

Rooting for Rivals: How Collaboration and Generosity Increase the Impact of Leaders, Charities, and Churches

By P. Greer, C. Horst, and J. Heisey

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“Seek first the kingdom of God.” Jesus’ words, recorded in Matthew 6:33 challenge Christians, including leaders of faith-based organizations, to radically reorient their worldviews and priorities. In their book *Rooting for Rivals*, Peter Greer, Chris Horst, and Jill Heisey suggest Americans’ focus on ownership, competition, and winning distract Christians from having a kingdom-focused mindset in the marketplace. Instead of envisioning peer organizations as collaborators, leaders often default to viewing them as competitors. Potential allies become sworn enemies to be vanquished. Viewing peer organizations as “the enemy” has resulted in the hoarding of resources and division. The authors do not mince words when discussing the unfortunate consequences this has produced for faith-based organizations, particularly those in the nonprofit sector. They bemoan, “When we think of other organizations as our competition, we are choosing the wrong villain. We should fight and struggle—but not against one another. The competition is poverty. The foe is injustice. The opponent is our own sinfulness. The enemy is the evil one” (Greer, Horst, & Heisey, 2018, p. 37). Many of the challenges facing organizations today are massive in scale and require considerable coordinated effort to address.

According to the authors, the way Christian leaders navigate the relationships existing between their own organizations and peer institutions depends on their answers to two critical questions:

1. Do we live in a world of scarcity or abundance?
2. Are we focused on our clan or the Kingdom? (Greer, Horst, & Heisey, 2018, p. 58)

The authors assert that organizational leaders often internalize the worldview of scarce resources, resulting in an exclusivity mindset manifested in selfish, greedy behavior. Furthermore, leaders’ primary concern is often confined to the individuals in their organizations—their clans. Such a narrow focus limits the generous sharing of information and resources that makes necessary collaboration possible. The authors create a framework for exploring the reasons for these deficiencies. Their framework focuses on disordered loves impacted by the Seven Capital Vices—pride, greed, gluttony, lust, envy, vengeance, and sloth. These vices interact with leaders’ worldviews concerning resource scarcity and clan priority in producing behaviors that often fall short of the Kingdom-focused generosity Christian leaders are called to exhibit. The antidote to such worldly focus is the intentional promotion of corresponding virtues, including humility, generosity, temperance, love, contentment, grace, and steadfastness. Through this reorientation of love and focus, leaders will come to understand that their agendas and stewardship extend beyond the walls of their organizations and embrace the much larger Kingdom-focused perspective of interdependent action in the marketplace.

The book’s central message of pursuing a Kingdom-first agenda practiced by collaboration and generosity between rivals might initially sound too idealistic and appear to lack practicality. However, the authors encourage readers to take their message seriously by providing numerous examples of situations where leaders have put their ideas into practice and by discussing the positive results achieved. They provide many captivating narratives (including their own stories) involving the struggle

with vice and the demonstration of virtue. There are clear connections made between their personal stories of failure and triumph and the impact on organizational stakeholders. Each chapter includes discussion questions at its conclusion, providing opportunity for critical reflection.

The book is not without its shortcomings. The authors' emphasis on collaboration suppresses dialogue related to the many benefits achieved by marketplace competition. Marketplace competition has the potential to help focus attention on organizational (in)efficiencies, the production of goods and services that customers demand, and continual efforts to offer product and service innovation. Many (albeit not all) of the examples used to illustrate the kind of Kingdom-focused, inter-organizational collaboration advocated by the authors came from the nonprofit sector. It is unclear whether the same results would be observable in for-profit enterprises. The exploration of business-as-mission (BAM) and social impact enterprises may offer additional environments for further validation of the ideas presented in this book. There is also additional opportunity for exploring how leaders might get others to embrace the ideals presented in the book. The decision to collaborate and give generously should never be an isolated activity given managers' responsibilities to shareholders, employees, and customers. It becomes imperative to understand how to communicate a vision and appeal that resonates with the stakeholders that will be impacted by such decision-making.

Rooting for Rivals is a valuable resource for nonprofit leaders, business practitioners, and Christian educators. There are various concepts discussed, such as resource scarcity, mission drift, and the curating of vices and virtues that provide fruitful opportunity for discussion in personal, professional, and educational circles. Educators that instruct nonprofit, strategy, and religious courses should consider this book as a supplemental reading for students. Opportunity for critical reflection and group discussion is abundant. What does collaboration look like in the nonprofit sector where contributions remain frozen at a measly 2% of personal income? How do business leaders conditioned to view strategy using frameworks of growth and industry rivalry think about strategy anew as a restrained, joint effort between peer institutions? How can individuals coordinate with others to provide the greatest Kingdom-focused impact? The book provides an opportunity for individuals to explore possibilities related to these pressing questions. It encourages individuals to look inward at the vices operating in their own lives that may hinder their pursuit of radical Kingdom-focused

collaboration and generosity. It challenges us to think critically and creatively as we envision how to engage collaboratively in a world mired in sin.

May *Rooting for Rivals* remind us that our vocations should reflect the glory and generosity of the one who calls us to serve those around us, including our rivals.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Chris Langford is an assistant professor of management at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. He teaches a number of management, human resource management, and organizational behavior courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. His research interests

include examining the interface of work and faith in addition to the exploration of emerging diversity issues in organizational behavior and human resource management. Dr. Langford received his Ph.D. in organization and management studies from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He earned his MBA at the University of Central Florida and his BSBA at the University of South Carolina. He is an active member of the Christian Business Faculty Association, Academy of Management, Society for Human Resource Management, and Southern Management Association.