

Road to Flourishing: Eight Keys to Boost Employee Engagement and Well-Being

By A. Lopus, and C. Hartman, InterVarsity Press, 2022, \$22.49

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Did Jesus really come so that people could have life to the fullest? *The Road to Flourishing: Eight Keys to Boost Employee Engagement and Well-Being* (2022) by Al Lopus with Cory Hartman attempts to show that a flourishing Christian workplace is the best supportive evidence to this question. Lopus is the co-founder and CEO of Best Christian Workplaces Institute. He has a passion in life to see the workplace culture of every Christian-led organization flourish for all to see around the world. A deeper purpose for this book is to help individuals flourish as leaders and guide them to creating a flourishing workplace culture. The “why” behind Lopus’s book is his belief that “workplace culture determines employee engagement, and employee engagement determines organizational success” (p. 7).

Lopus and Hartman use ten chapters of content to outline “8 keys to a transformed culture,” which use the acronym F.L.O.U.R.I.S.H. The book concludes with final steps leaders should consider taking on the road to flourishing organizational cultures. Each chapter offers reflection questions and additional published resources to learn more about the content. Example stories are consistently used to discuss the implementation of key concepts, provide insight to important lessons learned, and give hope to struggling organizations. While many of these stories are helpful, the overuse of certain institute stories can come across as overbearing and distracting. However, there is considerable value in the Workplace Culture Pulse Survey located in the Appendix. The survey includes 16 questions regarding employee engagement to help leaders measure the progress of their action plans and provide a glimpse into the health of their corporate cultures. The survey would be a great tool for faith-based and secular organizations. Additionally, instructors teaching courses in organizational leadership or organizational behavior may find value in using this

instrument to enhance student learning as it is an example of a real and practical tool that students may want to utilize in their organizations after college. In addition, Lopus makes many connections between the chapters’ topics and published works from other respected authors, such as Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, John Kotter, Patrick Lencioni, Ken Blanchard and Julie Hodges, and Jim Collins. There are many relatable leadership lessons to be learned from other authors similar to Lopus’s work on topics, such as strategy, culture, trust, servant leadership, work, and more.

Lopus defines culture as “how we do things around here” (p. 19). The health of an organization’s culture is important, but leaders need to first know what their culture is, and second, “they have to be able to identify what drives their organization to flourish and measure for it” (p. 22). Lopus indicates employee engagement serves as the best assessment for flourishing, yet a concern for leaders is that “the higher you rise as a leader, the more distant you become from what is happening” in your organization” (p. 22). Chapter 2 is foundational as it discusses the first key, fantastic teams, and examines what makes a fantastic team. Christians will likely appreciate the biblical perspectives about fantastic teams shown in the modeling of Jesus. Lopus reminds readers how Jesus built the first fantastic team described in John 1:35-50 and gathered a diverse group depicted in Matthew 10:3-4 and Luke 8:1-3. Furthermore, when Jesus returned to the Father, he left a fantastic team to continue the good work he began. Hence, fantastic teams are “influenced by almost all the other keys,”...making teams the “fruit of other keys” (p. 33).

The other seven keys to a transformed culture include the following: life-giving work, outstanding talent, uplifting growth, rewarding compensation, inspirational leadership, sustainable strategy, and healthy

communication. *Lopus* reminds readers of the image of the church as the body of Christ presented by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. “Each person is God’s gift to the organization, and that is clearly seen when the person does most what they do best” (p. 56). Leaders of organizations may find it challenging to have employees do what they do best and still be profitable, yet “[t]here’s a direct correlation between creating a healthy culture where your people enjoy what they do every day and they get fulfillment out of it, and gross revenue and net profit” (p. 177). Hence, it is the role of a leader to know their people well (i.e., the “condition of your flocks” as found in Proverbs 27:23) and create work that matters. (I see this through my role as a professor, as stated in 3rd John 4; I have no greater joy than to hear that my children (students) are walking in the truth.) The authors attempt to connect meaningful work with compensation and fairness. Some readers may react negatively to this connection, as meaningful work for some individuals is much more than rewarding compensation through merit, seniority, and equity. Moving forward, *Lopus* asserts the key of inspirational leadership “is the key that turns the other keys” as workplace culture “simply does not thrive without it” (p. 129). The important connection between communication and employee engagement is examined. *Lopus* states, “[I]f you involve me more, you’ll get more of me,” which basically is a good reminder to “involve people in the decisions that affect them” (pp. 165-166). Flourishing for an organization must include the involvement of people. A three-stage roadmap is provided to improve workplace culture through discovering, building, and growing. The main power of workplace culture is that “competency can be corrected, but culture kills—plain and simple” (p. 177). Errors or weaknesses in competencies of people within an organization can be corrected, but a toxic culture can destroy the recruitment and retention of key talent and kill the whole organization.

From a Christian perspective, *Lopus* encourages us to keep in mind that we are imperfect leaders. He warns us that we “do something that Jesus never did.... [W]e don’t just identify with our organizations, we also place our identity in our organizations” (p. 186). As imperfect Christian leaders, *Lopus* describes how we take on guilt, shame, and fear as we become one in what we lead. We personally take on what is bad in an organization, assuming it means we are bad as well. (As professors, we can personally take on what is bad in our classrooms and assume we are bad as well.) Furthermore, this poses an interesting thought to continue to ponder: Should

Christian leaders place their identity in their organizations? Should leaders’ welfare and organizations’ welfare be tied? *Lopus* ends with a healthy reminder that “the road to a flourishing culture begins with self-knowledge and humility, which is too threatening for us to receive unless we rest safely in the glory of Christ’s complete love” (p. 188). All “eight keys” should be a reminder that as leaders progress on their road to flourishing, others will be able to notice His magnificence within their organizations and know that God is real.

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