis on prioritizing the needs of others. The Galatians bridge-building model’s self-sacrificial component draws from the biblical kenotic (self-emptying) paradigm. Gomez (2013a) advanced a kenotic model for developing cross-cultural relationships with peoples of other faiths and cultures, acknowledging that such an approach “does not allow us to superimpose our own

views; instead, it asks that we be changed by the very encounter with the other person” (“A Better Model: *Kenosis*” section). This kenotic accent to bridge-building prioritizes others, making it compatible with the Galatians-based helping-others paradigm.

Bridge-building is also consistent with the Galatians’ courageous leadership model, emboldening us to venture beyond the barriers that divide us. Moreover, in view of the work of Morris (2020), bridge-building is closely tied to inclusive leadership, as the other side of the courage that reaches across the aisle to bring others in (see also Thompson & Matkin, 2020). Galatians bridge-building thus offers a robust framework for spiritual and social reconciliation in fulfillment of the creational mandate of human flourishing.

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