

## **Why All Work is Collaboration**

Great leaders never work alone, including God.

The English verb collaborate is derived from the Latin prefix *com*, meaning “with, together or jointly,” and *laborare* meaning “to labor.” To collaborate means to work together. Examples of Christian collaboration are found in the Trinity, the Garden of Eden and the Body of Christ.

**The Trinity:** Christian collaboration, like God Himself, is *perichoresis*, a circle dance of unity in diversity, a paradox of authority and submission. Father, Spirit and Son act in unison, with purpose and reciprocity, initiating while deferring and making room for the Other. Genesis<sup>1</sup> and John,<sup>2</sup> for example, tell the story of God collaborating with Himself: God creating, Spirit hovering, the Word speaking life into being.

**The Garden:** God creates *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. What was not came to be at God’s command—light, heavens, water, earth and sky; plants, birds and all living creatures. Then, finally, human is formed from dust, made in God’s image, animated with spirit and life. God looks favorably upon the man and woman, placing them in the Garden and blessing them to care for His good creation. Here, in paradise, humanity works with God and labor is joy.

Humankind was created for collaboration with God. Then came desire. Deceit. Temptation. Sin. With becomes against. Union becomes separation. Labor moves from blessing to curse: thorns and thistles, toil and sweat. In time, God calls out leaders and nations, establishes covenant, restores blessing. But, eventually, repentance falls into rebellion.

Finally, at just the right time, divine collaboration is made flesh and dwells among us. In love, Father gives Son whose work is to do the Father’s will, inaugurating a new kingdom life in the Spirit. The Church is born. A new work is given.

Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”<sup>3</sup>

**The Body:** The cross unveils the mystery that “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”<sup>4</sup> We join with Him and with one another to steward His creative will. The Spirit bestows gifts given by grace for the common good.<sup>5</sup> God appoints leaders—apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers, to “prepare God’s people for works of service”<sup>6</sup> and to build up the Body of Christ. We are one body with many members and these members “do not all have the same function, so in Christ many form one body and each member belongs to all the others.”<sup>7</sup>

So, what does the Trinity, the Garden of Eden and the Body teach us about leadership and Christian collaboration?

**The Salvation Army: March 2019 Article**  
**From Collaborating to Co-Creating Part 1**

By Jim Van Yperen

1. **All work is God's.** God initiates and invites your participation into His work. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. . . You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."<sup>8</sup>
2. **You are not called do God's work alone.** Every Moses has an Aaron and Miriam; Paul a Timothy and Silas; Apollos a Priscilla and Aquila. Paul concludes his letter to the Romans mentioning the names of 25 men and women who Paul considers his co-laborers.<sup>9</sup>
3. **Your primary role is to invitation and preparation.** A leader discerns, invites and helps equip the right people to join in the right work of service. This means, first, that you need to know your people, their gifts and strengths. Second, you need to ask them to serve based upon their ability to fill God's purpose *for them* as well as the work.

The great danger of any structure, especially a hierarchical structure, is for leaders to distance themselves from people and their work. Christian collaboration means that a leader joins in the work, with their people, pointing to God. When leaders collaborate with God and others, their labor is joy.

--Jim Van Yperen

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1 -2

<sup>2</sup> John 1:1-5; 1John 1:1-4

<sup>3</sup> John 6:28-29

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 2:10

<sup>5</sup> I Corinthians 12:1-31

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 4:11-13

<sup>7</sup> Romans 12:3-8

<sup>8</sup> John 15:5,16

<sup>9</sup> Romans 16