Theology, Philosophy, Theory, Models

A Christian understanding of leadership is built on a theological foundation. Team ministry must also be built upon solid theological footings. Additionally, thinking through issues of philosophy, theory, and models helps in designing a plan for team ministry. The following definitions are meant to provide clarity for the process

Theology:

When I speak of the "theology of..." I am referring to the underlying biblical basis for what we believe/do. When we think about theology we think "revelation over reason." A theology of leadership and/or team means, "What does the Bible say about leadership and/or teams?" Gangel gives a great example of this when he writes about the principles of leadership derived from reading the Bible (for example see pages 62-63). A biblical theology is more inductive than deductive.

Philosophy:

When I speak of a "philosophy of ..." I am referring to a rational system of thought as to what we believe and/or why we do what we do. A philosophy of ministry is an explanation of why we do ministry the way we do. It is built on a theology, but is more an explanation of how it works in practice, i.e. how we weave the pieces together in our minds for ministry.

Theory:

A theory is an organized system of interrelated constructs (ideas) that provides an explanation, prediction or generalization about how something operates. Meltzoff views a theory as a large-scale map, with the different areas on the map representing general principles and the connecting highways the logical rules that connect the principles. (Meltzoff, Critical Thinking About Research, 1998, p. 28).

Model:

A model is a simplified description of a complex problem (www.onelook.com). Carly Fiorina's "Leadership Frame" is an example of a model. A model is a simple picture, but there is extensive amount of theology, philosophy, and theory behind it.

Summary:

If the model is the house, the theory is its blueprints, the philosophy is the reason we chose to build that particular house, and the theology is the foundation upon which it rests.

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