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## FROM THE EDITOR

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Greetings!

Welcome to the 2013 edition of the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*. Eight years ago when we started the journal, we sensed that a new avenue of scholarly research was emerging in the field of organizational leadership studies. This emerging stream of literature took the metaphors, models, approaches, truths, and principles of leadership in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures seriously and sought to use the insights of Biblical studies, theology, and organizational leadership to foster and advance this research. We have been grateful to see JBPL playing a central role in the growth of this scholarly enquiry. Special thanks go to Dr. Bruce Winston for his tiresome support of the journal.

In this edition, we have a number of articles that seek to not only broaden the scope of our methodological approach, but also the scholarly questions we are asking of the text. We hope that you will enjoy these articles as much we did editing them. As always, our further hope is that you will join the conversation by sending your manuscripts to JBPL.

Peace and all good.

Corné J. Bekker, D. Litt. et Phil.  
Editor  
Regent University



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Representing a diverse group of scholars in Biblical, social-science, historical, and leadership studies, from around the world, the JBPL editorial board aims to provide a much needed multidisciplinary, as well as international perspective on current research and interest in Biblical perspectives in the study of leadership. Each member of the editorial board has been selected because of their published research and focused interest in the exploration of leadership within the Christian scriptures and its application in the many varied contexts around the world. To contact the editorial staff, please send an email to [jbpl@regent.edu](mailto:jbpl@regent.edu).

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LEADERSHIP FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST:  
DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SPIRITUAL  
LEADERSHIP FROM 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7 AND TITUS 1:6-9:  
IDENTIFICATION AND EXPLANATION OF A SPIRITUAL  
LEADER'S PERSONAL PRIORITIES, FIDELITY OF  
AUTHORITY, AND COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

STEPHEN M. KING

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The purpose of this article is to provide a conceptual framework for re-examining spiritual leadership. The article uses textual analysis, critically examining the meaning and consequences of Biblical leadership qualities or traits found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The conceptual framework developed consists of three factors relevant to the socialization of spiritual leadership: personal priorities, fidelity of authority, and community responsibility. Using the Pauline texts as the basis for analysis, drawing upon relevant leadership literature, and illustrating with Biblical vignettes of spiritual leaders, the article contends that spiritual leadership is: (1) based on the character of Jesus Christ; (2) that the Pauline discussion of leadership characteristics found in 1 Timothy and Titus form the basis for spiritual leadership conceptualization and empirical development; and (3) that spiritual leadership should not be considered only in the context of a church vocation or function, such as pastor or elder, but is representative in all other vocational and professional walks of life. In addition, the article argues that as spiritual leadership is absent of one or more of these factors—character, authority, and community—there arises a breach or crisis in spiritual leadership, which has devastating social and cultural consequences. Spiritual leadership is a key variable in the study and re-examination of Biblically-based and Biblically-inspired theories of leadership.

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Leadership is a much discussed term. The number of books written on the subject over the last several decades is nearly countless. Business leaders, former corporate executives, academics, pundits, leadership gurus, business managers, sports heroes, coaches, pastors, theologians, and many more, have contributed to this bulging list of leadership information and knowledge. And as many different writers and types of writers that contribute to the subject, there are nearly as many different theses and purposes for trying to explain leadership.

Leadership in the business world is rightly concerned with vision,<sup>1</sup> human charisma, and motivation;<sup>2</sup> developing management expertise and strategy;<sup>3</sup> and revealing theories, goals, and ideas regarding the expanse and importance of leadership.<sup>4</sup> Even the Christian business world recognizes the need for setting precise business goals, being a strong manager, and implementing sound strategy.<sup>5</sup>

Leadership in the political world is certainly different from its business counterpart, but lately even the differences are blurring. The source and direction of presidential leadership is most often viewed as power,<sup>6</sup> persuasion,<sup>7</sup> or even emotion,<sup>8</sup> where the president's ability to lead is marked by his ability to make decisions with lasting impact. The composite of a president's charisma, character, strength, courage, persuasion, and even circumstances under which he leads, all combine to identify "presidential differences."<sup>9</sup> Political leaders, including presidents, enlist the aid of many advisors, but ultimately the leader and the leader alone is tasked with making decisions that impact many, oftentimes with consequences far into the future.

The purpose of this article is to provide a conceptual framework for re-examining spiritual leadership, using textual analysis of Biblical leadership qualities or traits found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The conceptual framework developed consists of three factors relevant to the socialization of spiritual leadership: *personal priorities*, *fidelity of authority*, and *community responsibility*. Using the Pauline texts as the basis

<sup>1</sup> Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperBusiness, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo, *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998); Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Peter F. Drucker, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1973); Mikel Harry and Richard Schroeder, *Six Sigma: The Breakthrough Management Strategy Revolutionizing the World's Top Corporations* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Gary Hamel, *Leading the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2000); James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Ken Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level*, rev. ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2010); John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: The Free Press, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> James David Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

for analysis, drawing upon relevant leadership literature, and illustrating with Biblical models of spiritual leaders, the article contends that spiritual leadership is: (1) based on the character of Jesus Christ; (2) that the Pauline discussion of leadership characteristics found in 1 Timothy and Titus form the basis for spiritual leadership conceptualization and empirical development; and (3) that spiritual leadership should not be considered only in the context of a church vocation or function, such as pastor or elder, but is representative in all other vocational and professional walks of life. In addition, the article intuitively argues that if spiritual leadership is absent of one or more of these character, authority, and community factors, there arises a breach or crisis in spiritual leadership, which has devastating social and cultural consequences. Spiritual leadership is a key variable in the study and re-examination of Biblically-based and Biblically-inspired theories of leadership.

### I. DEFINING SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

What constitutes spiritual leadership? Key Christian authors, such as John Stott,<sup>10</sup> J. Oswald Sanders,<sup>11</sup> and Henry and Richard Blackaby,<sup>12</sup> generally agree that spiritual leadership is leadership modeled after the principles and practices of Jesus Christ, which is defined as *servant leadership*. Many others, including pastors,<sup>13</sup> theologians,<sup>14</sup> and leadership researchers,<sup>15</sup> have all tried to explain some aspect of the spirituality of leadership, whether conceptually or empirically, including its impact on organizational transformation;<sup>16</sup> influence on organizational and even “unit” performance;<sup>17</sup> the appearance of Biblical “antecedents of successful leadership,” such

<sup>10</sup> John Stott, *Basic Christian Leadership: Biblical Models of Church, Gospel, and Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, rev. ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> John MacArthur, *Called to Lead: 26 Leadership Lessons from the Life of the Apostle Paul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005); Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Corne J. Bekker, “Towards a Theoretical Model of Christian Leadership,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 142-152; Eric B. Dent, M. Eileen Higgins, and Deborah M. Wharff, “Spirituality and Leadership: An Empirical Review of Definitions, Distinctions, and Embedded Assumptions,” *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16 (2005): 625-653; GT Freeman, “Spirituality and Servant Leadership: A Conceptual Model and Research Proposal,” *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 4, no. 1 (2011): 120-140; Louis W. Fry, “Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 14, no. 6 (2003): 693-727. Roland G. Kuhl, “What is Pastoral Leadership? A Review of the Relevant Literature on Approaches and Understandings of Pastoral Leadership at the Beginning of the 21st Century” (unpublished manuscript, 2005): 1-117.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Benefiel, “The Second Half of the Journey: Spiritual Leadership for Organizational Transformation,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 5 (October 2005): 723-747.

<sup>17</sup> Louis W. Fry, Sean T. Hannah, Michael Noel, and Fred O. Walumbwa, “Impact of Spiritual Leadership on Unit Performance,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (April 2011): 259-270.

as morality and virtue;<sup>18</sup> and the enduring “legacy of leadership” as evidence by the leadership wisdom of the Apostle Paul.<sup>19</sup>

Henry and Richard Blackaby note that “spiritual leadership is based on character and the working of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>20</sup> The recitation of both variables suggests that spiritual leadership is attained both through the internal and external merits of the leader himself (i.e., character) and through the manifest spiritual power and authority of the Holy Spirit. The former may lend itself to empirical verification; however, the latter is more amorphous and elusive.

J. Oswald Sanders, distinguished evangelical minister, described spiritual leaders (and thus, the resulting spiritual leadership):

Spiritual leaders are not elected, appointed, or created by synods or churchly assemblies. God alone makes them. One does not become a spiritual leader by merely filling an office, taking course work in the subject, or resolving in one’s own will to do this task. A person must qualify to be a spiritual leader.<sup>21</sup>

The qualification for spiritual leaders and leadership, then, is appointment by God. Following in the footsteps of Biblical leaders such as Abraham, Moses, Joseph, King David, and many others, spiritual leaders are marked by characteristics that do not emanate from who they are as a person, who they associate with it on a political or social basis, or what educational level they attained, but spiritual leaders are born of God’s spirit, marked by his character, and solidified in his image. John Stott, the influential British theologian, understood Christian or spiritual leadership equivalent with servant leadership.<sup>22</sup> Citing Jesus’ intonation that true spiritual leaders do not command or direct, Stott emphasized that true spiritual leadership is rooted in the mentality and action to serve others (Mk 10:42-44).

### *Definition of Spiritual Leadership*

Spiritual leadership is not confined to typical Christian ministries, vocations, positions, or functions. Spiritual leadership is not limited to jurisdictional authority defined by church or denominational dictates. Spiritual leadership is defined by three components, which are factored from the qualities or traits of spiritual leadership derived from the Pauline texts under consideration: (1) the presence of personal priorities, which at their foundation is character; (2) fidelity of authority, which is the commitment to purpose; and (3) community responsibility, which is the extension of character and authority of the spiritual leader to the larger world or community outside of the spiritual leader’s vocation. Spiritual leadership, then, is reflective of human character, manifested

<sup>18</sup> David A. Oginde, “Antecedents of Christian Leadership: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Timothy 3:1-7,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 23-31.

<sup>19</sup> J. Lee Whittington, Tricia M. Pitts, Woody V. Kageler, and Vicki L. Goodwin, “The Leadership Wisdom of the Apostle Paul,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 5 (October 2005): 749-770.

<sup>20</sup> Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 150.

<sup>21</sup> Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 18-19.

<sup>22</sup> Stott, *Basic Christian Leadership*, 11.



in jurisdictional authority, but not limited to one particular jurisdictional authority, and impactful of the outside world.

### *Character: The Key to Spiritual Leadership*

Spiritual leadership is based on the character of Jesus Christ. Character is first and foremost a Christian principle because it is fused to the person of Jesus Christ,<sup>23</sup> and it later leads to maturity, both as a person and a spiritual leader. The English word *character* derives from the Greek word *characakter*, meaning to make a mark or an indentation. The image of Caesar was imprinted on all coinage, denoting not only the divinity but longevity of Caesar himself. Later, character came to mean a “distinctive” and “lasting mark” made upon someone or caused by someone. Our love for our spouse, children, and parents, for example, is a “mark” or character that is imprinted not only in ourselves, but because of our love it also becomes part of the person we demonstrate our love toward. The Greeks developed this concept and understanding of character to describe what we understand today as *moral virtue*. For the Christian, though, the “Good” is God, and more specifically the knowledge and knowing of God through his son, Jesus Christ. The permanency of Christ translates into the permanency of character. And because of its permanency, it is indelibly etched into the recipient.

The evangelist D.L. Moody once noted, “Character is what you are in the dark.”<sup>24</sup> The spiritual leader is first and foremost imbued with character. And it is the character that is the foundation upon which he demonstrates the competence to make decisions.

## II. EXPLAINING SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF BIBLICAL CHARACTER TRAITS

A spiritual leader is one who does not win his position by strength, intelligence, or influence. These characteristics are certainly important, but they are not the linchpin for describing spiritual leaders or the decision making that ensues from such leadership. Instead of examining various philosophical and theological understandings of spiritual leadership, we confine ourselves to the Pauline tradition, defined by the Bible and outlined in detail in two separate Biblical passages: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

These two texts focus largely on the traits of spiritual leaders (i.e., leaders that occupy traditional Biblically-defined positions of authority and responsibility, such as bishops, deacons, elders, and pastors). As noted, this article expands the inclusion of spiritual leaders beyond these traditional church-defined positions to include leaders in various other cultural, institutional, and organizational leadership capacities. The Apostle Paul addressed his recent convert and young and devoted servant, Timothy, on the manner and behavior necessary for a spiritual leader to exemplify. Even though

<sup>23</sup> Richard J. Krejcir, “What is Character?” *Schaefter Institute of Church Leadership*, <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/?articleid=42500&columnid=&contentonly=true>.

<sup>24</sup> Attributed to Dwight L. Moody by his son, William R. Moody. See <http://quotationsbook.com/quote/6021/#sthash.Jkkwllpv.dpbs> for further explanation.

these traits are not exclusive, they do provide a spiritual benchmark expected of spiritual leaders.

Our two primary guiding questions are:

1. What are these Biblical characteristics of spiritual leadership? How are they factored?
2. Do these Biblical characteristics reflect the virtue and behavior that is expected of spiritual leaders only in the church? Or can these characteristics be useful in measuring the leadership dynamics, and thus resulting vacuum, of Christian leaders in vocations other than full-time ministry?

A corollary question is: What are the implications of a breach or crisis of spiritual leadership when these Biblical character traits are missing or diminished in some way?

The following Biblical passages describe spiritual characteristics that apply to various spiritual leaders, such as overseers and pastors (1 Tm 3:2-7), deacons (1 Tm 3:8-12), and elders (Ti 1:6-9). Several categorizations describe the arrangement of these spiritual characteristics. Table 1 is a general overview of these characteristics.

The characteristics listed in table 1 are wide-ranging, focusing on various aspects of a spiritual leader's life including: personal, professional, and family. Some characteristics appear in only one category: "respectable" and "able to teach" (overseers or pastors), while others appear at least twice ("not given to drunkenness" or "given to much wine"), or even three times ("husband of one wife" or "manager of his own children").

Some popular Christian authors, such as Gene Getz,<sup>25</sup> combine qualities or traits from all three scriptural passages, thus eliminating any redundancy or overlap, while providing a brief description of each characteristic or trait. Table 2 reflects this pared down version of the Pauline characteristics of spiritual leadership. Getz's primary purpose is to explain the characteristics as "attributes of a godly man," rather than focusing specifically on church leaders.

Several theologians and Bible scholars do type or factor the characteristics into various workable categorizations. In table 3, Ralph Wilson lists five categorizations, including "general reputation," "family stability and marriage and family," "basic character," "personal traits and habits," and "doctrinal fidelity."<sup>26</sup> He acknowledges that "general reputation," "basic character," and "personal traits and habits" collapse into one broad category labeled "character." Wilson crosses each trait category to each level or unit of church leadership, allowing the reader to distinguish between leadership and trait application. This reduces the number of categorizations to three.

<sup>25</sup> Gene A. Getz, (2004). *The Measure of a Man: Twenty Attributes of a Godly Man* (Ventura, CA: Regal Publishing, 2004), 20-21.

<sup>26</sup> Ralph Wilson, "Selecting Leaders in God's Household (1 Timothy 3:1-16; Titus 1:6-9)," *Jesus Walk Bible Study*, <http://www.jesuswalk.com/books/timothy.htm>.

Table 1. Biblical characteristics of spiritual leadership located in 1 Timothy 3:2-12 and Titus 1:6-9

Overseers (1 Tm 3:2-7)	Deacons (1 Tm 3:8-12)	Elders (Tt 1:6-9)
1. Above reproach	15. Men worthy of respect	23. Blameless
2. Husband of one wife	16. Sincere	24. Husband of but one wife
3. Temperate	17. Not indulging in much wine	25. Man whose children are believers and not wild and disobedient
4. Self-controlled	18. Not pursuing dishonest gain	26. Not overbearing
5. Respectable	19. Keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with clear conscience	27. Not quick-tempered
6. Hospitable	20. Must first be tested	28. Not given to drunkenness
7. Able to teach	21. Husband of one wife	29. Not violent
8. Not given to drunkenness	22. Must manage his children and his household well	30. Not pursuing dishonest gain
8. Not given to drunkenness		31. Hospitable
9. Not violent but gentle		32. Loves what is good
10. Not quarrelsome		33. Self-controlled
11. Not a lover of money		34. Upright
12. Manage his own family; see that his children obey him with proper respect		35. Holy
13. Not a recent convert		36. Disciplined
14. Good reputation with outsiders		37. Hold firmly to Word of God—to (a) encourage others by sound doctrine, and (b) refute those who oppose it

Table 2. Pauline characteristics of Biblical or spiritual characteristics in Timothy and Titus<sup>27</sup>

Pauline characteristic
1. Overall spiritual maturity (well-rounded man, Renaissance man)
2. Above reproach (person of good reputation outside the church)
3. Husband of one wife (fidelity; morally pure)
4. Temperate (balanced in words and deeds)
5. Prudent (wise and humble)
6. Respectable (being a good role model for others)
7. Hospitable (not selfish, but generous)
8. Able to teach (able to communicate clearly and sensitively)
9. Not given to drunkenness (not addicted to a controlling substance that would impair judgment)
10. Not self-willed (not self-centered and controlling)
11. Not quick tempered (not violent or excessively angry)
12. Not abusive
13. Gentle (sensitive, loving, and kind)
14. Peaceable (not argumentative or divisive)
15. Not a lover of money (not materialistic)
16. Manage his own family; see that his children obey him with proper respect (good husband and father; good steward)
17. Loves what is good (pursues godly activities)
18. Just (wise, discerning, nonprejudiced, and fair with others)
19. Devout (is holy, devoted to God)
20. Self-controlled (disciplined personally, professionally, socially)

Further clarification of the categorizations of spiritual leadership traits include Ray Pritchard's<sup>28</sup> framework, which is divided in categories titled "personal," "public," "family," and "ministry." One of the utilities of Pritchard's framework is the explicit delineation of various characteristics applicable in contexts outside of the local church. It is Pritchard's contention that spiritual leaders are not just leaders within and to their congregation of Christian believers, but that they are accountable for leadership responsibilities to the greater public, including "being above reproach," "hospitable," and of "good reputation" (see table 4).

<sup>27</sup> Table 2 is adapted from Getz, *The Measure of a Man*.

<sup>28</sup> Ray Pritchard, "The Biblical Concept of Elder," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January-March 1987): 73-74.

Table 3. Grouping of Pauline leadership traits found in 1 Timothy 3:2-12 and Titus 1:6-9<sup>29</sup>

	General reputation	Family stability/marriage and family	Basic character	Personal traits and habits	Doctrinal fidelity
Overseers	“Respectable” (i.e., “of good behavior”), “Good reputation with outsiders” (“good report” or “well thought of”)	“Husband of but one wife” (Paul meant leaders are not to be “unfaithful within the marriage”), “Manage his own family well, children obey with proper respect” (“Manage, meaning rule in a caring, servant-like way”), “Hospitable”	“Above reproach” (“not open to censure, irreproachable”), “Not a recent convert”	“Temperate,” (“vigilant,” “restrained in conduct, level-headed”), “Self-controlled,” “Not given to drunkenness,” “Not violent but gentle,” “Not quarrelsome,” “Not a lover of money”	“Able to teach”
Elders		“Husband of but one wife,” “Children are believers and not wild or disobedient,” “Hospitable”	“Blameless,” One who loves what is good,” “Upright,” “Holy”	“Disciplined,” “Not indulging in much wine,” “Not violent,” “Not quick-tempered,” “Not overbearing,” “Not pursuing dishonest gain”	“Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught,” “Encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it”
Deacons	“Worthy of respect,” (“serious,” “dignified,” “grave”)	“Husband of but one wife,” “Manage his children and household well”	“Nothing against them,” “Trustworthy in everything” (“trustworthy in all things”), “Tested first” (“proved,” “make a critical examination of; to determine genuineness, put to the text, examine”)	“Temperate,” “Not malicious talkers,” “Sincere,” “Not given to drunkenness,” “Not pursuing dishonest gain”	“Hold the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience”

<sup>29</sup> Table 3 is adapted from Wilson, “Selecting Leaders.” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 5, no. 1 (2013), 3-40.  
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Table 4. Categorization of Pauline leadership traits along four dimensions<sup>30</sup>

Personal	Public	Family	Ministry
Temperate: even-tempered, not erratic or unstable	Above reproach: no questionable conduct, no grounds for accusations	Husband of one wife: "one woman man," faithful to wife, fidelity	Able to teach: knows and communicates Biblical truth
Prudent: showing good judgment and common sense	Hospitable: receptive and open to people	Manages own household well: leader at home, especially spiritual	Holding fast the word of truth: firm in truth, not a compromiser
Not addicted to wine	Good reputation with outsiders: admired by non-Christians	Children under control: children who respect him	Exhort with sound doctrine: encourages others with Biblical truth
Not pugnacious: does not lose temper; not violent		Children who are Christian believers	Refute those who contradict: spots and refute false teaching
Gentle: patient and considerate			
(Un)contentious: peaceful; willing to listen, not argumentative			
Free from love of money: not greedy for personal gain			
Not self-willed: willing to yield to others; not trying to get own way, servant leader			
Not a novice: evidence of spiritual maturity			
Not quick tempered: not easily angered			
Loving what is good: adhere to highest moral and ethical values			
Just: fair and honest			
Devout: devoted to God in his personal life			
Self-controlled: control himself under pressure			

<sup>30</sup> Table 4 is adapted from Wilson, "The Biblical Concept of an Elder." *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 5, no. 1 (2013), 3-40.  
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Lastly, Stephen M. King<sup>31</sup> develops yet another conceptual framework, loading the leadership traits or characteristics onto three factors: personal priorities, fidelity of authority, and community or public responsibility. Similar to Pritchard's conceptualization, King's categorization focuses (1) upon both internal and external direction of a spiritual leader's focus, but (2) unlike Pritchard and others, it forges a relationship between character and virtue traits or personal priorities, commitment or fidelity of God-ordained authority, and community or public responsibility to those followers, organizations, and institutions that the spiritual leader influences, particularly outside his own vocational environ. King's categorization and resulting factor loads are derived from 1 Timothy 3:2-9 and Titus 1:6-9. He identifies a total of twenty-two character or spiritual leadership traits (see table 5).

Table 5. Identification of spiritual leadership traits loaded on three factors: personal priorities, fidelity of authority, and community responsibility<sup>32</sup>

Personal priorities	Fidelity of authority	Community responsibility
Basic character: blameless and holy	Husband of one wife (demonstrates moral behavior)	Good report of those without (being a good witness)
Strength and stability: vigilant, sober, temperate, and of good behavior	One that rules his own house	Being just Given to hospitality
Personal moderation: not given to wine, no striker, not a brawler, not soon angry, not covetous, not a lover of money	Not a novice Not self-willed (obedient and respectful of authority)	Lover of good men (loves what is moral and ethical)
Spiritual maturity: holding fast to Word of God, being apt to teach		

King argues that the first of three spiritual leadership factors is rooted squarely in character formation and development. They are labeled personal priorities. These qualities are the primary ingredients of spiritual leadership; the necessary characteristics that every Christian leader, particularly those in pulpit ministries, but inclusive of all spiritual leaders regardless of vocation or calling, must exemplify, believe

<sup>31</sup> Stephen M. King, "The Qualities of Biblical Christian Leadership" (Christian leadership teaching series, New Life Assembly of God, Lakeland, FL, January 12, 2011-March 30, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Table 5 is adapted from King, "The Qualities of Biblical Christian Leadership."

in, and demonstrate. These qualities or characteristics reflect the leader's inner person, arguing that a spiritual leader must control his carnal nature, his lustful desires, his temper, his patience, his self-control, etc. Without doing so, no spiritual leader can effectively be put in a position to lead. If he cannot control and govern himself, he has no business trying to govern and lead others. These ten qualities or traits are further divided into four subcategories:

1. Basic character (blameless and holy)
2. Inner strength and stability (vigilant, good behavior, temperate, and sober)
3. Personal moderation (too much wine, don't be angry, and don't be greedy)
4. Spiritual maturity (given to teach)

The second set of factors is referred to as fidelity to authority. These four qualities represent faithfulness to one's responsibilities, either directly or indirectly related to the spiritual leader's vocation. A spiritual leader is committed to not only his job, but to fulfilling the duties of that job with excellence. Perfection in this world is not attainable; however, commitment of service, devotion to detail, and sincerity of heart is attainable. Just as a husband and wife should reflect fidelity of heart, so should a spiritual leader demonstrate fidelity of concern for both the job and the people affected.

These qualities include:

- Not being self-willed
- Husband of one wife
- One that rules his own house
- Not a novice

The third set of factors for spiritual leadership is community responsibility, specifically denoting the spiritual leader's relationship and influence of and to those organizations, both civil and private, constituent groups, nonprofit programs, or other para-church ministries among others, which form the larger community. God expects spiritual leaders to control and govern themselves not only within the confines of their vocation, but also to the broader community. These two qualities include:

- Good report of those without
- Given to hospitality

We live in difficult and challenging times. These times require strength and purpose of character, particularly within spiritual leaders. Spiritual leaders must develop and exhibit quality of character first as a person, second for the fidelity of their authority, and third for the larger community as a whole. The remainder of this article critically assesses and examines sixteen of the twenty-two Biblical qualities or traits of spiritual leadership identified by King,<sup>33</sup> addresses the probability of a breach or crisis in spiritual leadership, and finally offers concluding remarks.

### III. PERSONAL PRIORITIES: THE CORE OF A SPIRITUAL LEADER

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<sup>33</sup> King, "The Qualities of Biblical Christian Leadership."



The core of a spiritual leader is his character. Character is what marks a person's soul and influences his action and behavior. Character motivated by or impressed of Biblical virtues is the cornerstone for a spiritual leader. Like the foundation of a house, the foundation of a person (i.e., his character) upholds and strengthens who he is as a person.

### *Character: The Basic Priority of Spiritual Leaders*

The first of the personal priorities is the basic character of spiritual leaders, which includes being *blameless* or *above reproach* and to be *holy*. Let's examine each quality or trait and then illustrate, using Job and John the Baptist as Biblical examples.

**Blameless.** The first of Paul's traits related to personal character or virtue is "to be blameless and holy." Some translations read "above reproach," which means "something that cannot be taken hold of." First, before we examine this trait or characteristic, it is necessary that a spiritual leader be a confessional Christian. It is imperative that a spiritual leader, who is entrusted with the lives and souls of others under his care or watch, be a Biblical Christian, one who receives through his spiritual transformation at the time of confession, or as evangelicals note, at the time of his "new birth," the divine nature of Jesus Christ. He is a "new creature in Christ Jesus" (2 Cor 5:17a).<sup>34</sup>

A blameless spiritual leader, or one who is above reproach, is not a perfect leader—one who is without sin, or who commits no wrong. Man's sin nature precludes this from happening. To be blameless means that the leader, as evidenced by his actions, behavior, and, most importantly, decision making—not necessarily decisions made—cannot be censured or cannot be called to account for a wrong action or behavior. He cannot be rebuked or found fault with. A spiritual leader's core conviction, his inner nature, is of such noteworthiness that nothing he says or does will produce a blot or blemish on either his reputation or character. More importantly, as Kenneth Wuest writes, "a spiritual leader (or 'bishop') must be of such spotless character that no one can lay hold anything in his life which would be of such nature to cast reproach upon the cause of Christ."<sup>35</sup> It is often noted that Billy Graham, when traveling alone, would not allow himself to be placed in a potentially compromising position, such as riding in an elevator alone with a female stranger. This is clearly a spiritual leader carrying himself in such a way that his character and, thus, reputation are beyond criticism.

Bear in mind, blameless does not mean or imply sinless, as we have mentioned. Only one was sinless: Jesus Christ. But according to others, such as J. Rodman Williams, "it does mean solid in character so that reproach or censure cannot be

<sup>34</sup> All scripture references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*, vol. 2, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973), 52-53.

brought against him.”<sup>36</sup> He should not engage in illegal or illicit activities—obviously! But he should not even be associated with such activities; he should avoid “the very appearance of evil.”<sup>37</sup>

**Holy.** In Titus 1:8, Paul commands that a spiritual leader also be holy. The Greek word *hosios* translates “right” by “intrinsic or divine character.”<sup>38</sup> This is powerful because it implies that a spiritual leader’s character or inner nature is infused with the divine nature of God. We as Christians at the “new birth” have imparted into us the nature of God himself. We do not become “gods,” of course, but beyond *imago dei*, when we confess and believe that Christ is our Lord and savior, we become “new creatures,” discarding the “old man” or our old ways and embracing the “new man” or the new nature which is found in God himself (2 Cor 5:17). Thus, by being holy, a spiritual leader is to display holiness, or the actions of being holy.

The call to be holy is found in both the Old and New Testaments. In Leviticus, God speaks through his prophet that “you shall be holy; for I am holy.”<sup>39</sup> Hebrews declares, “For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled.”<sup>40</sup> And Peter writes, “But as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy.”<sup>41</sup> The power of godly holiness is present in every believer. God commands all Christians to be holy, but it is specifically applicable to his spiritual leaders. Let’s examine our first of two Biblical spiritual leaders: Job.

*Job: The calm and careful spiritual leader.* Job was a worthy man; a man of note and eminency; he even held the position of magistrate. In all of his private and public dealings, he was perfect and upright, concerned with both his character and his reputation. The first line of Job reads: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”<sup>42</sup> The key is that he “feared God.” When the fear of God reigns in the heart of a spiritual leader, his character and actions are governed entirely by the reverence granted to God himself. Matthew Henry wrote about Job:

The fear of God made him perfect and upright, inward and entire for God, universal and uniform in religion.... He feared God, had a reverence for his majesty, a regard to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. He dreaded even the thought of doing what was wrong; with the utmost abhorrence and detestation, and with a constant care and watchfulness...he avoided all appearances of sin and evil.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>36</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: The Church, the Kingdom, the Last Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 204.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Thes 5:22.

<sup>38</sup> Biblesuite.com, s.v. “hosios,” <http://biblesuite.com/greek/3741.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> Lv 11:44-45.

<sup>40</sup> Heb 7:26.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Pt 1:15.

<sup>42</sup> Jb 1:1.

<sup>43</sup> Henry, “Job 1” in *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible*, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/job/1.html>.

Job did not consider his earthly station or relish in his wealth and position; but he did love his family, his life, and his God. As a spiritual leader in his community, he embodied the spirit of service and worship. He did not despise what God provided for him in terms of possessions, yet he did not excuse them either.

Throughout his long and arduous physical, emotional, and spiritual challenge, where he combated the torment of Satan, endured the lack of support from his wife, and was regaled by the ungodly and frivolous advice from his companions, Job remained vigilant and faithful. Certainly he questioned his position, and why what was happening to him was happening, but because of his virtue and character, Job did not waver or did not consider abandoning his God. He feared God too much; the reverence for God's glory and majesty was too great that he could not conceive of disappointing his lord.

Job's trials demarcate the strength of inner character; he displayed what it means to be blameless and walk holy before God and man. Our second Biblical spiritual leader, John the Baptist, is a far different type of leader. John was led into the desert at a young age, subsisting on very little of natural necessities. He carefully listened to the voice of God, emerged from the desert region, developed his own band of disciples, and eventually sounded the clarion call for the coming Messiah.

Certainly it is true of spiritual leaders that they possess the calling from the Lord—the command from God himself to lead in a particular area and way—but it is imperative that before this command can be fulfilled, the spiritual leader must exhibit the Pauline qualities necessary to carry out the divine call. No spiritual leader can lead in the church, business, education, family, government, or in any other jurisdictional area unless and until he walks worthy of the call.

*John the Baptist: The combative and prophetic spiritual leader.* Compared to Job, John the Baptist was spiritually pugilistic; yet, beneath the rough exterior was a man who dedicated his life to austerity and holiness. Prophets are usually not considered spiritual leaders, but in fact they exhibit more leadership acumen than many Christians who reside in spiritual leadership posts, regardless of vocation. Abraham Heschel wrote, "The prophet was an individual who said 'No' to his society, condemning its habits and assumptions, its complacency, waywardness, and syncretism."<sup>44</sup> As a result, the prophet led (leads) those who wish to follow. He does not usually lead out of a traditional vocational or professional position (but he may). He leads from his heart; he leads by his proclamation of truth, truth that is sown deep in his character, a character that is burned in the lava of holiness, a complete commitment to God, where he hears the voice of God in the same way we hear the roar of a waterfall cascading downward. Heschel writes, "God is raging in the prophet's words,"<sup>45</sup> and the people risk their own life if they ignore the prophet's words.

John the Baptist was such a spiritual leader. His holy lifestyle was forged on the backside of the desert, "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of

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<sup>44</sup> Abraham, Heschel, *The Prophets: An Introduction*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), xv.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

sins.”<sup>46</sup> Isaiah proclaimed the forthcoming of John the Baptist: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”<sup>47</sup> John’s purpose was simple, but profound: usher in the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Only a man baptized in tears, consecrated among the rocks, hills, and animals of the nether regions of the Judean wilderness, who kept himself “pure and undefiled” from all worldly excesses. His purpose was certain, and his calling without question—only this kind of spiritual leader can proclaim loudly and without reservation that the Messiah was coming.

Beyond his messianic calling, John, operating as a spiritual leader, birthed in the baptism of fire of holiness, confronted the abuses of religion and society. First, while at the same time he encouraged and provoked the common people, the publicans, and soldiers to good works and repentance (Lk 3: 10-14), he excoriated the religious zealots and synagogue leaders—the Pharisees and Sadducees—for substituting their holy rituals and self-righteousness for the unconditional love and mercy of Jesus Christ. At John’s baptismal services, for example, he scoffed at them: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come” (Mt 3:7). John spoke the truth in a way and manner that did not endear him to the religious establishment; he not only challenged their lifestyle and hypocrisy, but he thrashed unmercifully at the shallowness of their religious thought and pedigree, when he proclaimed, “And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees” (Mt 3:10a). John spoke the truth, a truth that only he could speak, because it was a truth born out of his untarnished character, a character that glistened in godliness and consecration.

Second, he spoke against Herod the tetrarch because of his sexual immorality: having sex with his brother’s wife (Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17). Herod was the epitome of a weak leader: he could not think for himself, he constantly groveled at the feet of those who would do his bidding; he could not stand up for what was right and honorable. But Herod did recognize the strength of John’s spiritual leadership: inner character, marked by holiness. Herod “feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly” (Mk 6:20). He confronted Herod, warning him that his own leadership position would suffer if he continued in his immoral lifestyle. Herod responded, of course, by beheading John.

A spiritual leader’s basic character traits are to be blameless and holy. He is to be above reproach, not giving his detractors the opportunity to appoint blame, from unethical indiscretions to immoral or even illegal actions. The Biblical examples of Job and John demonstrate that spiritual leaders do not necessarily need to reside in common vocational positions of authority to hold and be recognized by others to operate as a spiritual leader. Second, their callings and personalities will influence their purpose, while still requiring their inner core to be virtuous.

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<sup>46</sup> Lk 3:3.

<sup>47</sup> Is 40:3.

### *Strength and Stability*

The second set of personal priorities is strength and stability, including the qualities: “vigilant, sober, temperate, and (of) good behavior” (1 Tm 3:2; Ti 1:7, 8). A spiritual leader’s virtuous character is displayed in his actions and demeanor toward others. Operationally, spiritual leaders are challenged to fulfill or demonstrate their inner virtues. While monks in monasteries portray blameless and holy lifestyles too, their cloistered lifestyle negates their involvement with the world around them. Spiritual leaders do not have this luxury; instead, they are to interact, to communicate, and to live by example their blameless and holy lifestyle. Stating it is one thing; living it is something entirely different. Let’s define and describe each quality, and then we will illustrate the strength and stability factor through the Biblical lives and work of the Apostles Peter and Paul. First, let’s define each term.

**Vigilant.** The Greek rendering for vigilant is *nephalion*, which means “to be calm, dispassionate, and circumspect.”<sup>48</sup> A spiritual leader must be certain of what transpires around him; he needs to be cognizant of his social surroundings, and use wise caution when speaking or acting.

**Good behavior.** Good behavior (Greek: *kosmios*) means “orderly,” even “dignified.”<sup>49</sup> Spiritual leaders are to display an attitude toward others that is stable, meaning focused, and sincere.

**Temperate and sober.** Temperate (Greek: *egkrates*) and sober (Greek: *sophron*) are similar enough that we will treat them as one. To be temperate is to be “strong, masterful, and self-controlled,” while being sober also means to be “self-controlled,” while displaying seriousness of purpose.<sup>50</sup> A temperate and sober spiritual leader should be “careful, controlled, and earnest” in displaying good behavior toward others.

**The spiritual leader’s vigilance: The Apostle Peter.** Peter demonstrates and explains the behavioral qualities of vigilance and good behavior in this passage. Notice in verse 2, he argues that the spiritual leader assumes leadership not in a demanding or compulsorily fashion, but with the followers’ consent (i.e., willingly or voluntarily). The spiritual leader is to exercise sobriety and circumspectness in his actions and behavior, meaning he is to be careful and diligent in the words he chooses and the actions he engages in. He is to always discharge his leadership duties with care, doing so because he desires to, not because he is forced to.

Certainly spiritual leaders face unenviable dilemmas, sometimes life and death. Regardless of the outcome, or perceived outcome, of a spiritual leader’s decision, he is not to be forced or compelled into making the decision hastily or without contemplation; he is to make the decision because he knows it is the right thing to do (i.e., make the decision, not to try and control the outcome of the decision). In order to accomplish this,

<sup>48</sup> *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, vol. 4, by W. E. Vine (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981), s.v. “vigilant.”

<sup>49</sup> *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, vol. 1, s.v. “good behavior.”

<sup>50</sup> *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, vol. 4, s.vv. “temperate,” “sober.”

Peter argues he can do this because of his authority and commitment to the greater good. He is not simply doing it because it represents another task to be performed—a job to do—but he is performing the task, making the decision, and functioning as a sober and circumspect leader, despite the challenges and difficulties.

Besides reaching a decision outcome, what benefit comes from the spiritual leader being vigilant and of good behavior? The spiritual leader, whether in the pulpit or the boardroom, must be prepared for the spiritual attacks from the enemy. First Peter 5:8 admonishes the Christian leader to be prepared “because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” Further, the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 6:11 and 13 to “put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” The spiritual leader must take care that his followers’ professional and perhaps personal needs are met and cared for. Spiritual leaders should demonstrate care and concern by being watchful, sensing the impact of change not only spiritually, but economically to socially as well, and by being prepared to address the needs of followers. A Biblical exemplar of temperance and sobriety of character throughout the practice of spiritual leaders is Paul himself.

***The temperate and sober spiritual leader: Apostle Paul.*** First Corinthians 9:24-27 is Paul’s account, perhaps even defense, of not only his ministry but the actions he took while fulfilling his ministry calling.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Paul not only defended his apostolic character, but demonstrated the self-denial he endured and continued to endure, not only as an example of true spiritual leadership, but for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. Let’s look at a simple illustration: the Isthmian Games and pursuit for the “crown of life.”

The Isthmian Games, organized circa 581 B.C., were played every two years in Corinth in honor of the sea gods Palaemon and Poseidon. The contests were athletic, and were similar to the Olympic Games, but on a smaller scale. Although drinking, dancing, and general frivolity were part of the event, the main prize that all contestants strove for was the victor’s crown, a “crown of wild celery.” This illustration depicts the hard work, dedicated effort, strength, and self-control exercised by the spiritual leader that is needed to win. Paul is our example. Look again at verses 26 and 27:

I therefore so run; not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Paul was not an athlete competing for the winner’s prize: the crown of celery. But he was striving to be the spiritual leader that God commanded him to be on that dusty road to Damascus many years before. Paul was not trying to be perfect in outcome, but to be excellent in behavior. He ran his spiritual leadership race the same way that the

Isthmian athletes prepared to compete: with conviction and purpose. Paul sought to control his body and mind, keeping both under subjection, not allowing either to wander. Paul had a holy fear of himself, meaning that he took nothing for granted in his role as apostle, chief spiritual leader. Paul so demanded of himself temperance and self-control of character that he would not do anything that might detour himself or those he led from fulfilling their calling and achieving the cause of Christ.

Do spiritual leaders today truly live lives reflective of the commitment Paul exemplified? Do they live lives that are under control, disciplined, and sanctimonious to their calling and purpose? Do they in turn demonstrate this seriousness to the people they are commanded to lead? We live in a world that is filled with temptations, but so did Paul. We work in a world that weighs heavily upon us, but so did Paul. It is not that the temptations and weight of sin is not there, it is how spiritual leaders prepare themselves to face these challenges.

### *Personal Moderation*

The third category of personal priorities is personal moderation. This factor is framed by five negative or non-qualities, which can be grouped under three headings: being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, not being angry or contentious, and not being greedy of filthy lucre.

**Too much wine.** Although drinking wine (Greek: *oinos*) was not forbidden during the first-century church, Paul abstained, primarily so as not to be a stumbling block for new Christians in Rome (Rom 14:21). Because wine was a common drink during the first century, it shows up in many places throughout the scriptures, including being the centerpiece of Jesus' first miracle at Cana (Jn 2:9). Further, it is used for medicinal purposes in the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:34) and advocated as such by Paul to Timothy (1 Tm 5:23). Spiritually, it is one of the primary symbols of the Holy Spirit (Mt 9:17; Mk 2:22). Clearly, the scriptures do not paint wine as evil or totally forbidden. Rather, Paul's admonition about consuming too much and, thus, becoming drunk, reflects his concern to Timothy about how the human personality is altered, character tainted, and behavior becoming unseemly after too much alcohol is consumed.

The Greek word in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 for the phrase "not given to wine" is *paroinos*, which simply meant a person was drinking too much wine. The direct effect, of course, of tarrying too long at the wine or consuming too much, is that it may, and usually does, lead to behavior alteration that will cause harm to the character and reputation of the spiritual leader. Paul warns in Ephesians, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit,"<sup>51</sup> meaning that the Christian leader must be moderate in his consumption of alcohol (i.e., wine), and, if necessary, even abstain completely. We should drink to excess the wine of the Holy Spirit, but we should not indulge in like manner with the fruit of the vine!

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<sup>51</sup> Eph 5:18.

**Don't be angry!** Paul strongly emphasizes that in addition to refraining from consuming too much alcohol, the spiritual leader should abstain from blatant, raw, emotional-based actions or reactions, such as getting angry (not soon angry), not fighting (no brawler), or lashing out at others in anger (no striker). (It is not stated in the Biblical text, but one could infer that there is cause-and-effect relationship between over-consumption of alcohol and the resulting negative behavioral and emotional responses.)

These emotional responses are raw and natural (Greek: *orge*, where we get the term “orgy”). They are raw because they explode out of the person, initiated by some reaction to an external or even internal event or substance. But they are natural, too, because they are part of man’s makeup as a fallen creature. They are present in man and the spiritual leader—I don’t think Paul denies this—but he does deny the excuse of the spiritual leader that he cannot or will not control or moderate these actions. This in Paul’s estimation is inexcusable on the part of the spiritual leader. His responsibility and accountability is too great to be excused. Righteous or “godly anger” is replete throughout the Old and New Testaments (Heb 3:11; Mk 3:4, 5; Jn 3:36; 1 Thes 2:16), but unchecked emotion, anger, and especially physical action is completely unacceptable. Even Jesus was “righteously indignant” when the moneychangers set up shop in the temple courtyard (Jn 2:14-16), but his provocation and agitation was warranted based on the gravity of the situation: the desecration of the temple and its purpose.

**Don't be greedy.** Perhaps one of the greatest human temptations is to seek after or lust an ample supply of wealth. Spiritual leaders are just as susceptible as anyone, Christian or not. Money and its exchange is a necessary part of any organization—private, public, or nonprofit, including Christian ministry. No matter how spiritually centered or motivated the Christian leader’s focus, plan, and purpose is, the fulfillment of it requires resources, including financial. Paul understood this (2 Cor 9:6-11), but he also understood that spiritual leaders and their respective organizations and human resources are not to be greedy and lax in their handling of money, but are to be careful and not covetous. Let’s examine 2 Corinthians 9:6-11:

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work; (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness) Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

Money itself is but a means, a conveyance, of distributing and redistributing material goods. It is means to an end; in other words, it is deontological—it has a designated purpose. For Paul, though, the purpose is not to increase the bank account



of the spiritual leader. Spiritual leaders are not to use money to advance their personal station in life. They certainly are to draw wages or salary (Dt 5:24; 1 Tm 5:16-17), but they are not to achieve or even seek after unjust gain; they are not to be “greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Tm 3:3; Ti 1:7; 1 Pt 5:2). Pursuit of financial accumulation of wealth—wealth for wealth’s sake—is for Paul to embrace worldliness (1 Tm 6:6-10). Paul is emphatic with Timothy: money itself is not the problem; “the love of money” is the problem (v. 10).

Matthew 6:19-21 reads: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.” Clearly a spiritual leader’s contentment or satisfaction is not found in this world; these material things we have and accumulate and exchange for other things of greater value must not lay hold on our hearts in a way than does the person and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is stressing that spiritual leaders must equate the natural and material needs of this present world with the satisfaction and glory of the world yet to be. This balance requires that spiritual leaders be good stewards (e.g., Joseph and the distribution of grain in Genesis 39-41 and the apostles and distribution of goods for widows and orphans in 1 Peter 5) of the material goods, particularly as it relates to the furtherance of the organization’s goals and purpose.

Pursuit of personal moderation is a third category or factor that undergirds a spiritual leader’s personal character or virtue. The scripture is clear—or at least Paul is clear—as to how and why the spiritual leader is to exhibit or manifest the strength and stability of character through self-control and personal resistance of vices or even the inordinate accumulation and hoarding of financial resources in order to maintain and present a picture of control and moderation in action. This reflects the spiritual leader’s primary goal, which is to be a service to others rather than propagating self-service.

### *Spiritual Maturity*

The fourth and final subcategory under personal priorities is spiritual maturity. A spiritual leader is one who is devoted to the spiritual growth and well-being of his followers. Scholarly attention is granted in both the public and private work sectors to promote the spirituality of workers, both from a Christian and non-Christian perspective.<sup>52</sup> Spiritual leaders themselves, therefore, must be able to communicate to workers spiritual truths of moral value and ethical conduct.<sup>53</sup> For Paul, who was referring

<sup>52</sup> Jean Claude Garcia-Zamor, “Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance,” *Public Administration Review* 63, no. 3 (May-June 2003): 355-363; Robert A. Giacalone and Carole L. Jurkiewicz, eds., *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> Stephen M. King, “The Moral Manager: Vignettes of Virtue from Virginia,” *Public Integrity* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 113-133; Stephen M. King, “A Proverbial Approach to Public Administration,” *Public Voices* 7, no. 2 (2004): 28-40; Stephen M. King, “Toward a New Administrative Ethic: An Understanding and Application of the Judea-Christian Tradition to Administrative Issues,” *Public Integrity* (Winter 2000): 17-27.

to pastors or overseers and elders, the convictions and manifestations of spiritual maturity are borne out in understanding and applying the Word of God through teaching (2 Tm 2:2).

**Given to teach.** Teaching has both Old and New Testament meanings. Two primary Hebrew terms for *teach* are *arah*, meaning “to lay or throw; to point out” and *lamad*, or “to goad” or “teach.”<sup>54</sup> The spiritually mature leader must lead through compliance or willingness on the part of the learner (i.e., the learner or student desires to be instructed or guided into knowledge and truth). Or the learner may need more persuasive means for learning, such as bribing or prodding. Let’s look at three Old Testament spiritual leaders whose spiritual maturity was unique, but in each case effective as the situation warranted.

**Moses: The communicator and judge.** The focus of Moses’s ministry was teaching or, better, explaining (*arah*) God’s law, primarily through the Ten Commandments. Receiving direct instruction from the Lord himself (Ex 24:12), Moses was entrusted and directed by God to commit to not only the literal commandments themselves, but the essence of truth and character of God to the people (Ex 24:3). Moses’s spiritual maturity is reflected in his role as communicator, as the mouth piece of God himself, and judge of God’s law (Ex 18). Spiritual leaders, when leading with conviction of heart, oftentimes present the truths that emanate outside of themselves (i.e., God or Providence), and then communicate and adjudicate the spiritual truths of those laws.<sup>55</sup> The Levitical priesthood was similar in calling and purpose to Moses: teachers and overseers of God’s truth (Lev 10:11), offering of sacrifices (Lev 9), maintaining and protecting the Tabernacle (Nm 18:3), officiating in the Holy Place (Ex 30:10), and even adjudicating disputes concerning aspects of the Law (Dt 17:8-13). The point is this: Moses led through teaching and commandment; he led by demonstration of both godly and ungodly behavior (i.e., striking the rock instead of speaking to it, as directed by God). But clearly he led, not by *lamad* only, but by *arah*. The spiritually active and sincere leader does not point to where he will not lead.

**Ezra: The scribe of God.** Ezra, who was a descendant of Seraiah a high priest (Neh 8:13; Ezr 7:1; 2 Kgs 25:18-21), himself was a member of the priesthood. Following on the heels of the prophets, Ezra, who was born in Babylonian captivity, commanded the attention of the Jewish community through his expert knowledge and practice of the Torah and the Commandments (Ezr 7:10). For example, he led Jewish exiles out of Babylon back into Jerusalem, and repatriated them into the knowledge and observance of their Jewish law and heritage. As a professional scribe, he knew the law functionally, but as a spiritual leader he practiced the Law of the Lord upon return to Israel. When he found the younger generation had fallen away from the practice of their forefathers, he taught and trained able and willing priests how to instruct the younger generation in the basics of Jewish faith and life. Unlike Moses, Ezra’s spiritual leadership exemplified a practical and direct approach, particularly as he witnessed the lapse of Jewish faith and

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<sup>54</sup> BibleStudyTools.com, s.vv. “*arah*,” “*lamad*,” <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/kjv/arah-2.html> and <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/kjv/lamad.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, *Moses as Political Leader* (Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2005).

tradition. Spiritual leaders must sometimes pull and prod as well guide and direct. How did Paul the Apostle lead?

*Paul: The apostle–leader.* Spiritual maturity reflects working creatively and innovatively to provide followers with a sound and stable organizational environment. The apostolic mantle carried by Paul is representative of such spiritual leadership. The apostle was not only a master–teacher, but a pioneer in organizational transformation, such as church planting and growth, business entrepreneurship, and civic foresight. Paul’s dedication to his calling and responsibility as apostle is legendary.

He was born in Tarsus (2 A.D.), a city in the Roman province of Cilicia, and was executed by Nero (c. 65 A.D.). Even though he claimed Roman citizenship; Paul was born an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5). He was trained in the sacred writings by the religious leader Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; 22:3), and aspired to and ultimately became a Pharisee (Rom 11:1). Paul was zealous to uphold the history and heritage of his Roman brethren, but as a Pharisee, trained in the strictness and ritualism of the Law of Moses, he was adamantly opposed to the spread of Christianity.

After his spiritual conversion and calling on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6), Paul assumed the spiritual mantle and challenge of proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ to the very same people he had intended to arrest, imprison, and ultimately execute. Paul would suffer much (Acts 9:16), but his apostolic teaching, oversight, administration, and leadership of dozens of churches throughout the known world, each which posed as an embarkation point for the proclamation of the gospel, served notice of his extraordinary spiritual acumen and leadership.

The Pauline epistles, especially the two books of Corinthians, are a treasure trove on the leadership capacity of the Apostle Paul, especially focusing on his heart for people he ministered to and on his intellectual acumen regarding the strategic and tactical decisions he made regarding ministerial, cultural, economic, and political events, activities, and relationships. Over the years, authors have examined the leadership traits and qualities of Paul, lauding his character,<sup>56</sup> his visionary status,<sup>57</sup> and his servant qualities,<sup>58</sup> and marveling that the apostolic qualities of Paul rival that of any major contemporary leader.

The personal priorities factor is the foundation for spiritual leadership, and the crux of the personal priorities factor is character. McArthur put it succinctly: “Character—not style, not technique, not methodology, but *character*—is the true Biblical test of great leadership.”<sup>59</sup> We further divided this first factor into four sub factors, each representing one or more of the Pauline characteristics or qualities of spiritual leadership enumerated in our text. Each sub factor represents different nuances of personal character, including the basic foundation of character (blameless and holy), the strength and stability of character (vigilant, sobriety, temperance, and

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<sup>56</sup> MacArthur, *Called to Lead*.

<sup>57</sup> Richard S. Ascoug and Charles A. Cotton, *Passionate Visionary: Leadership Lessons from the Apostle Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2005).

<sup>58</sup> Agosto, *Servant Leadership*.

<sup>59</sup> MacArthur, *Called to Lead*, xi.

good behavior), exhibition of personal moderation in action of character (not given to wine, no striker, not a brawler, not soon angry, and not covetous or not a lover of money), and finally the crux of personal character which is the manifestation of spiritual maturity (holding fast to the Word of God or being apt to teach). We now turn to our second factor: fidelity of authority.

#### IV. FIDELITY OF AUTHORITY: A SPIRITUAL LEADERS' JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction represents the spiritual leader's commitment to his vocational accountability. Vocational accountability is the extended relationship between the spiritual leader and his area of authority. A spiritual leader by definition is, *de facto* and *de jure*, a superintendent; he is an overseer, a steward, an administrator or manager of people, plans, and property. Whether the spiritual leader is a pastor, a corporate CEO, an elected official, a nonprofit director, or in any other public interest position of leadership and accountability, his sphere of control or oversight is critical to the fulfillment of the organization's purpose. Clearly, in order for his authority to be exercised properly and with purpose, the spiritual leader must possess and exercise several key qualities of spiritual leadership, such as: not being self-willed, being the husband of one wife, ruling his own house well, and not being a novice. Before we continue with our textual analysis of these four qualities, we need to clarify the meaning of two terms: *fidelity* and *jurisdiction*.

Fidelity is defined as "faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, (and) demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support."<sup>60</sup> It derives from the early fifteenth-century French term, *fidélité*, which comes from the Latin derivation *fidelitatem*, meaning "faithfulness (or) adherence (to)."<sup>61</sup>

Jurisdiction is "the official power to make (legitimate) decisions," or "the extent of official power."<sup>62</sup> Jurisdiction derives from the early fourteenth century, meaning "administration of justice."<sup>63</sup> It is derived from the French derivation *juridiccion*, and directly from the Latin word "*jurisdictionem*," meaning "right law."<sup>64</sup>

What is the relationship or association of the two terms, particularly as they apply to the development of spiritual leadership? It is obvious: a spiritual leader must not simply exercise his jurisdiction, his administration of right and wrong, his "official power." Rather, he must do so faithfully and with a cause. He must not do so simply to exercise raw power in a Machiavellian way; this is not Biblical. True character-based spiritual leaders exercise their jurisdiction with fidelity, with cause, and with faith that their decisions will produce not only action, but will do so with a sense of integrity and loyalty to higher ideals and purposes. Unrestricted or unrestrained exercise of jurisdictional

<sup>60</sup> Etymoline.com, s.v. "fidélité," <http://www.etymoline.com/>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Etymoline.com, s.v. "jurisdiction," <http://www.etymoline.com/>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

authority is anything from gross mismanagement to tyranny, whether performed in the local church, the president's office, or somewhere in between.

**Not being self-willed.** Interestingly enough, the key quality discussed by Paul is not being self-willed. At first glance it would seem this quality should be included in the factor personal priorities, but it is not simply because it is the foundation upon which the spiritual leader's commitment to fidelity of jurisdiction is grounded.

As we discussed, character is the key variable for spiritual leadership. MacArthur writes, "A lowly slave of unimpeachable character is more suitable for spiritual leadership than a business magnate whose integrity is questionable. A man is qualified for this role because of what he *is*, not merely because of what he *does*."<sup>65</sup> Likewise, not being self-willed is the linkage that connects a spiritual leader's character, virtue, or personal priorities with the exercise of his jurisdictional authority.

*Self-willed*, which comes from the Greek word *authades*, essentially means to please yourself. Thus, to be self-willed is to be dominated by self-interest, even arrogant about asserting one's own will. The great Biblical expositor, W.E. Vine, writes about the consequences of the self-willed person. He is "one [that is] so far overvaluing any determination at which he has himself once arrived that he will not be removed from it."<sup>66</sup>

In Genesis 49, Jacob pronounced blessings and uttered contempt over his twelve sons for their vile actions and behavior. In verse 7, for example, Jacob criticizes Simeon and Levi for acting "angry and self-willed" when they killed Hamor and Shechem (Gn. 34:26) and destroyed a wall or fortress of protection (Gn. 49:6). Proverbs intones that "proud and haughty scorner is his name, who deals in proud wrath" (or "self-will").<sup>67</sup>

In the New Testament, Peter tells us that self-willed, self-centered, and arrogant men and spiritual leaders are constantly speaking wrongly and negatively of all people, especially of those in some type of authority (2 Pt. 2:9-10). This is clearly unscriptural (1 Tm. 2:2). The godly and self-willed are distinguished by the attention that is focused on the one who deserves attention: God himself. The self-willed spiritual leader presumes that others *should* think of them the way *they* think of themselves. This is ungodly, even sinful.

Spiritual leaders must take care of and control over their will. They are not to direct attention to themselves, because then their purpose or cause for exercising jurisdiction will directly and defiantly be focused on themselves, and not upon those they serve. Let's examine the Old Testament figure, Nabal, for demonstration of how self-will is devastating upon the exercise of spiritual influence and leadership.

*The foolish spiritual leader: Nabal.* Samuel is dead (1 Sam 25:1). The great prophet-leader, the one who led the Israelites through word and deed, was buried in Ramah. David, who was still running from Saul, encountered a person named Nabal. Nabal was wealthy and influential; he lived near Carmel (1 Sam 25:2). Nabal was in the

<sup>65</sup> MacArthur, *Called to Lead*, 175.

<sup>66</sup> *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, 342.

<sup>67</sup> Prv 21:24.

process of shearing his sheep. David heard of it and sent messengers to Nabal to inquire as to whether or not he would provide David with minimal provisions, thinking that Nabal would be open and willing to do so, since David and his band of ruffians had ample opportunity to kill Nabal's herders and take his sheep and goats. Instead they protected Nabal's herds from marauding bands of Bedouin (1 Sam 25:15; 25). But Nabal's self-centered response in verses 10 and 11 demonstrated not only his shoddy character but his self-centeredness, too:

Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?

Needless to say, David did not receive Nabal's response very well. David prepared to kill Nabal for his "churlish" and insulting attitude, gearing himself and his band of 400 fighters (vv. 13-14). Abigail, Nabal's beautiful and sage wife, intervened, ordering her servants to prepare provisions and give them to David. She then fell prostrate before the soon-to-be king and begged his forgiveness for her husband's insensitive and self-directed actions (vv. 14-20). David accepted Abigail's response (v. 35), while Nabal, after awakening from a drunken stupor, died of a heart attack after hearing from Abigail how close he had come to being killed by David and his men (vv. 36-38).

Nabal is a perfect illustration of how spiritual leaders, especially those blessed with great wealth, should not behave toward others. Spiritual leaders, regardless of their position or power, should (1) be ready to take advice, (2) be willing to defer back to others as much as reasonably can be assumed, and (3) be as closely aligned with others as is possible, without falling into sin. Spiritual leaders must be willing to admit when they are wrong and others are right, defer to them, acknowledge that others are more gifted in areas that the spiritual leader is not, and receive information and knowledge necessary to make wise decisions.

Nabal's self-willed behavior exemplifies the destructive effect upon faithfulness of action and oversight. Nabal had the opportunity to use his great wealth and influence to strategic advantage—not just for himself, but for the furtherance of God's kingdom through David's hands. But even if Nabal did not think or act in a politically strategic manner, opening himself up to David through friendship, rather than distancing himself through self-willed behavior, was the morally correct thing to do. Spiritual leaders do not take advantage of others, nor, as in Nabal's case, disregard kindness simply because it does not sit well with them.

**Husband of one wife.** More than any one of the qualities of spiritual leadership discussed here (e.g., one that rules his own house, not a novice, and not self-willed), the Pauline injunction of the spiritual leader to the "husband of one wife" strikes to the heart of fidelity of jurisdiction. Let's explore this quality in more depth.

Christian marriage is to be the most sacred of all institutions. The spiritual union of one man and one woman being united in holy matrimony is not only supposed to be the foundation of a sound and moral society and culture, but symbolizes the spiritual

union of the church and Jesus Christ. It is the finest example of a true relationship, a “fidelity relationship;” the type of relationship that should be mirrored between the spiritual leader and his followers.

The primary focus of the spiritual leader is fidelity, but if a spiritual leader will not be faithful to his marriage vows, then it is highly unlikely he will be faithful or devoted to his followers and his jurisdictional accountability.

*State of Christian marriage in the U.S.* Christian marriage is a sanctified union, where the husband and wife are created from and for each other (Gn 2:22-25). Marriage is to be an indissoluble bond, unbroken by anyone (Mk 10:5-9). Further, it is a spiritual union between one man and one woman, embodying the one-flesh relationship between two people of the opposite sex (1 Cor 6:19; Eph 5:31). Same-sex marriages are not to be sanctified or acceptable before God and man. But setting aside the gay-marriage debate, what happens when this holy and undivided one-flesh relationship is broken or damaged? What happens to the unity, loyalty, and fidelity necessary for the continuation of the relationship? Further, what does this dissolution mean with regard to the relationship between the spiritual leader and his followers?

W. Bradford Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, contends that even though the divorce rate in the U.S. since the 1980s has not continued its striking upward trend seen in the 1960s and 1970s, the consequences of divorce are now cultural and social. He states that they are being “felt disproportionately by the poor and less educated, while the wealthy elites who set off these transformations in the first place have managed to reclaim somewhat healthier and more stable habits of married life.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, one of the main problems of U.S. divorce patterns is not its direction—although it is certainly positive that it has decreased—but its cultural impact, including religious.

In 2009, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that over two million American marriages ended in divorce. Although the marriage rate is approximately 6.8 per 1,000, the divorce rate is almost one half of this rate at 3.4 per 1,000 population.<sup>69</sup> However, while family and marriage scholars, such as Bradley Wright of the University of Connecticut, contend that the divorce rate among Christians is approximately 42 percent compared to “religiously unaffiliated” Americans of 50 percent, George Barna of The Barna Group places the divorce rate for Christians even lower, at approximately 33 percent.<sup>70</sup> The primary difference is definition. Wright and others question The Barna Group’s specific and controversial definitions of *born again Christians* versus *evangelicals*. Born again is marked by a “commitment to Jesus Christ” and knowledge they will “go to heaven” as a result of their commitment, while an evangelical is also “born again” but must meet other specific criteria, such as witnessing

<sup>68</sup> W. Bradford Wilcox, “The Evolution of Divorce,” *National Affairs* 1 (Fall 2009): 81-94.

<sup>69</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Births, Marriages, Divorces, and Deaths: Provisional Data for 2009,” *National Vital Statistics Reports* 58, no. 25 (August 27, 2010): 1-6.

<sup>70</sup> “New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released,” *The Barna Group*, March 31, 2008, <http://www.barna.org/family-kids-articles/42-new-marriage-and-divorce-statistics-released?q=marriage+divorce+statistics+2008>.

to others of their faith.<sup>71</sup> Wright and others look largely at church attendance rather than examine theological differences to assess divorce rate distinction between believers and nonbelievers or the religiously unaffiliated, meaning those who attend church infrequently.

More importantly, for the purpose of this article, the divorce rate among evangelical pastors, which is part of a broader “burnout rate” among evangelical clergy, is also alarming. PastorBurnout.com reported in a 2010 *New York Times* article stating, “Members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans.”<sup>72</sup> Divorce rates among pastors were high on the list of criteria that is a contributing factor to “pastor burnout.” The Francis Schaeffer Institute reported the results of a survey conducted of pastors at two separate conferences held in Florida (2005) and California (2006). The results were shocking:

- 77 percent of pastors surveyed felt they did not have a good marriage
- 38 percent of pastors said they were divorced or currently in a divorce process
- 40 percent said they have had an extra-marital affair since beginning their ministry
- 50 percent of pastors’ marriages will end in divorce<sup>73</sup>

What do these facts about Christian marriage tell us about the fidelity to authority required of spiritual leaders? First, fidelity to authority is a critical variable for leadership in general and specifically spiritual leadership. Spiritual leaders are expected to be committed not only to their leadership calling but also to the fulfillment of their followers. Spiritual leaders who recognize and practice fidelity to authority and jurisdictional accountability practice *service leadership*. No other type of leadership can emerge. Service leadership is not necessarily servant leadership. The latter suggests a transformational and even transparent action on the part of the leader, whether toward his followers or toward fulfillment of a task or purpose. Of course, this is important and critical to evoking true followership. Service leadership, on the other hand, represents not only an action, but a relationship. Thus second, the Pauline requirement of the “husband of one wife” represents the truest and deepest form of not only fidelity in action, but fidelity in relationship, summoning the strongest commitment to organizational plan and purpose, and “oneness” in relationship and service to the spiritual leader’s constituent, clientele, and/or followers. In other words, a spiritual leader’s commitment to a marriage relationship speaks loudly toward his ability of commitment for carrying out his duty, and being accountable to his office or authority.

<sup>71</sup> Adelle M. Banks, “Christians Question Divorce Rates of Faithful,” *USA Today*, March 14, 2011, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-03-14-divorce-christians\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-03-14-divorce-christians_N.htm).

<sup>72</sup> “Pastor Burnout Statistics,” *PastorBurnout.com*, <http://www.pastorburnout.com/pastor-burnout-statistics.html>.

<sup>73</sup> Richard J. Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors,” *Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development*, [www.churchleadership.org](http://www.churchleadership.org). This data is from 1,050 pastors who were surveyed from two pastor’s conferences held in Orange County, CA (2005) and Pasadena, CA (2006). It is a follow-up survey to an original one given in 1989.



**Rules well his own house.** A spiritual leader's fidelity to authority and jurisdictional accountability cannot materialize outside of his organizational jurisdiction if in fact his own home, or personal jurisdiction, is bombarded by disloyalty and faithlessness. The key is that the disloyalty and faithlessness is not coming from others, directed toward the spiritual leader, but from the leader himself. In other words, if he is not capable of enlisting loyalty and faithfulness from his own home, primarily his children, toward his leadership, then he is not going to enlist followership in the church environment. Let me explain.

The Greek word for *rules* is *proistemi*, which essentially means to stand at attention. (He uses the same word in Romans 12:8, where the pastor is to rule diligently.) But here in 1 Timothy 3, Paul refers to the spiritual leader's family. So it seems clear that Paul means for a pastor or elder for that matter to rule his church as he would (or should) rule his own home.

Clearly, the spiritual leader is held to a high standard of personal attention to decorum, but the spiritual leader's home, primarily his children, and by default, his wife, are to be in obedience, or subjection to the God-given authority of the spiritual leader (Eph 5:21). Notice, and let me be clear about this, the subjection noted in the text is not to the person, but to the office, to the authority granted to the person via the power of the authority. A simple illustration is when an enlisted man salutes an officer, he is not saluting or acknowledging the man or woman officer; he is saluting the rank, and the authority that accompanies the rank. The enlisted personnel exhibit fidelity to rank or authority, not to the person. This is what Paul notes here: the spiritual leader's home, including children and spouse, is subjection to the authority or rank that God has granted to the spiritual leader (Eph 5:22-24). And likewise, the spiritual leader must take care to "rule well" or "oversee" his own home, his own jurisdiction (Eph 5:25-26) before he can ever be expected to demonstrate fidelity to authority over his vocational or organizational jurisdiction.

**Not a novice.** Lastly, Paul commands that the spiritual leader must exhibit, demonstrate, or have evidence of experience in leadership; he is not to be a *novice*, or neophyte, meaning a young convert, lest he will be carried off in pride and condemnation by the enemy of his soul (1 Tm 3:6). Paul is clear on this point: for a spiritual leader to exhibit fidelity to authority and jurisdictional accountability, whether he is pastor or holds some other office, he must have experience. Experience in leading is not necessary from a performance standpoint, meaning an experienced versus inexperienced leader has the knowledge and years of practitioner in the particular field, and thus will be more effective. No, the spiritual leader requires experience, both in terms of understanding and practice, because he will not be self-absorbed, he will not be tempted to think about himself and his plans, purposes, and accomplishments, and thus be motivated by hubris rather than humility. A novice lacks the grounding and temperament needed to lead with excellence; instead, the novice will as Paul indicates, be "lifted up in pride" and the results, both personally and organizationally, can be extreme (Prv 16:18). Let's look at Timothy, a protégé of Paul's, and a spiritual leader.

*Timothy: Paul's leader-protégé in the Lord.* Timothy is one of the best known of Paul's students, companions, and mentorees. In fact, Timothy was one of Paul's converts at Lystra during Paul's first missionary trip (Acts 16:1; 1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tm 1:2; 2 Tm 1:2). Later, during the second missionary trip, Paul enjoins Timothy (2 Tm 3:15). Paul is drawn to Timothy for many reasons: Timothy's loyalty, his spiritual desire, but also because of his "unfeigned faith," a Christian character, and his suitability for ministry work (Acts 16:3). Paul ordains Timothy (1 Tm 4:14; 2 Tm 1:6), culminating in his participation on Paul's third missionary trip as well (Acts 19:22).

Suffice it to say, Paul trusted Timothy like he trusted himself, or better like Paul trusted the Lord: unconditionally. Paul believed in Timothy's character, he recognized Timothy's devotion, and he witnessed his determination and hard work over the many years. Paul trusted in Timothy's fidelity to authority and jurisdictional accountability that after the second missionary trip, where they worked in Berea and in the larger region of Galatia (modern-day Turkey), planting churches and reaping spiritual converts, Paul ultimately left Timothy in charge of building up and strengthening the Church at Berea (Acts 17:14). From here on, Timothy became a close confidant of Paul, ministering not only in Berea, but in Macedonia, Corinth, and again in Ephesus, where he accompanied Paul on his third and last missionary trip (Acts 19:22).

The point is clear: Timothy is trusted by Paul. Why? Paul recognized in Timothy not only the desire to minister, the call to minister, but the commitment to spiritual leadership; a commitment that was birthed in the work of the ministry—a work that did not simply add to Timothy's resume, but demonstrated to Paul (and others too) that though Timothy was young chronologically, and perhaps even as a believer, he was solidly grounded and entrenched in fulfilling the plans and purposes of God, not as Paul received his directive from God, but as Timothy himself received his calling from the Lord. It is not necessarily the number of years, but it is the commitment to purpose that distinguishes the neophyte from the mentor; that determines with clarity the sense of fidelity to authority and jurisdictional accountability that the spiritual leader possesses.

## V. COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY: A SPIRITUAL LEADER'S COMMITMENT TO FULFILLING THE PUBLIC GOOD

Spiritual leadership's influence is not limited to the confines of a designated position or function; it has responsibility to reach out to fulfill the greater public good. Spiritual leaders are not to confine their influence to the jurisdiction over which they have direct authority. Spiritual leadership demands outreach to the broader community tangent to the spiritual leader's jurisdictional oversight.<sup>74</sup>

**Given to hospitality.** In addition to our texts in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, two additional textual references are instructive: Romans 12 and 1 Peter 4. In Romans 12:13, Paul discusses how Christians are to demonstrate hospitality to each other by meeting the material needs of other Christians. This passage in Romans 12 is directed

<sup>74</sup> Stephen M. King, *God and Caesar: The Biblical Keys to Good Government and Community Action* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2002).

toward the whole body of Christ, where Paul addresses the practical and spiritual gifts alike. Notice in verse 9 and continuing through verse 16, Paul is very practical, regarding not only the communal responsibilities of Christians toward one another but to the world (v. 14). The Romans passage is not referenced specifically to spiritual leaders, but clearly Christians in general (as well as Christian leaders) are to project to others and to implement the love of Christ (Eph 3:19). One way of doing this is to meet material needs (1 Cor 16:1; Heb 6:10; 1 Jn 3:17).

Look especially at 1 John 3:17:

But whoso has this world's good, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?

Author translation: "If you have money (and one might argue influence, and you know there is a need that you can meet, and you don't do anything to meet that need, then the love of God is in not in your heart." That is strong language. And remember, this is not a recommendation, it is a commandment! If this is what God expects of Christians who are not spiritual leaders; imagine how much more he expects of those who are placed in positions of leadership (1 Pet 5:1-11).

Look at Hebrews 13:1-2: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." The word *entertain* is the Greek word, *xenizo*, which is from *xenos*, where we get the word *guest*. Christians have a responsibility to treat others with hospitality, with kindness, with care, even if they are strangers.

Mark 6:34 states, "Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." In the Greek, *compassion* refers to a strong yearning one has for another. Jesus, the ultimate spiritual leader, reached out to those who were part of his "flock," his jurisdiction so to speak, but he also reached out to the unlovely (the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4) and the unwanted (the lepers). Spiritual leaders, today, are to reach out through churches, nonprofits, and faith-based initiatives to reach the "unlovely," the "unwanted," and the "forgotten."<sup>75</sup>

We are responsible for our gifts and calling and for our ministries. Likewise, spiritual leaders are responsible not only to their authority and jurisdiction, but they are responsible to engage the larger community. The first line of defense is not the civil government, it is the lowest level of social institutions, beginning with self and moving to nonprofit and faith-based organizations and initiatives.<sup>76</sup>

Look at 1 Peter 4:9: "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." Peter, who is speaking to Christians about what our behavior should be during the end times, is clearly speaking to not only lay Christians, but spiritual leaders. For pastors, they should enjoin their congregations to engage the world, to reach out beyond the confines of our comfortable houses of worship, where we sing praises to God, while at the same time we watch the poor and the homeless wither before our eyes. For businessmen, they are

<sup>75</sup> Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992).

<sup>76</sup> Steven Monsma, *Healing for a Broken World: Christian Perspectives on Public Policy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007).

to invest, to contribute to the community they do business in, give back to the people and organizations and institutions who contribute to their “bottom line,” particularly through matching contributions to community actors and activities, matching educational and scholarship contributions, working with schools, churches, and other nonprofit organizations. For civic personnel, such as politicians, it means garnering financial and organizational support for civic and community projects, projects that benefit the greater public good, such as parks, civic centers, economic and community development initiatives, and many other opportunities. The Bible is replete with such examples. Let’s examine one in particular: the Good Samaritan.

*The Good Samaritan.* Responding to an inquiring lawyer regarding (1) how to inherit eternal life, and (2) how to define for selfish reasons who is the lawyer’s neighbor, Jesus tells the famous story of the kind-hearted Samaritan in Luke 10: 30-34:

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

This is a simple, but compelling story of human suffering, empathy (or the lack thereof), and ultimately compassion. The priest, who symbolizes the religious leader, who cannot be soiled by touching a bloody body, quickly moves away, even to the far side of the rocky path, illustrating how even friends, or “kinsman,” often time “stand afar off,” away from someone else’s pain (Ps 38:11). The Levite is a descendant of Levi, one of the ancient tribes of Israel (Gn 29:34), which produced essentially assistants to the priests, who were also Levites, who were set apart by Moses for ordination to the service of God (Ex 32). Interestingly, the Levite in this story actually came to the wounded Jew and inspected him, but because the Levite was forbidden from engaging persons who were not “clean,” he, too, quickly moved to the other side of the road. Finally, the Samaritan, who of course is a non-Jew, really a Gentile, and thus according to Jewish law and heritage, is not worthy, goes to the wounded Jewish man, attends to his wounds, transports him to an inn, and pays for his care. It is the Samaritan, the one who was viewed by Jewish society, law, and tradition as being less than human, who reached out and embodied human compassion. The Samaritan not only extended kindness and care to the supposedly least in society, but he did so with empathy, without caring who the person was, or where he had come from, or what his background was. The Samaritan treated this stranger as a non-stranger, working at the lowest-level of service. The Samaritan exemplified spiritual leadership, reaching out to meet a need as it arose, where it arose.

Spiritual leaders reach to the center of the community, to the heart of the neighborhood, going beyond their jurisdiction, and engaging the community and the

people that make up the community, in order to contribute back. Spiritual leaders reach to the roots or foundation of the community. This is true leadership.

**Good report of those without.** In 1 Timothy 3:7, Paul writes, “Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” This final quality of spiritual leadership may be the most important. It demands the most from the spiritual leader, including, perhaps, even his life. Paul’s exhortation to Timothy, and effectively all spiritual leaders to come, is to be a “testimony,” specifically of the work of Christ, to the world, that is, to the people and system that is outside or not of the Christian faith. This is effectively what God did for the world through his son, Jesus Christ. First John 4:14 explains: “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son (to be) the savior of the world.”

An excellent testimony, as we will see, is not simply standing up in a Christian-friendly environment, and testifying of Jesus’ love and grace—although this is certainly noteworthy. No, Paul had something much more dramatic, yet at the same time common place, in mind when he penned this phrase. Paul is confiding to Timothy that spiritual leaders are to testify, even to death if necessary, of the goodness of Jesus Christ, especially and even to those who are nonbelievers. The scriptures are filled with illustrations of the kind of human witness by leaders and non-leaders alike that defended and promoted the person of Jesus Christ, even to the point of death (Mk 14:55, 56, 59; Lk 22:71; Jn 1:7; 3:11, 3:32, 19:35, 21:24; Heb 11:32-39; 1 Jn 5:9-11; 3 Jn 12). And Christian history, too, is filled with examples of the defenders of the Christian faith, even martyrs, men and women who freely and willingly gave their lives in sacrifice for the defense of the gospel message of Jesus Christ.<sup>77</sup>

But, at the same time, even though there are many examples where men and women gave the ultimate sacrifice, both scripturally and historically, there are many examples too where spiritual leaders proclaim the power and person of Jesus Christ, and dramatic, positive results occur, contributing to the furtherance of the kingdom of God. Three short Biblical illustrations best represent this testimony: Peter in the temple, Paul before the council, and Jesus as a witness to the world.

*Peter in the temple.* After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, Peter confronts an unruly and suspicious Jewish crowd gathered in the temple courtyard. He stands and preaches a powerful gospel message, harking back to their Jewish forefathers and the Torah itself, including the Book of Joel, which prophesied of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Jl 2:28, 29), and even King David, who was the spiritual embodiment and kingdom maker of and for the power of Jesus Christ. The spiritual leader, Peter, challenges the Jewish crowd, shakes them to their spiritual core, even goading them to believe (v. 32). When the crowd thought they had finally heard enough, many of them were “pricked in their heart,” and they inquired as to how they might be saved (v. 37). Peter responds:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost. For the promise

<sup>77</sup> John Fox, *Fox’s Book of Martyrs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978).

is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation.

*Paul before the Jewish Council.* Paul is apprehended in Jerusalem (Acts 21:15). He purified himself for seven days and then entered the temple (v. 27). His Jewish enemies made false charges (v. 28), captured him, threw him out of the temple, and would have killed him had he not been rescued by Roman centurions (v. 32). Paul tried to defend his name, his place, and his message (Acts 22), but he is condemned before the Jewish council, led by Ananias, the high priest (Acts 22:12, 23:2). Finally, Paul is given his opportunity to speak, and his testimony is convincing (Acts 23:3-11): he is told by the angel of the Lord that he will be able to testify, too, of Jesus in Rome itself (Acts 24). As a spiritual leader, Paul is unafraid of the consequences that his testimony might bring upon himself (Phil 3:4-21). He simply engages in the work that God called him to on that day long ago when he was struck down by the power of God on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

*Jesus: The penultimate testimony.* Jesus, of course, is the greatest testimony of the Christian faith. He *is* the Christian faith. He testifies before his accusers (Mt 27:1-2; Mk 15:4-5a); he testifies at his crucifixion (Lk 23:33a-34); he testifies before Thomas after his resurrection, but before his ascension (Jn 20:29); and he testifies at his ascension (Lk 24:50-53). Jesus' entire life, character, and behavior testified of his spiritual leadership. He ministered to those in need (Jn 4), he taught and prophesied of his sacrifice (Mt 6-7), and he lived the meaning of servant leadership (Mk 10:42-45). Up to his death, at his death, during his resurrection, and through his ascension, Jesus demonstrated the principles and qualities of spiritual leadership.

These three illustrations clearly describe the sacrifice spiritual leaders embrace and commit to when engaging the broader community. Death and hardship are not always expected, but trials and tribulations do occur when the spiritual leader unveils himself, his character, and his behavior to the community outside of his traditional jurisdiction. The crux is this: providing a "good report to those without" is not simply social and graceful; it is a *modus operandi* for proclaiming the greater good of the spiritual leader's purpose. But as we will briefly discuss in the next section, when the spiritual leader's personal priorities, fidelity to authority, and community responsibility are compromised, then a breach or crisis in spiritual leadership—and leadership overall—occurs. The consequences can be troubling.

## VI. THOUGHTS ON CRISIS IN SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Crises are by definition difficult and even dangerous times. Crises can be natural disasters, like hurricanes, tornadoes, and tsunamis. Or they can be manmade, such as terrorist attacks or wars. Leaders are many times defined and labeled, rightly or wrongly, by their reaction to and decisions made during times of crisis. Winston Churchill will always be known by the British people as the greatest political leader of WWII. He stood toe to toe against Hitler and his Nazi war machine and refused to be

intimidated. Abraham Lincoln, too, will likely always be remembered as the greatest U.S. war-time president—even more so than FDR—primarily because the crisis he worked through was a civil war, devastating to himself personally and professionally, and to the nation as a whole.

The focus of this discussion, however, is not toward a single event labeled as “crisis,” such as “crisis leadership” or “crisis management.” Rather, the point is not crisis *of* leadership, but crisis *in* leadership, specifically, crisis in the three factors examined when trying to fulfill spiritual leadership. What happens when there is a breach or breakdown in these three factors? How is spiritual leadership compromised or weakened when character, authority, and responsibility are not functioning properly in a spiritual leader’s life and work?

The lack of or diminished presence and action of personal priorities, or character-framing qualities or traits, in spiritual leaders is most profound, and is negatively affecting and even leading to the erosion of trust in spiritual leadership and the institutions and organizations that spiritual leaders lead. The number and increasing severity of “ethical-less” incidents in business, government, politics, ministry, education, and family continue to increase at an alarming rate. Insider stock trading, illicit sexual encounters involving spiritual leaders, and the list goes on involve at the core a betrayal of trust and diminished emphasis on a spiritual leader’s moral principles and ethical practices. It signals a low level of character transformation, and thus negatively overtly influences the actions of the spiritual leader.

Secondly, the breach of fidelity of authority, particularly through the continued lack of commitment by the spiritual leader toward his jurisdictional oversight, is alarming. Commitment to purpose, fulfillment of goals, achievement of mission, and pursuit of vision is oftentimes derailed as a result of a lack of stability in spiritual leadership. Substitution of mission for the meeting of immediate bottom-line results compromises the overall purpose of the institution or organization. Tom Peters and Robert Waterman wrote in their bestseller *In Search of Excellence* that a corporation should “stick to the knitting,” which means to do one thing and do it well.<sup>78</sup> Diversifying simply for the sake of diversification is not beneficial to the company in the long run, if the diversity in products or services takes away from the original purpose of the company and ideals of the founder. Being committed to a government program, a ministry, or an educational initiative is critical not only to programmatic success, but to the integrity and credibility of spiritual leadership.

And third, there is a crisis in community responsibility. Contemporary spiritual leaders too often do not reach beyond their jurisdiction to the broader community at the rate and level of intensity that their forefathers did. Marvin Olasky chronicled the historical impact of spiritual compassion, which was manifested through the outreach of families, neighbors, local churches, schools, charities, nonprofit organizations from the inception of the nation to the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> But once the impending Progressive Era emerged, complete with greater centralization of authority,

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<sup>78</sup> Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, *In Search of Excellence* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982).

<sup>79</sup> Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*.

command, and control of the economy, and various other criteria that negated self-governance and self-reliance, significant retrenchment of American compassion occurred. Some patterns of renewal of self-identification and responsibility have emerged over the last several decades, but for much of the last fifty years the institutions and organizations of social responsibility have withered, replaced by greater emphasis on centralizing mechanisms of assistance, whether from the government, mega-churches, large-scale NGOs, or even White House-led faith-based initiatives.<sup>80</sup> This crisis in community responsibility on the part of spiritual leadership is profound and stark: reaching out to others has almost become passé. Some hope exists in the Millennial Generation, where young spiritual leaders find it within their core being to reach beyond the walls of their jurisdiction and meet needs where they exist.<sup>81</sup> The question is, how long will this desire last?

## VII. CONCLUSION

This lengthy discussion of spiritual leadership is meant to (1) describe the meaning and application of the concept that scales beyond the typical ministerial understanding of the term; (2) examine the Biblical and cultural meaning of spiritual leadership; and (3) by implication raise many questions as to the authenticity, stability, and even credibility of such a term, particularly during the tumultuous time period we live in, suggesting that spiritual leadership is in a crisis mode.

Certainly this article is not the end of the discussion; hopefully, it is just the beginning. It argues for greater clarity and consistency in defining spiritual leadership; it contends that spiritual leadership has a Biblical basis, but a socio-cultural application; and it reflects multi-dimensional implications surrounding the role and influence of spiritual leaders in today's society. Expounding on the virtues and vanities of spiritual leadership is tantamount to fomenting a revolution in leadership development and research. Significant knowledge and even wisdom can be gained from future Biblical, socio-cultural, and theological research in the definition, conceptualization, and empirical implications of spiritual research, but at what cost to the current trends of research in leadership studies?

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<sup>80</sup> Sheila Suess Kennedy and Wolfgang Bielefeld, *Charitable Choice at Work: Evaluating Faith-Based Job Programs in the States* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006).

<sup>81</sup> Thom S. Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011).



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## A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL DISCOURSES: TABLE FELLOWSHIP AND THE IMPLICIT THEOLOGY OF SALVATION

MICHAEL MAHAN

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This study undertakes a narrative reading of the text of Acts 15:1-31 and develops the construct of implicit theology, defining it as generic, usually unspoken ideas about the theological realm that have a measurable effect on individual and congregational behavior. The reading of the Jerusalem council narrative (Acts 15:1-31) highlights three points of view regarding law, grace, and fellowship considerations. This study finds that one chief thread of the narrative is the issues of the practical matter of fellowship between Gentiles and law-following Jewish Christians. The practical issues in the narrative reveal the main narrative thread of the contrast of differing perspectives on the theology of salvation. Based on the council narrative, it is suggested that in applied settings, the implicit theology of salvation is a balance between grace and law rather than a dichotomous, theological position. This study proposes the development of instruments measuring implicit theology in congregational studies, potentially revealing implicit theological tenets underlying observable congregational characteristics.

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The Jerusalem consultation, recounted in Acts 15:1-31, describes a significant practical issue regarding the integration of Gentile Christians into what had been a

primarily Jewish body of believers. The issues seemed to have been multiple<sup>1</sup> and necessitated the assembly of a significant portion of the early church's leadership structure. Through the description of the contextual situation and its resolution, the narrative presents the possibility of an implied theological issue underlying practical issues such as the potential fellowship of believers with radically divergent life practices.

## I. ACTS 15: AN OVERVIEW

The Jerusalem council narrative is pivotal to the body and theology of Acts<sup>2</sup> and has been at the center of much scholarly discussion as well.<sup>3</sup> According to Bock, numerous practical concerns are at stake:

1. "How can Gentiles ignore God's covenant law?"
2. "How can fellowship occur if Jewish Christians keep the law but Gentiles do not?"
3. "Does the issue of uncleanness emerge?"
4. "How can law-observing Jewish Christians and law-ignoring Gentile Christians coexist?"<sup>4</sup>

In the council narrative, amidst a certainly heated discussion of the practical issues of circumcision, strangled animals, blood, fornication, and the general issue of the Law of Moses, the apostle Peter addressed a theoretical issue. As a conclusion to his monologue, the apostle stated, "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are" (Acts 15:11).<sup>5</sup> In Peter's estimation, then, the issues of law following were the manifestations of the implied theological of salvation.

## II. NARRATIVE CRITICISM

Hermeneutics and exegesis traditionally offer numerous methodologies for Biblical research, yet since the twentieth century, the historical-critical method has been prolific.<sup>6</sup> In the burgeoning fields of organizational and ecclesial leadership, Vernon Robbins's socio-rhetorical criticism<sup>7</sup> has likewise enjoyed an almost exclusive rule as the interpretative methodology. In the case of Acts 15, the vast majority of studies produced to date (with the notable exceptions of Cheung's *Narrative Analysis of Acts*

<sup>1</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 538.

<sup>3</sup> Bock, *Acts*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 486-487.

<sup>5</sup> All scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

<sup>6</sup> Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Vernon Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

14:27-15:35, Ben Witherington's *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, and Robert Tannehill's *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*<sup>8</sup>) have relied almost exclusively upon the historical-critical method. Precisely the focus on the historical-critical approach has led Meier to affirm that "only with fear and trembling any exegete should presume to speak of the Jerusalem council, since reconstructing the events surrounding that meeting is fraught with difficulty."<sup>9</sup> Yet John Meier's concern is methodologically bound; approaches such as that of narrative analysis need not reconstruct the entirety of the event, nor reconcile it with foreign texts (e.g., Gal 2) in order to speak of the Jerusalem council or its theological significance. Meier's bias and subsequent concern have failed to recognize the simple genre of the account. According to Grant Osborne:

Biblical narratives contain both history and theology. . . . The historical basis for the stories is crucial, but the representation of that story in the text is the actual object of interpretation. . . . Our task is to decipher the meaning of the historical-theological text in the biblical narrative, not to reconstruct the original event.<sup>10</sup>

Although narrative criticism can forego the difficulties of the historical-critical method, narrative criticism can be complemented by other methodologies; specifically socio-rhetorical techniques such as oral-scribal intertexture and inner textual repetitive-progressive textures are particularly important in a nuanced text such as Acts 15.

### III. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

#### *External and Internal Plot*

The Jerusalem council narrative occupies a central role in the book of Acts. This is first clear from a structural perspective. As noted by Joseph Fitzmyer, in his translation, "chapters 1-14 have 12,385 words and chapters 15-28, 12,502 words."<sup>11</sup> Acts 15 is also theologically pivotal to the entire book's narrative<sup>12</sup>—so much so that Haenchen described it as the "turning-point," "watershed," and "centerpiece" of Acts.<sup>13</sup> The council narrative concludes the introduction of the gospel to the Gentiles (beginning in Acts 10) and thus marks a change in emphasis from Jewish Christianity to the gospel's work amongst the Gentiles. According to Conzelman, in Acts 15, the concern

<sup>8</sup> Alex Cheung, "A Narrative Analysis of Acts 14:27-15:35: Literary Shaping in Luke's Account of the Jerusalem Council," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55 (1993): 153; Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 439; R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts, Vol. 2, The Acts of the Apostles, A Literary Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> John Meier, "The Jerusalem Council. Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-29," *Mid-Stream* 35 (1996): 466.

<sup>10</sup> Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 200.

<sup>11</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Acts*, 538.

<sup>12</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 461.

for Judaistic Christianity (focused on Jerusalem) falls off, and Paul's missions to the Gentiles take over for the rest of the Acts narrative.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, it does not seem coincidental that this particular incident occurs in Jerusalem. Luke's introductory comments regarding the apostolic mandate to witness ("you shall be my witnesses in both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the ends of the earth" [Acts 1:8]) places Jerusalem in a central position regarding the gospel.<sup>15</sup> According to Scott, then, Acts narrates the cultural, racial, and social expansion of the church from Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> Richard therefore concluded, "Not only do all post-crucifixion events occur in or around the holy city, but also every impetus, embassy, or ideational thrust—regardless how reluctant or questionable—arises from or is related to Jerusalem. Officially and unofficially, theologically and spatially, Jerusalem is critical for an understanding of Acts 15."<sup>17</sup> As the later chapters of Acts depart from the Jerusalem center, the influential role of the Jerusalem church in blessing this geographical and social shift of the gospel is fundamental.

Not only does the Jerusalem council narrative denote the shift from Jerusalem, even the narrative's character focus pivots around the episode. The character of Peter, previously the prominent apostle, effectively disappears from the Acts narrative beyond chapter 15.<sup>18</sup> Paul subsequently becomes central to the entire narrative of Acts. The council episode is the point of overlap between Peter, apostle to the Jews, and Paul, apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:8), allowing for a natural transposition between the two characters and their evangelistic foci. Even on the level of character depiction, Acts 15 is central to the entire book, further underlining that Jerusalem council narrative is thus essential to the plot of the entire Acts narrative. Ben Witherington's comment that "it is no exaggeration to say that Acts 15 is the most crucial chapter in the whole book"<sup>19</sup> is thus fully justified.

The internal plot of the council narrative consists of a series of four incidents (minor episodes), each initiated by a missionary report. Allowing for Cheung's inclusion of Acts 14:27-28 into the council narrative,<sup>20</sup> missions reports are given on at least four separate occasions: 14:27, 15:3, 15:4, and 15:12 (see table 1). The reports are characterized by two clear themes: (a) the work that "God had done" and the Gentiles and (b) reactions to the reports, varying greatly from "great joy" (15:3) to protests (15:1, 15:5). The protests, though, are characterized by a concern for circumcision and the

<sup>14</sup> Hans Conzelman, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Frederick F. Bruce, "Paul and Jerusalem," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 3-25.

<sup>16</sup> J. Julius Scott, "The Church's Progress to the Council of Jerusalem According to the Book of Acts," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 7 (1997): 205-224.

<sup>17</sup> Earl Richard, "The Divine Purpose: The Jews and the Gentile Mission (Acts 15)," in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar*, ed. C. H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 190.

<sup>18</sup> Cheung, "A Narrative Analysis," 153.

<sup>19</sup> Witherington, *The Acts*, 439.

<sup>20</sup> The inclusion of Acts 14:27-28 in the council narrative is a primary purpose of Cheung's work, "A Narrative Analysis."

Law of Moses. With no further reading, it is initially clear that an ideal underlying the varying conflicts, in the narrative itself, is a contrast between the work of God, ethnicity, the work of man (circumcision).

Table 1. Minor episodes in Acts 14:27-15:21

Mission report	Initial reaction	Resolution
“All things God has done,” “how he opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (14:27)	Protest—“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (15:1)	Entourage to Jerusalem (15:2)
“in detail, the conversion of the Gentiles” (15:3)	“Great joy to all the brethren” (15:3)	Continuing to Jerusalem (15:3)
“all that God had done with them” (15:4)	Protest—“It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses” (15:5)	Apostolic/pastoral assembly (15:6)
“what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles” (15:12)	“All the people kept silent” (15:12)	Resolution letter (15:19-20)

In the narrative, the initial mission reports give rise to the situation that will finally allow the negative reactions to be dealt with on a definitive basis. The narrative is thus driven forward to resolution by the mission reports and the reactions. Each minor episode is essential to the narrative: without the initial episode (14:27-15:2), the conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christianity would never have arisen; without the second episode (15:3), the true measure of the conflict (between joy and protest) could not be appreciated; without the third episode (15:4-6), the council would not have met to discuss the issue; and without the fourth (15:12-20), no final resolution of the conflict (and the underlying doctrinal issue) would have occurred.

In every minor episode, the reader is driven to understand a theological message. From the original mission reports, through objections and the defenses and final conclusion at the council, the reader is convinced, at times even implicitly, of the issue of salvation. According to Timothy Wiarda:

The narrative forcefully highlights a theological message, that God’s purpose for the Gentiles is salvation without circumcision. Readers are directed towards this truth at every point: a sequence of notable speakers support it, confirming signs are reported, God’s direct involvement in the mission to the Gentiles is

emphasized, supporting Scripture is cited, and the Holy Spirit is said to stand behind the Council's final decision.<sup>21</sup>

The driving home of this point is pivotal to the expansion of the gospel and to the rest of the Acts narrative. Even the final resolution of the council, through a letter to the churches, is important for later narrative, as the findings and Paul's use of them resurface in a later episode (Acts 21:19-26).

### *The Characters*

The actual function of the characters is fundamental in narrative and is often important as characters are developed or because of the points of view that they may embody.<sup>22</sup> A precursory reading of the main characters of the council narrative reveals a limited list of characters representing determined points of view: Paul and Barnabas, Peter, James, the party of the Pharisees. According to Joseph Fitzmyer and Arthur Just, these characters actually compose only three groups (or points of view, see table 2).<sup>23</sup> Although each of these characters undergoes little development here in Acts 15, they are not without a more complete development throughout the entire Acts (or possibly Luke–Acts) narrative.

**Peter.** Peter has been described as one of the chief pillars of the Jerusalem church.<sup>24</sup> In numerous episodes, Peter is portrayed as the chief spokesperson for the apostles.<sup>25</sup> He is also one of the central figures of the episodes in Acts 4-5, Acts 9:32-43, Acts 10-11, and Acts 12. Peter is depicted as the bringer of the gospel to the Gentiles in the Acts 10 narrative (the conversion of Cornelius) and in Acts 11 as he reports this good news back to the Jerusalem church. The bulk of these episodes are situated in Jerusalem. Yet even in those episodes outside Jerusalem,<sup>26</sup> Peter's role is that of verifying (or even active involvement) in the gospel's expansion to Samaritans and Gentiles, echoing his role in the witness radiating out from Jerusalem (see Acts 1:8).

According to Cheung's narrative reading, the presence of Peter in the Council narrative is crucial to the flow of the book of Acts. Peter's mission to the Gentiles is carried to its logical conclusion through Peter's discourse and the council's final decision.<sup>27</sup> In essence, Peter's witness to the gospel in Jerusalem, Samaria, and the ends of the earth is consolidated at his character's final appearance in the entire Acts

<sup>21</sup> Timothy Wiarda, "The Jerusalem Council and the Theological Task," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46 (2003): 245.

<sup>22</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1978).

<sup>23</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Acts*; Arthur Just, "The Apostolic Councils of Galatians and Acts: How First-Century Christians Walked Together," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74 (2010): 261-288.

<sup>24</sup> Just, "The Apostolic Councils."

<sup>25</sup> Acts 1:15-22, 2:14-38, 3:12-26, 4:8-12, 4:19-20, 5:3-4, 5:8-9, 5:29-32, 8:20-23.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 8:14-25, 9:32-10:48.

<sup>27</sup> Cheung, "A Narrative Analysis," 152.

narrative. Peter's role as the primary spokesman from the Gentile point of view at the council is also appropriate; he functions within the persona of primary spokesman for the apostles—even when the issue itself is brought by others, such as Paul and Barnabas.

Table 2. Main characters in the Jerusalem narrative<sup>28</sup>

Characters	Location	Point of view	Position
Paul and Barnabas	Antioch	Gentile Christian	Salvation by the grace of God
Peter	Jerusalem	Gentile Christian	Salvation by the grace of God
Pharisees/Jews	Jerusalem	Pharisaic Christian	Christian need for circumcision
	Antioch		Mosaic law observance
	(Galatia)		
James (elders)	Jerusalem	Apostolic Decree	Salvation by grace, table fellowship by avoiding idolatry.

**Paul and Barnabas.** The convening of the actual council is narratively attributed to the mission reports and disputes in which Paul and Barnabas are primary players (Acts 15:2). Paul and Barnabas are by no means new characters in the story of Acts; Barnabas was introduced to the reader at the Jerusalem church in Acts 4:36-37 and Paul is preliminarily introduced in Acts 8:1. Initially, Barnabas was presented as an encourager; Paul (Saul) as a persecutor. In Acts 9, Paul was converted to Christianity and he encountered Barnabas, who took him under his wing and presented him to the apostles. By Acts 13, both Paul and Barnabas serve in the church of Antioch (Barnabas had intentionally found him and brought him there in Acts 11:24); the Holy Spirit sets them apart for service (Acts 13:2) and they jointly begin missionary travels. Although in popular conception Barnabas may be viewed as conceding the role of leader to Paul, the Lycaonians at least would not have agreed, as they attempt to honor Barnabas as Zeus and Paul as Hermes, his spokesman (Acts 14:11-12).

<sup>28</sup> See Just, "The Apostolic Councils," 277; Meier, "The Jerusalem Council," 466-467.



Although by the later chapters of Acts, both Paul and Barnabas are fully developed as individual characters, in the council narrative they function as a single narratological unit. It is only in a subsequent episode (“some time later” in Antioch in Acts 15:36), that significant differentiation between the characters is clear. In the Jerusalem council narrative, the names occur united; the two assemble churches, recount the conversions among the Gentiles and the power of God, and dispute and debate with the Pharisee party. Paul and Barnabas thus function as a united missionary team in a true sense, with a single *modus operandi* and point of view.

Cheung is instrumental in noting the relationship between Paul and Peter in the Jerusalem council.<sup>29</sup> Luke’s primary concern is to show the agreement between the two apostles; a harmony that is noticeable through a number of parallels through the entire Acts narrative (see table 3). Although Peter is the spokesman for those representing the view of Gentile Christianity (Paul, Barnabas, and the church in Antioch), according to Cheung, his discourse takes a subtle Pauline wording, presenting Pietrine theology (1 Pt 1:1-8) in a way representative of the entire Gentile Christianity team.<sup>30</sup>

Table 3. Similarities between Paul and Peter

Similarity	Peter	Paul
Heal men lame from birth	Acts 3:1-10	Acts 14:8-14
Triumph over sorcerers	Acts 8:7-13	Acts 13:6-12
Heal by secondary contact	Acts 5:15	Acts 19:12
Raise the dead	Acts 9:36-41	Acts 20:9-12
Miraculous escape from prison	Acts 12:6-11	Acts 16:23-24
Give Holy Spirit by laying on of hands	Acts 8:14-24	Acts 19:1-7
Reluctance to evangelize Gentiles	Acts 10:9-16	Acts 22:17-21

**The party of the Pharisees.** The council narrative utilizes the party of the Pharisees (or some men “down from Judea”)<sup>31</sup> as the group driving the social and theological conflict of the entire episode. The group is rightly called “troublemakers” by Just;<sup>32</sup> they leave Judea in order to arrive at Antioch to stir up trouble by advancing their ideology and by their musings essentially necessitate global ecclesial action.<sup>33</sup> That

<sup>29</sup> Cheung, “A Narrative Analysis.”

<sup>30</sup> Just, “The Apostolic Councils,” 277.

<sup>31</sup> That the “party of the Pharisees” and the “mean came down from Judea” function as one narratological group is evident from the singular point of view regarding circumcision in Acts 15:1 and 15:5.

<sup>32</sup> Just, “The Apostolic Councils,” 277.

<sup>33</sup> The narrative reading of the council, and the Pharisaic Christians’ driving role (representing Mosaic law and salvation) in the narrative, strongly contrasts Scott’s (“The Church’s Progress,” 219) thesis that side

Pharisees bring conflict with Christianity seems abundantly clear in Luke and Acts. In Luke 7:36-47, a Pharisee objects to Jesus being anointed by a sinful woman, and in Luke 11:37-54, the reaction of a Pharisee to Jesus' lack of ceremonial washing before a meal prompted the pronouncement of a list of woes and the Pharisees' active opposition. Likewise in Luke 14 and Luke 18, Pharisees are portrayed as self righteous, judgmental, and law conscious.

Within Acts, the Pharisees are never a clear group, although some Pharisees (like Gamaliel) were part of the Sanhedrin who attempt to silence the apostles (Acts 5:17-41). Acts 11, though, presents a party known as the "circumcised believers" (Acts 11:2-3) that criticized Peter's fellowship with the Gentile Cornelius. Although Acts' characterization of the Pharisees is more positive than that of Luke, the general position that "Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses" (Acts 15:5) is fully within character of the Pharisees within Luke and Acts. These Pharisees may not be the hypocrites so often criticized by Jesus himself, but a central aspect of their religious life was the contrast between the Law of Moses and the grace in Christ.

**James and the elders.** The third and perhaps most critical voice in the narrative is James. According to Just, James would have been the acknowledged leader of the Jerusalem assembly,<sup>34</sup> whereas for Hofer, he was "seemingly the head of the elders."<sup>35</sup> Robert Tannehill upholds James's importance, noting that in a normal narrative, a chief figure would have been introduced; the lack of even an introduction thus indicates a common understanding of his identity.<sup>36</sup> In Paul's description of the church in Jerusalem, James was also reputed a pillar (Gal 2:9). This denomination seems upheld by historians, both modern and ancient, as Bauckham and Hegesippus attest.<sup>37</sup> James's prominent role was recognized in the Acts narrative in Acts 12:17, as Peter, after his miraculous release from prison, advised that "James and the brothers" be notified. Later in the Acts narrative, when Paul goes visit James, the other elders were present as well (Acts 21:18). It is precisely in Acts 21 that James (along with the elders) also shows consideration for the strong law-seeking contingency in the Jerusalem congregation. According to narrative criticism, in the council narrative, Peter represented the apostles' voice while James represented the group of elders at the assembly (Acts 15:6).

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issues such as association first surfaced in the council. In a narrative reading (rather than Scott's historical-critical method), association is only addressed implicitly and in later discourse.

<sup>34</sup> Just, "The Apostolic Councils."

<sup>35</sup> Herbert Hofer, "Principles of Cross-Cultural/Ethnic Ministry: The Stories of Barnabas and Paul and the Jerusalem Council," *Missio Apostolica* 13 (2005): 147.

<sup>36</sup> Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity*, 186.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1995), 448-450.

### *Ideological Points of View*

Within the council narrative, the character groups function to relate contrasting ideological points of view and drive the conflict and final resolution. Commentators<sup>38</sup> generally agree on three points of view represented in the council: the Pharisaic Christian point of view, the Gentile Christian point of view, and the Jerusalem/Apostolic decree point of view. In the narrative itself, the depth of the characters' dialogues is progressive; whereas the Pharisaic Christians have two simple statements, Peter's dialogue is more developed and James's is very well rounded, complete with allusion to previous discussion, oral-scribal intertexture, and scriptural exegesis.

**Pharisaic Christian point of view.** The Pharisaic Christian point of view has been said to be completely clear, stated in "no uncertain terms."<sup>39</sup> The first pronouncement (Acts 15:1)<sup>40</sup> creates two clear emphases, circumcision and salvation. The second pronouncement (Acts 15:5)<sup>41</sup> seems to clarify the implications of the first. Circumcision is not a standalone ritual; the Pharisaic Christians understand circumcision as an entry ritual into Mosaic Law. The relationship of circumcision to the following of Mosaic Law is fully justifiable, yet circumcision, even within Lukan narrative, is seen as belonging to the Jews.<sup>42</sup> Narratologically, though, the Pharisaic point of view expressed in the council narrative contrasts the perspective of the Lukan narrator. In Lukan usage, circumcision is not related to salvation and as a right is never impugned but is a "custom of the people."<sup>43</sup>

Two devices, literary and narratological, underline the force behind the Pharisaic point of view. First, the belief in this ideology is so strong that a group of men leave Judea to go to Antioch for the purpose of teaching it. The act is comparable to the evangelism connected to the early persecution of the church, taking the gospel as far as Antioch (Acts 11:19). Despite the specific content of the point of view, it was held to be so fundamental that certain groups were prepared to travel in order to be sure it was taught alongside the gospel itself.

Second, in the narrative, this is the only repeated point of view. Whereas the two following points of view are developed throughout discourse, the Pharisaic Christian point of view is pronounced twice in two minor episodes. For scholars such as Grant Osborne, Vernon Robbins, and Robert Alter, repetition is an important literary device,

<sup>38</sup> Such as Luke Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992); Witherington, *The Acts*; Veselin Kesich, "The Apostolic Council at Jerusalem," *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 6 (1962): 112; Just, "The Apostolic Councils"; Fitzmyer, *The Acts*; and Cheung, "Narrative Analysis."

<sup>39</sup> Cheung, "Narrative Analysis," 151.

<sup>40</sup> "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

<sup>41</sup> "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses."

<sup>42</sup> See Gn 17:10-14, 17:23-27, 21:4, 34:15-24; Lv 12:3; Lk 1:59, 2:21; Acts 16:3.

<sup>43</sup> See Johnson, *Acts*, 259; Cheung, "Narrative Analysis," 151-152; Lk 1:9, 2:42, 6:14; Acts 16:21, 21:21, 26:3, 28:17.

with a number of functions.<sup>44</sup> In Acts 15, the repetition highlights the central role of this point of view. For Robbins, the progression from “circumcised” to “circumcised and required to obey the law” would function to underline the strong relationship between the single circumcision act and the full praxis of following the law. The Pharisaic Christian point of view does not simply insist on circumcision as a rite or for fellowship purposes (akin to Paul’s circumcision of Timothy in Acts 16:3), but as representative of law following, for salvific purposes. In this point of view, circumcision is not a cultural practice, but is a salvific condition. For the Pharisaic Christian point of view, as a consequence of following Christ, Gentiles must be assimilated into Judaism as well.

**Gentile Christian point of view.** Although the Paul and Barnabas duo and Peter (along with the sending congregation of Antioch) constitute the Gentile Christian group, it is Peter that fully represents the point of view as its spokesperson. His role as representative is perhaps accentuated, though, because of his association with the Jerusalem church.<sup>45</sup> Peter is also a natural representative for the Gentile Christian point of view because, in his own words, “God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.”<sup>46</sup>

Peter’s speech (see table 4), although relatively brief, is composed of three clear sections. In the first, the dialogue is composed of three statements regarding the action of God. The second section contrasts the perspective of the first, placing the action on the part of human action, asking a rhetorical question to the Pharisaic Christian group. The final section provides a conclusion, an answer to the rhetorical question based upon the first section. The Gentile Christian point of view foremost underlines the action of God in the conversion of the Gentiles. In a repetitive–progressive texture, God is shown to have: (a) chosen the Gentiles, (b) showed his acceptance, and (c) made no distinction between peoples. Each of these statements is backed by a proof, that the Gentiles: (a) heard the message and believed, (b) received the Holy Spirit, and (c) had their hearts purified by faith.

The radical shift in perspective between the first and second section of the discourse is notable through three grammatical shifts. The change from divine to human action is first demarcated by the shift of grammatical subject, from *God* to *you*. According to the Gentile Christian perspective, what God has affected is contrasted by what the Pharisaic Christians are attempting to do; human action is contrasting the divine. A second grammatical shift likewise underlines the second section. Where in the first section of the discourse God acted toward Gentiles, the Pharisaic Christian group is acting towards God (testing God). The third grammatical shift is the reference to the Gentiles and Gentile Christians. In a progressive texture, those that had been called “Gentiles” (Acts 15:7) become “the disciples” (Acts 15:10). This more subtle shift serves

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<sup>44</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutic Spiral*, 210; Robbins, *The Tapestry*, 46-50; Robert Bernard Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

<sup>45</sup> Just, “The Apostolic Councils,” 279.

<sup>46</sup> Acts 15:7, NIV.

to emphasize the position that there is no distinction between Gentile and Jewish Christians, a position clearly stated in Acts 15:9 and 15:11.

Table 4. Peter's speech (the Gentile Christian point of view) in Acts 15:7-11

Divine action	Human action	Conclusion
God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.	Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?	No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.

The conclusion of the Gentile Christian discourse clarifies the basis for the point of view. The salvation of all disciples is dependent upon God's grace. If this discourse was in any way prompted by the Pharisaic Christian group's action, the conclusion indicates that Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and the Antioch church perceive the obligation to follow the Law of Moses as a threat to grace. Yet a grammatical shift also gently turns the ideological perspective inside out. Where the Pharisaic Christians had contrasted the salvation of the Gentiles disciples, Peter's conclusion places the Jewish Christian position on the line: "It is through the grace of our Lord that we are saved" (Acts 15:11). From Peter's point of view, the action of God had clearly proven the Gentile Christians' salvation by grace; the actions of the Pharisaic Christians, instead, had actually questioned the means of salvation of Jewish Christians!

**The Jerusalem point of view (the Apostolic Decree).** James's speech, representative of the Jerusalem point of view is the most developed and conclusive in the council narrative, as it concludes the assembly and initiates the proliferation of the council's decision.<sup>47</sup> The monologue becomes the theological/ideological conclusion of the council and like Peter's speech, is built in three sections (see figure 1). These sections are an introductory tie-in to Peter's speech, an oral-scribal texture (a citation from Amos 9:11-12), and the logical conclusion with consequently implied actions.

<sup>47</sup> Just, "The Apostolic Councils," 281.

The introductory section of James's speech shows two notable characteristics. First, as noted by Robert Tannehill, James actually uses the Semitic name for Peter, Symeon.<sup>48</sup> This identifies James with the Aramaic speaking part of the church.<sup>49</sup> Therefore the most definitive voice in the council proceedings is Jewish, as is every speaking character at the council. Second, in this point of view, the Gentiles are characterized as a people taken for God "for himself." The statement (and its wording) is vaguely reminiscent of references to Israel as God's chosen people,<sup>50</sup> in some way identifying the Gentiles as God's chosen people.<sup>51</sup> This only stands to be reinforced in the following oral-scribal texture.

Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.

The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

"After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent.  
Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it,  
that the remnant of men may seek the Lord,  
and all the Gentiles who bear my name,'  
says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages."

"It is my judgment, therefore,  
that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.  
Instead we should write to them, telling them  
to abstain from food polluted by idols,  
from sexual immorality,  
from the meat of strangled animals  
and from blood.

For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

Figure 1. James's speech (the Jerusalem point of view) in Acts 15:13-20

<sup>48</sup> Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity*, 186.

<sup>49</sup> Although his later quotation of Amos 9 apparently derives from the LXX, indicating a degree of Hellenization among Palestinian Jews. See Martin Hengel, *The Hellenization of Judea in the First Century after Christ* (London: SCP, 1989); Williams, *Acts*, 249; Richard Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles (Acts 15:13-21)," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. Ben Witherington (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 154-184; Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 457-458.

<sup>50</sup> "And who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself" (2 Sm 7:23).

<sup>51</sup> See Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity*, 186.

The mid-section of James's speech derives from Amos 9:11-12. This was to be expected from an elder of a Jewish Christian congregation, where,<sup>52</sup> and according to Witherington, it is the strength of this proof from scripture that allows the council to be concluded and acted upon.<sup>53</sup> This approach from the Jerusalem point of view is therefore also noticeably different from that of the Gentile Christian group. Whereas Peter progresses from God's action in the present, James progresses from God's past testimony in scripture. Despite the clear difference in perspective, Just argues that James's use of scripture constitutes a change of traditional hermeneutics.<sup>54</sup> James, in Just's surmised, declares that the action of God determines how scripture is understood. This follows Luke Johnson's note that James is revising the formula used to compare events to prophecy; where usually it is stated that "this is in agreement with the prophets," James states, "The words of the prophets are in agreement with this."<sup>55</sup>

The text of Amos 9:11-12 utilized by James is particularly adapted to the situation of Gentile integration into what had been Jewish Christianity. The text is such a good fit that Bauckham has stated, "Probably no other scriptural text could have been used to make this point so clearly."<sup>56</sup> Robert Tannehill, noting the relationship of the rebuilding metaphor to Lukan narrative, has suggested the theme related to David and Christianity is repeated throughout Luke and Acts in Luke 1:32-33, 69 and 2:10-11, and Acts 2:30-36 and 13:22-23, 32-34.<sup>57</sup> For Tannehill, this quotation is thus a type of repetitive–progressive texture, culminating in James's usage, in which the rebuilt tent encompasses all men of every nation. Even discounting Tannehill's wide narratological reading, it is at least clear that the Amos citation brings the Gentiles into the category of God's chosen. As a second and conclusive note to Gentile chosen-ness, the mention of the "Gentiles who bear my name" represents God's enlarged claim on all mankind rather than only the Jews, as his chosen people.<sup>58</sup>

The final section of James's speech is conclusive doctrinally and as far as future action is concerned, yet it is considerably more problematic from a theological point of view. The section is composed of two sections, the first of which is James's simple response to Peter's rhetorical question in Acts 15:10: "We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19). The second section is difficult and seems to incorporate a second oral–scribal texture; beginning with Hans Waitz,<sup>59</sup> a strong tradition has linked the prohibitions in the Apostolic Decree to the text of Leviticus 17-18. Scholars are in no way in agreement regarding the application of this text to

<sup>52</sup> Bauckham, *The Book of Acts*, 452; Just, "The Apostolic Councils," 281-282.

<sup>53</sup> Witherington, *The Acts*, 457.

<sup>54</sup> Just, "The Apostolic Councils," 282.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 271.

<sup>56</sup> Bauckham, *The Book of Acts*, 458.

<sup>57</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 189.

<sup>58</sup> Just, "The Apostolic Councils," 282.

<sup>59</sup> Hans Waitz, "Das Problem des Sogenannten' Aposteldekrets und die Damit zusammenhängenden Literarischen und Geschichtlichen Probleme des Apostolischen Zeitalters," *ZKG* 55 (1936): 227-263.

Christianity and it is well beyond the scope of this article to discuss this oral–scribal texture, but it should be noted that Jerusalem point of view does not create an ad-hoc list of requirements for Gentile Christians.<sup>60</sup>

It is also clear, though, that James’s conclusion neither regards circumcision nor following the complete Law of Moses. However these four prohibitions are fleshed out, they regard neither the means of salvation nor entrance into the Jewish population (proselytism).<sup>61</sup> The fourfold prohibition, though, is universally recognized as regarding practices of idolatry.<sup>62</sup> Luke Johnson consequently asked the question, “Why insist even on these [requirements]?”<sup>63</sup> What is the connection between Gentile and Jewish Christianity, idolatry, and the explanation offered by James (that Moses is preached in every city)?

The agreement of scholars would seem to be that these prohibitions regard Gentile and Jewish table fellowship.<sup>64</sup> Although Gentile Christians are not obliged to obey the entire Law of Moses, Jewish Christians did follow the law, although not for salvation (as implied by Peter’s speech in Acts 15:11). The requirements of Leviticus 17-18 would, though, create a particular situation for Jewish Christians. Amongst law followers, even aliens were prohibited from sacrifices, blood, and illicit sexual relations; such acts would demand the removal of the practitioners. These practices could contaminate both land and people (Lv 18:24-25); faithful Jews would therefore necessarily not have fellowship with those participating in such acts. In this light, the fourfold prohibition of James’s speech and the Apostolic Decree was a way of assuring that Jewish Christians, as Jews, could maintain table fellowship with Christian Gentiles. The imposition of these four holiness codes upon Gentile Christians, then, “enabled Jews to remain in communion with them, since the Gentiles would not be engaging in practices in radical disharmony with the Jewish ethos.”<sup>65</sup>

If this is indeed the case (and not all scholars are agreed),<sup>66</sup> the Jerusalem point of view as explained by James advances the theological discussion beyond matters of

<sup>60</sup> For a recent discussion, see Terrence Callan, “The Background of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 284-297; and Just, “Apostolic Councils,” 283-284.

<sup>61</sup> Torah regulated proselytism through extensive regulations, see Ex 12:19, 12:45, 12: 48-49, 22:21, 20:9-10, 23:9, 12; Lv 10:6, 16:29, 17:8, 17:10-14, 17:18, 19:9-10, 19:33-34, 20:2, 22:18-25, 23:22, 24:16, 24:18-22, 25:6, 25:36-37, 25:45-46, 25:47-55; Nm 9:14, 15:14-16, 15:22-29, 19:10; Dt 1:16, 5:13-14, 10:18-19, 14:29, 16:11-14, 24:14, 12:17, 19-21, 26:1-11, 26:12-13, 27:19, 28:43, 29:9-30:20, 31:9-13.

<sup>62</sup> Charles K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2, *Introduction and Commentary on Acts XV-XXVIII* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 733-734.

<sup>63</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 273.

<sup>64</sup> Just, “The Apostolic Councils,” 285.

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 273.

<sup>66</sup> Callan’s *The Background of the Apostolic Decree* is one notable opponent. His view expounds significantly upon the regulations of Leviticus 17-18 as applied to Israel and the Gêr. His analysis, although complete, is founded upon the ideology that Christians were incorporated into a physical Israel (minimal converts to Judaism). Callan does not even consider the possibility that the Apostolic Decree permitted table fellowship between two culturally diverse groups of Christians.



salvation. The Jerusalem concern surpassed matters of circumcision and law following. The council did not desire to burden Gentiles with the Jewish yoke (Acts 15:10, 20), yet it did impose regulations upon Gentiles. This imposition is interesting exactly because food or ethical laws were not the issue that prompted the disputes and the Jerusalem council. The issue had been circumcision (Acts 15:1, 5); yet the council's concluding comments gave no mention to circumcision nor to the plethora of regulations necessary for becoming a member of a Jewish community. The issues addressed, though, could prohibit Jews from table fellowship with Gentiles and thereby preclude the multi-cultural sharing of the Eucharist. In Kesich's words, "the Eucharist is the life of the Church and if these laws made it possible for Jews and Gentiles to share in the Eucharist, then these laws were acceptable to everyone."<sup>67</sup> The Jerusalem point of view, then, respected both salvific and fellowship issues, more than any of the other points of view.

### *Theological Analysis*

Human behavior quite frequently manifests side issues (symptoms) alongside real issues.<sup>68</sup> In narrative criticism, these issues may be referred to as the major and minor theological threads.<sup>69</sup> As a narrative reading shows, the initial conflicts introduce issues of circumcision and the Law of Moses and the final resolution deals with the relationship of Christianity to Judaism and the possibility of fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

The bulk of recent scholarship has addressed issues such as church council precedents, conflict resolution, and the issue of fellowship.<sup>70</sup> Amongst these, the issue of fellowship is particularly significant. Arthur Just, for example, is particularly concerned with fellowship, both from an exegetical and applied points of view. In his appraisal, the Jerusalem council functions to provide a model for dealing with church debate and fostering consensus.<sup>71</sup> For Herbert Hofer, the narrative's address of the question of fellowship relates significantly to contemporary cross-cultural ministry possibilities.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, to Timothy Wiarda, the council narrative is "grounded in the assumption that his [Christ's] mission . . . that applies equally to all people."<sup>73</sup> Amongst other commentators such as Bock, Scott, and Witherington (who all produce significant lists of the underlying issues in the council narrative), the chief concern of the text is fellowship (see table 5).<sup>74</sup> This consensus among scholars indicates that a major thread throughout the council narrative is the issues of cross cultural, Christian fellowship.

<sup>67</sup> Kesich, "The Apostolic Council," 112.

<sup>68</sup> J. Julius Scott, "Parties in the Church of Jerusalem as Seen in the Book of Acts," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18 (1975): 217-227.

<sup>69</sup> Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 219.

<sup>70</sup> See Meier, "The Jerusalem Council," for a discussion of all of these.

<sup>71</sup> Just, "Apostolic Councils," 261.

<sup>72</sup> Hofer, "Principles of Cross-Cultural," 139.

<sup>73</sup> Wiarda, "The Jerusalem Council," 248.

<sup>74</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 486-487; Scott, *The Church's Progress*, 219; Witherington, *Acts*, 439.

The narrative flow seems to suggest fellowship as such a major issue. The initial minor incident begins with Gentile evangelization and a report to the first congregation with a significant Gentile population (Acts 11:19-20) that had sent the mission. The narrative progresses to the council, in which an entirely Jewish cast of characters discusses theology. Exegesis prevails (in concomitance with the witness of the Holy Spirit) in describing the salvation of all of mankind under the tent of David. At the conclusion of the narrative, the findings of the council are taken back to the Gentile congregation in Antioch. Intercultural relations are a clear thread in the council narrative.

Yet beyond the flow, the council dialogues themselves make no explicit mention of fellowship as an issue! It must be wondered, then, how much the historical-critical method (and the problematic relationship of Acts 15 to Galatians 2) has influenced our reading of the council narrative. Neither is circumcision explicitly mentioned in the council dialogues. Although it is implied that following the law/circumcision is “a yoke” (Acts 15:10), “trouble” (Acts 15:19), and “a burden” (Acts 15:28), neither the law nor circumcision are mentioned. From the narrative perspective, Scott is correct to affirm that these questions are, in fact, “side issues”<sup>75</sup> in the theological debate, although law and circumcision were the initial controversy, manifesting underlying and more fundamental issues.

Table 5. Questions pertinent to the main thread in the council narrative<sup>76</sup>

Scott	Bock	Witherington
With whom may Jewish Christians associate?	How can fellowship occur if Jewish Christians keep the law . . . but Gentiles do not?	How can fellowship continue?
With whom may Jewish Christians eat?	Does the issue of uncleanness emerge?	How to deal with ethnic division?
What is the status of food laws within the new faith?	How can Gentiles ignore God’s covenant law?	How may the church remain one?
What is the necessity and place of circumcision and the customs within Christianity?	How can law-observing Jewish Christians and law-ignoring Gentile-Christians coexist?	What constitutes the people of God?
What is the status of Jewish privilege?		How may the major ethnic divisions in the church be dealt with so that both groups may be included in God’s people on equal footing?

<sup>75</sup> Scott, *The Church’s Progress*, 219.

<sup>76</sup> Taken from Bock, *Acts*, 486-487; Scott, “The Church’s Progress,” 219; Witherington, *Acts*, 439.

That Gentile-Jew fellowship was implied in the narrative is demonstrated through the contemporary concern in the scholarly debates and in the implications of James's quotation of Amos 9. Yet according to numerous scholars, and the council dialogues themselves, neither circumcision nor fellowship were the real issue. In Kesich's reading, "the council dealt with a pure issue of faith, a doctrinal question of grace and salvation."<sup>77</sup> Scott concurs that "at Antioch the main issue became clear: what is the nature of the new faith? On what basis is salvation imparted?"<sup>78</sup> Wiarda's theological evaluation of the narrative is similar: "My assessment is that the narrative forcefully highlights a theological message, that God's purpose for the Gentiles is salvation without circumcision. Readers are directed towards this truth at every point."<sup>79</sup> According to these and other scholars, the underlying issue, and the true main theological thread throughout the narrative, even though it is not discussed explicitly in James's discourse nor in the resolution letter, is the theology of salvation.

**Implicit theology.** The construct of implicit theology has been recently introduced by Martyn Percy. In Percy's theorization, implicit theology contrasts explicit propositional theology (i.e., doctrine) and strongly shapes church life.<sup>80</sup> For Percy, implicit theology would attempt to arrive at "hidden meanings in structures and practices that on the surface appear to be benign and innocent."<sup>81</sup> Percy, primarily following Hopewell and Geertz, originally proposed implicit theology to describe aspects of congregational or denominational culture (symbols, etc.) that influence their own self-understandings.<sup>82</sup> From this point of view, implicit theology is generally deduced from observable church practices.

Yet implicit theology could find larger substantiation and application through the way in which implicit leadership theory has been theorized. Implicit leadership theories<sup>83</sup> have been described as "generic ideas about the traits and behaviours that leaders in general have."<sup>84</sup> Following this theorization, implicit theology can be better substantiated as generic, usually unspoken ideas about the theological realm that have a measurable effect on individual and congregational behavior.

<sup>77</sup> Kesich, "The Apostolic Council," 113.

<sup>78</sup> Scott, "The Church's Progress," 219.

<sup>79</sup> Wiarda, "The Jerusalem Council," 245.

<sup>80</sup> Martyn Percy, *Shaping the Church: The Promise of Implicit Theology* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010), 1.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>82</sup> See James Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures* (London: SCM, 1987) and Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock 1966), 1-46.

<sup>83</sup> Dove Eden and Uriel Leviatan, "Implicit Leadership Theory as a Determinant of the Factor Structure Underlying Supervisory Behavior Scales," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 60 (1975): 736-741; L. Offermann, J. Kennedy, and P. Wirtz, "Implicit Leadership Theories: Content, Structure, and Generalizability," *Leadership Quarterly* 5 (1994): 43-58.

<sup>84</sup> Birgit Schyns, "The Role of Implicit Leadership Theories in the Performance Appraisals and Promotion Recommendations of Leaders," *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion* 25 (2006): 189.

In Acts 15, conflict over an implicit theology of salvation not only drives the narrative, the implicit theology of salvation is the theological underpinning that framed the circumcision/law protest, the council discussions, and the fellowship resolution. Implications of the theology of salvation are present throughout the narrative at least at three visible points. First, the initial Pharisaic Christian protest (Acts 15:1) was clear, "Unless you are circumcised . . . you cannot be saved." This first statement of the means of salvation within the narrative could mean that, in the eyes of Pharisaic Christians, either: (a) salvation obtained through law observance or (b) salvation is through grace plus law. For this reason, some commentators such as Terrance Callan discuss the necessity of becoming part of Israel in order to be saved.<sup>85</sup> Yet even the findings letter does not utilize salvation language, simply concluding, "If you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well."<sup>86</sup> It is precisely this implied understanding (that circumcision is not a salvific issue) that suggests that the theology of salvation is an implicit theological in the text.

The second indication of an implicit theology of salvation is manifest as Peter explicitly contrasts either possible reading of the Pharisaic Christian statement regarding salvation. In the conclusion of his monologue, he clarifies the Gentile Christian position, "We are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way they are also."<sup>87</sup> According to Kesich, through this statement, "Peter set the tone, and furnished the framework in which the whole problem had to be examined. God's plan was to include all within the Church. Man would be saved by grace of God and not by an act of circumcision."<sup>88</sup>

Through this statement, Peter made explicit what the implicit matter in previous debates had been. Circumcision, following the law, and Jewish or Gentile heritage, as themes of debate, were manifest issues; the often implicit but underlying issue was the nature of salvation. Through insistence upon circumcision and law-keeping, Pharisaic Christians manifested a fundamental belief about the nature of salvation: it was through Judaism, and more particularly, it was related to personal works. For Peter, though, that God had given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles manifested an implicit theological truth: that salvation is given only by grace. The Pharisaic Christian position and the Gentile Christian position represented two extreme theologies of salvation: salvation by works (either in whole or in part), or salvation by grace.

The third indication that the implicit theology of salvation is the main thread in the council narrative occurs in James's monologue. In Acts 15:14-18, the Jerusalem

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<sup>85</sup> In "The Background of the Apostolic Decree," Callan writes, "The Apostolic Decree implies that Gentile Christians are incorporated into Israel in some way, either as converts or as a group associated with Israel without full conversion. This suggests that for Luke the core of the Christian church is that part of the Jewish people which has accepted Jesus as the Messiah sent by God. Gentile Christians are associated with this restored Israel and are dependent on its existence in order to be part of the Christian church" (p. 297).

<sup>86</sup> Acts 15:29.

<sup>87</sup> Acts 15:11.

<sup>88</sup> Kesich, "The Apostolic Council," 112.

position reiterated the manifestation of salvation by grace: “God had taken from among the Gentiles a people for himself.” The exegetical proof along with the experiential proof underlined how God actually saved; he had taken for himself a people from among the uncircumcised Gentiles. God’s action had been wholly independent of law, indicating a particular theology of salvation: salvation by grace. In keeping with the unspoken nature of the undercurrent, though, the theology of salvation does not emerge as the explicit matter.

#### IV. PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP APPLICATIONS OF THE IMPLICIT THEOLOGY OF SALVATION

Debate of grace versus law in salvation is longstanding—prominent in the first century (as Acts 15 and numerous epistles attest), during the European Reformations<sup>89</sup> and contemporarily as well.<sup>90</sup> As common as the “law versus grace” terminology is that of the “battle between antinomianism and legalism.”<sup>91</sup> The lack of agreement between the reformers, the continued contemporary debate, and even the need for a congregation such as Antioch (with prophets and teachers and even an apostle of the Lord!) to send to Jerusalem for assistance underline the difficulty with which the dichotomy is resolved. Seemingly, even though doctrinal resolutions of the grace versus law dichotomy exist through systematic theology, in practice, the continual, periodic resurgence of the issue indicates a permanent tension between law and grace.

Some empirical data exists to demonstrate that in contemporary churches different implicit theologies of salvation are indeed operant. Neil Anders, Rich Miller, and Paul Travis, together with the George Barna Research Group, conducted research into what they defined as legalism within the American church. In a sample of 529 churchgoers, 58 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, “I feel like I don’t measure up to God’s expectations of me,” and 66 percent agreed with the statement, “Rigid rules and strict standards are an important part of the life and teaching of my church.”<sup>92</sup> In the same survey, 70 percent disagreed with the statement, “I am motivated to serve God more out of a sense of guilt and obligation rather than joy and gratitude,”<sup>93</sup> yet in another survey conducted the same year, 55 percent of Americans affirmed to believe that salvation can be earned through doing good.<sup>94</sup> Yet in a recent survey of church mission, value, and vision statements conducted among Anglican

<sup>89</sup> Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 103-104.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, Bryan Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David Van Druenen, *The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P and R, 2009).

<sup>91</sup> Tom Pennington, “All the World’s A Stage: Understanding the Ultimate Purpose of Our Salvation (Eph 2:7),” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 22 (2011): 113.

<sup>92</sup> Neil T. Anderson, Rich Miller, and Paul Travis, *Breaking the Bondage of Legalism* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2003), 10-11.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

congregations, none spoke of law while many spoke of grace.<sup>95</sup> Either Anderson, Miller, and Travis's sample is skewed compared to Voss's, or an implied theology of salvation, (specifically of salvation by human effort or law following) is being propagated within churches. According to another question in Anderson, Miller, and Travis's survey, though, it would seem that sample diversity is not the problem; amongst the same sample (of which 55 percent believed that salvation could be earned), 77 percent believed that their congregation loved and accepted others, regardless of their actions.<sup>96</sup>

That some theologies of salvation are implicit, communicated by church practice rather than systematic theology or indoctrination, could explain the pigeonholing and debate around certain Christian churches. Aecio Cairus, responding to accusations of strictness or legalism, offered a strong and rather agreeable doctrinal defense of his denomination's position on salvation.<sup>97</sup> Yet over a decade later, Ryan Cragun and Ronald Lawson's study in the sociology of religion, still considered Cairus's among similar denominations as strict proselytizing groups.<sup>98</sup> The contrast could not be stronger, yet it highlights a difference between explicit doctrinal affirmation and church practices that imply a different doctrine. The difference seems to correspond strongly to Chris Argyris and Donald Schon's differentiation between espoused theory and theory in action.<sup>99</sup> Yet the dilemma is not exclusive to Cairus's denomination; numerous authors describe similar situations for their churches as well.<sup>100</sup> It is precisely the lack of congruency between teachings and understandings, even in the matter of the theology of salvation, that led Martyn Percy to question, "What is the relationship between the acknowledged propositional truths that order ecclesial identity, and the more hidden and mellifluous currents that might shape the life of the church?"<sup>101</sup>

Manifestations of such incongruence existed in the Jerusalem council narrative as well. Where grace was being taught, joy abounded (Acts 15:3, 31); where law was attempted to be bound, there was disturbance and troubling (Acts 15:24). There is little evidence that amongst the groups promoting grace (the Gentile Christian perspective or the Jerusalem perspective) that joy was being taught as a value; nevertheless where

<sup>95</sup> Robert Voss, "Congregational Leadership: Grounded in Identity and Mission" (D.Min diss., University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, 2007), 131-145.

<sup>96</sup> Anderson et al., *Breaking the Bondage*, 11.

<sup>97</sup> Aecio Cairus, "Is the Adventist Faith Legalistic?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7 (1996): 23-33.

<sup>98</sup> Ryan Cragun and Ronald Lawson, "The Secular Transition: The Worldwide Growth of Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh-Day Adventists," *Sociology of Religion* 71 (2010), 349-373.

<sup>99</sup> Chris Argyris and Donald Schon, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

<sup>100</sup> See Leroy Garrett, *What Must the Church of Christ Do to Be Saved?* (Norwich: SCM, 2011); Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom* (Maitland, Florida: Xulon, 2008); Stephen Crosby, *The Silent Killers of Faith: Overcoming Legalism and Performance Based Religion* (Shippensburg, PA: Treasure house, 2004); Stefan Ulstein, *Growing Up Fundamentalist: Journeys in Legalism and Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995); Wayne Hobbes, *The Pharisee within Me: MY Journey from Legalism to Grace* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge, 2009).

<sup>101</sup> Percy, *Shaping the Church*, 1.

grace could have implicitly created joy. It may also be plausible that law following implicitly created the contrasting (“troubling”) climate. Whereas it would be difficult to assume that the Pharisaic Christians intended to create troubling situations, the climate may have been a consequence of the implicit theology of salvation the group promoted. The narrative reader, in fact, is left to decide whether the trouble is from theological conflict—or a side effect of the theology of salvation. Whichever the case may be, in the narrative itself this contrast exists and it corresponds to distinct groups with specific theologies of salvation.

The question remains whether the implicit theology of salvation, as manifest in the Jerusalem council narrative, would be clearly dichotomous (a singular choice between grace and law) or represent a scale. Implicit theology would want that in any given group or congregational setting, the standardization of church practice would eventually settle the law versus grace issue in some practical (and not dogmatic) way. As seen in the work of Anderson, Miller, and Travis and Voss, the resolution would probably not be by doctrinal statement by the congregation.<sup>102</sup> The simple fact that in the Jerusalem council narrative, three perspectives exist is indicative of nuance within viewpoints (the Jerusalem point of view imposed upon full freedom of Gentile followers in order to promote fellowship, a view that was subtly different from that of the Gentile Christians). It would therefore not be surprising to find that in contemporary practice, the implicit theology of salvation in any congregation is somewhere between the extremes of grace and law. This viewpoint would justify the lack of the accusation either of antinomianism or legalism against every Christian group—accusations that, according to Tom Pennington, are applied to some (but not all).<sup>103</sup> The development of and validation of a scale for the implicit theology of salvation would be an important step for future research in ecclesiological/congregational studies.

## V. IMPLICATIONS OF IMPLICIT THEOLOGY FOR ECCLESIAL LEADERSHIP

Implicit theology, as developed in this study and by Martyn Percy, is in no means limited to specifics of the theology of salvation. Percy’s development of the construct deals with limited expressions familiar in his Anglican settings. Theoretically, though, implicit theology could address all the chief areas of systematic theology: the theology of God, Christology, pneumatology, theological anthropology, psychology, ecclesiology, soteriology, and the like. As such, implicit theology should be addressed as a multidimensional and open construct, much like implicit leadership theories.

Percy has suggested that implicit theology be found through deduction, inferring unspoken theological dimensions through the cultural artifacts of any given congregation.<sup>104</sup> Percy is correct about the collocation of implicit theology within congregational studies, in very practical situations in which implied theologies may

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<sup>102</sup> Anderson et al., *Breaking the Bondage*, 11-18; Voss, “Congregational Leadership,” 131-145.

<sup>103</sup> Pennington, “All the World’s A Stage,” 113.

<sup>104</sup> Percy, *Shaping the Church*, 12.

express themselves in clear ways. Yet the assumption that implicit theology is best understood through deduction overlooks the great strength of modern ecclesiological research. Through the development and use of specific social–scientific instruments (questionnaires, etc.) measuring numerous theological dimensions, congregationally held implicit theologies could be statistically correlated to church practice and other elements of church culture. Such an enterprise could provide a unique window of understanding into how implicit theologies affect congregational life in very concrete ways. This is the promise of implicit theology within the contemporary field of ecclesial leadership, surpassing speculations (no matter how logical they may be) and providing empirical data linking observable congregational characteristics to previously hidden beliefs.

## VI. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Much scholarly debate (generally based in the historical–critical method) has focused on the relationship of Acts 15 to Galatians 2 without rendering a consensus of the two texts' relationship and without highlighting the full intricacies of the Jerusalem council narrative (Acts 15:1-31). The council narrative is pivotal to the overarching flow of the Acts narrative. The text provides a transition to the expansion of the gospel; it also provides the backdrop of a controversy over which to discuss the integration of Jewish and Gentile Christianity and to the resolution of the issue of law and grace. Although the controversy which gives rise to the episode is circumcision, the narrative's internal flow highlights the issue of fellowship while implying responses to the issue of the role of law in the New Covenant. The ideological perspectives of the three groups (Gentile Christians, Pharisaic Christians, and Jerusalem Christians) are the carriers of the theological discussion and final resolution.

Most astonishing in the council narrative is the lack of mention of circumcision and the law (or grace) in the final resolution discourse and the communication letter to Antioch. Much of what is to be learned from the narrative is implicit; both the significance of the fellowship issue and the theology of salvation are encoded into the narrative itself—an encoding that highlights narrative criticism's role in Biblical research. Yet what is implicit is what is most important to the theological message of the Jerusalem council story.

The fellowship issue was central to the Antioch congregation and thus became a focal point for Jerusalem as well. That Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians could have table fellowship through cultural concessions is a significant precedent for contemporary Christianity and, perhaps most relevantly, for the mission work and the missional movement. Although salvation is by grace, for all peoples, there are cultural practices (rights) that render table fellowship and evangelism difficult or even impossible. A central theological theme of the council narrative is thus personal sacrifice in order to enable and enjoy cross-cultural fellowship. Further exploration of Acts 15 from the point of view of narrative criticism could provide a vital contribution to the missional movement and to cross-cultural missions.



The issue of grace versus law is prominent in theological discussion even into the present. Whereas the council narrative deals with the issue implicitly, it is the possibility of the grace/law equilibrium underlying Christian group or congregational practices that emerges as perhaps most significant. Research into the linkage between church organizational characteristics and implicitly held theologies (of any dimension) could be ground breaking in the field of congregational studies. Implicit theology, like that observed in the council narrative, holds incredible promise to further our empirical understanding of church health, church growth, and potentially any dimension of practical ecclesiology.

The question remains whether the implicit theology of salvation, as manifest in the Jerusalem council narrative, would be clearly dichotomous (a singular choice between grace and law) or represent a scale. Implicit theology would want that in any given group or congregational setting, the standardization of church practice would eventually settle the law versus grace issue in some practical (and not dogmatic) way. As seen in the work of Anderson, Miller, and Travis and Voss, the resolution would probably not be by doctrinal statement by the congregation.<sup>105</sup> The simple fact that in the Jerusalem council narrative three perspectives exist is indication of nuance within viewpoints (the Jerusalem point of view imposed upon full freedom of Gentile followers in order to promote fellowship, a view that was subtly different from that of the Gentile Christians). It would therefore not be surprising to find that in contemporary practice, the implicit theology of salvation in any congregation is somewhere between the extremes of grace and law. This viewpoint would justify the lack of the accusation either of antinomianism or legalism against every Christian group—accusations that, according to Tom Pennington, are applied to some (but not all).<sup>106</sup> The development of and validation of a scale for the implicit theology of salvation would be an important step for future research in ecclesiological/congregational studies.

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## About the Author

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<sup>105</sup> Anderson et al., *Breaking the Bondage*, 11-18; Voss, "Congregational Leadership," 131-145.

<sup>106</sup> Pennington, "All the World's A Stage," 113.



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**“THIS IS HOW ONE SHOULD REGARD US”:  
AN EXEGETICAL STUDY ON PAUL’S TREATISE TO THE  
CORINTHIANS REGARDING HIS RELATIONAL  
EXPECTATIONS WITH HIS SPIRITUAL CHILDREN  
(1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-21)**

**MARYJO BURCHARD**

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Much church conflict could be mitigated if both the ecclesial leaders and congregational members were in agreement about role expectations and behavioral norms within their group. This study explores Paul’s expectations for leaders and followers as described to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4:1-21. A synchronic hermeneutical approach is utilized, which incorporates elements of historical and social-identity perspectives into the examination of the argumentative and sensory–aesthetic textures of socio-rhetorical inner-textual analysis. Findings include expectations for (a) a steward, (b) apostles, (c) a father, and (d) the congregation. The study also includes discussion and recommendations for further research, including a comparison of ecclesial leaders’ selection criteria in contemporary settings with those found in Pauline settings, and development of a means to identify how many ecclesial leaders in formal positions of authority are functioning as spiritual parents within their respective congregation(s).

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Both ecclesial leaders and members of congregations have implicit expectations of one another and of themselves. Unfortunately, these expectations are rarely communicated with one another, nor are the grounds for these expectations very frequently discussed. Much confusion and conflict in churches could be minimized if both the pastor and the congregation were able to understand and come to agreement

regarding role expectations and the dynamics of their relationship. In an effort to begin this conversation, this exegetical research article examines Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian congregation regarding his own expectations of their relationship with—and perception of—him and his ministry team, as described in 1 Corinthians 4:1-21. The research utilizes a synchronic approach to interpretation, beginning with historical and social-identity lenses, and progressing to argumentative and sensory–aesthetic inner-texture analysis using the socio-rhetorical approach.<sup>1</sup> Ideological implications follow the research.

## I. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

An overview of this passage presents several areas for exploration. The research attempted to answer inquiry into the significance and ecclesial leadership implications of Paul's articulated expectations for (a) a steward, (b) apostles, (c) a father, and (d) the congregation. The methodology of the study addresses each of these areas. Too often, ecclesial leaders are viewed in nebulous terms, with vaguely articulated relational expectations. The nature of this inquiry challenges research and definition of these ecclesial roles to become more intentionally studied, and contributes to the extant literature by providing an initial framework for more specific descriptions of dyadic and group dynamics based upon ecclesial leaders' roles.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Due to the highly contextualized nature of this pericope, a synchronic research approach is utilized.<sup>2</sup> Research therefore begins with a contextual framework examining the social concerns and influences within Corinth that precipitated this epistle, drawing insight from cultural and historical dynamics present in the city, and political and relational issues in the church. Jack Barentsen's<sup>3</sup> social identity perspective in Corinth is summoned upon to explore how the Corinthians' group identity impacted leadership acknowledgement and relational expectations. After examining the contextual framework of the epistle, this study utilizes a socio-rhetorical approach to inner-textual analysis, exploring an operational definition of Paul's expectations based on the

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<sup>1</sup> The socio-rhetorical method of Biblical interpretation is described by Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> James E. Bradley and Richard M. Muller introduced this method to contemporary church historians, also terming it the "organic" or "integral" method. The synchronic method of research was initially developed by doctrinal historians who desired to expand the scope of insight provided by church historians. Adolf von Hamack and Reinhold Seeberg were the most prominent practitioners of this model, which integrates insights from multiple disciplines within a specific time period to gain a more holistic understanding of the history, in this case, within the Biblical text. See James E Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Jack Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission: A Social Identity Perspective on Local Leadership Development in Corinth and Ephesus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011). This book introduced the use of social identity theory and group-dynamics theory in the comparison of early church leadership development.

dynamics found in each of the described roles specifically in the argumentative and sensory–aesthetic<sup>4</sup> textures. Additionally, ideological texture analysis informs the findings to ascertain the ideological implications of Paul’s words on his own times as well as our own. All of these insights contribute to culminating insights into contemporary applications for both leader and follower role expectations and standards for treatment of one another within the ecclesial context.

### III. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

To even a casual reader of the Corinthian letters, the tension between Paul and the believers in Corinth is evident. Despite Paul’s establishment of the Christian community in Corinth and raising up this collection of house churches on an extended missionary trip,<sup>5</sup> it is apparent that his credibility and authority were being called into question in his absence, and factions and personal agendas were marring the church’s health and capacity to grow.<sup>6</sup> Divorced from the relational and political interactions within the Corinthian church, one could misunderstand Paul’s words to be simply self-promotion, competition, and politicking—the very things that Paul himself preached against in this epistle. To fully appreciate the dynamics present in Paul’s epistles to the Corinthians, the historical and cultural setting must be considered.

According to David DeSilva,<sup>7</sup> Julius Caesar ordered the resettlement of Corinth in 44 B.C. after a century of lying in ruins. It became a formal Roman colony, which modeled every aspect of social and political life after Rome. Corinth’s status was elevated when it became the seat of the Roman proconsul who ruled the province of Achaia. The city’s identity was significantly shaped by the primary demographic who settled there: first, second, and third generation freed slaves from all over the Roman Empire,<sup>8</sup> many of whom had grown rich through entrepreneurial exploits in various venues of trade. As a strategic port city between the eastern and western sides of the Roman Empire, ever-increasing wealth and power attracted artisans and craftsmen and other entrepreneurs. Competition for trade and political status was steep, and self-promotion was an integral part of the culture.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps nowhere was this vigorous competition and self-promotion more evident than in the realm of argumentation and public speaking. Both public porticoes and marketplaces provided sophists (skilled and beguiling orators who trained others in their craft for money) a venue to demonstrate their ability to convince others and recruit new patrons.<sup>10</sup> Just as they had in ancient

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<sup>4</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry*.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 18; cf David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 560-563.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor 1-4.

<sup>7</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction*. See also Gordon D. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians: New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 1-4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. See also Jerome M. O’Connor, “Corinth,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David M. Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 1.134-139.

<sup>10</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction*.

Greece,<sup>11</sup> young social climbers who were vying for public office pursued sophists to train them in the art of argumentation and oration.<sup>12</sup> This culture promoted by the sophists fostered an appreciation for the value of presentation, including posture, presence, delivery, and voice, often over the substance of the argument itself, and rivalries and divisions between followers of various orators was fierce.<sup>13</sup> Orators discovered that political prestige and social power could be derived from collecting followers from among the Corinthian elites, so speakers used every public opportunity to argue and debate, to showcase their charisma and persuasive prowess and garner as many loyal adherents as possible.<sup>14</sup>

These cultural influences shaped the collective identity of the people of Corinth, and provide no small insight into why Paul had stated that not many of the Corinthian believers came from backgrounds of prestige or power or wealth.<sup>15</sup> It also informs the motivations behind the Corinthians' inclination to manufacture rivalries between Paul and Apollos<sup>16</sup> when no historical account of any actual rivalry or competitive tension between the two Christian leaders exists.<sup>17</sup>

### *Social Identity and Leadership*

An understanding of the social and demographic background of Corinth suggests that the conflicts and challenges within the Corinthian church stemmed largely from personal and social identity issues. Although the Corinthian congregants had become Christians, this aspect of their identity was the newest, least familiar, and least defined to them. In comparison, they had been Corinthians perhaps their entire lives. This intimate connection with their identity as Corinthians, therefore, had seeped into their identity as Christians.<sup>18</sup> Identity is a highly subjective entity, based on a perception of whom people believe they are. Although people's sense of *personal identity* tends to be more constant, it is developed and shaped by the "cognitive, affective, and social interaction processes, occurring within particular cultural and local contexts."<sup>19</sup> It is an individual's sense of personal identity that makes him or her feel distinct from others. Similarly, an individual's *social identity* is based on (a) his or her sense of belonging to a group, and (b) the significance that he or she connects with this membership.<sup>20</sup> As is true with individuals, groups gain their sense of distinction by comparing themselves

<sup>11</sup> Hermann Diels and Rosamand Sprague, *The Older Sophists* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor 1:26.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor 1-4.

<sup>17</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction*.

<sup>18</sup> Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*.

<sup>19</sup> Vivian Vignoles and et al., "Beyond Self-esteem: Influence of Multiple Motives on Identity Construction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 2 (2006): 308-333.

<sup>20</sup> Originally described by Henri Tajfel in his book *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Waltham, MA: Academic Press, 1978), and cited in Rupert Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2001).

with various characteristics of other groups. As individuals identify with each other within the context of a particular social identity, they reinforce and continuously build a contextual sense of self, and define a set of acceptable behaviors within that group.<sup>21</sup> People tend to perceive themselves to be somewhat similar to other members within their group, and distinct from members of out-groups. In this way, people receive specific behavioral and interaction-related parameters through their identification within the contexts of different groups.

Sometimes, however, the interests and expectations of one group trigger conflict with one's obligations with another group. When this conflict becomes significant, the individual will choose to adopt the behavior and attitude of the group whose belonging is most necessary.<sup>22</sup> Value and behavior comparisons are constant both within and between groups, to afford the individual and the group a sense of distinction and belonging. Groups and their members are therefore always judged in a comparative context, not simply based upon their inherent characteristics alone. Typically, the member or members that most clearly epitomize the group's identity emerge as the leaders within the group.<sup>23</sup>

From the perspective of social identity, leadership is more than simply exertion of general influence in order to help a group achieve common goals.<sup>24</sup> It extends more deeply into the social influence process. A leader in this context is someone "perceived to be more prototypical and influential than other group members in a particular social context,"<sup>25</sup> which enables this individual to "[empower] and [mobilize] other group members to solve collective problems or to attain collective goals."<sup>26</sup> A leader who embodies the values and behavioral standards for a group has credibility and influence because the group recognizes the leader to represent who they ultimately want to be, what they want to emulate. Thus, through example, the prototypical leader is able to enrich the agency of the followers to implement group goals, simply by exemplifying group values and encouraging followers to do the same. Instead of garnering power at the expense of follower agency, the opposite effect occurs: the group gains more power to mobilize collectively to reach common goals as the leader enhances their agency.<sup>27</sup> As the group's social power and influence increases, so does their access to resources.<sup>28</sup> The members continue to grow in clarity in terms of who they are, unity in common purposes, and strength in their capacity to carry out their mission.

### *Social Identity, Agency, and Power in Corinth*

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<sup>21</sup> Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Bernd Simon and Penelope J. Oakes, "Beyond Dependence: An Identity Approach to Social Power and Domination," *Human Relations* 59, no. 1 (2006): 105-139.

<sup>28</sup> John C. Turner et al., *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1987).

The social identity perspective lends new insight into what was occurring relationally within the Corinthian church. In the first century, social identity was predetermined largely by ethnicity and family lineage, as well as one's vocation, social standing, patronage, religion, and citizenship (both national and city).<sup>29</sup> In such a deterministic environment, it was relatively easy for people to identify those with whom they shared a group identity, in which trust and support existed to reinforce the shared socially expected behavioral norms. Corinth was filled with people who knew exactly how to behave within the established social norms of each group that included them.

However, when Paul introduced Christianity to Corinth, he also ushered in a new social identity for converts. Christianity presented an entirely different form of community, including values and behavioral standards in visible conflict with many of those held by new believers within the context of their other social identities. Suddenly the rules of engagement were called into question; behaviors and attitudes previously unfamiliar to members were expected to become primary characteristics of members, embraced as the dominant values that would take precedence over those from all other social identities.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the need for a "spiritual father" whom they could imitate<sup>31</sup> emerges early on. Despite being empowered by the Holy Spirit, the new community of Corinthian believers had no local history to provide depth of context for this new social identity, and minimal resources to help members navigate the social pressures from their other identity groups, to de-identify from this new community. This demonstrates the intense psychological complexity of group identity and membership, as individuals interact with and process their multiple social realities, particularly in its developmental stages.<sup>32</sup>

When 1 and 2 Corinthians were written, the church in Corinth had been in existence for approximately six years, so Paul and his missionary team had already navigated the choppy waters of initial formation and delineation of the group's identity and establishment of expectations in terms of behaviors, values, and norms within the context of their own group.<sup>33</sup> Now members of the Corinthian church were encountering conflict with the obligations and expectations of external groups that also laid claim to their personal identities in other contexts. Meanwhile subgroups within the Christian community (often based on identification with status, gender, or other groups outside the church) were creating tension and insecurity within the group's own social identification. This resulted in shoddy and uncertain identity performance in the church, especially in the absence of their spiritual father.<sup>34</sup> One of the most critical keys to interpreting the meaning behind Paul's epistles to the Corinthians is recognition of the challenges addressed in the text as natural tensions resulting from early, rapid growth of

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor 4:14-21.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander S. Haslam, Stephen Reicher, and Michael J. Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence and Power* (New York: Psychology Press, 2011), 143-144.

<sup>33</sup> Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Keay (2004) dedicated more elaborate research to applying social identity theory to Paul's relationship with the Corinthians in his Ph.D. dissertation. See Robert Keay, "Paul the Spiritual Guide: A Social Identity Perspective on Paul's Apostolic Self-Identity" (Ph.D. diss., St. Andrews University, 2004).

the group.<sup>35</sup> Paul's intention in 1 Corinthians 1-4, then, was deeper than wanting to halt the factions within the church. Paul was attempting to demonstrate prototypical behaviors that would renew and reframe the church's sense of social identity, and transform the way they viewed the conflicts that they were facing both within and outside their group.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV. INNER-TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Inner-textual analysis of 1 Corinthians 4:1-21 attempts to answer the research questions surrounding the basic role-related expectations through the use of socio-rhetorical analysis in the argumentative and sensory-aesthetic textures.<sup>37</sup> This exploration will lay the foundation for the following sections by clarifying Paul's reasoning and basis for the differentiation of roles and relationships between leaders and followers. The first section examines the argumentative texture of the passage, followed by an exploration of the sensory-aesthetic textures found in the text.

Many scholars have held the popular assumption that Paul's confrontation of the schisms and divisions in the church found in 1 Corinthians 1-4 were theologically based, namely that Paul's gospel varied from what Peter and Apollos were preaching.<sup>38</sup> However, Paul never contrasted his theology with any of the leaders he mentioned, nor did Paul attempt to compete with them for the Corinthians' allegiance. Instead, Paul allied himself with Peter and Apollos, placing Christ as their highest example.<sup>39</sup> The problem, according to Paul, was caused not by theology, but by jealousy, competition, and dissension—which members of the Corinthian church would have known were characteristics of Corinthian society at large. Greco-Roman politics was a world enmeshed in the perpetual striving of personal alliances in the familial, economic, and social settings, “constellated around a few men of noble houses who contended for power against the background of the class struggle.”<sup>40</sup> The nature and prominence of the political dynamics of the culture was demonstrated when nearly 1,500 paintings of political posters were excavated from stucco walls on houses in Pompeii<sup>41</sup> which were sponsored by private citizens. These posters imply vigorous popular participation in the political process, which was typical for Greco-Roman citizens. Friends and neighbors appear to have done most of the work on these posters, although the names of prominent trade groups such as goldsmiths and dyers seem to have sponsored some candidates as well. One characteristic that is

<sup>35</sup> Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*.

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence. L. Welborn, “On the Discord in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Ancient Politics,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 1 (1987): 85-111.

<sup>37</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry*.

<sup>38</sup> For an extensive examination of this discussion, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text: New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*.

<sup>40</sup> Welborn, “On the Discord,” 91.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 92; for more detail see also F. Abbott, “Municipal Politics in Pompeii” in *Society and Politics in Ancient Rome* (New York: Scribner's, 1916), 3-21.



blatantly absent are candidate promises, or mention of issues. Instead, the notices simply state the candidate's name, the office he is pursuing, the name(s) of the sponsor(s), and a word that indicates support.<sup>42</sup> This demonstrates the deeply personal nature of politics in the Greco-Roman world. Politics embodied and fueled the social identity process in every spectrum of society.

Paul's letters must be considered in this light. The verses leading up to 1 Corinthians 4 were Paul's attempt to point out the underlying problem within the church: believers were still identifying more with the values and expectations found within their social identities outside the church than those that were to typify the community of Christ's followers. Thus, 1 Corinthians 1-4 was a confrontation of social phenomena that bore significant spiritual consequences.<sup>43</sup>

### *Argumentative Texture Analysis*

Since many scholars have been reluctant to consider its political elements, the way this passage relates to the remainder of the epistle has been puzzling to some.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, this passage's significance has at times been minimized as an illustration or appendix to Paul's exhortations about divisions in the church.<sup>45</sup> But 1 Corinthians 1:1-21 is an essential window into Paul's relational expectations between himself and the Corinthians, as an examination of his arguments in this pericope will demonstrate.

**“Servants and stewards:” Resisting the infiltration of courtroom drama.** “This is how one should regard us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor 4:1-2).<sup>46</sup>

The significance of Paul's identification with the roles of servant and steward are lost in contemporary language and culture, but to the Corinthian mind, this was a radical move. Corinthian society was marked by its frequent public use of the courts as a venue to engage in attacking political opponents and practicing their oratorical skills.<sup>47</sup> Sophists would attempt to discredit one another to promote their own following, and gain patronage from those with high social rank and power.<sup>48</sup> Such competitive, embittered exchanges would have been anticipated in the Corinthian mind, between the leaders within Christian circles, and the church members' selection of parties in 1 Corinthians 1 demonstrates preparations for such a standoff. This text exposes the

<sup>42</sup> Abbott, “Municipal Politics,” 12.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Welborn, “On the Discord.”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> All scripture references are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>47</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction*; Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*; Welborn, “On the Discord.”

<sup>48</sup> For further detail on the impact of patronage upon Corinthian society, see John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 75 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), and Andrew D. Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, Library of New Testament Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2008). Additionally, in *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), Bruce Winter studied the Corinthian and Alexandrian sophists, as they apply to 1 Cor 1-4 and 2 Cor 10-13.

Corinthians' intent to subject Paul to an "examination" of his qualifications in a sort of quasi-court.

**Changing the rules of engagement.** Paul's argument began by removing himself from the platform that would require such an examination. Shunning the position of the Christian community's patron, which would have bestowed upon Paul automatic position, status and power, and mandatory follower submission, Paul instead described himself and Apollos as farm laborers<sup>49</sup> and household servants (stewards).<sup>50</sup> In both cases, the field and the household were overseen by God himself: God gave the commands to the laborers in the field, and he was responsible for the harvest. Likewise, the mysteries that Paul and his companions stewarded did not belong to Paul, but to God. Paul held no personal claim over the truths he was entrusted, but instead directly reported to Christ to know how to serve the household of God with these mysteries.<sup>51</sup> This position directly contrasted the sophists' claim to be exclusive keepers of truth and persuasion, and eliminated the drive to garner followers on this basis.

**"A small thing that I should be judged by you": Accountability and power.** "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God" (1 Cor 4:3-5).

Paul's identification with the lowliest servants<sup>52</sup> and alignment with God as his judge<sup>53</sup> stripped the Corinthian believers of their justification for judging Paul's qualifications on two levels. First, people of lowly status and no political aspirations had no need to be scrutinized. Since they were not a threat to others' position, laborers were free from being assessed by anyone but their masters. Additionally, if Paul saw himself as part of the slave class (with God as his master), he was excluding himself from the right to engage in the political machinery that defined the Corinthian social exchanges of the upwardly mobile. Assuming the humble status of a servant, laborer, and steward, Paul was excused from having his legitimacy placed on trial.<sup>54</sup> Still, Paul acknowledged that God was his judge, and that he would need to be ready to answer to him, to be

<sup>49</sup> In 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, Paul insisted that both he and Apollos were simply servants who were assigned different tasks of an agrarian laborer, while God gave the increase.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Cor 4:1.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> cf Phil 2.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Cor 4:3-5.

<sup>54</sup> Welborn ("On the Discord") demonstrated the practice of Roman and Greek societies to establish the credibility of leaders through the public examination (and often attack) of their credentials in public court proceedings. The Corinthian church appears to have been pursuing a similar model of operation, attempting to develop a quasi-court in the ecclesial setting. Welborn illustrated the connection between party contentions and litigation in a description of Greek and Roman trials that were designed for public political attacks. These trials, held in open public forums, included a wide latitude of pleading and evidentiary support, making the courts a prime venue for character assassination and the elimination of political competition. Cicero, Demosthenes, and Peithias eliminated many political rivals through their mastery of oratory persuasion in the court setting.

found trustworthy.<sup>55</sup> Paul effectively disqualified himself from the status-grasping socio-political system of Corinth's elite, de-legitimizing the Corinthian believers' drive to integrate this carnal practice of pitting leaders against one another into the Christian community. As a prototypical leader, Paul modeled for the Corinthians how to disassociate with this element of their cultural and social identity, helping them to reshape the rules of engagement with one another.

**“Myself and Apollos”:** Re-framing the conflict, re-uniting the community. “I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another” (1 Cor 4:6).

In case the Corinthians were tempted to interpret Paul's argument as permission to exclude only Paul from the forum of public scrutiny and party strife, Paul made it clear in this passage that his role identification as a servant and a steward applied to all leaders in the church. This meant that Paul's articulated rules of engagement also applied to Apollos (who unlike Paul, was Greek and more closely emulated the Corinthian ideal of an oratory master—and possibly appeared more promising as a political candidate). Thus through verse 6, Corinthian believers were barred from attempting to mirror their secular culture by contriving factions and setting their leaders in competition with one another for prominence.

The phrase “that you may not learn to go beyond what is written” (v. 4:6a) finds increased relevance in this context, because similar advice was routinely offered by leaders in the Greek and Roman communities who wanted to squelch factions, even outside the church:

Plato's Seventh Epistle . . . warns the εταίροι that the evils of faction will not cease until they enact “common laws” by which all can abide (Ep. 7. 336d-337b). In the speech entitled περί πολιτείας, sometimes attributed to Herodes Atticus, the citizens are urged to put an end to factional strife by living “in accordance with the law” (κατά νόμον) instead of destroying one another “lawlessly” (παρανόμως, 17-18, 29).<sup>56</sup>

While some may object that Paul's verbiage refers to “what is written” (*ἡ γέγραπται*) instead of “the law,” inscriptions of this precise wording have been discovered, documenting Greco-Roman parties who were willing to settle a dispute by living according to terms in a written agreement. OGIS 229 documented the resolution of a period conflict between Smyrna and Magnesia, when all the citizens of both cities swore by the following oath:

“I will not transgress the agreement nor will I change for the worse the things which are written in it . . . and I will live in concord and without faction” (*καὶ οὐθέν παραβήσομαι κατὰ τὴν ὁμολογίαν οὐδέ μεταθήσω ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν αὐτῇ . . . καὶ πολιτεύσομαι μεθ' ὁμόνοιας ἀστασιάτως*).<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> 1 Cor 4:2.

<sup>56</sup> Welborn, “On the Discord,” 109.

<sup>57</sup> From Wilhelm Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae: Supplementum Sylloges Inscriptionum Graecarum* (Leipzig, Germany: Hirzel, 1903), as cited in Welborn, “On the Discord,” 109.

Paul's following clause "that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another" (v. 4:6b) further illustrates Paul's desire to prohibit the Corinthians from factitious interactions with one another.<sup>58</sup> In direct opposition to the prevailing cultural norm, Paul resisted any role that would require him to garner honor at the expense of a co-laborer in Christ. He stood as an ally with Apollos, united with all other Christian leaders, who went directly to Christ for legitimacy—not to the popular whims of the Christian community.

**"Who sees anything different in you?" Reframing personal identities.** "For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Cor 4:7).

To prevent the Corinthians from interpreting Paul's exhortation to mean that only the leaders were excluded from bitter rivalries and competition but there was still room to continue their factious behavior among themselves, Paul made it clear that radical reformation of the church's social identification extended to the followers themselves. Corinth was embroiled with an intense constant battle between the grasping social elite and the exploited masses.<sup>59</sup> All evidence seems to imply that the real impetus behind the system of factions within the Corinthian community was the material wealth and amassed resources of the social elite, and the dependence that it created.<sup>60</sup> Complicating matters was the reality that the community of believers in Corinth was made up of people from both extremes of the social strata. For example, members of Chloe's household mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:11 may have included servants, hired freemen, and slaves, who trusted and supported Paul enough to report serious conflict to him. Yet many of the affluent elite also counted themselves as supporters of Paul, including Chloe herself; Stephanas, the community's patron (vv. 1:16, 16:15); and Gaius, who served as "host" to (ξένος) to Paul as well as the "entire church" (Rom 16:23). And Erastus<sup>61</sup> would have had the greatest civil power, both due to his material wealth and his position as the city treasurer who controlled the municipal disbursement of funding for streets and public places.<sup>62</sup>

Paul stripped all Christian members of the elite of their right to create factions to elicit power, followership, and material dependence within the church. Like Paul and Apollos, no matter their standing outside the church, Corinthian believers could not claim that any position or power within the body of Christ came from grasping, competition, or personal merit. This, too, was a revolutionary reshaping of relational expectations by leaders of all the followers. Within the Christian community, influence among members was not to be obtained by means utilized in other Corinthian contexts; exploitation of fellow members of the family of God was thus prohibited. In terms of power and agency within the community, no one's personal identity within the church could be defined in ways that would isolate or elevate them; social strata were to be

<sup>58</sup> Welborn, "On the Discord."

<sup>59</sup> Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*; Welborn, "On the Discord"; DeSilva, *An Introduction*.

<sup>60</sup> Welborn, "On the Discord."

<sup>61</sup> Rom 16:23; 2 Tm 4:20.

<sup>62</sup> Welborn, "On the Discord."

eliminated from the family of God. Paul had effectively made them all equal members of the family.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> For additional descriptives of Paul's position regarding class distinction in the body of Christ, cf Gal 3:27-29 and Phlm 8-17.

### *Sensory-Aesthetic Texture Analysis*

Analysis of Paul's use of sensory–aesthetic language allows further insight into Paul's intent in writing this passage. This is particularly true in (a) Paul's descriptions that compare the Corinthians' status and treatment with that of his ministry team, and (b) the verbiage used when Paul discusses his parental relationship with the Corinthian believers. This section examines these two passages separately.

**You are held in honor, but we in disrepute: A painful contrast.** “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings!” (1 Cor 4:8). Viewed within the context of the previous section, Paul's exclamation of the Corinthians' already having attained high status seems to imply a deeper question: What were they still grasping at? What more could they possibly want to gain? When they had already reached such high status in their other social contexts, why would the powerful among them be driven to strive for more, by dividing and exploiting others within the family of God? There also seems to be some irony built into these declarations, because it appears that Paul esteemed the Corinthians' strength, wealth, and self-perceived greatness as the cause of strife and faction among them. In contrast, he vividly described the opposite stance of the apostles.

For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. (1 Cor 4:9-13)

Not only did Paul and his colleagues refuse to be held in high social esteem or attempt to compete for power and influence, they allowed themselves to be held in disrepute. Instead of referring to the apostles as the spiritual elite, Paul described them as being the “least of all” (v. 9); instead of fighting for a position of honor in the public courts, the apostles were made a public spectacle (v. 9). Instead of fighting for their rights as contenders for their personal kingdoms, the apostles esteemed themselves as sentenced to death (v. 9), as those who would rather allow themselves to be thought fools for Christ than to bitterly fight to be seen as wise (v. 10). Here, Paul modeled his own challenge to the Corinthian believers who were routinely taking one another into the courts, publicly discrediting and exploiting one another through oratory prowess,<sup>64</sup> when he said: “To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!” (1 Cor 6:7-8). Indeed, Paul and his colleagues demonstrated their preference to do this very thing rather than exploit or hurt a member of God's family through public humiliation.

<sup>64</sup> For full context, see 1 Cor 6:1-8.

Further, the apostles would rather suffer physical lack, or work with their own hands to obtain physical resources, than receive resources that could place them at risk of becoming entrapped in the corrupt social system at work in Corinth (vv. 11-12).<sup>65</sup> Paul and his ministry team had determined that they would respond to the Greco-Roman challenge to compete for position through the factional system, by responding in the opposite spirit: “When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat” (vv. 12b-13a). This practice led to the founders of the Christian church in Corinth being regarded by Corinthian society as leadership failures, or more pointedly, “like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things” (v. 13b). Yet Paul and the apostles counted all societal position and influence as lost, for the sake of the freedom to preach the gospel without compromise.<sup>66</sup>

**“I became your father . . . be imitators of me”:** Reframing social identification. “I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children” (1 Cor 4:15, 16).

A dramatic shift in tone occurred here. Before discussing the reason for this, let us consider all that Paul had accomplished leading up to this passage. He had stripped himself and all ecclesial leaders of any platform that would provide any justification for creating factions within the church based on allegiance to specific leaders, he had delegitimized the socio-economic elite class’s efforts to set up an internal quasi-court system for vetting faction leaders or a class system within the church that would mirror the realities of exploitation and contention found in other Corinthian social contexts, and he had modeled a lifestyle that shunned every method of personal and group advancement that was familiar to the Corinthian people. Essentially, Paul had completely disoriented the Corinthian believers in terms of their ability to identify appropriate rules of engagement with one another and their leaders. Within the single social identity context that was mandated to take precedence over all others, the behavioral norms and expectations had been abolished, along with its members’ known means of assessing leaders appropriate to delineate and develop these norms. Paul clearly recognized that the Corinthians needed a new way to develop values and behavioral standards within their group, so he provided them with an entirely new framework for understanding their relational dynamics. With this abrupt change in tone, Paul demonstrated that the church was not a political system of rivaling factions. The church was a family, Paul was their father, and they were his dearly loved children (v. 14).

The images and feelings that Paul’s words invoke here are dynamically significant. First, he stressed that his motivation in admonishing the Corinthians so strongly was not to embarrass or shame them,<sup>67</sup> as was the practice of orators debating in public forum. Instead, despite Paul’s obvious and vocal disagreement with their

<sup>65</sup> For a more detailed description of Paul’s reasoning for the refusal of resources from the Corinthians while serving among them, see 1 Cor 9:1-15. Also cf 1 Thes 2:9; 2 Thes 3:8.

<sup>66</sup> See 1 Cor 9:1-15.

<sup>67</sup> According to the LXX Paul used the word “□ντρέπων” which literally meant to cause someone to be shamed in a manner that would cause one to turn in upon himself. *Blue Letter Bible*, s.v. “□ντρέπων,” <http://www.blueletterbible.org>.

behaviors and attitudes, he addressed them as his ἀγαπητὰ, or his “beloved, esteemed, dear, favorite, worthy of love.”<sup>68</sup> In the midst of conflict, Paul’s words illustrate a heart for the Corinthians full of profound affection and compassion, familial intimacy, and parental care. This imagery and its implications intensified and expanded in the verbiage that followed: “For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (v. 15). Paul distinguished himself from all other ecclesial leaders here: he had not simply taught the Corinthians, he had become their father. This parental distinction could not be bought or hired; it could only be earned relationally. When Paul refers to fathering others in the faith, he has invested aggressively in their spiritual development, and in nearly all cases, he himself had been instrumental in his spiritual children’s initial commitment to becoming Christians in the first place.<sup>69</sup> In their moment of disorientation, Paul provided them with a safe point of relational reference, a means to begin to regain their bearings. In essence, Paul said, “I know you feel lost, but I am your father and I am here for you. I will not leave you disoriented and humiliated.” He provided an entirely new framework upon which social identity could be built.

This new framework for social identity, however, also presented a new set of behavioral expectations: “I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church” (vv. 16-17). Paul possessed an intimate parental relationship with the Corinthians, stemming from his role in their coming to Christ, as well as six years of spiritual parenting interaction with them. Based on this parental relationship (not simply his position as an apostle or his knowledge as a teacher), Paul urged the Corinthians to imitate him. As a nurturing prototypical leader, Paul was both able and relationally qualified to model the attitudes, values, and behaviors that he expected the Corinthians to develop within themselves individually and corporately, thereby providing the social resources necessary to build an entirely new set of relational expectations within the group.<sup>70</sup>

**“Shall I come to you with a rod, or . . . in a spirit of gentleness?” The other side of parenting.** “Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?” (1 Cor 4:18-21).

Paul knew that he was responsible before God to spiritually parent the Corinthians, but the Corinthians still bore the responsibility of receiving his parental right to do so. This passage describes certain Corinthian members as being “arrogant” (vv.

<sup>68</sup> *Blue Letter Bible*, s.v. “ἀγαπάω,” <http://www.blueletterbible.org>.

<sup>69</sup> Paul described Timothy (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tm 1:2, 18), Titus (Ti 1:4), and Onesimus (Phlm 1:10) as his spiritual sons. In each of these cases, Paul had taken on these young men to mentor and disciple them, and then trained and released them into ministry in various capacities. Timothy and Titus became pastors in their own right (1 Tim 1; Ti 1) and Onesimus became a member of Paul’s ministry team (Col 4:9). Similarly, Paul also referred or related to the members of other congregations that he and his team had established and disciplined as his spiritual children as well (cf Eph 1; Gal 4:19).

<sup>70</sup> Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*.



18-19) with their arrogance most evident in their boastful and presumptuous words (vv. 19-20). Considered within the context of the rest of this text, it appears that despite Paul's obvious stance against it, these members were still attempting to impose their political agendas and recreate the social structures of Corinthian society within the context of the church, as if Paul were never going to challenge them (vv. 18-19). Because Paul is their spiritual father, he is vigilant to protect the church's social identity from being defined by the Corinthian morals and behaviors, instead of those established by Christ's law of love.<sup>71</sup> It was Paul's relationship as the Corinthians' spiritual father that both drove him to confront these who would attempt to exploit the others, and gave him the right to expect the Corinthians to allow him to confront so strongly.

Paul's status as a teacher or an apostle was not mentioned in this portion of the passage. Although they remained a reality, these roles did not automatically merit the level of reciprocal trust and relational expectations associated with being the Corinthian members' father who had demonstrated for years that he dearly loved them as his children. This is further demonstrated in Paul's declaration that the Corinthians had many teachers (v. 15)—teachers who had obviously been unwilling or unable to confront and successfully correct these arrogant members—but they only had one father (vv. 15-16). The intense and intimate emotion that this passage invokes suggests that it was not his position, but the nature of Paul's relationship, exhibited in faithful parental love, trust, and intimacy over an extended period of time, that justified Paul's unapologetic stated intent to come "with a rod . . . or in a spirit of gentleness" (v. 21), depending on the social and spiritual condition of the group when he arrived. Fathers have both responsibilities and reciprocal expectations that no other leaders possess. This is why Paul was confident that the members who were attempting to assume a position of power and influence through lofty and arrogant words would easily be shut down when their spiritual father exposed and confronted the true nature of their efforts: "But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power (1 Cor 4:19-20). Paul's entire life modeled his conviction that God's leaders need not (and must not) rely on manipulative words or social grasping to gain power or influence. The power of God flowed through people who fearlessly modeled the heart and mind of Christ in the context of community, relationally shaping a Christocentric approach to social-identity development. This mandated Christ-following leaders to resist external pressures to measure success in their efforts by using a worldly political system.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Paul's personal identity included identification with all of the distinctions and expectations found in the contexts of each of his social identities. Yet the values and behaviors crucial for Paul's roles as apostle, steward, and father were never in conflict with one another because all of these roles were grounded in his identification with Christ. Yet each of these separate roles addressed different issues and needs within

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<sup>71</sup> cf 1 Cor 13.

the Corinthian Christian community. Paul's role as an apostle demonstrated the inverted values of leaders with true power from God. Paul's description of the apostles' treatment and social standing may have caused those who were pursuing position within the church to second guess their pursuits based on the nature of leadership in the Christian community. Apostleship appeared to translate into a vigorous shunning of all political grasping, to the point of suffering lack, for the sake of staying uncompromised. Additional research is suggested to explore the contemporary application of this principle. What are the obligations of ecclesial leaders who find themselves in comparable roles to the apostle Paul? Is it possible for the demands of national and international-level ecclesial leaders to minimize or prevent conflicting demands of their ecclesial roles in the same manner Paul did, or do organizational polity or denominational structures inhibit apostolic leaders from having the same level of freedom?

Additionally, Paul's role as a steward of God and a servant of Christ (1 Cor 4:1) demonstrated that Paul obtained his ultimate affirmation and legitimacy from being found trustworthy by God. As God's household servant, Paul was not interested in earning their favor or passing their vetting processes. As with his apostolic role, Paul's assumption of the role of steward disarmed the Corinthians from their capacity to subject him to their system of politically-based rule. Paul forbade the social elite among the Corinthian church members to establish a social identity system that mirrored the corrupt system in the city. The church, Paul insisted, was to be a safe haven for all members of society—rich, poor, slave, free, male, female—to come together as one without fear of exploitation, isolation, or exaltation based upon external affiliations.<sup>72</sup> A question emerges from this situation: have groups within the contemporary Christian community developed similar practices to the Corinthians by developing systems of vetting and hiring ecclesial leaders through political processes that are run by spiritually carnal and immature congregation members? If this is how some spiritual leaders are entering ecclesial leadership, how will they be able to navigate the challenge to then become spiritual fathers to the people who have legitimizing power over them?

This leads to the question of the role that spiritual maturity has in processing Paul's approach in this passage. Paul's words to the Corinthians were based on the maturity level of the people in that specific congregation, and must be viewed in that light. Despite the Corinthians' self-perception and reputation for being wise,<sup>73</sup> Paul identified them as still being spiritual infants.<sup>74</sup> Although in the world many of them wielded power and made administrative decisions, these skills in the civil world did not translate into being capable of judging the credentials of their spiritual leaders. A compelling study could be to compare contemporary selection criteria of congregational leaders to those found in the Pauline epistles. How do the social identities and ideologies differ between congregations where business skills and

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<sup>72</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction*; Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership*; Welborn, "On the Discord."

<sup>73</sup> 1 Cor 4:10-11.

<sup>74</sup> "But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ" (1 Cor 3:1).

political power in external social identities are the primary qualifiers for congregational lay leaders, versus congregations in which congregational lay leaders are selected based on exhibiting prototypical Christocentric values and behaviors?

It seems that the role of greatest significance in terms of potential for being an agent of positive change in social identity among the Corinthian church was the role of father. Paul's assumption of this role as his defining relationship with the Corinthians in specific seems to be the impetus of his boldness in calling them to imitate him (vv. 14-16). For all Paul's strong words, he did not assume he had the right to speak to them in this manner simply because he was an apostle or a teacher. The basis of his urgent exhortations, according to 1 Corinthians 4:14-15, was his father's heart of love for the Corinthians.<sup>75</sup> His parental responsibility also gave him the right to confront those who were challenging his directives to destroy faction in the church (vv. 18-21). The many teachers in their midst did not possess the power as leaders to engage with the Corinthians on this level, but their father did. Room for further research in this area includes a study to identify how many ecclesial leaders in formal positions of authority (e.g., teaching pastors, senior pastors, bishops, priests, etc.) are truly functioning as spiritual parents within their respective congregation(s). In congregations that do not appear to have a spiritual parent in a position of formal leadership: (a) Do mature spiritual parents exist elsewhere in the congregation? Where? How are they exercising this role? (b) How are congregations that do not appear to be able to identify spiritual parents within their community impacted by this lack? Are the people in formal positions still expecting the congregational members to respond to them as if they were being parented (e.g., attempting to assert the same level of intimate boldness as Paul did with the Corinthians), despite the lack of parental history or relational intimacy? How is this impacting the dyadic and leader–congregational dynamics?

As was stated in the beginning, much conflict could be avoided in churches if the leaders and the congregational members understood the roles and expectations that were present in their congregation. A need exists for additional research to be conducted that will find ways to assist congregations and their leaders in identifying the types of leadership roles that are operant and missing within their congregation—and articulating what relational expectations are appropriate for leaders and members, based on these findings.

Very little research has been conducted in the area of expectations between ecclesial leaders and members of the congregation, beyond studies of the qualifications for deacons and elders (1 Tm 3, Ti 1, and Acts 14), or contemporary (largely secular) organizational leadership theory-based studies conducted on churches. Exegesis-based study of the relational dynamic expectations in this context is lacking. This exegetical study opens up this new conversation in the field of ecclesial leadership. Additionally, this study could become the basis for either a qualitative or quantitative study of pastors'

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<sup>75</sup> See also the nature of Paul's appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus in Phlm. Although Paul claimed he had the right to command Philemon to relate redemptively to Onesimus because Philemon was Paul's spiritual son and he had led Philemon to Christ, yet he appealed to Philemon on the basis of love. This was the spirit of Paul's approach to all entreaties to those he parented.

and congregants' expectations of role and relationship with one another, comparing the findings with the description outlined by Paul.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study explored the significance and implications of Paul's articulated relational expectations in his exchange with the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 4:1-21. Inquiry focused on the significance and implications of described expectations for (a) a steward, (b) apostles, (c) a father, and (d) the congregation. A synchronic approach was utilized to address the depth and complexity of the issues being examined. Historical and social-identity perspectives lent insight into the argumentative and sensory-aesthetic textures of the inner-textual analysis.

Both leaders and followers in the ecclesial setting may be challenged by the ideological implications of Paul's exchanges in this text. Vernon Robbins described ideology as that which "concerns the particular ways in which our speech and action, in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures, and institutions of power."<sup>76</sup> Robbins's description of ideology embodies the tensions that defined Paul's interaction with the Corinthian believers in this passage. The argumentative texture of the passage illustrates the essential conflict between the Corinthian practice of groups using "resources, structures, and institutions of power"<sup>77</sup> to manipulate and exploit the masses. Corinthian culture was infamous for intertwining faction into every sector of society. Everyone had a role to play, from the wealthy elite who created factions for the sake of fostering dependence upon them, to the orators who spent their lives exalting themselves and publicly deriding others to gain clientele and followers, to the lower classmen of limited means who attempted to gain social footing by waiting upon the sophists and patrons, down to the masses of laborers and slaves whose physical needs were constantly exploited as a means to gain greater power by those leading and feeding the factions. All aspects of life, all of one's personal identity, were enmeshed within the context of these often battling social identities.

With the induction of Christianity, a new ideology was introduced that challenged the very fabric of the way Corinthian society functioned. Paul, the quintessential prototypical leader for the Corinthian church, modeled a rejection of established institutions of power, which based authority and influence upon competition for resources and reputation. Paul refused a position that placed him in any evaluative or practical dependence upon the whims or opinions of the Corinthian church. He referred to himself as God's field laborer and household servant, thus disqualifying himself from the need to vet him as a person of prominence—and he applied the same standard to all of the apostles. By making himself answerable to God instead of the Corinthian political machinery, Paul was able to speak the truth without compromise and relate to all members without prejudice. For the present-day reader, the question remains whether the contemporary church will take Paul's

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<sup>76</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry*, 36.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

conversation with the Corinthians personally, and assess both leadership and congregational social identity in the light of the standards delineated in scripture.

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### **About the Author**

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## THE ROLE OF THE ECCLESIAL LEADERS IN SHAPING THE FUTURE CHURCH

TONYA BANKS

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Through Biblical imagery or metaphor, the church is described as a social institution, and like all other organizations, has a purpose in achieving its vision, mission, values, goals, and beliefs. The church's purpose is met through the use of human beings, which is a complex system that is made up of several components that interrelate and interconnect with the other like parts of a human body. One part of the system cannot function without the other. The role of the future leader is to know this complex system and how it must function in the future to progress forward. Leaders must challenge present organizational and leadership structures of faith communities with purpose for growth, change, and production in the church. The trend of culture, immigration, inculturation, migration, and mutuality are discussed. It is shown that systems theory can be applied within the church to achieve its mission in preparation for the future.

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The world has changed, is constantly changing, and will continue to change. Change is inevitable and occurs throughout facets or cycles of life and is a necessary component for life. This life includes humans and nature. For example, life develops through change. A seed is planted inside of the ground, begins to grow, takes root, bursts out of the ground, and continues to grow into a flower; a child is conceived through fertilization of the egg by the seed (sperm), then the child grows inside of the womb, is born, and continues to grow. With these two examples, if growth stops, something is wrong. The plant or flower may need more soil or water, need to be replanted, or even pruned. For the child, the milk formula may need to change, the child may need more vitamins, have a medical condition that requires treatment by a doctor, or may have some social development problem that contributes to nongrowth. The



analogy described can be applied to the church. Continual change in growth is an important ingredient to shaping the future of the church; therefore, the role of the ecclesial leader is an important one. The ecclesial leader must encourage and allow for change to take place, thus not stopping or staunching growth in the church. This can become a daunting task, however, necessary for ecclesial leaders to design structure, and challenge organizational and leadership structures of faith communities with purpose for growth, change, and production in the church.

The Lord God Almighty wants the church to progress forward in doing his will. After the flood account, the people that were born from Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gn 10:1) were of all one language and speech (Gn 11:1). Everyone could communicate with the other, therefore was of the same culture; however, as they traveled from the east they decided to stop progressing forward (v. 2) but instead to build a city and tower that would reach the heavens and to make a name for themselves so that they would not be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth (v. 4). Their actions resulted in them not doing the will of God as commanded to Noah and his sons after the flood. Genesis 9 states, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (v. 1), and, “As for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it” (v. 7).<sup>1</sup> Their disobedient actions landed them into a state of confusion. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit confused their language and speech (v. 9), thus there was a break in communication that caused individuals to band together or attach to those who were common to them in dialect. People had no choice but to scatter abroad in the earth with one another (v. 9) to progress forward in bringing about change. Differences in culture and nations of the world began. The purpose of this article is to describe my own understanding of the role of the ecclesial leader to shape the future of the church by design, and to challenge organizational and leadership structures of faith communities through planning and preparation. A few questions arise that should be addressed: Can one challenge the design and organizational leadership structures of the church? Are there repercussions for challenging structures in particular faith communities? What is the risk for challenging design and organizational leadership structures?

## I. THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION DESCRIBED

Before one answers these questions, let's first define what the church organization is. Is it different from any other type of organization or institution? The church has been described heavily using theological images over the past decades.<sup>2</sup> Minear<sup>3</sup> described the church using ninety-six different metaphors. Dulles described the church using several models or metaphors—institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, servant—and explained that the Bible speaks entirely through

<sup>1</sup> All scripture references are from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Floyd Bantz, “Old Roles, But New Routines: A Biblical Theological Rationale for Executive Leadership,” *Brethren Life and Thought*, no. 27 (1982): 142.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 1960).

images that are metaphorical<sup>4</sup> which plays a prominent role in contemporary ecclesiology.<sup>5</sup> Driver<sup>6</sup> described the church using twelve Biblical images: the way; sojourners; the poor; the kingdom of God; new creation; new humanity; the people of God; the family of God; the Shepherd and the flock; salt, light and a city; a spiritual house; and a witnessing community. Dulles further stated that images are immensely important for the life of the church—for its preaching, its liturgy, and its general *spirit de corps*,<sup>7</sup> and Driver<sup>8</sup> contends that the life and mission of the church must have adequate images to capture and inspire its imagination. Similarly, Bradley<sup>9</sup> believes that the church must explore Biblical images of the church in order to understand its identity. Although the church has been described using several different metaphors or models from a Biblical perspective in theological terms, Bantz stated that one has ignored the basic nature of the church.<sup>10</sup> The idea is that the church in basic terms is just like any other organization or institution in that a group of people gather together having things in common to meet some specific purpose. Banks<sup>11</sup> states that an organization's structure is composed, constructed, and assembled together by particular components that make up the organization, thus giving one understanding and purpose to its existence. These components are vision, mission, values, goals, and beliefs. In other words, all organizational types should possess these elements.

The church can also be described as a social institution which is just like other institutions. Bantz further stated:

An institution is any gathering of persons who have accepted a common purpose, a common discipline to guide the pursuit of that purpose, to the end that each involved person reaches higher fulfillment of that purpose through serving and being served by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship.<sup>12</sup>

The emphasis placed here is that like all institutions, the church consists of human beings, thus having a language of their own, an organizational pattern, decision-making process, and political structure made up of people that identify with the each other, choose leaders, grant authority, and influence community<sup>13</sup> like all other institutions. In more simplistic terms, the church exhibits the same characteristics as other institutions. Institutions are important in impacting the lives of individuals through the leadership of their leaders. Therefore, leadership is an important factor for the future church in

<sup>4</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Image Books, 2002), 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> John Driver, *Images of the Church in Mission* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Driver, *Images of the Church*.

<sup>9</sup> Phillip Bradley, "Planning for the Future: The Church as a Social System," *Brethren Life and Thought*, no. 27 (1982): 213-222.

<sup>10</sup> Bantz, "Old Roles," 142.

<sup>11</sup> Tonya Banks, "The Link Between Theological Emphasis and the Organizational Structure of Faith Communities Within an Ecclesial Context: The Church," *The Ooze*, <http://theooze.com/church/the-link-between-theological-emphasis-and-the-organizational-structure-of-faith-communities-within-an-ecclesial-context-the-church-by-tonya-banks/>.

<sup>12</sup> Bantz, "Old Roles," 142.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

preparing for turbulent change. Such change includes technological advancements, political change, and inventing new ways for meeting the demands of the future church due to social change.

## II. MOVING AWAY FROM TRADITION TO A CHURCH INSIDE OUT

Leaders should be prepared to fight against tradition and the status quo which may include getting rid of particular organizational structures and old ways of doing things. Tradition is good, however may not be good enough to accommodate change in society and the church. Bradley posits that the church only gives attention to its internal life and structures when planning for the future; however, it is imperative to also give attention to outside environmental factors that affect radical changes in society, lifestyles, values, and lives of people<sup>14</sup>. The idea that Bradley presents is that the outside environment transmits signals to the church, thus calling for change. Future leaders of the church must be sensitive to environmental factors that may impact the church. This allows for finding opportunities and threats, thus knowing which are best for implementation in the church.

Berquist and Karr suggest that the future church must be conceived, birthed, and conceptualized through interior design.<sup>15</sup> The idea is that as a designer, the design starts from the inside then evolves or is manifested on the outside. Similarly, Duraisingh states that there is a “call to a fundamental reorientation of the church to be church inside out.”<sup>16</sup> Berquist and Karr state that the church, like other organizations, keeps with the status quo or the familiar when improving or trying to fix things using an outer perspective, such as adding or getting rid of existing programs or methodologies.<sup>17</sup> The idea presented is that the future church should be designed and realigned from the inside out, thus speaking to the future. This calls for a new level of thinking when it comes to understanding the church. Berquist and Karr hint that the church must try various avenues or methods in accomplishing its purpose, including those things that have not been tried before. As an example, Jesus radically changed the church, thus irritating the religious leaders of that day with his inside-out ideas which included the teaching that to be rich you must be poor; to be first, you must be last; to live, you must first die; to gain, you must lose; and it is by giving that you receive.<sup>18</sup> Jesus Christ brought about changes in the church which broke down traditional barriers. Jesus stated in Matthew 16:18, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Jesus implemented change to tradition to help with building his church. If Jesus had to break down barriers in the church during the era when he walked in physical form on the earth, then leaders of the church should accept new ideas, models, and methods, thus implementing changes in

<sup>14</sup> Bradley, “Planning for the Future,” 219.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Bergquist and Allan Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out: A Guide for Designers, Refiners, and Re-aligners* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Duraisingh, “From Church-Shaped Mission to Mission-Shaped Church,” *Anglican Theological Review*, no. 92 (2010): 9.

<sup>17</sup> Bergquist and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

preparation for the future church. Therefore, one can challenge the design and organizational leadership structures of the church; however, there may be repercussions and risks. Jesus challenged the status quo which led him to his death, but he came alive again so that humans would have everlasting life. He took the risk and repercussions so that one could receive salvation. It was worth it all to restore mankind back to the Father. There was victory over death and hell. Therefore, leaders within the church should adapt, challenge present and traditional structures and procedures, and also take risks in making necessary changes to save one's soul.

### III. CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP STYLE TO THINKING CREATIVELY

Kincaid<sup>19</sup> stated that Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky<sup>20</sup> hint that organizations make modifications to address problems with the organization's present understanding of structures and procedures without considering the new, thus are not willing to adapt, challenge, or take a risk to think of something new to implement. A leader for the future church may need to change their leadership style and methods to reach the people of the church and community. For example, adaptive leadership allows for the breaking away of predictable patterns that are informed by outdated assumptions, and allows leaders to think creatively. This form of leadership also seeks to increase an organization's capacity to thrive by aligning the organization with its core values and purposes.<sup>21</sup> In the Old Testament, leadership was autocratic<sup>22</sup> or like a dictatorship; it was a pattern followed by priests, prophets, and kings. However, in the New Testament, or for the first-century church, this pattern changed. Thomas<sup>23</sup> reveals that participatory leadership emerged and Nilsson<sup>24</sup> shows that leadership structure varied in the church, therefore implying that there was no standard or static form of leadership to be followed. Implementation of a leadership style or form depended upon the situation or needs of the New Testament church. Similarly, Wright<sup>25</sup> stated that in the early church, different times, different places, and different authors showed different patterns of structure and leadership that continued to evolve as the needs of the New Testament church grew and changed. Acts 6 reveals democratic leadership; Acts 13 shows theocratic leadership; 1 Corinthians 12-14 shows charismatic leadership; and 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, 1 Titus, and 2 Titus reveal institutionalized leadership.<sup>26</sup> These scriptures reveal that leadership types or styles for the church changed based on its needs,

<sup>19</sup> William B. Kincaid, "The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World, Review," *Christian Century*, no. 127 (2010).

<sup>20</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 40.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph C. Thomas, "New Testament Basis for Group Decision Making," *Regent University Center for Leadership Studies*, [http://www.jctnet.us/MOL/LEAD605/Papers/ThomasJMRRangeBP\\$2.pdf](http://www.jctnet.us/MOL/LEAD605/Papers/ThomasJMRRangeBP$2.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Nils-Olov Nilsson, "The Debate on Women's Ministry in the Swedish Pentecostal Movement: Summary and Analysis," *The Journal of the Society for the Pentecostal Studies*, no. 22 (2000).

<sup>25</sup> J. Robert Wright, "Ordination in the Ecumenical Movement," *Review and Expositor*, no. 78 (1981): 498.

<sup>26</sup> Nilsson, "The Debate on Women's Ministry," 74-75.

therefore leaders must adapt in addressing the needs of the future church in times of trend and change so that the church may continually grow and expand. It must be mentioned that this growth can be both natural and spiritual; however, the spiritual should be sought first. Matthew 6:33 states, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The leader for the future church must also seek God first in preparation for the future church.

### III. CULTURAL TREND

There have been trends in culture, migration, immigration, inculturation, and mutuality, just to name a few that must be addressed in the future church by its leaders. Questions that arise are: How will the church handle these trends? How have these trends impacted the church? What does it say about mission for the church? Bergquist and Karr<sup>27</sup> analogize the church using four of Morgan's<sup>28</sup> metaphors: organizations as machines, organisms, brains, and cultures. The church is described as bureaucratic, goal oriented, and predictable; it is committed to growth and reproduction for survival.<sup>29</sup> The church provides information and is a learning environment through its preaching, teaching, seminary training, and discipleship programs.<sup>30</sup> Those that are culture based follow beliefs, rules, norms, and traditions, thus determining if one is considered an insider or outsider<sup>31</sup> of the group or church. Of these metaphors, culture seems to be the most influential trend in the church that leaders must be aware of and able to adapt to in order to fulfill the needs of the future church. Migration, immigration, inculturation, and mutuality are part of culture in that they are interrelated or build upon the other.

#### *Culture*

The culture of any organization can be described like a religion<sup>32</sup> in that there are a set of common beliefs, customs, and values that are shared among members, as well as groups of an organization which describe the way things are and why things are the way they are. This culture definition sounds much like the definition or implication presented by Bantz<sup>33</sup> and Banks.<sup>34</sup> The idea is that organizations and institutions are all alike in that they have the same characteristics to meet its purpose. The culture of an organization is actions, ways of thinking, practices, stories, and artifacts that characterize a particular organization.<sup>35</sup> With culture, there are varying views that one should consider. These are the practical, interpretive, critical, and postmodern views. Cultures that are built upon the principles of ideology, indoctrination, tightness of fit, and

<sup>27</sup> Bergquist and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*.

<sup>28</sup> Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Bergquist and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*, 169.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>32</sup> Eric M. Eisenburg, H. L. Goodall, and Anglea Trethewey, *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Bantz, "Old Roles."

<sup>34</sup> Banks, "The Link Between Theological Emphasis."

<sup>35</sup> Eisenburg et al., *Organizational Communication*, 127.

elitism are effective and strong<sup>36</sup> which involves shaping the behavior of the employees or members to achieve success. According to the practical view, there is increase in employee or member satisfaction and employee or member commitment to help build strong relationships. The interpretive view of culture states that it is the employees of the organization that shape the organization, not the managers or leaders. The idea is that the culture emerges in the symbolism or discourse of everyday organizational life with the focus on how people communicate and create meaning in dialogue to understanding culture.<sup>37</sup> The final view, critical and postmodern, is focused on challenges to power relationships and the status quo<sup>38</sup> which calls for a change in addressing needs for the church.

For the future leader, culture will play an important role in understanding and addressing the needs of the church. Romo<sup>39</sup> describes the Christian church as a modern tower of Babel in that it is a pluralistic society dispersed across the entire continent. America is made up of various ethnic and cultural groups. These groups can be identified as American Indians, Arabs, Europeans, Hispanics, African Americans, Immigrants and Refugees, and Internationals. Romo makes it clear that ethnicity, culture, and language are trends that have influenced the church and states, "With the increase of mobility and technology, the world continues to shrink. Ours is a global community; in a sense, we live in a global village."<sup>40</sup> The idea presented here is that the church must accept diversity, thus not trying to Americanize people in the church. The focus should be on evangelizing, thus sharing the gospel within the context the people know. The church should have flexible infrastructures designed to provide ministry and witness to America's mission field<sup>41</sup> by positively responding to the opportunity to imbue the American mosaic with the redeeming love of Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

### *Migration and Immigration*

Migration and immigration, which stem from culture, are also important for the leader to be aware of in meeting the needs for the future church. Migration is seen as a trend that will influence, shape, and challenge organizational and leadership structures of the global church or future church. Huffard states that Christianity is a "migrating religion"<sup>43</sup> in that the religion is not enslaved to one geographical, ethnic, or cultural center.<sup>44</sup> Huffard believes that the future—the next Christendom—depends on migration. The point being made is that future church growth will be based on immigrants. Huffard identified that the shifts to Christianity began in Acts 8:4 as the

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>38</sup> Einsenburg et al., *Organizational Communication*, 143.

<sup>39</sup> Oscar Romo, "Ethnic Southern Baptists: Context, Trends, Contributions," *Baptist History and Heritage*, no. 18 (1983): 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>43</sup> Evertt Huffard, "When Scholarship Goes South: Biblical Scholarship and Global Trends," *Restoration Quarterly*, no. 48 (2006): 66.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 66.

gospel was preached by the disciples everywhere they went. Then, migration became a major factor in the emergence of Islamic age (750-1750 A.D.), followed by Christianity as it emerged again as a dominant religious force in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After this, over 50 million Europeans migrated overseas between 1815-1915.<sup>45</sup> Shifts have been identified to go from Hebrew to Greek, Greek to Latin, then Latin to German to other European languages. Individuals migrate from other countries for various reasons or factors to gain a better life. Kling<sup>46</sup> refers to these factors as “push” (famine, natural catastrophes, war, oppression, and poverty in their home countries) and “pull” (food, peace, liberty, and prosperity elsewhere). The globalization of the immigration trend comes with another’s culture, philosophy, and their needs. In simpler terms, one has arrived into a new environmental setting that is different from where one came from. The question arises: How does the church or how can the church accommodate new arrivals with various diversities?

### *Migration, Immigration, Mutuality, and Missions*

To help with answering this question, Johnson states, “The contemporary experience of living and acting across cultural borders means both the loss of traditional meanings, and the creation of new symbolic expressions, thus reconstructing feelings of belonging”<sup>47</sup> and that people are not buying what the traditional church is selling.<sup>48</sup> Kling explains that an Ireland pastor studied and learned about the culture of immigrants, such as sociology, religious history, demographics, philosophy, economics, and missiology to gain a current understanding of complex issues<sup>49</sup> which helped with knowing how to minister and address the needs of immigrants in their church. Leaders of the future church can use such an example to help them prepare to minister to those of different cultures in a changing society.

Johnson identifies trends that have impacted missions around the world. These are identified as the shifting of Christianity to the global south which is due to what has already been described as migration and increasing proximity of once distant peoples. Christians have maintained limited contact with Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists,<sup>50</sup> for example. Johnson points out that Christianity has become Westernized, and that there is a lack of witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ to other faith communities because of non-relationships. The migration trend has occurred due to globalization, an economic phenomenon<sup>51</sup> which is defined by Steger as a “multidimensional set of social processes” including economic, political, cultural, technological, and ecological

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>46</sup> Fritz Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters. 7 Global Currents That Will Propel the Future Church* (Colorado Springs: David Cook, 2010), 94.

<sup>47</sup> Todd Johnson, “Globalization, Christian Identity, and Frontier Missions,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, no. 27 (2010): 167.

<sup>48</sup> Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*, 91.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, “Globalization,” 165.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 166.

processes that “resists being confined to any thematic framework.”<sup>52</sup> The idea is that complexity of globalization impacts Christian identity and missions in the world by establishing relationships with others of diverse ethnicities, languages, denominations, practices, theologies, and creeds. However, Kling states that “organizations” that seek to practice mutuality must do more than merely establish token partnerships or hire employees,<sup>53</sup> but they must take measures to solve. In other words, the future leader of the church must share the gospel of Jesus Christ with other faith communities that are diverse from us and find ways to establish loving relationships with one another.

In addition, there is concern that leaders leave their own countries to pursue positions of ministry in the West, thus leaving a lack of leadership back home. Neill<sup>54</sup> reports that the future role of expatriate missionaries is to drain away church leadership from the third-world churches to positions in the West. The complaint is that the center of control in third-world churches has changed to indigenous leaders in that people leave to go to America, thus becoming Westernized. This implies that there is a call for leaders to remain within their own countries, thus providing the needed training and education for missions. Neill states that the essential task of missions is to proclaim the gospel to those who have never heard it before. The idea presented here is that some leaders may need to stay home or within their own countries to witness the gospel of Jesus Christ. To take this further, one should handle matters at home then expand abroad. For example, Jesus’ mission was to preach the gospel to the Jews and not the Gentiles. It was not yet time for him to preach or heal the Gentiles. For example, a woman from Canaan came crying to Jesus for help (Mt 15: 22). In Matthew 15:24, Jesus states that he was sent to the lost sheep of Israel. However, the woman came and worshipped him and asked for help again (Mt 15:25). Jesus was marveled at her faith and delivered the woman’s daughter (Mt 15:28). Although it was not yet time for deliverance to come to the Canaanites, Jesus still provided deliverance because of faith. After the day of Pentecost, there was an opportunity to move abroad to preaching and ministering to all humankind. Acts 1:8 states, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” This very scripture catapulted the opportunity to world missions including all nationalities.

### *Inculturation, Mutuality, and Missions*

Inculturation is another element that is closely associated with culture and missions. Those that are on the mission field, who witness and travel to other parts of the world to minister Jesus Christ, require a set of skills. Smith says that inculturation is required and states, “When we speak of the inculturation of missionaries, we speak of ourselves, the strangers, the visitors, the religious people at the service of men and women of another culture with the task to adapt ourselves to render ourselves sensitive to the values, priorities, wishes, ways of conduct, of communication, of relating to

<sup>52</sup> Manfred Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003). Preface.

<sup>53</sup> Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*, 83.

<sup>54</sup> S. Neil, “Mission in the 1980s,” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, no. 3 (1979): Abstract.



others".<sup>55</sup> Basically, Smith is saying that one needs to respect another's culture. The skills that are mentioned are that the missionary must have respect, love, and language. Another example comes from a paper prepared by Smith<sup>56</sup> from the Mission Committee of the Conference of Major Superior Men Religious and the Global Ministry Committee of Leadership Conference of Women Religious. This paper discusses personal missionary experiences and was presented to the United States Catholic Mission Council. It states, "Within this basic Christian hope, our own central hope as missionary religious is that we, as a missioned church, will respond creatively and enthusiastically to the growing awareness of other cultures, within and outside the United States, of the needs of other peoples and of how much we have to receive from them."<sup>57</sup> The implication here is that culture is important to learn for missions. Things are performed differently in the present day. Smith stated this better: "The present is structured differently and faces us with new challenges to inter-cultural sensitivity, to our own humility and ultimately to a renewal in our self-understanding as a church and mission."<sup>58</sup> Thus, in embracing "unity in diversity," for a more thoroughly incarnated faith, one is not liable to be labeled "western" or "imported."<sup>59</sup> Smith also mentions mutuality of missions, a trend also identified by Kling,<sup>60</sup> which calls for accepting another's culture, providing justice in inter-community relations, and a sense of receptiveness.<sup>61</sup> Again, the role of the future leader is to embrace cultural differences and diversities to progress in change of the church, thus not stopping growth but producing progressive life in achieving the mission of the church.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Through the use of Biblical imagery or metaphor, the church has been described as a social institution, and like other organizations has a purpose in achieving its vision, mission, values, goals, and beliefs. The church can be considered a complex social system that is composed of many interrelated subsystems or components. This system can be equated to the body of Christ as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27. Therefore, the church is the body of Christ where each individual member is simultaneously viewed as a member of the body,<sup>62</sup> or each individual church itself is part of several super-systems such as denominations and religious groups, communities, nations, and subsystems such as administrative substructure, committees, deacons, church program organizations, and other groups.<sup>63</sup> Bradley<sup>64</sup> describes the church as a social system that exists among other systems that affect

<sup>55</sup> Simon Smith, "The Future of Mission," *AFER* 27, no. 1 (1985): 23.

<sup>56</sup> Simon Smith, "Hopes and Concerns for Missions," *International Review of Mission*, no. 66 (1977).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>60</sup> Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, "Hopes and Concerns for Missions," 157.

<sup>62</sup> Bradley, "Planning for the Future," 217.

<sup>63</sup> Allen Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins: Mr. Church Administration," *Review & Expositor*, no. 75 (1978): 393.

<sup>64</sup> Bradley, "Planning for the Future."

one's life. Bradley<sup>65</sup> and Graves<sup>66</sup> show that systems theory can be applied in the church to understand how the church should function. The focus is to discern and examine both internal and external factors that influence change so that one can be prepared for it. Bradley<sup>67</sup> and Graves<sup>68</sup> also share that one must understand the Biblical images of the church as described in scripture to understand who we are as a church. Utilizing the systems theory can help with understanding and planning for the future church. According to systems theory, the church is viewed as a human that has multiple parts that interrelate with the other. The human is considered the whole system with many parts. The goal of the systems theory includes discerning both inner as well as outer environments that influence the system, thus understanding the organizational structure, roles within the system, and its relationship to the environment,<sup>69</sup> and therefore identifying any emerging problems or opportunities. Using this theory, leaders of the future will be able to diagnose their surroundings and be able to prepare for the future in the midst of a rapidly changing world.

Change is inevitable and the future leaders must seek God's will and plan for the future. Change should not be a surprise, but should be seen as opportunity to do something different from the norm. Graves<sup>70</sup> believes that one should approach change without surprise, apathy, weariness, or indifference, but with enthusiasm and zest. Cultural shifts of change have occurred throughout Biblical and Christian history which should not at all be a surprise to the church. Diversity began when the tower of Babel fell and everyone's language was confused. Several nationalities emerged, thus causing rapid change in society. Leadership will make the difference in making an impact for the future church. Leaders will be challenged to think creatively, thus adopting new ways of doing things in the church.

Although the church has been analogized to any other institution or organization in having the same traits or characteristics in reaching purpose, there is yet a distinguishing factor. Bantz states, "The church is the communal event of the presence of God in Jesus Christ in the world and that church exists in a heavenly-worldly intertersection. The church by its inquiry, witness, and commitment becomes the body of Christ in the world, the continuing Incarnation,"<sup>71</sup> thus implying that the church is also divine. In simpler terms, people make up the body of Christ who God uses to make his presence known or visible to the world through sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church is a living body—the body of Christ—living and functioning among the systems within its environment. God is the ultimate leader that uses humans in the church to fulfill his mission, goals, and tasks for the furthering of his kingdom. It is the church institution that proclaims the salvation of Jesus Christ and that we come from God, find meaning in life by being Jesus Christ's disciples, find purpose in his service, and are

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins."

<sup>67</sup> Bradley, "Planning for the Future."

<sup>68</sup> Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins."

<sup>69</sup> Bradley, "Planning for the Future," 221.

<sup>70</sup> Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins," 384.

<sup>71</sup> Bantz, "Old Roles," 144.

destined to be in his presence permanently.<sup>72</sup> Although they live in a rapidly changing environment, leaders of the future church are required to be prepared to adapt to changes that arise through culture, migration, immigration, inculturation, and mutuality with the sole purpose of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ so that one might be saved, disciplined, find their purpose for doing service for Jesus Christ while on earth, and reach the eschatological future. As Christians, our destiny is to complete the mission of Jesus Christ while on earth, thus transitioning to the heavenly church (1 Cor 15:24-26, 28) where life is filled with blessing as described in Revelation 21. The church as we know it will come to an end when Christ returns. His kingdom will be revealed in all its glory. Amen.

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### About the Author

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 144.



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## THE TRANSFORMATIONAL EFFECTS OF SABBATICAL IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CHRISTOPHER K. TURNER  
DOUGLAS L. FIKE

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Christian leaders face stress and burnout in their professions.<sup>1</sup> Taking a sabbatical is one way leaders can protect their personal growth to develop in their leadership, but as a recently emerging phenomenon, there is little understanding of the process, its dynamics, or categories. Drawing from a range of theoretical sources, this research proposes a model for building neutral space into the overall sabbatical process to hypothesize a difference in outcomes when participants intentionally disengage for a period of time from their normal ministry context. An exploratory multi-methodological approach is used to address the theoretical model of including a neutral zone in a sabbatical process by sequentially linking qualitative interviews with sabbatical participants and developing a survey instrument grounded in their experiences, opinions, and observations. Using exploratory factor analysis and comparing the mean differences between sabbatical participants who structured neutral space into their sabbatical experience, and those that did not, quantitative results support the hypotheses of the research.

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Leaders in Christian ministry face the likelihood of stress and burnout as a side effect of working in this profession. This reality is a reported fact among institutes and organizations dedicated to facilitating the health, personal growth, and leadership development of Christian leaders. London and Wiseman claim

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<sup>1</sup> A. Richard Bullock and Richard J Bruesehoff, *Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2000).

45.5 percent of pastors from North America have experienced depression or burn out,<sup>2</sup> while The Alban Institute estimates up to 50 percent of professional ministers are exhausted from their work.<sup>3</sup> Long unstructured hours come with the job, weekends are taken in preparing for and administering the church service, and high expectations are placed on the pastor as troubleshooter, conflict manager, counselor, or friend.<sup>4</sup> For cross-cultural missionaries, 15 percent of first-term workers return home within two years, expended emotionally by their transition, the need to continually fundraise, and the cultural differences faced on the field.<sup>5</sup> Like those who serve as church ministers, their work is often all consuming, but combined with cultural dynamics that can drain and frustrate, burnout is extremely common.<sup>6</sup>

Without focused and intentional rhythm, Christian leaders become emotionally and spiritually empty and are unable to effectively lead, function, or minister.<sup>7</sup> Lack of boundaries enables pastors or missionaries to respond to the continual demands of their ministry to the detriment of their personal growth.<sup>8</sup> Over time they are unable to effectively operate in their leadership, their journey stagnates, and passion is lost. Christian organizations are then lead by hollow and soulless individuals.<sup>9</sup> Bullock and Bruesehoff contend that Christian leadership is fundamentally spiritual and that this form of leadership demands ongoing lifelong spiritual growth and nurture.<sup>10</sup> Creating space for personal reflection is extremely difficult in the middle of a sixty-hour work week, particularly when Protestant work ethics and self-sacrifice are admired as honorable practices in Christian service.<sup>11</sup> Even when Christian leaders focus on personal growth or leadership development, the opportunity is filled with further study or training, rather than on focused reflection and rest. Intentional patterns and

<sup>2</sup> H. B. London and Neil B Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 75.

<sup>3</sup> See Roy Oswald, *Why You Should Give Your Pastor a Sabbatical* (Virginia Beach, VA: Alban, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Wheat Ridge Ministries, "Ministry Sabbatical Resource," [http://www.wheatridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Sabbatical\\_Flyer\\_Updated2011.pdf](http://www.wheatridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Sabbatical_Flyer_Updated2011.pdf); Paul Shrier, "Pastoral Burnout: How Churches and Pastors Are Working Together to Create Failure," *Azuza Pacific University Practical Theology Lecture Notes*, <http://groups.apu.edu/practicaltheo/LECTURE%20NOTES/Shrier/F10/Pastoral%20Burnout.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Esther Schubert, *What Missionaries Need to Know About Burnout and Depression* (New Castle, IN: Olive Branch Publications, 1993), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Koteskey, "What Missionaries Need to Know About Burnout." *Missionary Care: Resources for Missions and Mental Health*, [http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br\\_burnout.htm](http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/br_burnout.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Bryan P. Stone and Claire E Wolfeich, *Sabbath in the City: Sustaining Urban Pastoral Excellence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 42-46.

<sup>8</sup> Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 119.

<sup>9</sup> Ruth R. Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Finding God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 13-14; Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Lives* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 1-5.

<sup>10</sup> Bullock and Bruesehoff, *Clergy Renewal*, 1-62.

<sup>11</sup> Stone and Wolfeich, *Sabbath in the City*, 44.

rhythms that maximize performance are not widely practiced or modeled in Christian leadership or ministry<sup>12</sup> with palpable effect on the leadership and stewardship of Christian organizations.<sup>13</sup>

Substantial scholarly attention has been given to the topic of Sabbath, the space created in time where all are commanded to disengage from vocation to reconnect with personal purpose, freedom, and vitality.<sup>14</sup> The relationship between this rhythm and the *shmita*, the sabbatical year in Jewish culture, is less understood. While sabbatical is a common phenomenon in academia where researchers take a period of time for fresh inspiration or academic direction,<sup>15</sup> within Christian leadership it is regarded as an innovative and recently emerging practice despite its long history and traditional roots in Jewish agricultural practice.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, sabbaticals are not regularly engaged or well practiced by Christian leaders, meaning outcomes are predictably variable.<sup>17</sup> The few studies available present sabbatical as a phenomenon that can develop leadership capacity, foster personal growth, or positively affect organizational culture; yet, this is done without a clear presentation of how these outcomes emerge. Taking a sabbatical may make intuitive sense, but without comprehensive definition or theoretical foundation, assumed outcomes are tenuous at best.

Sabbatical as an independent variable requires further exploration as an emerging phenomenon that can be articulated, theoretically grounded, and empirically tested. The dependent variables of personal growth, leadership development, and lifestyles of rhythm, and how they are affected by how a leader engages their sabbatical process is also without adequate research. This study theoretically explores the relationship between how a Christian leader may intentionally or indiscriminately engage their sabbatical, and what differences exist in terms of sabbatical outcomes based on their posture. Exploring these dynamics and process will present significant evidence to help Christian leaders, their leadership teams, congregations, or sending organizations in specific ways, to understand: (a) the overall impact sabbatical can have in terms of personal transformation and leadership capacity development; (b) what expected outcomes of sabbatical can be in terms of investment and return for leaders and their leadership teams; and (c) the importance and function of taking time for

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<sup>12</sup> Jim Loehr, James E. Loehr, and Tony Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), 110; Barton, *Strengthening the Soul*, 117-121.

<sup>13</sup> Stone and Wolfeich, *Sabbath in the City*, 38-41.

<sup>14</sup> Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), x-xv; Eugene H. Peterson, "The Good-for-Nothing Sabbath," *Christianity Today* 38, no. 4 (1994): 34-37; Muller, *Sabbath*, 1-5.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth J. Zahorski, *The Sabbatical Mentor: A Practical Guide to Successful Sabbaticals* (Boston: Anker Books, 1994), i-viii.

<sup>16</sup> Steve Hoke, "Taking Sabbaticals Seriously," in *Global Mission Handbook: A Guide for Cross Cultural Service*, eds. Steve Hoke and Bill Taylor (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 258-261.

<sup>17</sup> Stone and Wolfeich, *Sabbath in the City*, 42-60.

personal reflection, regular Sabbath rest, intermittent retreats, and the effects they have in terms of personal transformation and leadership capacity development.

The purpose of this research study is therefore to better understand how Christian sabbaticals affect personal growth, leadership development, and ongoing sabbatical practices. To achieve this aim, the study first reviews current literature on Christian sabbaticals to raise three issues that will be further explored in wider literature from Biblical, theological, anthropological, sociological, and leadership theory to articulate a model and framework for Christian sabbatical that facilitates personal growth and leadership development, and catalyzes ongoing practices of reflection and rest.

## I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Current literature on Christian sabbatical is sparse. Within academia a concept of sabbatical is broadly understood, yet within Christian ministry it is considered a recent and emerging phenomenon. This raises three issues. First, the dynamics inherent to a sabbatical process are not well understood. Hoke, writing for cross-cultural ministry practitioners, defines *sabbatical* as space and time away from ministry to reflect, study, and experience holistic refreshment to enable ongoing fruit.<sup>18</sup> The Alban Institute qualifies the modern Christian sabbatical as a time to disengage, be renewed, and “nurture and cultivate our lives.”<sup>19</sup> These two definitions both provide a scripted purpose for taking sabbatical, yet the capacity of the sabbatical process for enabling relational connection, internal transformation, and leadership development remains ambiguous.

Second, the process of taking a sabbatical is not well understood. It is normal for a Christian leader to take a sabbatical under a contractual obligation to return to service after its completion. Bullock and Bruesehoff argue, however, that following a sabbatical the church leader should have “enough freedom to change directions and let go of an old dream if a new vision emerges,”<sup>20</sup> but this is often not possible. Core to the findings in a study focusing on sustainable and creative Sabbath practices among ninety-six North American pastors, was the difficult reentry experienced by these leaders because of the degree of change occurring internally for them during their sabbatical.<sup>21</sup> Certainly, a sabbatical process cannot be without boundaries or funded indefinitely, but does critically need structuring within a set amount of time and space where the individual can explore new opportunities without future performance expectations.

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<sup>18</sup> Hoke, *Taking Sabbaticals Seriously*, 259.

<sup>19</sup> Bullock and Bruesehoff, *Clergy Renewal*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>21</sup> Stone and Wolfeich, *Sabbath in the City*, 57.

Third, the categories of sabbatical are not well understood. Where language and categories enable connection with abstract concepts,<sup>22</sup> a framework for taking a sabbatical, which accounts for both its processes and dynamics, is required. This last issue is perhaps the most serious because Christian leaders, often in desperate need of time to rest, reflect, and refocus, are blocked by their organizations from taking a sabbatical because it is conceptually misunderstood and envied by laity.<sup>23</sup> The following Biblical, theological, sociological, and anthropological theoretical perspectives attempt to address these issues of sabbatical dynamics, processes, and categories to articulate a framework for Christian sabbatical processes.

### *Biblical Perspectives*

Sacred rhythm was hardwired into existence at creation as God formed three beats of time—day and night, weeks and months, seasons and years—to structure life (Gn 1: 4-14). Inherent to the constitution of time is ceasing. As God stops from his work to enjoy his creation, he models the gift of rest (Gn 2:1-3). This template of laboring over six days to rest on the seventh was elaborately commanded and reiterated to the Jews more than any other law.<sup>24</sup> This day of rest was blessed as *qadosh*, or made holy by God. The unfolding attribute of holiness as a characteristic of YHWH throughout the Torah is now first revealed in this moment, signifying the import of time over space where the civilizations surrounding the Jewish nation sanctified place over time.<sup>25</sup> This rest is instituted in Hebrew culture through the Sabbath, or *Shabbat*, a three-step rhythm of stopping, resting from work to engage a period without structure or demand, and reentering the next cycle. It took a generation for the Israelites to grasp this concept of rest after 400 unrelenting years as slaves to Pharaoh. God's command to rest appears directly on two occasions in Jewish law. The first is in admonition to mirror his actions (Ex 20:8-11), and secondly it is revealed as a gift of liberation that frees people from a dehumanizing mechanistic existence (Dt 5:15). Peterson powerfully supports this point stating, "The moment we begin to see others in terms of what they can *do*, rather than who they *are*, we mutilate humanity and violate community."<sup>26</sup> God did not rest then because he was tired; there was intentional agency in his choice, demonstrating he "was not enslaved

<sup>22</sup> Kirsten F. Condry and Elizabeth S Spelke, "The Development of Language and Abstract Concepts: The Case of Natural Number," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 137, no. 1 (2008): 22-38.

<sup>23</sup> Lilly Endowment Inc., "What Will Make Your Heart Sing? 2011," [http://clergyrenewal.org/resources/2011\\_NCRP\\_application.pdf](http://clergyrenewal.org/resources/2011_NCRP_application.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Diddams, Lisa Surdyk, Denise Daniels, and Jeff Van Duzer, "Implications of Biblical Principles of Rhythm and Rest for Individual and Organizational Practice," *Christian Scholar's Review* 33, no. 3 (2004): 311-332.

<sup>25</sup> See Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1951), part 2, chapter 3.

<sup>26</sup> Peterson, *The Good-for-Nothing Sabbath*, 36.



to [creation] but master over it.”<sup>27</sup> In the same way for each individual, Sabbath is not simply a day off to stop from work and recuperate; it’s a gift to be enjoyed.

Two additional rhythms are instituted in scripture, the *shmita*, or the sabbatical year (Lv 25:2-4), and the year of Jubilee, a Sabbath of Sabbaths (Lv 25:8-10). Both commands required the increased faith of the Jewish people in their God over their capacity to provide for themselves.<sup>28</sup> The *shmita* reflected an extended winter period where no agricultural work was practiced, the land was left barren, and nothing seemingly happened. Modern agricultural science now understands that by leaving the land fallow, soil structure is replenished, the spread and effects of pests in the food chain are reduced, and the ground is given literally time to heal.<sup>29</sup> The *shmita* was essential for ongoing fruitfulness. The Jubilee, an extreme practice that scholars even question occurring,<sup>30</sup> came with a command to reorganize economic, social, and judicial inequalities. Everything was leveled. Interestingly, at this point creation was, and still is, also reconstituted, for at the blowing of the shofar to announce the onset of Jubilee, “the sun and the moon return to their original positions relative to each other . . . with an error of only 32 hours,” every forty-nine years.<sup>31</sup> Sabbath rhythm in the *shmita* and Jubilee ensured dependence on God over personal or corporate ability, continuing fruitfulness, and social restitution, while being rooted and reflected in clearly identifiable seasonal markers.

Human development is grounded in these rhythms of creation. Trugman claims, “The very essence of the sabbatical year expresses the proper balance between the physical world we live and the spiritual foundations on which it rests.”<sup>32</sup> Buchanan connects this incarnational expression of sabbatical rhythm to personal development and transformation in the teachings of Jesus.<sup>33</sup> As Lord of the Sabbath, abiding in him is the only way in which his followers produce lasting kingdom fruit (Mk 2:28; Jn 15:16). This process requires all seasons, including winter pruning to produce fruit, “but only one season bears it.”<sup>34</sup> The sparseness of winter is required to develop the roots of our lives, and it grates against humanity’s need for ever-present tangible and observable outcomes.

<sup>27</sup> Diddams et al., *Implications of Biblical Principles*, 314.

<sup>28</sup> Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath*, 29-33.

<sup>29</sup> Scott Russell Sanders, “Wilderness as a Sabbath for the Land,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 2, no. 2 (2002): 210-216.

<sup>30</sup> Dennis T. Olson, “Sacred Time: The Sabbath and Christian Worship,” in *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture*, eds. Edward O’Flaherty, Rodney L. Peterson, and Timothy A. Norton (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 43-66.

<sup>31</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online*, s.v. “Astronomy, I,” <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/A/astronomy-i.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Avraham Arie Trugman, *The Meaning of the Sabbatical Year*, <http://www.canfeinesharim.org/learning/torah.php?page=16581>, para. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Buchanan, *Spiritual Rhythm: Being with Jesus Every Season of Your Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 210-214. Kindle edition.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

Sabbatical rhythm therefore forces a time of inactivity or barrenness where true personal development and future effectiveness are fully realized.

### *Sociological and Anthropological Perspectives*

Bridges, writing from a sociological perspective, notes the same basic structures that guide life's transitions where, "there is an ending, then a beginning, [with] an *important empty fallow time in between*. That is the order of things in nature. . . . Human affairs flow along similar channels."<sup>35</sup> Bridges defines this fallow period as a neutral zone, or a moment in which personal transformation and growth can be explored internally before an individual reengages their next season or stage of life that is structured both creatively and differently. Within anthropology, this neutral zone was observed in African tribal rites of passage and defined as *liminality*, or a moment where an individual temporarily transitions between social roles and is afforded the space to internalize this change.<sup>36</sup> Liminality also enables psychological and emotional space for the community to recognize and embrace the social effects of the transition. What is noteworthy for this research is in how the *neophyte*, the subject of the passage rite, is often profoundly isolated, separated, and effectively neutralized from previous responsibilities by this process and experiences deep emotional and psychological disorientation. There is ethnographically observed correlation between entering this state and the degree of transformation or change in the person themselves. Turner also clearly indicates where liminality is violated or desecrated the offending individual cannot progress and may even be excommunicated from community.<sup>37</sup>

### *Leadership Perspectives*

In leadership theory, Clinton proposes similar concepts in how individuals are processed in their personal and professional growth. For Clinton, leadership is primarily spiritual, effective when grounded in character and values (being), rather than skills or competencies (doing). It is formed in individuals over a lifetime where periods of isolation and separation are the most successful vehicles in delivering such maturity, or "one way that God forces a leader into

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<sup>35</sup> William Bridges, *Transitions. Making Sense of Life's Changes: Strategies for Coping with the Difficult, Painful, and Confusing Times in Your Life* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004), 17, italics added.

<sup>36</sup> See Victor Turner, *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-14.

<sup>37</sup> Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage," in *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, eds. Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster, and Meredith Little (Peru, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1994), 3-22.

reflective evaluation and into a 'being' stage."<sup>38</sup> Isolation catalyzes internal shifts, personal growth, and leadership development.

Parsing together these theoretical perspectives then provides a model, or set of categories, for sabbatical practice, and a window into how the structure of this process can catalyze a dynamic of transformational change in Christian leaders. Table 1 draws together the sabbatical stages of Dawn, Bridges's sociological framework of transition, and Turner's and Van Gennepe's anthropological models.<sup>39</sup>

Table 1. Transition stages from four theoretical perspectives

Author	Theoretical approach	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Dawn	Spiritual	Ceasing	Resting	Embracing
Bridges	Sociological	Ending	Neutral zone	Beginning
Turner	Anthropological	Pre-liminal	Liminal	Post-liminal
Van Gennepe	Anthropological	Separation	Margin	Aggregation

Each theory, although using alternate language, ideas, or categories, proposes a three-step process through which transformation occurs. This study uses the model of Bridges to define sabbatical as a process that includes endings, a neutral zone, and new beginnings where new rhythms are instituted. The neutral zone is defined as a period of time and space where the individual is removed from their work and ministry context, in a similar way to neophytes in the liminal stage of their passage rights, to experience profound psychological, emotional, and sociological disorientation and be enabled through this isolation or separation to reflect, connect inwardly, and develop both personally and in leadership capacity. A working definition of leadership development draws on Clinton<sup>40</sup> and is articulated as a lifelong process, rooted in character and values, and matured in the personal formation made possible through the isolation processing of the neutral zone.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

If personal growth, leadership capacity, and lifestyle changes are then forged and developed through periodic rest and times of isolation, the neutral zone of a sabbatical process theoretically influences a development or change in each of these areas. Core to this contention, the following research question is then proposed. Does a sabbatical process that incorporates a neutral zone experience result in significant outcomes in terms of a leader's personal growth,

<sup>38</sup> Robert J. Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 161.

<sup>39</sup> See Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath*; Bridges, *Transitions*, 107-157; Turner, *Between and Between*, 3-22; van Gennepe, *Rites of Passage*, 38.

<sup>40</sup> Clinton, *Making of a Leader*, 17-28.

their leadership development, and lifestyle rhythms that emerge from the process? This logic informs the central objective of the research study to provide a deeper understanding of the differences in sabbatical outcomes, in terms of personal growth, leadership development, and post-sabbatical practices, and their relationship to how a Christian leader engages the sabbatical process. Framing an independent variable with two groups, those that do engage the theorized neutral zone during their sabbatical and those that do not, operationalizes this objective. The differences between these two groups in the related dependent variables of personal growth, leadership development, and lifestyle rhythms can then be explored. Figure 1 provides the proposed model of the research. The substantive hypotheses of this research are then as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference in the personal growth of Christian leaders who engage a full sabbatical process that includes a neutral zone and those who do not.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is a difference in the leadership capacity of Christian leaders who engage a full sabbatical process that includes a neutral zone and those who do not.
- H<sub>3</sub>: There is a difference in the practice of post-sabbatical rhythms of Christian leaders who engage a full sabbatical process that includes a neutral zone and those that do not where:
  - H<sub>3a</sub>: theorizes difference in the rhythm of daily reflection
  - H<sub>3b</sub>: theorizes difference in the rhythm of weekly rest
  - H<sub>3c</sub>: theorizes difference in the rhythm of taking personal regular retreats
  - H<sub>3d</sub>: theorizes difference in the rhythm of taking extended periods of rest

### III. METHOD

A sequential exploratory two-phased mixed methods approach was used to address the research question and hypotheses to seek greater understanding of the sabbatical process, identify themes where sabbatical affects each of the dependent variables, and generalize these findings to a broader population.

The philosophical foundation for using a mixed methods strategy in this research is to “emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand [it].”<sup>41</sup> As a pragmatic approach, it then utilizes qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments to interrogate a research problem from diverse perspectives and methodologies and sequentially connect the findings of one approach with the other. Where little research has been conducted regarding the emerging concept and practice of sabbatical among Christian leaders, this philosophy provides an appropriate method with which to explore more deeply the experience and meaning of sabbatical for participants,

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<sup>41</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009).

and test potential relationships between the sabbatical process and its outcomes in terms of personal growth, leadership development, and post-sabbatical lifestyle rhythms.

### The Sabbatical Process

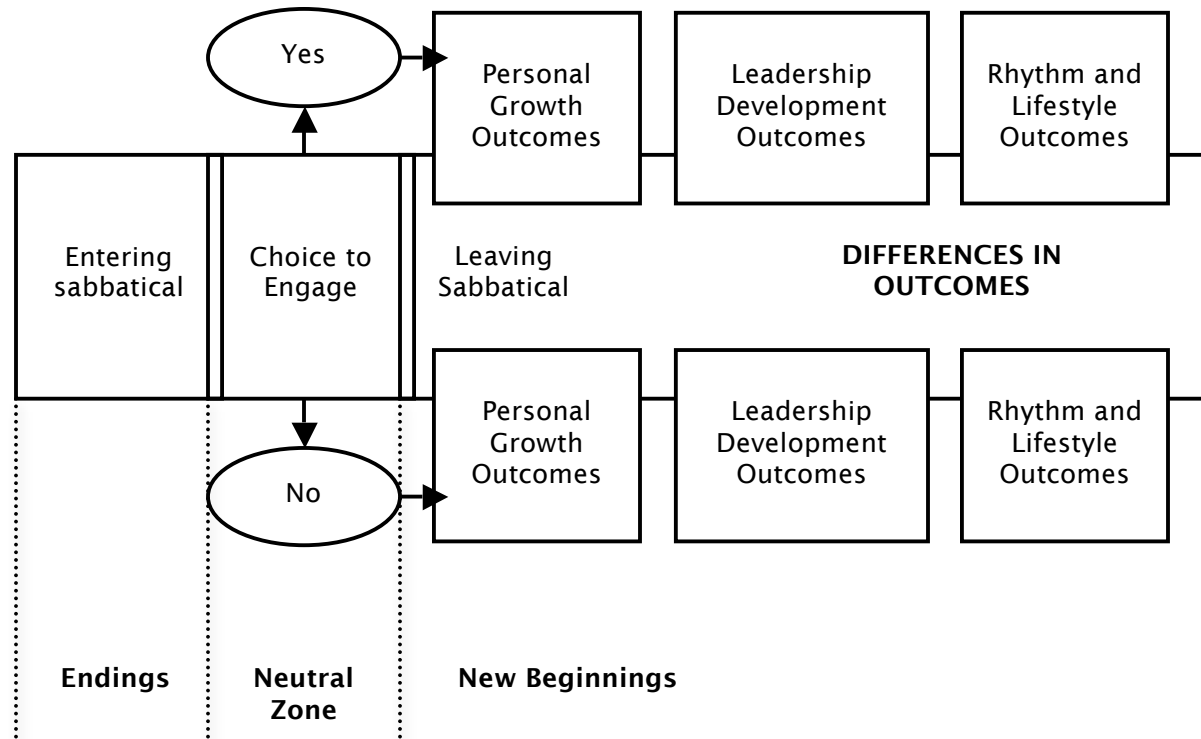


Figure 1. The process of sabbatical and theorized differences in outcomes between those that choose to engage a neutral zone and those who do not.

The first phase of the research was qualitative in focus and conducted open-ended, semi-structured interviews with two staff from Growth Dynamics International (GDI), an organization committed to facilitate and coach sabbaticals for Christian leaders. The purpose of these interviews was to develop, confirm, and refine taxonomy, identify concepts, and standardize language for a follow-up set of semi-structured interviews with purposefully sampled sabbatical participants. The use of purposeful sampling is beneficial when the researcher can select specific cases that have experienced the central phenomenon and were deemed suitable for the first phase of this study's approach. Five leaders, one female and four males, were sampled for this study. Each engaged a sabbatical process with the support and facilitation of GDI and were consequently familiar with the definitions, concepts, and theoretical premises established in this research. These five individuals were all senior or associate pastors of churches in North America. All but one transitioned into different roles following the sabbatical.

The interviews were conducted over four weeks through Skype, recorded with the permission of the respondents, transcribed using electronic dictation software, and cross-checked for irregularities. This strategy was used to illuminate where and how individual engagement of the sabbatical process differed; provide greater understanding of the phenomenon's dynamics, processes, and categories; and generate themes or areas of interest to inform the development of a survey instrument "grounded in the views of the participants."<sup>42</sup>

The second phase of the study attempted to generalize findings to a wider population of sabbatical participants by using quantitative methodologies through the development of a survey instrument based on findings indicated by the qualitative phase of the research. The instrument was developed by coding the transcripts and selecting relevant quotes to identify themes central to the issues of this study in order to connect the two phases of the research in the development of this survey instrument. The item pool generated through structuring the raw interview data into a set of statements regarding personal growth, leadership development, and sabbatical practices was shared with GDI staff for their critical review. Three subsequent drafts of the survey instrument were collaboratively developed, tested for portability for a wider range of respondents, validated by pilot testing with two individuals, and posted to Survey Monkey for data collection over a four-week period. This data collection method was used for its convenience and efficiency because of the international locations of respondents. The population for this stage of the research was collected through a single-stage convenience sampling based on the proximity and availability of sabbatical participants, predominantly through GDI, Youth With A Mission (YWAM), Church Resource Ministries (CRM), and a network of churches in Westminster, London. Through the process of collecting data, respondents who had taken a sabbatical forwarded the link to others within their broader organizational networks. Consequently individuals from every continent

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 219.

but South America completed the survey with the main grouping of respondents being based in North America and Europe. In total, the survey generated seventy-six responses. Five were incomplete and therefore dismissed from subsequent analysis. Of the respondents, forty-two were male and twenty-nine were female. Fifty-one of the individuals reported structuring a neutral zone between three and six weeks into their sabbatical experience that included: (a) isolation from their home and ministry context; (b) profound emotional, psychological, and sociological disengagement; and (c) were consequently enabled to connect more deeply with God and identify personal growth and leadership development outcomes. Twenty of the respondents did not intentionally structure this space into their sabbatical experience. Respondents were all actively involved in full-time Christian ministry going into their sabbatical, serving in capacities ranging from church leadership, worship leading, arts, teaching, and cross-cultural ministry.

#### IV. QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to develop a survey instrument based on the understanding, experiences, and observations of sabbatical by participants, mentors, or coaches. A range of questions were developed that focused on each leader's sabbatical process and structure, readily identifiable personal growth and leadership transformation outcomes, and subsequent life patterns and rhythms that emerged from the process. The full interview protocols for GDI staff and sabbatical participants are provided in Appendix A and Appendix B.

GDI staff contended that the key areas of personal growth emerging in the neutral zone of a sabbatical process are primarily relational. The following four relational dimensions were highlighted: (a) relationship with God; (b) self-identity; (c) relationship with family (spouse, children, or immediate family members); and (d) relationships with core individuals, fellow leaders, mentors, or friends. These are vital themes around which GDI sabbatical coaches have observed tangible outcomes. One staff member stated, "If things are not working at the relational micro level, they will not work at the leadership macro level; they are connected,"<sup>43</sup> adding credence to the contention that effective leadership flows from personal growth and relational health.<sup>44</sup> Operating out of a well-founded relational paradigm then creates space for a leader to collaborate with and facilitate those individuals in their sphere of authority, releasing synergy and influence in new ways.<sup>45</sup> GDI staff generally identified a second range of leadership outcomes based on the personal growth experienced in the neutral zone of a sabbatical. These included increased freedom, creativity, delegation, and focus in leadership practice, but were more specifically identified and

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<sup>43</sup> W. Good (Life Coach, GDI), in discussion with authors, February 2, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Bullock and Bruesehoff, *Clergy Renewal*, 1-62; Clinton, *Making of a Leader*, 161.

<sup>45</sup> Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006), 40.



addressed in the responses of sabbatical participants. Additionally, leaders were observed by GDI staff to be intentional about ensuring rhythms and practices were sustained in their lives following sabbatical to stimulate ongoing reflection, relational connection, and leadership development and continue in ongoing transformation.

Based on these observations, a second protocol with a set of open-ended questions was refined for sabbatical participants to flesh out their personal growth and leadership outcome experiences of the neutral zone. Of the five pastors interviewed, each one of them indicated that the isolation period of their sabbatical enabled them to connect with God in new ways and see new dimensions of their personal identity in light of this relationship. For example, one leader, noting how the neutral zone experience forced him to reassess his personal identity as a son of God and not as a slave, “liberated [him] from obligation,”<sup>46</sup> giving him a deeper sense of self awareness and enabling him to lead with greater freedom by empowering others to use their strengths and gifts in complimentary ways. Equally, each of the five leaders interviewed reported how the space of the neutral zone enabled the identification of core issues in their marriages and/or immediate families that lead to greater intimacy and connection, and ultimately effective leadership. One leader clearly identified the relational chasm exposed by the sabbatical process and their internal realization how this was undermining effective leadership because, “if it was not working for [my spouse], then it was not working for me, or anyone under my leadership.”<sup>47</sup> Finally, four of the respondents noted how their sabbatical affected how they interacted with their leadership teams and wider community at the backend of the process. For each individual, leadership development outcomes were contingent on these relational and personal growth changes. For example, one leader reflected that after, and because of, their sabbatical, “there was a tremendous realignment of relationships in the church. They now have a different quality . . . paved in a way that is deeper or more long-term,”<sup>48</sup> and because of these changes, the entire organizational culture of this leader’s group became more reflective, organic, and kingdom orientated.

The leadership outcomes based on the personal growth items experienced by sabbatical participants grouped into six core themes and included leadership: (a) position, (b) delegation, (c) confidence, (d) effectiveness, (e) encouragement, and (f) creativity. Four of the leaders interviewed expressed how their sabbatical process facilitated a shift in their thinking regarding position, authority, and influence. This for them was the key variable that supported other leadership outcomes. All but one of the pastors ended up in a different role following their sabbatical, with each respondent indicating that even if the new role came with less responsibility and, in one case, no formal position or responsibility, authority was experienced qualitatively differently. With increased comfort and confidence to functionally maximize leadership performance, each

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<sup>46</sup> Respondent A (Sabbatical Participant), interview A, February 18, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Respondent B (Sabbatical Participant), interview B, February 17, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Respondent A, interview.

pastor was enabled to be increasingly intentional about their focus and therefore quicker to delegate and encourage other leaders in their capacities. Consequently, all respondents reported greater leadership effectiveness as a result of their sabbatical. Finally, four of the leaders expressed how in process of becoming clearer about their sphere of influence a new creativity and freedom was possible. As one of the leaders reported, "The net result [of sabbatical] was a serious increase in creativity and focus into the next arena of my life; my whole understanding of leadership has become more creative."<sup>49</sup>

Finally, the third and final thematic change identified by the five interview respondents regarding sabbatical outcomes was an increased awareness of how important rhythms and practices were and how they could be instituted into their lifestyles after sabbatical in innovative ways. These practices were also engaged differently, with a higher anticipation and even expectation than before their neutral zone experience. One respondent noted:

I think I engaged rhythms and took personal retreats before the sabbatical, but during the sabbatical it went to a whole new level. Now it's so, so different. I need to do this, put it on my calendar and, now it's more like "when can I do this."<sup>50</sup>

The practices where positive change occurred for each of the five respondents included more consistent: (a) daily reflection; (b) a weekly day of rest from work; (c) periodic retreats for extended reflection and renewal; and (d) extended periods of rest, or future sabbaticals.

## V. INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Based on interview findings from the first phase of the research, three general outcomes experienced by sabbatical participants were identified. Each of these three areas provided support to the theoretical premises suggested in this research that periods of isolation are instrumental in facilitating personal growth, leadership development, and changed practices in lifestyle rhythms after the sabbatical. Each of these three themes were incorporated into a survey instrument to connect the two phases of the research process in an attempt to generalize the findings to the wider population<sup>51</sup> of Christian leaders who have taken a sabbatical.

For the two themes of personal growth and leadership development, a set of ten statements, based on the respective variables identified in the research's first-phase findings, were developed to test sabbatical participants' level of agreement against each statement on a five-point Likert scale (1 [*strongly agree*] through 5 [*strongly disagree*]). For the theme of sabbatical practices or rhythms, a similar set of statements were developed to assess respondents' level of agreement on the same Likert scale regarding practices before and after their sabbatical experience. The instrument also used the theoretical definition of the

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<sup>49</sup> Respondent C (Sabbatical Participant), interview C, February 26, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Respondent D (Sabbatical Participant), interview D, February 18, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 216-217.

neutral zone to generate the categorical groupings required to test the hypotheses of this study. This definition was tested for its portability and comprehension before the survey was conducted. The overall survey instrument and each variable statement was reviewed by co-researchers and refined with their feedback then finally pilot tested for timing, content, irregularities, and the logical order of questions. The survey instrument is provided in Appendix C.

## VI. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Based on the ten personal growth and leadership development scales identified in the qualitative phase of the research, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using principle component analysis with Varimax orthogonal rotation in PASW Statistics 18.0. This analysis initially yielded one latent root factor for analysis with an Eigen value greater than one. However, the scree plot criterion suggested two factors should be retained for analysis so a second data reduction test was conducted forcing a two-factor loading output. The results of this analysis are provided in table 2.

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis rotated component matrix of ten relationship and leadership variables ( $N = 71$ )

Variable	Factor loading	
	Component 1	Component 2
Relationship		
God*	.63	.50
Family	.58	.33
Self-identity	<b>.78</b>	.34
Friends	<b>.85</b>	.15
Leadership		
Effectiveness	.42	<b>.73</b>
Delegation	.15	<b>.81</b>
Confidence	.43	<b>.68</b>
Position**	<b>.69</b>	.41
Creativity	.38	<b>.81</b>
Encouragement*	.58	.61

NOTE: Factor loadings greater than .65 are in boldface. \* = Low discriminant value between factors and omission in third analysis. \*\* = Theoretically weak loading variable.

Based on the sample size of seventy-one, a statistical significance value of .65 is required for a .05 alpha level with a power of 80 percent in order for the variable to be retained in the factor. Practical significance is set at .50.<sup>52</sup> Three

<sup>52</sup> Joseph F. Hair, Rolph E Anderson, Ronald L Tatham, and William C. Black, *Multivariate Data Analysis* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall International, 1998), 112.

items were consequently removed because they either did not meet these criteria, or the discriminant value between variable scores across the two factors was not sufficient to warrant retention. Leadership position, leadership encouragement, and relationship with God were therefore consequently omitted and a final analysis was conducted. This factor analysis generated two factors accounting for a cumulative total of 70.47 percent of the variance for the seven retained variables. Factor 1 cleanly loaded the leadership variables, while factor 2 cleanly loaded the relationship, or personal growth variables, both satisfying the criteria for statistical significance and discriminant value. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of each factor was .86 and .77 respectively. These results are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Exploratory Factor Analysis Rotated Component Matrix and Communalities for retained Leadership and Relationship Variables ( $N = 71$ )

Variable	Factor loading		Communalities
	Leadership	Relationship	
Relationship			
Self-identity	.27	<b>.745</b>	.63
Family	.43	<b>.722</b>	.70
Friends	.21	<b>.841</b>	.75
Leadership			
Effectiveness	<b>.75</b>	.41	.73
Delegation	<b>.78</b>	.16	.64
Confidence	<b>.75</b>	.34	.67
Creativity	<b>.83</b>	.34	.80

NOTE: Factor loadings greater than .65 are in boldface.

Both factors were used as separate variables for further analysis. Substantively, this exploratory factor analysis identified two independent dimensions of responses from among the sabbatical survey instrument respondents, one regarding leadership outcomes and the other regarding relational outcomes.

The two extracted factors were then analyzed as dependent variables against the two groupings created by the responses to the survey question designed to ascertain if the participant structured neutral space into their overall sabbatical experience or not. Independent  $t$ -tests were used to test  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ . An alpha significance level of .05 was used for each statistical test. Participants who structured a neutral zone into their sabbatical process reported higher leadership outcome scores ( $M = -.15$ ,  $SD = .88$ ) than those that did not ( $M = .39$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ),  $t(69) = -2.11$ ,  $p < .05$ . Also those individuals who took neutral space in their sabbatical process reported higher personal growth outcome scores ( $M = -.29$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) than those who did not ( $M = -.72$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ),  $t(26.04) = -3.64$ ,  $p < .001$ . Consequently,  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  were supported by the results of the analysis.

While the variables of leadership position, leadership encouragement, and relationship with God were not retained in the final exploratory factor analysis, independent *t*-test analyses of each variable indicated that participants who structured neutral space into their sabbatical responded with higher scores than those that did not. Results for each variable included: (a) leadership position,  $t(69) = -3.80, p < .001$ ; (b) leadership encouragement,  $t(24.58) = -2.98, p < .006$ ; and (c) relationship to God,  $t(21.22) = -3.36, p = .003$ .

A second series of independent *t*-tests were conducted to address  $H_3$  to ascertain if there was significant difference between the two groups regarding changes in respondent's pre- and post-sabbatical rhythms or practices. This was conducted by computing composite variables from the data set that took after-sabbatical rhythm scores in the four categories of daily reflection, weekly rest, regular retreats, and extended periods of rest and subtracting before-sabbatical scores on the same four scales. The outputted variables D1 for daily reflection, D2 for weekly rest, D3 regular personal retreats, and D4 for extended periods of rest, were then tested for differences between the two categorical groupings. For each variable tested, those that took a neutral zone as part of their sabbatical reported higher scores on the difference between after-sabbatical rhythm practices subtracting before-sabbatical practice scales, than those that did not. Results are presented in table 4. Consequently  $H_{3a}$ ,  $H_{3b}$ ,  $H_{3c}$ , and  $H_{3d}$  are each supported by the results of this analysis.

Table 4. Independent *t*-tests of rhythm variables and difference between sabbaticals with and without neutral zone groupings

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	Group 1 <sup>a</sup>	Group 2 <sup>b</sup>			
D1	-.84 (1.08)	-.15 (.88)	-2.55	69.00	.01
D2	-.80 (1.13)	-.05 (.60)	-3.62	62.39	.001
D3	-.96 (1.30)	-.25 (.85)	-2.70	52.71	.009
D4	-1.02 (1.19)	-.20 (.89)	-2.78	69.00	.007

NOTE: Group 1 sabbatical with neutral zone, Group 2 sabbatical without neutral zone. D1 = daily reflection, D2 = weekly rest, D3 = regular retreats, D4 = extended rest.

<sup>a</sup>  $n = 51$ .

<sup>b</sup>  $n = 20$ .

## VII. DISCUSSION

The findings of this exploratory research indicate that each of the hypotheses are both substantiated in the qualitative results of sabbatical participants and supported in the quantitative results of a wider population of Christian leaders. This is one of the key strengths of a multi-methods approach to research.<sup>53</sup> There is a significant difference in terms of personal growth,

<sup>53</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 14.

leadership development, and ongoing lifestyle rhythms for those individuals who structured a neutral zone into their sabbatical process.

However, in the exploratory factor analysis, three component variables were omitted from the final solution including relationship to God, leadership position, and leadership encouragement. While the relationship to God variable was practically significant within the relationship factor, it was also highly correlated with the leadership factor so it was deleted from the exploratory analysis for low discriminate validity. The same scenario occurred for the leadership encouragement variable, while leadership position loaded theoretically on the wrong factor and was also taken out of the final data set. Interestingly, the issue of leadership position was a key outcome identified by the respondents of the research's first phase as contingent in facilitating other leadership outcomes emerging from the neutral zone. Where leaders were less vested in positional authority, they were increasingly enabled to delegate, be more confident, and more focused in dispensing their leadership. While this variable was not retained in the final exploratory factor analysis, an independent *t*-test analysis of leadership position indicated participants who structured neutral space into their sabbatical indicated an extremely high statistical difference between the two groups in its own right.

Despite the strength of the findings in support of the hypotheses, the study contains equally significant limitations. Most pertinent are the sampling methods in each phase of the research. In the qualitative phase of the research, the participants were purposely sampled as leaders who had intentionally built in neutral space to their sabbatical process. The quality of this research could be enhanced by including an equal amount of individuals in this phase of the research that had not structured their sabbatical in such a way. This would also minimize claims the research fit the sample and its data to the theoretical model it proposes. Secondly, the convenience sampling strategy of the quantitative stage of the research, while necessary because the phenomenon of taking a Christian sabbatical is quite rare, opens this research up to several further poignant critiques. First, the results collected from participants may be dated. For many participants, their sabbatical clearly occurred within the last year, but there was no way to empirically ensure all participants had taken their sabbatical within a particular timeframe. Second, and related to this first issue, is the question of data recall. Survey responses from the quantitative phase of the research are retrospective, are without longitudinal baseline data, and could be skewed because of potential response bias.<sup>54</sup>

This research however has significant implications for Christian leaders, leadership teams, and supporting organizations in terms of how leaders engage and structure a sabbatical process. It is clear in the qualitative findings that each individual experiences their sabbatical process in a significantly personal way. No formula can dictate or guarantee outcomes. Yet, for those individuals that do

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<sup>54</sup> Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 49-53; Fred N. Kerlinger and Howard B Lee, *Foundations of Behavioral Research* (Orlando: Harcourt College Publishers, 2002), 693-702.

intentionally engage a context that is separate from their work and ministry for a period between three to six weeks, an environment is created where accelerated personal growth and consequent leadership development is both facilitated and enabled. Leaders who have followed this three-stage process of ending, entering such a neutral zone, and re-engaging what follows their sabbatical, create significant territory for the dynamics of personal growth and relational issues to emerge within this process. Equally, they are more expectant of continued personal transformation in maintaining ongoing lifestyle rhythms following the experience. The potential upside for leaders and their networks, in terms of how sabbaticals can be fruitfully engaged in a way that is complimentary for the wider community are clearly evident in the research's findings.

Finally, where this study articulates an important theoretical framework for the categories, process, and dynamics of the sabbatical experience for Christian leaders, further research must be conducted around these concepts incorporating longitudinal strategies that establish less biased or post hoc baseline data. Equally, further research of participants who have not intentionally built in neutral space to their overall sabbatical experience can be collected to assess the qualitative outcomes in terms of personal growth, relationships, leadership capacity, or lifestyle rhythms to compare these results with those of this study.

The practice of sabbatical was Biblically modeled, morally commanded, and historically experienced by the Jews for their ongoing fruitfulness and enjoyment. Engaging similar practices and rhythms potentially protects those who administer churches, organizations, or ministries at home or abroad, from becoming the soulless directors readily identified by research regarding the contemporary health of Christian leadership. Rather, in living a lifestyle of ongoing rhythm and reflection, with periodic sabbatical experiences where neutral space is structured within the process, leaders can reclaim, retain, and sustain relational and personal integrity, and be transformed in their leadership capacity.

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## APPENDIX A

Interview protocol for GDI staff:

1. What constitutes a “well-engaged” sabbatical from the perspective of GDI?
2. In what ways do you see leaders develop as a result of engaging a sabbatical process?
3. In what ways do you see leaders personally grow, change (or not) as a result of taking a sabbatical?
4. What concept of a “neutral zone” does GDI hold and if so, what do you see occurring in that stage of the sabbatical process?
5. What additional questions could be added or changed in the proposed question list for the key informants?

## APPENDIX B

Interview protocol for sabbatical participants:

1. How did you find the experience of sabbatical?
  - a. What were some of the highlights or benefits of your sabbatical?
  - b. What were some discouragements or disappointments of your sabbatical?
2. In what ways did you experience personal growth in your sabbatical process?
  - a. What made this possible?
  - b. What were the keys to this growth?
3. How has sabbatical changed your leadership capacity and paradigms and/or your understanding of Kingdom life?
4. How well did you engage Sabbath rhythms and cycles (days off, personal retreats) before your sabbatical? And how has your understanding of the Sabbath principle changed?
5. What were the reasons, external triggers, or what initiated the sabbatical process for you?
6. Was there a point in your sabbatical where it played out differently than you expected? What were the outcomes?
7. When you started your sabbatical, how long did you think it was going to be?
8. Did your sabbatical lead to unexpected outcomes or unfold as you expected? If there were unexpected outcomes what were they?
9. Why sabbatical? Why is it worth it? Why do it?



## APPENDIX C

Survey instrument for sabbatical participants:

Question 1. Please provide your level of agreement with the following statements. (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *disagree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*).

- My sabbatical has helped improve my relationship with God.
- My sabbatical has helped improve how I see and understand myself.
- My sabbatical has helped improve my relationships with my friends and co-leaders.
- My sabbatical has helped improve my relationship(s) with my family (spouse, children, and/or immediate family).
- My sabbatical has helped me be a better leader.
- My sabbatical has helped me lead because I no longer feel that I have to do everything and can delegate more.
- My sabbatical has helped me encourage others in their leadership.
- My sabbatical has helped me lead with creativity and freedom.
- My sabbatical has helped improve my leadership by freeing me to do less, more effectively.
- My sabbatical has helped me lead with less regard for position or title.

Question 2. As a part of your sabbatical, did you intentionally incorporate a period of time between three to six weeks where you were: (a) totally separated and isolated from work and ministry; (b) experienced profound emotional, psychological, and sociological disengagement; and (c) consequently were enabled to connect with God, be reflective, and develop personally in transformational ways.

Answer: Yes/No.

Question 3. Please provide your level of agreement with the following statements. (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *disagree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*).

- Before my sabbatical I took time each day for personal reflection.
- Before my sabbatical I took a weekly day of rest.
- Before my sabbatical I took regular personal retreats.
- Before my sabbatical I took extended periods of rest.
- After my sabbatical I took time each day for personal reflection.
- After my sabbatical I took a weekly day of rest.
- After my sabbatical I took regular personal retreats.
- After my sabbatical I took extended periods of rest.



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## THE CONSUMMATED HARVEST OF JESUS' FOLLOWER-CENTRIC APPROACH IN THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

PETER K. Y. CHANG

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Jesus' follower-centric approach confirmed that effective followership has substantial influence on successful leadership. Yet, he would not compel followers to comply with all his requests at once, but inspired them to do so when they devoted themselves heart and soul to his leading and teaching. This spontaneous confession of faith found an exemplar in the case of Simon Peter's three-time denial and three-time repentance between Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus made it possible for Simon Peter to change characteristics and reinstate apostleship. This study is grounded in Robbins's<sup>1</sup> inner-texture analysis in order to unfold Jesus' attainment in the process of leader and followers' reciprocal influences. Jesus' follower-centric approach throughout his earthly mission, finally harvested tremendous success in the last chapter of the Gospel According to John.

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Jesus' follower-centric approach is based on the trilogy of Christian virtues—faith, hope, and love—rather than the four cardinal virtues—wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance.<sup>2</sup> Among the trilogy of Christian virtues, the greatest is love (1 Cor 13:13), but faith and love are based on hope, which leads to greater trust in God and deeper love for people. According to the epistles of the Apostles Simon Peter and Paul,

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<sup>1</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 121.

faith looks upward to God, hope looks forward to Christ, and love looks outward to others. Faith abides in the past work of Christ; hope anticipates God's kingdom in the future; and love works in the present, ready for Christ's second advent (1 Pt 1:3, 5, 22; 1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thes 1:3). The interaction of faith, hope, and love as principal causes of the correlation between leader and followers evolved into the unique pattern of Jesus' follower-centric approach throughout his itinerant ministry. With this pattern, Jesus led and taught his inner circle disciples—the twelve (see table 1)—about the work of faith, labor of love, and endurance of hope in the kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. The names, occupations, and characteristics of the twelve according to the New Testament

Name	Characteristic	Verses
Simon Peter (son of John), also known as Cephas the "Rock"	Fisherman Impetuous personality, but bold in preaching the gospel Became a leader of the twelve and the church Jesus foretold that he would be the martyr of Christianity	Mt 4:18-20; Mk 8:29-33; Lk 22:31-34; Jn 1:42, 21:15-19; Acts 2:14-41, 10:1-11:18
Andrew (Simon Peter's brother)	Fisherman First disciple of Jesus Eager to bring friends to Jesus	Mt 4:18-20; Jn 1:35-42, 6:8-9, 12:20-22
James (son of Zebedee), he and his brother John were called the "Sons of Thunder"	Fisherman Ambitious, violent, judgmental, severely committed to Jesus The first Christian martyr	Mk 3:17, 10:35-40; Lk 9:52-56; Acts 12:1-2
John (son of Zebedee), James's brother and "the disciple whom Jesus loved"	Fisherman Same as his brother James, but John later was very loving Left behind to witness Jesus' revelation until his old age	Mk 1:19, 10:35-40; Lk 9:52-56; Jn 19:26-27, 21:20-24
Philip	Fisherman Andrew's friend Curious and fervent	Mt 10:3; Jn 1:43-46, 6:2-7, 12:20-22, 14:8-11
Bartholomew (Nathanael)	Occupation unknown, later a prophet Honest and straightforward	Mk 3:18; Jn 1:45-51, 21:1-13

<sup>3</sup> See Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

Name	Characteristic	Verses
Matthew (Levi)	Tax collector Despised outcast because of his dishonest career	Mt 9:9-13; Mk 2:15-17; Lk 5:27-32
Thomas (the Twin)	Occupation unknown Courage and doubt	
James (son of Alphaeus)	Occupation unknown Courageous, but doubtful	Mt 10:3, 3:18; Lk 6:15
Thaddaeus (Judas son of James)	Occupation unknown Characteristics unknown	Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Jn 14:22
Simon the Zealot	Occupation unknown Fierce patriotic Crucified	Mt 10:4; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13
Judas Iscariot (Matthias was later in the Pentecostal to replace Judas Iscariot among the Twelve [Acts 26])	Occupation unknown Later the accounting Rebellious and greedy Committed suicide after betrayed Jesus	Mt 26:20-25; Lk 22:47-48; Jn 12:4-8

This study concentrated on the resurrected Jesus' continual follower-centric approach to enhancing the twelve's faith, hope, and love, except the betrayer Judas Iscariot, who committed suicide, in order to recompense for their remorse and shame about losing confidence after Jesus' crucifixion. Then, the focus shifts to Simon Peter's reinstating of his commission, since he was the spokesperson of the twelve, whom Jesus designated as a rock of the church that none of the wicked could overcome, and gave him the keys of God's kingdom and authority to bind or release those that deserved (Mt 16:18-19). In order to sufficiently unfold Jesus' consummated harvest of his follower-centric approach immediately after his resurrection, this study is grounded in Robbins's<sup>4</sup> inner-texture theory to analyze the elements of Jesus' success and the process of reciprocal influences between leader and followers.

## I. BACKGROUND AND PROBLEMS

Although the twelve were Jesus' chosen inner-circle disciples, they were dissimilar in characteristics; degrees of faith, hope, and love; and engagements in Jesus' ministry. Among them, there were three groups of four classified by running different errands as Jesus always demanded. This unsophisticated grouping found

<sup>4</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry*.

different configurations in the New Testament, but the leaders of the three groups were constantly shown in the first position of each group, and the list of the groups also remained in the same order. Table 2 is the example of the first group, which most frequently accompanied Jesus while other groups were absent.

Table 2. Order of the first group in the twelve according to the New Testament

Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:13-16	Acts 1:13
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew, brother of Simon Peter	James, son of Zebedee	Andrew, brother of Simon Peter	John, brother of James
James, son of Zebedee	John, brother of James	James, son of Zebedee	James, son of Zebedee
John, brother of James	Andrew	John, brother of James	Andrew

NOTE: Simon Peter, in the first position of each list, was the leader of this group.

In general, the twelve lived with Jesus for three years before his crucifixion and they still had difficulty acquiring full understanding of Christ or his kingdom. Simon Peter even denied Jesus thrice (Mt 26:34, 35, 75; Mk 14:30, 31, 72; Lk 22:34, 61) until he was forgiven, restored, and recommissioned after Jesus' resurrection (Jn 21:16-19). Still, there were unfaithful disciples like Cleopas and his friend, who on the way to Emmaus did not recognize Jesus, who had risen from death three days after crucifixion (Lk 24:13, 18). The rest of the twelve also temporarily abandoned their ministries and returned to their original livelihoods (Jn 21:2) until the risen Jesus showed up on the Galilee seashore (Jn 20:29-21:17). From that time forward, they resumed their ministries by compelling testimonies and epistles (Jn 21:24-25), regardless of the risk to their lives, as the first Christian martyr James did (Mk 3:17). In his last chapter of his gospel, John documented that Simon Peter and his crew utterly ignored that Jesus had sent word to them, via Mary and some other disciples who had seen the risen Jesus, that he would meet them at the Galilee seashore (Mt 28:7,10; Mk 16:7). This study is grounded in Robbins's<sup>5</sup> inner-texture theory to unfold and analyze how Jesus tolerated the twelve's unfaithfulness and ignorance, and enlightened them on their reformation through his follower-centric approach.

## II. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

While it is true that Jesus' leadership approaches (e.g., servant, shepherd, or transformational leadership) have been widely cited by scholars and applied to

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

organizational management, there was no explicit record of his follower-centric approach in the New Testament. The exception is that the New Testament crystallized the definition of servant leader (Mt 20:25-28; Mk 10:35-45; Lk 22:24-27), the requirement of shepherd leader (1 Pt 5:1-4; Acts 20:28; Jn 10:2-16, 21:15-17), and characterization of transformational leader (Rom 1:11, 12:1-3; 6:1-2; 6-8; 12:1-2). Providentially, the implicit documentary passages in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John clarified and justified all that was perplexing to those who doubted the capabilities of the twelve. This was especially true of Simon Peter, whom Jesus had most anticipated to achieve his unfinished ministry. However, it obviously requires more effort to draw an inference from the implication of texts. Thus, Robbins's<sup>6</sup> inner-texture theory has been helpfully attributed to this end. The subsequent section is the theoretical implication and framework for this study to unfold Jesus' follower-centric approach to the final cultivation and harvest of his three-year earthly ministry.

### III. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FRAMEWORK

Socio-rhetorical criticism challenges interpreters using rhetorical resources to analyze and interpret the inner texture, which concerns relationships among the word-phrase and narrational patterns. These intermingled patterns are the context for the network of signification in a text. This study discusses how multiple layers or textures might help interpret the last chapter of The Gospel According to John to demonstrate Jesus' follower-centric approach, by means of Robbins's<sup>7</sup> inner-texture theory. This theory included five kinds of analyses: repetitive–progressive, opening-middle-closing, narrational texture, argumentative texture, and sensory–aesthetic texture.

#### *Four Types of Narrative Found in the Texts*

This study comprises four types of narrative in various indicative moods and different themes of the last chapter of The Gospel According to John (see table 3).

1. An introduction to Jesus' appearance at the Sea of Galilee narrated factually in a straightforward way to recall Jesus' making disciples at the same place (vv. 1-11).
2. A terse and warm narration represents the tacit understanding of and sensibility to Jesus' cordial invitation that relieved the anxiety of his unfaithful disciples (vv. 12-14).
3. Tender persuasion and argument testified to Jesus' loving kindness and motivation, recalled Simon Peter's three-time denial, and assured his three-time acceptance to be recommissioned (vv. 15-17).
4. The sincere and outspoken prediction meant Simon Peter's death would glorify God, preparing Simon Peter for his future martyrdom (vv. 18-23).
5. A sudden turn of postscript announced the authorship and the conclusion of the gospel guaranteed an effective followership continuum (vv. 24-25).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Table 3. Four types of narrative and dialogue in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John<sup>8</sup>

Verse	Theme	Illustration
1 After these things, Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and he manifested himself in this way.	Jesus appears at the sea of Galilee	An introduction to Jesus' appearance at the Sea of Galilee narrated factually in a straightforward way to recall Jesus' making disciples at the same place.
2 Simon Peter and Thomas, called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.		
3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing". They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.		
4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.		
5 So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered him, "no."		
6 And he said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.		
7 Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Simon Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.		

<sup>8</sup> All scripture references in table 3 are from the NASV.

Verse	Theme	Illustration
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15	Jesus' invitation	A terse and warm narration represents the tacit understanding and sensibility to Jesus' cordial invitation that relieved the anxiety of his unfaithful disciples
16		



Verse	Theme	Illustration
17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Simon Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, You know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."		
18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."	The love motivation	Tender persuasion and argument testified to Jesus' loving kindness and motivation; recalled Simon Peter's three times denial and assured his three times acceptance to be recommissioned
19. Now this he said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him, "Follow Me!"		
20. Simon Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on his bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays you?"		
21. So Simon Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"	Our times are in his hands	The flank and outspoken prediction meant Simon Peter's death would glorify God giving Simon Peter a preparation for his future martyrdom
22. Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"		
23. Therefore, this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"		

Verse	Theme	Illustration
24. This is the disciple, who is testifying to these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.	Our times are in his hands	A sudden turn of postscript announced the authorship and the conclusion of the Gospel guaranteed an effective followership continuum
25. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.		

These narratives illustrated how Jesus concerned himself with his followers' discouragement and continued to emphasize the importance of relational qualities in the unity of leadership–followership.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Five Kinds of Inner Texture Analyses*

According to Robbins,<sup>10</sup> the five kinds of inner-texture analyses are repetitive–progressive, opening–middle–closing, narrational texture, argumentative texture, and sensory–aesthetic texture. These are defined as follows:

**Repetitive–progressive texture.** Rhetorical interpretations that displayed integrative patterns of repetition and progression in the texts throughout the last chapter of The Gospel According to John have different functions. The repetition of words or phrases is categorized as follows:

1. The personal nouns/pronouns, which were uttered by the narrator, frequently show the importance of a person in the applied settings.
2. The first and second-person pronouns, including reflexive pronouns uttered by the persons within the dialogue, frequently present a strong posture, initiative, affection, or overarching situation.
3. The verbs express a person's will, action, motivation, and command.
4. The symbols for things have meaningful implications, repeatedly mentioned by the person who wants to express them implicitly.

From these analyses, this study found that Jesus' leadership characteristics affirmed the leader–follower reciprocal respect and influence in his unceasing follower-centric approach, even after his resurrection.

**Opening–middle–closing.** Literary analysis concerns the beginning, middle, and ending of three major portions of texture in sequence. Early on, these three elements had been advocated by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. In the Old Testament, the books of Job,

<sup>9</sup> E. P. Hollander, "Organizational Leadership and Followership: The Role of Interpersonal Relations," in *Social Psychology at Work: Essays in Honour of Michael Argyle*, eds. Peter Collett and Adrian Furnham (London: Routledge, 1995), 69-87.

<sup>10</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry*.

Ruth, Esther, and Joshua, as theatrical scripts, all comprised these three major portions of sequences and plots. Rhetorical analysis emphasizes the integral relation among opening, middle, and closure. These three portions often include large units with smaller subunits. This study deconstructed the composition of opening-middle-closing texture in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John to better understand the functions of each relative to one another and discern the persuasive effect of the parts. This showed how they interacted and collaborated to accomplish the persuasive nature of the entire texts that annotated Jesus' strategic management to confirm the values and beliefs that functioned between followers and leader. He empowered followers' self-concepts and motivational needs through the bond with their leader.<sup>11</sup>

**Narrational texture.** The narrative styles are the distinct feature of the scriptures. John himself, who was Jesus' most beloved disciple, was the narrator of The Gospel According to John. His witness for Jesus and other disciples would be naturally accountable, even though he never used his name or first person viewpoint to announce the events. This indicates that John intentionally made his empathy neutral. John's third person viewpoint increased the effectiveness of other dialogues and enabled him to depict the whole settings in which Jesus and other disciples were interrelated and interacted. John's narration also distinguished the importance and the priority of persons and things that pinpointed the exemplar of effective following—Simon Peter's repentance and commitment.

**Argumentative texture.** Jesus' main argument was found in the key verses of his dealing with Simon Peter's restoration of his apostleship. These are overlapping functions of repetitive–progressive texture, but the major point of his argument is persuasive, not the debate. Jesus used his inspiration, counseling, and encouragement instead of suppression and compulsion, and repetition of questions instead of eloquent challenge, which gave the opportunity to his followers for reminiscing over the past and eventually confess to being unfaithful to Jesus.

**Sensory–aesthetic texture.** Sensory–aesthetic texture calls for the reader's imagination and emotional resonance to assimilate the full meaning of the scriptures in order to enjoy the blessings of God. Jesus always used the concept of aesthetic literature to explore the parables in the New Testament, such as the parable of the sewer (Mt 13:18-23), the parable of the heavenly kingdom (Mt 13:24-50), and the parable of the shepherd (Jn 10:7-16). The sensory–aesthetic texture in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John found three functions: (a) describing the scenes in which Jesus and disciples are inactive, (b) portraying the characteristics and emotional state of the persons, (c) symbolizing the things that would not be explicitly explained, and (d) exploring the underlying assumption. With these functions, Jesus created a cordial atmosphere for his utmost efficiency in moving toward his last period of earthly ministry through follower-centric approach.

The foregoing analyses of inner texture analyses are detailed in the section on

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<sup>11</sup> M. D. Mumford, F. Dansereau, and F. J. Yammarino, "Followers, Motivations, and Levels of Analysis: The Case of Individualized Leadership," *Leadership Quarterly* 11 (2000): 313-340; J. M. Howell and B. Shamir, "The Role of Followers in the Charismatic Leadership Process: Relationships and Their Consequences," *Academy of Management Review* 30, no. 1 (2005): 96-112.

method and concluded upon in the section on results. Before that, however, the following literature review also indentified the successful harvest of Jesus' final approach to his follower-centric perspective, which is documented in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John.

#### IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in Robbins'<sup>12</sup> inner-texture theory, in order to analyze the elements of Jesus' success and the process of leader–follower reciprocal influences as aforementioned. Jesus' follower-centric approach to solving the disciples' problems, enhancing their faith, hope, and love, as well as promoting their future ministries is also identified by the following literature review and the Bible standpoint.

Greenleaf<sup>13</sup> described the “servant first” and the “leader first”: two kinds of leadership. The servant leader begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve first. Then, a conscious choice brings one to aspire to one's leadership and makes it possible to serve other people's highest priority needs. This person is sharply different from one who is leader first because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. Amid these two most different kinds of leadership, there is limitless changing or overlapping of human tendencies in between. Because of these differences, the servant-first leaders demonstrate their caring for and serving to meet the top priority needs of other people.

According to Kouzes and Posner,<sup>14</sup> leaders must be honest, competent, forward-looking and inspiring. Servant leaders are not to govern in self-will and pride, but humbly as under-servants. Among Spears's ten characteristics,<sup>15</sup> the servant leadership lays stress on listening, awareness, empathy, and commitment, given that faith comes from hearing, and that in turn hearing comes from the Word of God, as well as love and humility. In addition to the servant leadership, some originated the shepherd leadership from a Psalm of David, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps 23), or overlapped both. As for transformational leadership, Burns<sup>16</sup> based his definition on a set of moral postulations about the relationship between leaders and followers to emphasize followers' needs and values. This type of leader may promote and help followers to engage and reassess their own values and needs when coping with conflicts. On the other hand, Bass<sup>17</sup> assigned more emotional element and the origins of charisma to this type; he wanted to raise followers' level of consciousness about the importance and value of specific and ideal goals, in order to transcend their self-interest to a higher level of needs.

All of these advocates generalized the characteristics of servant leadership, but

<sup>12</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry*.

<sup>13</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (Westfield, IN: Robert K. Greenleaf Center, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> J. M. Kouzes and B. Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Larry Spears, “Character and Servant-Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders,” *The Journal of Virtues & Leadership* 1, no 1. (2010): 25-30.

<sup>16</sup> James McGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> Bernard M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectation* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

Jesus had much greater demands in his follower-centric approach with regard to accomplishing his main objectives.

### *An Approach to Servant Leadership Demonstration*

From the foregoing analyses, the role of Jesus as a servant leader had six main attributes. He was willing to give life, condescending to serve and inspire, having God's wisdom to counteract worldly values, abandoning power and authority to serve God and others, leading with love and humanity, and in these ways, Jesus as a servant leader finally turning out to be an honorific title.

**Condescending to serve and inspire followers.** Jesus offered a model of the son of man who demonstrated the true greatness of redemptive service, which is the servant leadership. The disciples, however, misunderstood the nature of greatness in the kingdom that Jesus taught—all who exalted themselves will be humbled, and those who humbled themselves will be exalted (Lk 14:11). They even wanted the best positions in the kingdom (Mt 20:24) as sophisticated rulers to “lord it over the people they rule” (Mk 10:42).

**Having God's wisdom to counteract worldly values.** The disciples should not be like the worldly wise, but modeled after Jesus Christ, who was motivated to teach submission and humility, as in the phrases “the lowly should be exalted” (Mt 23:12; Lk 1:52, 14:11, 18:14) and “the last become the first” (Mt 19:30, 20:16). In the Bible, the servant and steward loomed large, not only as a reflection of ancient social practices but also because the Bible elevates the image of servanthood to define the believer's relationship and duties toward God. The servant concept is turned on its head due to Jesus, who is Lord (Jn 13:13; Acts 10:36; 1 Cor 12:3). To be a servant of Christ is to confess him as Lord. Yet, he came not to be served but to serve (Mt 20:28). This service was not just symbolic: It involved low status tasks like washing disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-17). Jesus voluntarily put himself in subjection to his own followers to serve as their example.

**Abandoning power and authority to serve God and others.** In Matthew 20:25, Jesus specified that the world's way represented power and authority; the leader ruled over others and demanded others to serve him. Sophisticated rulers used coercive power to force compliance. They magnified themselves at the expense of others' rights and freedom. In Matthew 20:26-28, Jesus emphasized servanthood: The servant abandoned power and authority in order to serve God and others. To minister to his followers, Jesus went among them, not above them. Jesus, as a servant, would not coerce, but by the power of his example and love motivated followers to make their own personal commitments to God and the godly. In carrying out his ministry, Jesus did not amplify his own importance, but emphasized the importance of followers because he would not come to be served, but to serve, even giving his life as a ransom for the lives of many (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45).

**Leading with love and humanity.** Humility is a fundamental grace in the Christian life, yet it is elusive. It begins with self-examination and continues with self-denial. True humanity helps to build up others, not to tear them down, and so the servant leadership makes the leader a stepping stone, not a stumbling block. It is simply

not thinking of oneself at all. Jesus encouraged his disciples to love God with their whole hearts, souls, and minds (Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30, 33; Lk 10:27), to love neighbors as though loving themselves (Mt 22:39; Mk 12:31, 33), and even to love their enemies and those who were against them (Mt 5:33; Lk 6:27, 35). In Jesus' connotation, love accompanied forgiveness (Lk 7:47), loyalty, respect (Lk 16:13), faith (Jn 3:16), knowledge (Jn 5:42), lawfulness (Mk 12:31; Jn 13:34, 14:15, 14:21, 14:23-24, 14:28, 15:10, 15:12, 15:17), submission (Jn 3:35, 5:20, 8:42, 13:1, 14:21, 14:24, 14:28, 14:31, 15:9-10, 16:27, 17:24), and sacrifice (Jn 3:16, 12:25, 15:13). Jesus reinstated Simon Peter's commission, also stressing love so that he continually asked Simon Peter three times, "Do you love me?" (Jn 21:15-17).

**Willing to give life to followers.** Jesus did not reproach the disciples for craving to become great. It is an acceptable aspiration if not just for fame and gain. There are great ones among Christians, but they do not lord it over one another, or play the tyrant. The term "Christian minister" relates to servanthood and applies to a variety of ways, including the technical sense of deacon (Phil 1:1); it also frequently applies to ministers of the Gospel (1 Cor 3:5). The way to be the first is to be the servant, especially a bondservant. This is a complete reversal of the popular opinion, then and now. The end of servant leadership, Jesus was to be a ransom for many; the son of man is self-abnegation, giving his own life as the price of freedom for the slaves of sin (Mk 10:45). Jesus rose to the full consciousness of the significance of his servanthood to die for the sake of sinners. A servant leader must have this decisive commitment to God and his followers.

**Turning out to be an honorific title.** Jesus' servant leadership trait and methods are most honorable and valuable, such that many present-day scholars testify to his leadership model. Servant leaders must be honest, competent, forward-looking, and inspiring. These characteristics are the foundation of all leadership. These factors are credibility of the servant leaders that the followers want them to be accountable and have a sense of direction. They must be able to stand before followers and confidently express an inspired vision of the future, communicating that they have the abilities to lead followers. A servant leader not only guides followers with what they want to do, but goes in front and escorts them to attain what they want to accomplish. The servant leaders establish this credibility through their actions, by challenging, inspiring, enabling, modeling, and encouraging. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6). Servant leadership is to be carried out in conformity to God's plan, and the epithet "the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ" becomes an honorific title (Jas 1:1; Col 1:7 20:28).

### *An Approach to Shepherd Leadership Supervision*

According to the Bible, the roles of shepherd and servant are always overlapped. However, there are still some characteristic distinctions between the two roles in various situations, as described in the subsequent sections.

**Shepherd leaders are not to govern in self-will and pride, but humbly as under-shepherds.** From 1 Peter 1:2, we are taught that Christian leaders must love and "tend the flock of God." In other words, we are in charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have us do it, not for sordid gain but

eagerly. We must not lord it over those in our charge, but rather be examples to the followers. Acts 20:28 implies that the Christian leaders are to keep watch over themselves and over all the followers, of which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers, to shepherd the church of God. He who is the true shepherd comes in through his narrow door, and the porter recognizes him (Jn 10:2-16).

**Shepherd leaders must be as wise as snakes and gentle as doves.** In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Simon Peter explained the way leaders were to shepherd their congregations. He exhorted the elders to shepherd (that is, feed and care for) the flock of God among them. The imagery of the servant leader as a shepherd to feed his flock was used by Jesus when instructing Simon Peter (Jn 21:15-17). Jesus' coping with the challenges of Pharisees always showed his exceptional competence, and so he demanded of his disciples the same abilities when they were sent out as sheep among wolves: to be as wise as snakes and gentle as doves (Mt 10:16). Jesus' teachings of the messianic kingdom implicitly denoted in his parables and explicitly revealed in his sermons are inspired visions that the servant leaders must eventually learn from to carry out his will.

### *An Approach to Transformational Leadership Realization*

In Romans 12:1-3, the Apostle Paul made a powerful transforming statement. In the same chapter (vv. 1-11), he conceptualized that sanctification is an essential component in a Christian's life. In verses 6-8, he introduced and explained the importance of living a holy life. Using statements such as, "What shall we say then?" "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" "By no means, we, who died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Rom 6:1-2), the Apostle Paul obviously depicts a transforming God, not a transaction god. Christians must transform their thinking and feeling about sin's destructive power and God's redeeming and health-producing grace. When they are in the process of transforming, they redefine what they need and want, as well as what they expect from and aspire to change their lives. The Apostle Paul summarized his teachings about this new life that God offers by reasoning with his readers. Romans 6:6-8 are designed to change values and perceptions about what matters most in life. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul concluded in Romans 12:1-2 that we do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but should be transformed by the renewing of our minds. In this sense, when we are transformed into God's view of mercy, we would be willing to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

## V. EMERGING HYPOTHESES

From the above literature review, this study hypothesized three scopes that Jesus alternatively managed for his follower-centric approach to achieve his earthly ministry through servant leadership, shepherd leadership, and transformational leadership. These three scopes were alternatively changeable, repeatable, and could be synchronized with others due to disciples' varied situations, from Jesus' making disciples on the Galilean shore to his three rounds of itinerant ministry back and forth

between Galilee and Jerusalem. These three scopes finally culminated in his resurrection three days after the crucifixion and reaped a consummated harvest in the last documentation of The Gospel According to John.

H<sub>1</sub>: Jesus applied servant leadership, by faith, in his follower-centric approach toward disciples' suspicions.

H<sub>2</sub>: Jesus applied shepherd leadership, by love, in his follower-centric approach toward disciples' conflicts.

H<sub>3</sub>: Jesus applied transformational leadership, by hope, in his follower-centric approach toward reinstating disciples' commissions.

## VI. METHOD

### *Data Collection Methods and Instrument*

Since this study is grounded in Robbins's<sup>18</sup> inner-texture analyses, data collection methods and analytic interpretation are thus worked out through the theoretical framework to analyze the last chapter of The Gospel According to John and then to unfold Jesus' follower-centric approach to the final cultivation and harvest of his three-year earthly ministry. Data pertaining to repetition and progression in the texts is collected and analyzed by Atlas.ti 2 software.

### *Consequences of Data Analyses and Inner Textual Analysis Frameworks*

**Repetitive–progressive texture.** Rhetorical interpretations that displayed integrated patterns of repetition and progression in the texts of the last chapter of The Gospel According to John have different functions, as aforementioned. The consequence of this analysis is as follows: Jesus' name and pronouns, including "the Lord," are used forty-four times in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John, which means that Jesus was the most important protagonist on the decisive restoration of disciples' faith and commitment by his follower-centric approach. He had a strong motivation to take the initiative in leadership to change his disciples' attitudes and reinstate their commissions. Simon Peter was the one Jesus most expected to re-establish his apostleship. As such, he commanded him to lead his churches during the first century. Simon Peter had an indispensable supportive role on the scene, so his name and pronoun appeared twenty-six times in this chapter, close to the total for Jesus' names and pronouns. Table 4 shows the number of first/second person pronouns found in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John.

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<sup>18</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry*.



Table 4. The frequency of first/second person pronouns in thte last chapter of The Gospel According to John

Verse	Jesus (I, my, me, myself)	Simon Peter (I, my, me, myself)	John (I, my, me, myself)	Jesus (you—to Simon Peter)	Simon Peter (you—to Jesus)	Jesus (you—to others)
1						
2						
3		1				
4						
5						1
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						1
11						
12						
13						
14						
15	1	1		1	2	
16	2	1		1	2	
17	2	1		1	2	
18	1			11	1	
19	1				2	
20					1	
21					1	
22	3			2		
23	2			1		
24						
25			1			
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>

The increasing frequency of first and second-person pronouns within the dominant dialogue, from verse 15 to verse 23 of John 21, forming a “tug of war play” at the outset, ultimately represents the climax of an intrinsically wordy conflict between Simon Peter’s misunderstanding of Jesus’ disclosure and Jesus’ good intention to forgive and reinstate Simon Peter’s apostleship. Finally, the conflict became reconciled by Simon Peter’s acceptance of Jesus’ demands—three times bidding Simon Peter to feed/tend his sheep/lambs. Jesus’ voice expressed his vigorousness in spirit and dynamic personality to carry out his will, action, and motive, not out of compelling but inspiring his follower. In contrast to Jesus, Simon Peter was frustrated by Jesus’ asking his love three times; he reminisced over his three-time rebellion against faith when Jesus was taken to be crucified. While this had been settled and their love for each other reached a mutual affinity, Jesus frankly foretold and signified Simon Peter’s future death to glorify God. Reading of his pointing at Simon Peter and telling him eleven times, “you” and “yourself,” one can vividly imagine Jesus’ strong will, initiative, affection, anticipation, and urgent situation through the “soundless voice” behind the scenes to motivate and encourage Simon Peter’s reinstatement of apostleship and commission (Jn 21:18). The verbs “love,” “feed/tend,” “shepherd/care,” “cast,” “fish,” along with the material nouns “fish,” “net,” “boat,” “sheep/lamb” are also (to some degree) repeated in the chapter as shown in table 5. These words would remind the disciples’ of their past and future followership.

In table 5, although the repeated words are few, it is obvious that Jesus was specifically choosing different words to speak with Simon Peter. When Jesus met other disciples in the Tiberias seashore the previous night, he told them how to cast the net from the boat to find a great number of fish. Simon Peter heard of it and jumped into the sea (Jn 21:5-11), but after Jesus invited all of them to have breakfast the next early morning, he focused on the conversation with Simon Peter and changed the subject from casting nets to shepherding. Then, Jesus asked Simon Peter to feed/tend his sheep/lambs (Jn 21:15-17). Jesus used different verbs to express his will, action, motivation, and command. This signified that Jesus had particularly expected Simon Peter to lead his churches after reinstating apostleship, while he merely anticipated other disciples to evangelize and convert people to Christianity. The meaning of casting a net to find fish implies “fisher-of-men” or “fish for people,” and “catching people instead of caching fish” (Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17; Lk 5:10). Although, Simon Peter himself was one of the fishermen, now Jesus wanted to change his vocation from that of a fisherman to that of a shepherd.

Table 5. The frequency of verbs and material nouns in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John

Verse	Verbs					Material nouns			
	Tend (feed)	Shepherd (care)	Cast	Fishing	Fish	Sheep	Lamb	Net	Boat
1									
2									
3									
4				1					1
5									
6									
7			2					1	1
8									
9								1	1
10									
11									
12								2	
13									
14					1				
15	1								
16		1					1		
17	1					1			
18						1			
19									
20									
21									
22									
23									
24									
25									
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>

The progressive texture in this chapter was not merely an extension of repeated words, phrases, or continual statements, but also increased the tension of conversation, changed the atmosphere and emotional state, and even reflected on a whole setting, in which they were interacting. These factors are illustrated in figure 1.

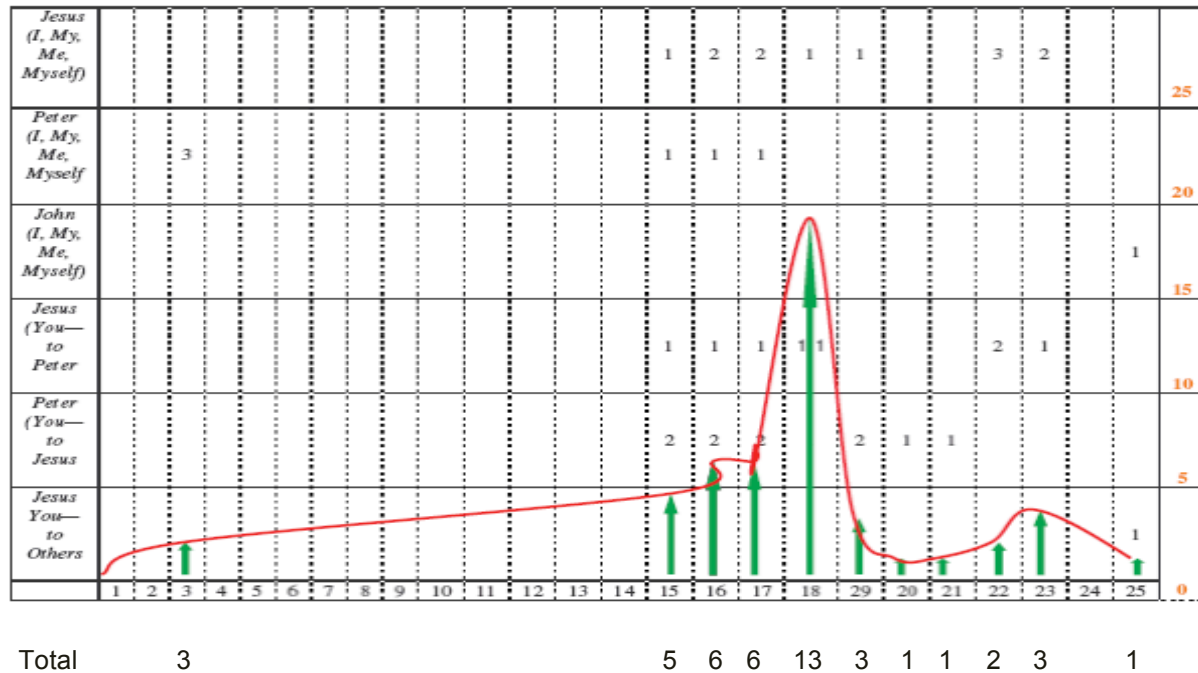


Figure 1. The frequency of first/second person pronouns increased the tension of conversation

Figure 1, based on table 4, notes the frequency of first and second-person pronouns in the twenty-first chapter and then works on a different type of analyses. The bottom numbers are the sum of repetitions in each verse. The red numbers on the right side are the levels of tension. The green arrows and the red curved line are the degree and motion of tension through the chapter. The tension gradually increases from verse 3 to verses 15-17, in which Jesus asked Simon Peter three times about his love for him, and commanded Simon Peter to tend/feed his sheep/lambs after he restored Simon Peter's apostleship. The tension reached the climax at verse 18 when Jesus foretold Simon Peter's future death. Since then, the tension swiftly decreased because Simon Peter tacitly received his own fate through Jesus' sincere motivation and became willing to glorify God through his future sacrifice. Figure 1 also illustrates the change in the whole atmosphere of their meeting. At first, there were six disciples who followed Simon Peter as he went fishing. Simon Peter could still be their leader, but he was very downhearted since his three-time denial of Jesus Christ. At night, they caught no fish, but Jesus came and everything turned out to be hopeful, fresh, and new, unlike what

had happened two years earlier when Jesus called Simon Peter into full-time discipleship (Lk 5:1-11). At that time, Simon Peter also fished all night long, but caught nothing because without Jesus, he could do nothing (Jn 15:5). This time, knowing that Jesus was such an agent of change and leadership, Simon Peter was so eager to see Jesus again and jumped out of the boat to the sea (Jn 21:7). There, he rushed to bring fish when Jesus asked for them (Jn 21:11). Simon Peter hurried back to Jesus to show his love and obedience, willing to follow Jesus again; then, the whole mood changed from gloomy to brilliant.

In the key verses 15-17, the repetitive–progressive texture was moved ahead through an undulated tensile line that affected Simon Peter’s emotion to rise and fall, affected by stimulating dialogue such as, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” “You know that I love you.” When they repeat these lines, there were some words changed, such as in Jesus’ second and third questions: he does not repeat “more than these [love],” which was the comparison between love for Jesus and love for others. Simon Peter’s third answer is omitted “Yes! [I love you].” This represents his confidence as he confirms his love for Jesus. Simon Peter’s third answer added a sentence—“You know all things”—to show his genuine love which the omniscient Jesus must have already known. After each question and answer, Jesus recommissioned Simon Peter to tend/shepherd his lambs/sheep. The frequency of repetitive–progressive key words and phrases are shown in table 6, and an illustration of the tension in the conversation between Jesus and Simon Peter is revealed in figure 2.

Table 6. The frequency of repetitive-progressive key words and phrases in verses 15-17

Verse	Jesus calls Simon Peter	Jesus’ questions	Simon Peter calls Jesus	Simon Peter’s answers	Jesus’ commands
21:15	Simon, son of John	Do you love me more than these?	Yes, Lord	you know that I love you	Tend my lambs
21:16	Simon, son of John	Do you love me?	Yes, Lord	you know that I love you	Shepherd my sheep
21:17	Simon, son of John	Do you love me?	Lord	you know all things you know that I love you	Tend my sheep
Repetition	3	3	3	3	
Progressive		Omitted: more than these	Omitted: Yes	Added: you know all things	Changed: lambs to sheep

Comparing the table 6 with figure 2 can clearly help reconstruct Simon Peter’s pose and emotions as they were affected by Jesus’ challenging, sensitive, and

inspirational remarks. The direction of arrows pointed to both Jesus and Simon Peter's emotional tension changes, which had designed precisely in Jesus' follower-centric approach.

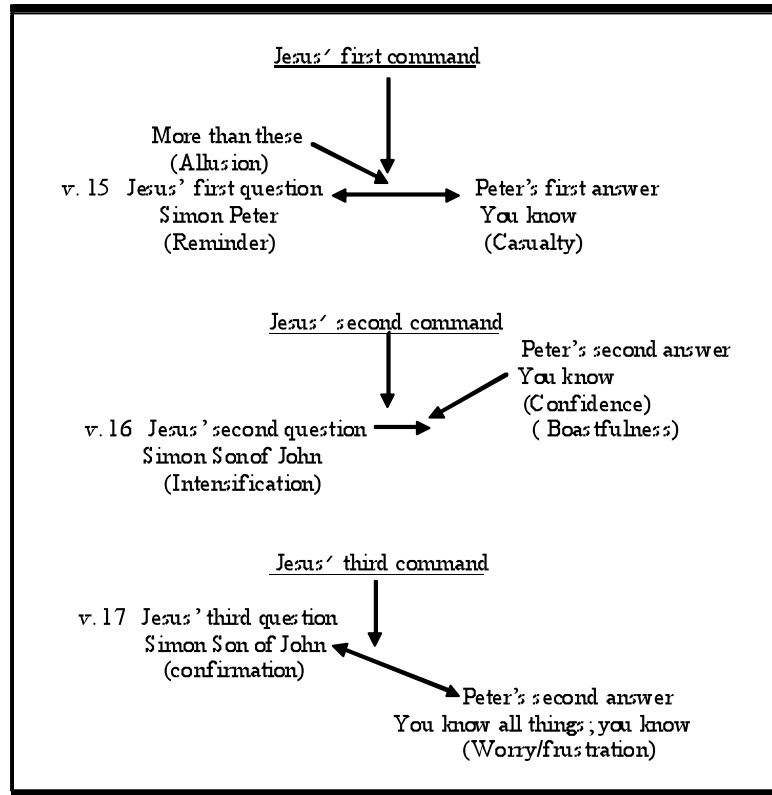


Figure 2. An illustration of the emotional tension in the conversation between Jesus and Simon Peter

**Opening-Middle-Closing.** Literary analysis concerns the beginning, middle, and ending three major portions of texture. Early on, these three elements had been advocated by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. In the Old Testament, the books of Job, Ruth, Esther, and Joshua are written as a theatrical script comprised of these three major portions of sequences and plots. Rhetorical analysis emphasizes the integral relation among opening, middle, and closure. These three portions often include large units with smaller subunits. This study deconstructed the opening-middle-closing texture composition of the last chapter of The Gospel According to John for better understanding their functions in relation to one another, and discerning the persuasive effect of the parts, such as how they worked together and related to the persuasive nature of the entire text.

In the last chapter of The Gospel According to John, as in the first twelve chapters of the Book of Acts, Simon Peter was the most prominent among Jesus'

disciples/apostles. This was due to Simon Peter's apostleship as a rock on which God prepared to build the first and forever church. Apostles were representatives of God's truth through Jesus' appointment to grant authorization (2 Cor 10:8, 13:10). They would exercise unique and functional authority in the early church. Further, Simon Peter, who was the leader and spokesperson of Jesus' inner-circle disciples—the twelve—was the key to Jesus' follower-centric approach. In Simon Peter's case, without the events leading up to Jesus' final approach, as the documentation in the last chapter of *The Gospel According to John* shows, he would not be recommissioned by Jesus. Without this chapter, Simon Peter would not be able to fulfill his role as a rock from which Christianity would stem and prosper throughout the world and conquer the gates of Hades (Mt 16:18).

Jesus' three-time appearances after his resurrection were the core principle of his follower-centric approach positioned in this chapter, which other New Testament synopses did not entirely record. Jesus met his disciples and gave them the miracle of catching 150 large fish without breaking the net. The documentation in this chapter was not only to stress the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, but also connected to the similar miracle at the same location where Simon Peter had experienced it. Now it aroused his memory for an authentic confession. Jesus invited the seven disciples to have breakfast with him in the Sea of Tiberias during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension. This was extremely important because Jesus wanted to prepare them for them to receive the Holy Spirit and promote them for future ministries as Luke recorded subsequently in Acts 1:1-9. Since then, the disciples kept on the alert until the third time of Jesus' public appearance to take his word and began to spread the gospel around the world. Table 7 illustrates Jesus follower-centric approach before the crucifixion and after the resurrection. The timing, location, and event were precisely arranged in the last chapter of *The Gospel According to John*.

In the opening of the chapter, Jesus met his disciples on the beach of Tiberias seashore where he prepared breakfast for disciples. This familiar scene on the same seashore reminded Simon Peter of his first fishing (Lk 5:1–11), and the miracle of Jesus' feeding a 5,000-person audience with five loaves of bread and two fishes (Jn 6:10). Simon Peter clearly confirmed his decision to follow Jesus when other disciples had turned their backs on him (Jn 6:66-71). The fire of coals Jesus made for the breakfast also reminded Simon Peter of the fire at which he denied Jesus three times (Jn 18:18). There were three invitations Jesus gave to his followers in *The Gospel According to John*: "Come and see" (Jn 1:39), "Come and drink" (Jn 7:37), and "Come and dine" (Jn 21:12). The last one was here with Simon Peter and other six disciples.

Table 7. Different structure of opening-middle-closing presented two periods of Jesus follower-centric approach

Chapter	Beginning	Middle	Ending
1:1-18	Prologue and theme		
1:19-4:53	Introduction of Jesus		
5:1-10:42		Jesus' ministry as God's Son	
11:1-12:50		Crisis in Jerusalem	
13:1-17:26		Jesus with his disciples	
18:1-19:42			Trial, death, and burial
20:1-21:25			Resurrection and conclusion
21:1-5	Jesus' appearance with disciples		
21:6-11	Miracle of catching fish		
21:12-14		Jesus had breakfast with disciples	
21:15-18		Jesus reinstated Simon Peter and foretold Simon Peter's death	
21:19-23		Jesus coached hot-brained Simon Peter	
21:24-25			John's conclusion

In the middle of the chapter, obviously, Simon Peter had already met with Jesus while Jesus took care of his iniquity (Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5). However, Simon Peter's public denial of Jesus must be a public restoration. He had denied Jesus three times, so Jesus asked him three questions to confirm his genuine love. After that, Jesus restored Simon Peter's apostleship and gave him a threefold commission to serve his church. Jesus changed Simon Peter's status from the fisherman in the opening stage to the shepherd in the middle stage. Without Jesus at the outset, Simon Peter and other disciples could not serve God, but returned to their original status as fishermen. In the middle stage, Simon Peter could minister as the leader of the church. Jesus gave three points of advice/commands to Simon Peter: "Feed my lambs," "Shepherd my sheep," and "Feed my sheep." He was to minister to the young and old Jews, as well as to Gentiles and Christians. Although it was an honorable and glorious service, being a shepherd of God's flock must be entered into willingly, not in a greedy aspect, or lording it over others, in order to be the example of the flock (1 Pt 5:2). While enemies



conspired to destroy the flock, the shepherd must be alert and courageously defend (Acts 20:28–35). After Simon Peter was rejoicing that he had been restored to apostleship and recommissioned his ministry, Jesus foretold that Simon Peter's death would be a shock to him. The first time Jesus spoke about his own death, Simon Peter opposed it (Mt 16:21); he even wielded his sword in the garden in an attempt to protect Jesus, and boasted that he would die for the Lord Jesus. Unfortunately, he failed and denied Jesus three times miserably. According to tradition, Simon Peter was crucified by the Emperor Nero upside down because he felt he was not worthy to be crucified as Jesus was. His martyrdom was not a tragedy since he glorified God as Jesus had predicted. Jesus' follower-centric approach extraordinarily changed his disciples with love, toleration, forgiving, and his example.

In the closing of the chapter, Jesus once more affirmed his calling—"Follow me!"—while Simon Peter cast his eyes off Jesus and hesitantly looked at others. Jesus required disciples not to compare their destinies with those of others, but looking at him alone (Heb 12:1-2). He so encouraged faith and loyalty that the twelve finally completed his unfinished ministry at the cost of self-sacrifice.

**Narrational texture.** The narrative styles are the distinct feature of the scriptures. The narrator in The Gospel According to John is the Apostle John himself. John, who had always been close to Jesus, was his most beloved disciple. His witness for Jesus and other disciples would be naturally accountable, but through the entire narration in this gospel, he never used his first-person viewpoint to announce the events. He did not even provide the name of the author until the ending of the postscript. This indicated that John intentionally made his empathy neutral. On the other hand, the third-person viewpoint narration could increase the effectiveness of dialogue, and provide more freedom to depict the whole factual settings in which Jesus and other disciples were interrelated and interacted in his follower-centric approach. John's narration also distinguished the importance and the priority of persons and things to integrate into the last chapter, while other synopses had not. This has been especially helpful in this study of Jesus' follower-centric approach.

**Argumentative texture.** Jesus mainly argued for Simon Peter's reinstating commission and apostleship. Jesus' persuasive revelation and encouragement suggested deliberation prior to decision making and made it possible for Simon Peter to accept all that he was expected to do. After Jesus' three-time critical inquiry as to loving, feeding, or tending sheep, Simon Peter received his reinstatement of the commission and commendation for leading the church. Jesus had never suppressed and compelled Simon Peter or other disciples to obey him, but moved their emotions by spiritual formation to acquire their spontaneous submission (see table 8). The repetition of questions instead of eloquent debate gave Simon Peter the opportunity to reminisce over his past and confess himself to having been unfaithful to Jesus before. When he predicted Simon Peter's destiny, Jesus used the pronoun "you" frequently to convey his authorization and persuasive prediction of truth to signify Simon Peter's future martyrdom (see table 8). Although Jesus admonished Simon Peter's comparison with John's destiny, he was concerned with Simon Peter's credulousness in misunderstanding of resurrection. On the other hand, John's defense against his authorship in the postscript also testified to the true document concerning Jesus'

effective leadership—Jesus’ follower-centric approach was not explicitly mentioned in other New Testament synopses. Table 8 and figure 3 are illustrations of argumentative texture with persuasive emphases and predictions that are demonstrated in Jesus and Simon Peter’ dialogue.

Table 8. Argumentative texture with persuasive emphases in John 21:15-17

Verse	Encouragement (intimacy)	Inspiration (reminder)	Advice (mandate)
21:15	Simon, son of John	Do you love me more than these?	Tend my lambs
21:16	Simon, son of John	Do you love me?	Shepherd my sheep
21:17	Simon, son of John	Do you love me?	Tend my sheep
Persuasive emphasis		more than these? (reminisce over Simon Peter’s past unfaithfulness)	

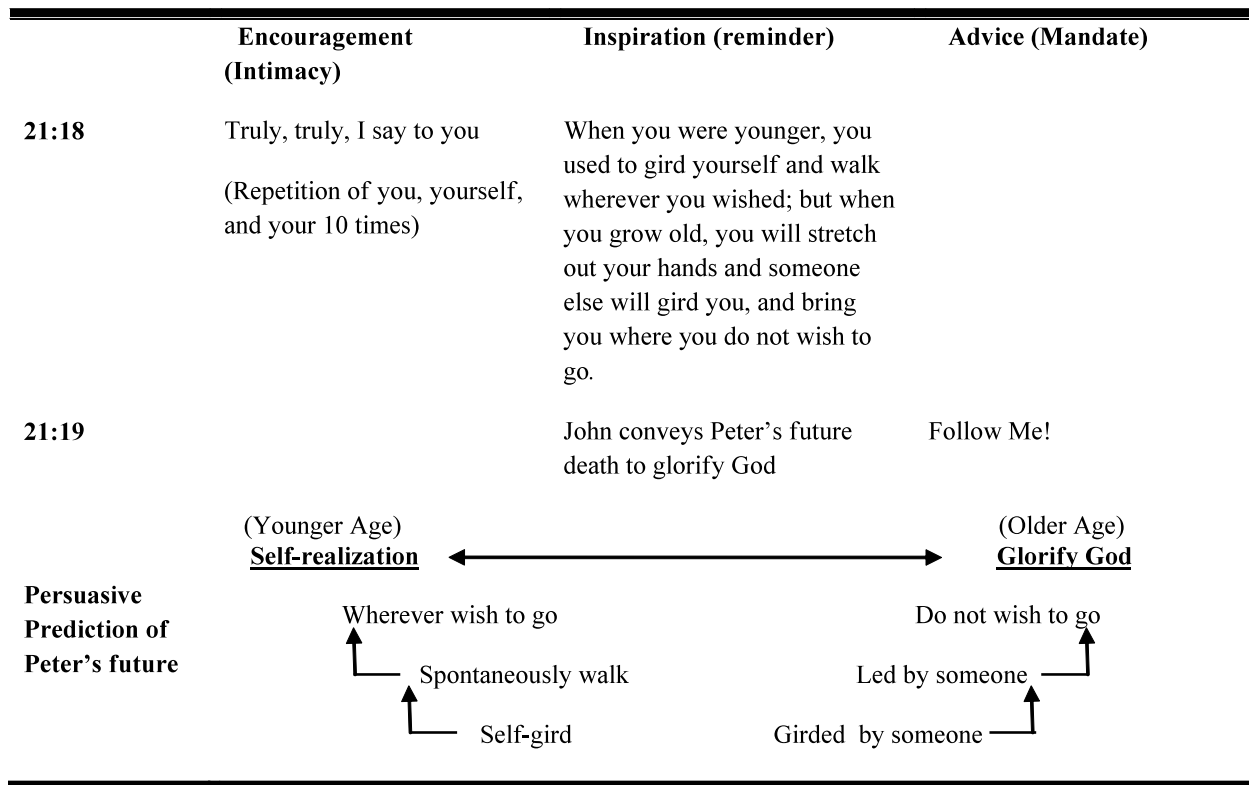


Figure 3. Argumentative texture with persuasive prediction in John 21:15-19

**Sensory–aesthetic texture.** Sensory–aesthetic texture calls for the reader’s imagination and emotional resonance to assimilate the full meaning of the scriptures in order to enjoy the blessings of God. Jesus always used the concept of aesthetic literature to explore the parables in the New Testament. The sensory–aesthetic texture in the last chapter of The Gospel According to John can be found across four functions: (a) describing the scenes, in which Jesus and disciples are inactive; (b) portraying the characteristics and emotional state of persons; (c) symbolizing the things that would not be explicitly explained; and (d) exploring the underlying assumption.

In John 21:4-17, John depicted night settings. For example:

1. “It is dark,” signifies that they are not “walking in the light,” but were very “quiet at heart.”
2. They had no “direct word from Jesus,” but probably they were “mediating his word.”
3. Their efforts met with “failure,” but they did not “complain.”
4. They “did not recognize” Christ when he “did appear.” Their “spiritual vision was dim” because they knew that “without Jesus, they could do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

This setting provides the succeeding opportunity for them to wait for Jesus’ coming. For instance, in the previous verses, while Jesus appeared on the scene, the light began to shine. He instructed them at the seashore so that they should catch a great deal of big fish without breaking the net. When Jesus was in control, they accomplished more than a whole night through their own efforts. After the next dawn, Jesus cooked fish for their breakfast: The fire of coals and the cooked fish were the center of the setting. The entire scene was designed to arouse Simon Peter’s memory and open his eyes. The catch of fish reminded Simon Peter of his past commitment to follow Jesus, and the fire of coals took him back to his denial of Jesus (Jn 18:18). The Sea of Tiberias reminded him of his experiences with Jesus’ miracles. All that Jesus planned for his follower-centric approach to solve the problems of Simon Peter and other disciples, in this scene, were arranged harmoniously and smoothly through the sensory–aesthetic texture. Most valuable was Jesus’ love, which echoed with Simon Peter and the other disciples.

In verses 18-25, Jesus repeated his call—“Follow me”—but the follower should be willing to accept the call at the cost of self-sacrifice. Likewise, Jesus was a scapegoat for all human beings (Jn 21:18). This was an awesome challenge to Simon Peter, who would be crucified himself to glorify God (2 Pt 1:12-14). Earlier, Simon Peter tried to keep Christ from the cross, now this charge took on a new meaning (Mt 16:21-28). The epilogue of this chapter was in symbolic ways, through which John pointed to the growth of the church as well as the diversity of gifts and callings within the church. Appropriately, it ended with the greatness of Jesus’ final follower-centric approach.

In the beginning of this chapter, while the disciples had not recognized him, Jesus alluded, by a miracle, to who he was. He reminded them continuously to be “fishers of men.” Before and after breakfast, Jesus used both servant and shepherd’s accountabilities to instruct Simon Peter and other disciples. Although he admonished Simon Peter for comparing with others’ destiny, his end was to transform Simon Peter’s characteristics into an advanced model of a leader.

## VII. RESULT

In the Bible, there is no literal statement regarding Jesus' follower-centric approach, since most books in the Bible, including the synopses of four gospels, were written in a narrative style. The authors mainly documented people, events, and things, as well as causes and effects in particular concerning God's agenda to convey a message through historical settings, situational characteristics, literature designs, and theological themes.<sup>19</sup> However, the factual movements of Jesus' earthly ministry implied the exact progress of his follower-centric approach to the end of God's plan, which was consummated in the climax of the last chapter of The Gospel According to John. This study began grounded in Robbins's<sup>20</sup> inner-texture theory, later analyzing the change in Peter's characteristics during the third time Jesus manifested himself to the disciples after his resurrection. On the seashore of the Tiberias, Jesus made a miracle of fishing (Jn 21:1-14) and prepared the breakfast for the disciples. Then, he asked Peter almost the same questions three times. Later, he foretold and signified that Peter's death would glorify God (Jn 12:33, 18:32; 2 Pt 1:14). The entire movement made use of an extraordinarily heuristic method of follower-centric leadership that made Peter change his characteristics and receive his reinstatement of apostleship and commission. In the postscript, John declared his authorship and concluded his book of the gospel, which also indirectly testified to the fact of Jesus' leadership always functions on the follower side.

This study used inner-texture analyses, canonical study, and literature review to unfold and interpret the implicit narrative scripture regarding Jesus' follower-centric approach. Therefore, the hypotheses that Jesus applied his servant leadership, shepherd leadership, and transformational leadership by faith, hope, and love, to solve his followers' suspicion, conflict, and commission reinstatement are identified.

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### About the Author

Peter K. Y. Chang is the former vice president of the Kuangchi Audio-Visual Educational Program Service, vice president of the Dausheng Publishing House & Christian Tribune Weekly, and vice president of Chinese Public Television Service. In his vocation, he produced some significant telecasting programs, such as the Billy Graham Crusade in Taiwan, the NHK Symphony Presentation Live Show in Taipei, and the Requiem Service for Chiang Kai-shek, the late President of ROC. He is a Chinese-English bilingual writer and has published four books of the short-story collection, an essay collection, three novelettes, a novel, and three books of non-fiction translation. Among these works, he was awarded as the winner of Taiwan National Short Story Competition and the grand prize in the First Annual Chunghsing Literary Award on Essay held by Taiwan Writer's Association. He also received the third honorable mention of the

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<sup>19</sup> Roy B. Zuck and Darrell L. Bock, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry*.

Edward A. Falot Poetry Competition, Poet of Merit of American Poetry Association, annual best poem, and editor's choice award at the International Library of Poetry many times. His brief biography, literary works, and samples of handwriting manuscript written in Chinese have preserved and exhibited in the Literary Historical Forum of ROC National Library in Taipei. He has a master's degree in leadership from Denver Seminary and is preparing for his dissertation in the Ph.D. program in Global Leadership at Regent University after six years of teaching at Taiwan Alliance Theological College as a vesting faculty.

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## LEADING BY BEING LED

PHILIP L. MCKINNEY II

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In *Leading By Being Led*, Phil McKinney II presents an exegetical examination of Biblical leadership as was demonstrated by two of scripture's greatest leaders: Moses and Jesus. In particular, scripture points to how these two leaders demonstrated a leading from being led by God. God led both his nation and his church, and he continues to lead his people today. Biblical leadership is built upon following rather than taking the lead. This is a difficult path for most to take. It is human nature to want to take the lead and be in control. However, scripture demonstrates a leadership that is contrary to that of the world and human nature. In *Leading By Being Led*, readers discover the primary principles of leadership that rely on God's guidance and direction rather than human will and initiative. This example of a "God who goes before us" is evidenced in five specific ways: (1) prophet, (2) presence (3) provisions, (4) prompting, and (5) passages. An examination of this "following the Father" is demonstrated through Moses and then paralleled in Jesus and is followed by an assessment of the implications for church leadership today.

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*Leadership* is a buzzword in churches today. Many publications have been and are currently being produced with the intent to build-up leaders in the Lord's church. Unfortunately, much of what is being produced is man-centered and taken from current business models. Yet, Biblical leadership is not man-centered. Instead, Biblical leadership takes its lead from the creator and the descriptions of leadership he laid out in scripture.

From this perspective, Biblical leadership is recognized first as taking its lead

from a God who goes before his people. In the song of Moses and Miriam recorded in Exodus 15, God is recognized as the one who is leading them. “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, Biblical leadership is built upon following rather than taking the lead. This is a difficult path for most to take. It is in human nature to want to take the lead and be in control.

However, scripture demonstrates a leadership that is contrary to that of the world and human nature. In fact, Biblical leadership is demonstrated when one moves “from slave of man to servant of the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> Howell goes on to state, “The great leaders of the Old Testament are commonly designated ‘servant of the Lord.’ This is the title of honor par excellence for those who discover a joyful abandonment to the will of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup> This sort of total abandonment is further seen in New Testament leaders as well.

This article seeks to do an exegetical examination of Biblical leadership as was demonstrated by two of scripture’s greatest leaders: Moses and Jesus. In particular, scripture points to how these two leaders (and others) demonstrated a leading from being led by the Father. God led both his nation and his church and continues to lead today. This example of a “God who goes before us” is evidenced in five specific ways: (1) prophet, (2) presence (3) provisions, (4) prompting, and (5) passages. An examination of this “following the Father” is demonstrated through Moses and then paralleled in Jesus. A brief assessment of the implications for church leadership today follows.

## I. GOD LEADING HIS PEOPLE

“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? . . . O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue. . . . O Lord, please send someone else to do it.”<sup>4</sup> Have these thoughts ever passed through your mind? These words are what Moses spoke to the Lord when God called him to lead his people out of Egypt. Moses, as is the case with many Biblical leaders, was a reluctant leader (yet, he was not always reluctant—see below). He felt unworthy of the task to the point of asking if someone else could do it. Nonetheless, God had a plan bigger than that of one individual. It was a plan that he himself would unfold to his glory and not to glory of man.

God would lead his people to the promise land as he unfolded his grand metanarrative (redemptive history) in the process. Through this, God demonstrates a pattern for how he led his people. Though this pattern is not laid out in specific terms, it is evident through the experiences of Moses and the Israelites and Jesus and his followers. Woven through this plan is God’s great love for his people and his desire for them to grow and know him better. Love is ultimately God’s greatest form of leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Ex 15:13. All scripture references are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Don N. Howell, Jr., *Servants of the Servant* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 6-10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ex 3:11, 4:10, 4:13.

He begins leading the Israelites and the early church with a prophet.

### *God Leading Through Prophet (Moses)*

“The LORD used a prophet to bring Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him.”<sup>5</sup> Exodus tells the story of God’s people under the yoke of slavery through Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God hears the Israelites groaning and cries for help and remembers his covenant with Abraham. Concern for his children fills God’s heart.<sup>6</sup> It is time to act. God’s first agenda item to lead his people from slavery is to choose a leader, but not just any leader. His leader must be someone who will follow him first in order to be his voice. In order for that to take place, his prophet must be a man of great humility.

Moses’s first attempt at leadership ended pitifully. In Exodus 2:11-12, Moses witnesses his fellow Hebrews being mistreated by their Egyptians captors. Moses has compassion for his brothers (Israelites) and desires to deliver them. He kills an Egyptian in a feeble attempt to rescue and secretly hides the body. Stuart writes, “These two verses explain how Moses had by this time identified with the Israelites over against the Egyptians and how his zeal against the oppression of his people got him into trouble. This was his first attempt at delivering his people—acting alone and in secret and relying on his own strength and wisdom—and though it failed miserably, it certainly shows the strength of Moses’ sentiments on behalf of his people.”<sup>7</sup>

Moses goes on (Ex 2:13-14) to attempt to bring resolution between two Hebrew brethren. Once again, his attempt (though made with good intentions) failed. He again acts independently and without any authority. Laniak says, “The personal journey of Moses is one that begins with a misplaced sense of his independent capacity as a leader of his ‘own’ people.”<sup>8</sup> His lack of authority and status<sup>9</sup> is the very reason why he acted in secrecy.<sup>10</sup> His Hebrew brothers “challenged his authority” and rebuked his actions through ridicule. While Moses thought he was helping, his “lone-ranger” arrogance placed its recipients in danger. However, God was working this situation for his purposes and ultimate glory. This was the way in which he would humble his future prophet and the leader of his people. As Stuart points out, “Here is God at work in a way that Moses surely did not recognize at the time, just as we can virtually never understand how our own miseries and emergencies, at the time we are experience them, might end up leading to blessing.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Hos 12:13.

<sup>6</sup> Ex 2:23-25.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 95.

<sup>8</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 87.

<sup>9</sup> John I. Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 19.

<sup>10</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, *The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 31.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart, *Exodus*, 96-97.



Moses leaves (escapes) to enter a “wilderness” time in which God was preparing him for his future role. As Laniak writes, “Moses *would* one day be the judge of this people (Ex 18), but only after he made his own forty-year sojourn in the wilderness that would later become their temporary home.”<sup>12</sup> Through this “wilderness experience,” Moses gains a family (which can be a humbling experience) and becomes a shepherd. It is very interesting that God leads Moses to become a shepherd (perhaps foreshadowing the role he would soon take with the Israelite nation). Through a burning bush, Moses encounters the Lord and is called by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. The text reads:

“So now, go. *I am sending you* to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” And God said, “*I will be with you*. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”<sup>13</sup>

It is evident from this discourse that *God* would be leading Moses (his prophet) to lead *his* people (the Israelites) out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. God could have simply spoken and it would be, but he instead chose to use one of his created children to demonstrate his power and love. Moses was reluctant with this call. Stuart writes, “It was not easy for Moses to hear the command of v. 10, with its demand that he go as God’s prophet (‘I am sending you’) to Pharaoh to *bring* Israel out of Egypt. Not only was Moses to be involved in the exodus but he was to lead it.”<sup>14</sup> With this understanding, it is evident that God leads his people through human leaders. However, God chooses those leaders, humbles them, and explicitly requires them to listen to his voice and none other. This same pattern is expressed through Christ as God sent him to lead his people.

### *God Leading the Church Through Prophet (Jesus)*

“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.”<sup>15</sup> Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is commonly referred to as a prophet (Lk 7:16, 9:18-19). What is most interesting is his status as a prophet being linked with that of Moses. There are two specific passages that attest to this linkage: Acts 3:14-26 and Luke 9:34-35. Acts 3:14-26 speaks to Jesus as the prophet whom Moses himself foretold (“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people”).<sup>16</sup> This passage is from Deuteronomy 18:15-19 where Moses warns the Israelites. Bruce speaks to this saying, “The primary reference of these words of Moses is to the institution of prophets in Israel, as a way appointed by God for making his will known to his people. But well before apostolic times this prophecy was interpreted as

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<sup>12</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 87.

<sup>13</sup> Ex 3:10–12, italics added.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart, *Exodus*, 118.

<sup>15</sup> Lk 24:19.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

pointing to one particular prophet, a second Moses, who would exercise the prophet's full mediatorial function as Moses had done."<sup>17</sup>

It is inferred that Jesus would then lead God's church in like manner of Moses. Even Jesus "commissioning" is not unlike Moses as seen on the Mount. There, while Jesus was speaking, a cloud came down and enveloped him and his companions. Then a voice was heard that proclaimed, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."<sup>18</sup> The cloud's appearance is representative of not only God's presence, but also (perhaps) a new beginning in and around Jesus not unlike that of Moses. "The cloud's presence seems to be God's answer to Peter's suggestion: no booths are needed since God has wrapped the disciples in his glory and presence. God's very presence is associated with Jesus, through whom they have access to full communion and presence with God."<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that scripture attests to Jesus as prophet and links him with Moses's leadership. Jesus came to free his people from the yoke of slavery (sin) and lead them to the Promise Land (heaven, God's presence). It is in this fashion that the Lord's church is to continue leading people: From slavery to freedom to promise. It is also important to note that God does not leave his leaders once he has placed them. Instead, God goes with them and his presence is felt every step of the way.

### *God Leading Through Presence (Pillar of Cloud/Fire)*

When God called Moses to lead his people out of Egypt, he also promised, "I will be with you."<sup>20</sup> This statement is theologically deep as it is echoed throughout scripture. This statement is reiterated by the son prior to his heavenly ascent (Mt 28:20). These comforting words were witnessed through God leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Primarily, God's presence was manifested in a pillar of cloud/fire.

God's presence was constantly felt and seen by the Israelites. The text writes, "By day the LORD went ahead of them in a *pillar of cloud* to guide them on their way and by night in a *pillar of fire* to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people."<sup>21</sup> The pillar of cloud/fire was God's constant abiding presence and was the means by which he led his people. It should not be understood as two separate pillars, but one. Exodus 14:24 reads, "During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the *pillar of fire and cloud* at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion."<sup>22</sup> This is also the same pillar that would cover the mountain and the tent, indicating God's presence and guidance. Stuart rightly notes, "It is clear that there was only one cloudlike

<sup>17</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 86.

<sup>18</sup> Lk 9:35.

<sup>19</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 873.

<sup>20</sup> Ex 3:12.

<sup>21</sup> Ex 13:21-22, italics added.

<sup>22</sup> Ex 14:24, italics added.

pillar, which represented God's presence, and that it appeared as a great column of dark cloud when viewed during the bright sunlit day but as a column of fire when viewed at night."<sup>23</sup>

Yet, the point of the pillar of cloud/fire is clear: God was present and leading. It was evident from the beginning that the Israelites could not go forth without God's guidance.<sup>24</sup> Laniak says, "YHWH's presence, physically manifest in the glory-cloud (*kābôd*) and pillar of fire, was the means by which Israel was *led (nhh)*."<sup>25</sup> Stuart beautifully sums up the purpose of God presence with the Israelites by saying:

By reason of being guided by the pillar, the Israelites knew all day every day that God was present with them. Here was a supernatural, huge, and visible reminder that Yahweh was at the head of his people as they marched or encamped, whether by day or by night. Therefore, even the seemingly erratic route described by 13:20 in combination with 14:1-3 could be trusted because Yahweh was directing them on it. Yahweh chose the odd route—not they. Again, the pillar was not merely a sign from Yahweh—it was Yahweh ("The LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light," 13:21). He manifested himself in the form of a pillar of cloud/fire for their benefit.<sup>26</sup>

The pillar of cloud/fire was a constant encouragement that God was near and leading. Even though the path did not make sense at times, it was evident that it was God taking them in that direction. However (as is evident from scripture), that was not enough for the Israelites. In fact, grumbling set in amongst the Israelites and it became clear that presence and guidance was not enough.

### *God Leading the Church Through Presence (Incarnation)*

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us.'"<sup>27</sup> Jesus is God's presence. The Greek here, μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός, is best rendered as "God is/will be with us." "It is the unfolding of the story that will clarify the precise manner in which God's presence will be manifested."<sup>28</sup>

His coming marked a new era in which God would be with us always. Matthew also speaks to this, quoting Jesus, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."<sup>29</sup> Jesus, as leader, would never leave his followers so that his work of freeing his children would be completed and successful. Jesus' disciples could not do this work without his leading. France speaks to this saying:

<sup>23</sup> Stuart, *Exodus*, 327.

<sup>24</sup> Durham, *Exodus*, 186.

<sup>25</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 79.

<sup>26</sup> Stuart, *Exodus*, 328.

<sup>27</sup> Mt 1:22–23.

<sup>28</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans/Paternoster Press, 2005), 102.

<sup>29</sup> Mt 28:20.

But the presence of Jesus himself among his people (cf. 18:20) ensures that it is not simply a relationship of formal obedience. In context this assurance is focused not on the personal comfort of the individual disciple but on the successful completion of the mission entrusted to the community as a whole. In OT commissioning scenes the assurance of God's presence was to empower his often inadequate servants to fulfill the task he had called them to (Exod 3:12; 4:12; Josh 1:5, 9; Judg 6:16; Jer 1:8; cf. also the angel sent with the Israelites in Exod 23:20–23). So here it is to the commissioned disciples as they set about their daunting task that the divine presence is promised, without which they cannot be expected to succeed. But the difference now is that it is not God himself who promises to be “with” them, still less an angel sent by him, but the risen Jesus, who has just been declared to stand alongside the Father and the Holy Spirit in heavenly sovereignty.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus' abiding presence is the church's means for fulfilling the Great Commission. Without his presence, the work would surely fail. As God used his presence to lead his people out of the slavery of Egypt and into the Promise Land, so Jesus' presence leads his people from the slavery of sin into the Promise Land.

### *God Leading Through Provisions (Water, Manna, and Meat)*

Scripture is abundantly clear that God does not ultimately leave his people to squander as he leads them. Instead, he provides for their needs, attempting to help them understand who the provider is. It is interesting to note that three days following the miraculous working of God in crossing the sea, the Israelites already begin to grumble against the Lord. “When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘What are we to drink?’”<sup>31</sup> God heard their cry through the voice of his prophet Moses and provided sweet water for them to drink. God led them on to Elim where he also provided them with abundant water. In these two instances, God did a great deal to demonstrate to his people that he was not only present with them, but cared for their needs. Durham speaks to this saying, “Yahweh thus provides for the needs of this people: by purifying polluted water, by guiding them through wasteland to an oasis overflowing with both water and fruit. That is the essential point of this section: Yahweh's provision for his people.”<sup>32</sup>

Continuing on, the Israelites find themselves in the desert with no food. The Israelites once again grumble against God in Exodus 16:2. It is important at this point to directly reference this powerful text:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “*I will* rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way *I will*

<sup>30</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 1119.

<sup>31</sup> Ex 15:23-24.

<sup>32</sup> Durham, *Exodus*, 366-367.

*test them* and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that *it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt*, and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. *Who are we*, that you should grumble against us?” Moses also said, “*You will know that it was the LORD* when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. *Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.*”

Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and *there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud*.

The LORD said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. *Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.*’”<sup>33</sup>

This is a very powerful passage that provides several theological insights. It is important to list each of these to better understand God’s leadership:

- God will provide for the needs of his people.
- God will use this as a leading point and will test them through the careful instructions he provides. God wants to know if his people will be inclined toward his leading.<sup>34</sup>
- Moses and Aaron remind and emphasize the Israelites that it was God who was leading them and not Moses or Aaron.
- God’s glory and leading would be visibly evident (in food and cloud).
- Moses and Aaron clearly recognized their roles as leaders as being those who followed the leader and passed on the instructions. Their repeated question of “Who are we?” is indicative of humility and of an understanding of the role of being led while leading (servant leadership).
- The people were grumbling against *God* and not Moses and/or Aaron.
- This demonstration of God’s power will bring understanding that God is God and there is no other.

While a great deal more could be said concerning God’s leading through provisions, it is sufficient to say here that God provides in order to reveal his presence and demonstrate his leading. The depths of God’s provisions are not at the physical level, but a spiritual one. As Durham notes, “Israel’s grumbling thus becomes occasion

<sup>33</sup> Exod 16:4-12, italics added.

<sup>34</sup> Stuart provides some good insight into this by saying that the passage should be translated “so that I can test them to see whether or not they will walk by my law.” In other words, the people’s willingness to obey the manna-gathering law (*tôrāh*) would show God whether or not they would be inclined to keep his covenant law (*tôrāh*) as revealed at Mount Sinai. It was not just a test to see if they could follow instructions but a test to see if their hearts were inclined to be his covenant people. Stuart, *Exodus*, 372.

for a response of Yahweh that gives further proof of his Presence. But the report of the grumbling and the anticipation of Yahweh's response points both to and beyond the provision of food to the provision of Yahweh's supreme revelation of himself in the entire OT."<sup>35</sup> The Israelites continually struggled with this. God's only desire in his leading was that his people would listen to, learn from, lift up, and love him. Yet, it was those very things that Israel struggled with the most.

In Deuteronomy 8:2-4 and 8:15-18, Moses reminds the Israelites of their wilderness experience and how God used provisions to not only lead them, but also test their hearts. God led them with the purpose to grow and test them. As Merrill points out, "The Lord had led them through the desert in order to humble and test them about their commitment (v. 2). He did this by allowing them to hunger and then to be fed by the miraculous supply of manna (Exod 16:1-30; Num 11:4-9), an act so clearly supernatural that the people had to recognize that it was all of God and not of themselves (v. 3; cf. Exod 16:32)."<sup>36</sup> He goes on to say that, "In fact, the manna symbolized more than mere physical nourishment but the word of God itself (v. 4), for the God who could provide in such a mighty and unexpected way was well worth listening to."<sup>37</sup> The point is that God leads and provides in order to care for and grow his children. This care and growth is to be understood not simply in the temporal sense, but also (and more importantly) in the eternal one.

### *God Leading the Church Through Provisions*

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."<sup>38</sup> The Father knows exactly what his children need. These things will be added to those who will trust and follow. God simply wants his children to trust him to supply all their needs and through this demonstrate their faith in him.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps lack of faith has to do more with what Morris points out, "They have a *heavenly Father*, and that Father knows all their needs. Since God knows them all, there is not the slightest reason for anxiety. Perhaps we should notice that it is *need* of which Jesus speaks. His followers may expect their needs to be met, but not necessarily their desires."<sup>40</sup>

Yet, it is imperative that his children seek him first and not the things of the world that are temporal. Jesus also speaks to a temporal provision when tempted by Satan. After forty days without food, Satan steps in and encourages him to use his ability to make bread out of the rocks. Jesus' response is through God's word and about God's

<sup>35</sup> Durham, *Exodus*, 221.

<sup>36</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 185-186.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Mt 6:31-33.

<sup>39</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 270.

<sup>40</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), 161.

word. He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 and says, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"<sup>41</sup> Laniak speaks to this saying, "Spiritual sustenance is the ultimate reality to which the feeding miracles (*in Exod*) refer. . . . The most significant 'food' in the wilderness was the Law itself. When Jesus relives Israel's forty-year wilderness experience in his forty-day temptation, he draws support in his hunger from these very words that come from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4)."<sup>42</sup>

God continues to lead his church today through provisions. However, those provisions may or may not look the same as those given to the Israelites. God desires that his people examine provisions from a spiritual sustenance perspective rather than a temporal consummation.

### *God Leading Through Prompting (The Spirit)*

God further led the Israelites through the prompting of his Spirit. This is often overlooked due to the immensity of God's leading through some of the other areas having already been mentioned. Yet, even in the Old Testament there is evidence of God using his Spirit to direct and lead his people. In Exodus 31 (concerning Bezalel), the text states, "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts" (this is also stated in Exod 35:31).<sup>43</sup> What is interesting to note here is that God does not give him four separate things. Instead, God simply (or maybe not simply) gives Bezalel his Spirit, which in turn provides him the skill, ability, and knowledge necessary to complete the work assigned him by God (in essence, God lives *in him* to lead him).<sup>44</sup>

This being led by God through his Spirit is furthered supported in the commissioning of Joshua by Moses (and God). The author of Deuteronomy states, "Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit (or Spirit) of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses."<sup>45</sup> As Christensen states, "The 'spirit of wisdom' that rested on Joshua was a divine gift to enable him to govern justly, like that which Solomon received in 1 Kgs 3:7-12."<sup>46</sup> Merrill's commentary on this passage is most helpful to understand how God uses his Spirit to lead:

The formal act by which the community understood that Joshua was Moses' successor was the ceremony of "laying on of hands," a rite that symbolized the transference of covenant authority and responsibility from the one to the other. This physical demonstration either accompanied the impartation of the divine Spirit or marked the recipient as one already endowed by that Spirit (v. 9). Thus

<sup>41</sup> Mt 4:4.

<sup>42</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 83, addition mine.

<sup>43</sup> Ex 31:3.

<sup>44</sup> Stuart, *Exodus*, 650.

<sup>45</sup> Dt 34:9.

<sup>46</sup> Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, vol. 6B, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 872.

after Moses had been told that he could not lead the people into the promised land, he was told to “take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him” (Num 27:18; cf. Num 11:16–30; 1 Sam 10:1, 10; 16:13).

The principal gift of the Spirit here was wisdom, a necessary endowment if Joshua was to be able to take Moses’ place and successfully complete the conquest and occupation of Canaan.<sup>47</sup>

The leadership that God commissioned Moses with evidently came with the indwelling of his Spirit. This enabled both Moses and Joshua to lead the Israelites through God’s leading. As Merrill mentioned above, the primary role of the Spirit’s leading tends to be through God’s wisdom being made manifest through the carrier (specifically, Moses and Joshua). For that reason, it would be safe to say that God imparts his Spirit on those he chooses to lead his people in order that he might lead them “from within” through wisdom, skill, and the like.

### *God Leading the Church Through Prompting (The Spirit)*

The words of Jesus speak plainly to the leading of the Spirit:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. . . . All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.<sup>48</sup>

This powerful text speaks to the prompting of the Spirit of God as leading the church (God’s people). Köstenberger points out, “The entire section of 14:15-24 envisions the giving of the Spirit subsequent to Jesus’ exaltation, at which time Jesus and the Father will make their dwelling in believers through the Spirit. Jesus’ identification with the Spirit, the “other παράκλητος,” is so strong that he can say that *he himself* will return to his followers in the person of the Spirit (14:18).”<sup>49</sup> The Spirit is not only God’s presence with his people, but the means by which he leads them today. Köstenberger continues saying, “As Jesus’ emissary, the Spirit will have a variety of functions in believers’ lives: he will bring to remembrance all that Jesus taught his disciples (14:26); he will testify regarding Jesus together with his followers (15:26); he will convict the world of sin, (un)righteousness, and judgment (16:8–11); and he will

<sup>47</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 454-455.

<sup>48</sup> Jn 14:16-21, 25-26.

<sup>49</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 434.



guide Jesus' disciples in all truth and disclose what is to come (16:13)."<sup>50</sup> The Spirit has several functions for Christians today, but one of the most important is that of leading and guidance.

### *God Leading Through Passages (The Law)*

God's Law was one of his greatest means for leading his people. Scripture abounds with reference to the Law and the keeping of it. One of the first instances of a specific law being set down for the Israelites goes back to provision of water at Marah. God not only gives the Israelites what they needed physically, but he also provides them spiritual direction through the giving of a decree and law. Specifically, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."<sup>51</sup> No matter what, God desired that his people continue to follow his lead by keeping the Law.

A great deal of God's leading through the Law is found in Deuteronomy. Many passages attest to God's desire for the Israelites to follow (an indication that the Law is God's leading through written word) and obey or keep. Here are but a few:

Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them (Dt 5:1).

So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days (Dt 5:32-33a).

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children, and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Dt 6:1-9).

God lay out before the Israelites the ways and requirements for living. It was through these laws (or the Law) that God would lead his people to a better understanding of him (that they may know him better). That required the whole of man:

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 437.

<sup>51</sup> Ex 15:26.

heart, soul, and strength (the *Shema*). The *Shema* constituted the whole of the Law by which the Israelites were to be led. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is the essence of the *Shema*. According to Merrill, the sixteen words found in the Hebrew text constitute “the expression of the essence of all of God’s person and purposes.”<sup>52</sup>

“Hear” or “to hear” is synonymous with “to obey,” especially in regards to covenantal passages such as this.<sup>53</sup> It mimics the opening of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) found in Deuteronomy 5:1, indicating the significance of what is about to be stated. With this introduction, all hearers understand that what is about to be said is of utmost importance. Craigie states, “The words introduce a major and important part of Moses’ address.”<sup>54</sup> Wright says that it is a “constant reminder that Israel was a people summoned by God to hear God’s word. They were not merely spectators at a divine ‘show,’ but the recipients of divine revelation in words. They were to *hear* the truth and to respond to it.”<sup>55</sup>

The next statement (“The Lord our God, the Lord is one”) is the crux of the *Shema*. As Merrill states, “Postbiblical rabbinic exegesis understood the role of the *Shema* to be the heart of all the law.”<sup>56</sup> The statement reiterates the idea that the command is being given to the nation of Israel with the use of “our.” The next statement to “Love the Lord your God” is a recurring phrase that is central to the message of the whole book of Deuteronomy (10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20).<sup>57</sup> Here the command to love is also linked to a command to obey. The very fact that love is commanded with an understanding to obey indicates that love is not merely an emotion. It is also a commitment to God that moves the believer to act according to his word (this can be linked to passages like 1 John 5:3).<sup>58</sup> As Christensen notes, “The effect is to emphasize that God’s actions in the historical events that make up the exodus-conquest provide the motivation for a covenant relationship between God and his people.”<sup>59</sup>

The Israelites are commanded to place the commandments “upon their hearts.” With the understanding that the “heart” was the center of intellect, will, and intention it is evident that God wished for his children to think on and meditate about “these words” (the *Shema*). This was so that “obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism, but a response based upon understanding. By reflecting on the commandments, they were reflecting on God’s words (6:1); and by understanding the path of life set down by the commandments, they would at the same time be discovering the way in which God’s

<sup>52</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 162.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 168.

<sup>55</sup> Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 95.

<sup>56</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 163.

<sup>57</sup> Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 169; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 98.

<sup>58</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 95.

<sup>59</sup> Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, vol. 6A, Word Biblical Commentary, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 143.

love for them was given expression.”<sup>60</sup> Christensen points out that God intended for his people to internalize his word as Jeremiah declared, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people (Jeremiah 31:33—NIV).”<sup>61</sup>

All of this but briefly underscores the importance of the Law (in light of the *Shema*) to God’s method of leading his people. Out of his deep love for his children, he instituted the Law (his decrees and commands) so that they could be led properly in the everyday routine of life. However, this was something that the Israelites could never live out in totality. Hence, the need for Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of God’s ultimate plan seen throughout his grand metanarrative of redemptive history.

### *God Leading the Church Through Passages (The Word)*

God’s word leads his people today as it did for the Israelites thousands of years ago. As was mentioned earlier, God’s word is the spiritual sustenance of his people. God’s word contains the words of life and the way by which to live it. However, the word is greater than that which is written. John records, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”<sup>62</sup> He goes on to say, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”<sup>63</sup> This indicates that Jesus Christ is God’s Word, both in flesh and in written form. That word came and dwelt amongst us (God’s presence in Jesus as mentioned earlier) yet lives on through both what has been written and the lives it has been passed on through.

John also says, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”<sup>64</sup> Carson comments on this saying, “The law that was *given* through Moses, and the grace and truth that *came* through Jesus Christ (v. 17), alike sprang from the fullness of the Word (v. 16), whether in his pre-existent oneness with the Father, or in his status as the Word-made-flesh. It is from that ‘fullness’ that we have received ‘one grace replacing another.’”<sup>65</sup> God’s word continues to lead and guide his people today. It is the standard by which all decisions are made when considering course in life and the leading of the Lord’s church.

## II. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

<sup>60</sup> Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 170.

<sup>61</sup> Christensen, *Deuteronomy*, 143.

<sup>62</sup> Jn 1:1-4.

<sup>63</sup> Jn 1:14.

<sup>64</sup> Jn 1:17-18.

<sup>65</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 133-134.

So, what can be gained from this in practical implications for church leadership? The following are some potential takeaways church leaders might glean from this study:

1. Church leadership must follow the “God who goes before us.”
2. God will lead his church through the prophet Jesus. As Jesus led, so should his followers.
3. God provides all the sustenance we need through his word and by physical means as well. Church leaders would do well to consider what physical “needs” the church really has as opposed to physical “desires.” God will provide the “needs” but perhaps not the “desires.” If the “desires” are granted, they are either a gift or not of God.
4. God’s presence through the Spirit will continue to lead his church. It is for church leadership to stop and listen to the still, gentle voice that is calling in order to honor God above all things and to trust in his power and not their own.
5. God’s word should direct each step. Current books, philosophies, worldviews, and culture should never supersede that which has been given through the word.

Church leadership can continue to honor God today by following his lead and then in turn leading in like manner. To God be the glory and honor in all that his people set out to do.

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## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR AN ETHICAL RESPONSE

THOMAS D. HOLLINGER

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Succession planning and management (SP&M) is a critical process for the long-term viability of an organization. Replacement continuity and leadership development are both essential for the process to work effectively. In Apostle Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus, he established what might be considered the first formal SP&M program for the early church. Socio-rhetorical interpretation using intertexture, sacred texture, and social and cultural texture analysis reveals that experience, character, and appropriate capabilities established the basis for Christian leadership succession. Although contemporary SP&M applications have some similarities, they fail to generate the same level of moral scrutiny or dedicated effort, which places today's organizations in a tenuous position. Going forward, organizations should consider the values and determination of the early church, placing more emphasis on SP&M—particularly on leadership development.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The early Christian church formed during a time of enormous change and tremendous pressure. To weather this onslaught, Jesus and his apostles selected, trained, and prepared successors to facilitate the spread of the gospel and ensure the church's survival. This Biblical model of succession planning played a vital role in providing development and continuity. Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus provide particularly revealing attributes regarding the selection and development processes used by the early church for establishing and perpetuating competent, values-based leadership. Exegetical analysis of these and related scriptures using socio-rhetorical

interpretation<sup>1</sup> reveals a deliberate process based on core values, competency models, and appropriate leadership qualities. Intertexture analysis, sacred texture analysis, and social and cultural texture analysis<sup>2</sup> demonstrate that experience, character, and capability were all requisites.

Christ initiated the process of succession planning for the Christian church by selecting and developing the apostles, who later selected and developed others. This process, critical to the early church, is vital to all sustainable organizations. Although there are many differences between the early church and modern organizations, today's leaders can learn important lessons from the approach to succession used by the early church. To facilitate that learning, this essay focuses on the Biblical model of succession planning and its fundamental role in providing development and continuity. It extends the analyses to contemporary applications of succession planning, highlights some of the similarities, identifies some of the gaps, and draws conclusions based on the implications generated throughout the essay.

## II. FOUNDATIONAL SCRIPTURES

Apostle Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus establish the foundational scriptures for this essay. In 1 Timothy 1:2, Paul referred to Timothy as "my loyal child in the faith."<sup>3</sup> Paul provided Timothy with encouragement, instruction, and a warning about false doctrine (1 Tm 1:1-11). In the third chapter, Paul provided Timothy with a detailed explanation of requirements for bishops<sup>4</sup> and deacons.<sup>5</sup> He gave these instructions to ensure clear expectations for those who were to lead the church of the living God and to leave no doubt about the truth. "Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory" (1 Tm 3:16). In a similar manner to the way Paul instructed Timothy, Paul trained Titus, referring to him as "my loyal child in the faith we share" (Ti 1:4). Beginning with the fifth verse, Paul explained the mission he had for Titus: "appoint elders in every town . . . someone who is

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<sup>1</sup> Vernon Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> All scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>4</sup> "The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil" (1 Tm 3:1-7).

<sup>5</sup> "Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. . . . Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tm 3:8-13).

blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious” (vv. 5, 6). Paul then described requirements for bishops to Titus.<sup>6</sup>

In his epistles to Timothy and Titus, Paul established a framework for the selection and development of future Christian leaders. He set a precedent for core Christian values, he established a competency model, and he identified character expectations for Christian leaders. In essence, he created the first formal succession plan for the early Christian church.

### III. SOCIO-RHETORICAL INTERPRETATION

Intertexture analysis,<sup>7</sup> sacred texture analysis,<sup>8</sup> and social and cultural texture analysis<sup>9</sup> facilitate understanding of Paul’s instructions to Timothy and Titus. During Christ’s earthly ministry, he selected twelve apostles, whom he taught and developed in “the way.”<sup>10</sup> After the death of Judas,<sup>11</sup> in accordance with the book of Psalms,<sup>12</sup> the apostles replaced Judas with Matthias.<sup>13</sup> Later, however, God added another apostle to their ranks when Saul of Tarsus met Jesus on the road to Damascus.<sup>14</sup> Saul’s dramatic conversion to Christianity and fervent teaching of the gospel established Saul (also known as Paul) as one of the great leaders of the early church.<sup>15</sup>

Consistent across Apostle Paul’s epistles, he acknowledged God’s sovereignty. Paul also acknowledged his personal responsibility to preach the gospel and the importance of focusing on Christ as the head of the church. Trust, obedience,

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<sup>6</sup> “For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it” (Ti 1:7-9).

<sup>7</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 40-70.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-131.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-94.

<sup>10</sup> Mt, Mk, Lk, and Jn.

<sup>11</sup> Mt 27:3-5 and Acts 1:16-18.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 1:20-22: “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it’; and ‘Let another take his position of overseer.’ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.”

<sup>13</sup> Acts 1:23-26: “So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.”

<sup>14</sup> Acts 9:1-6: “Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ He asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The reply came, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’”

<sup>15</sup> Acts 9:10-28:31, Rom, 1 and 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1 and 2 Thes, 1 and 2 Tm, Ti, and Heb.

righteousness, and Christ-like living are also consistent themes. Unique in his epistles to Timothy and Titus are his explicit instructions for bishops and deacons: leaders of the church.

Paul made it clear that church leadership was “a noble task,”<sup>16</sup> which required wholesome living,<sup>17</sup> an ability to teach,<sup>18</sup> a well-managed household,<sup>19</sup> and experience.<sup>20</sup> Leaders were to be peace loving, not lovers of money.<sup>21</sup> Paul noted that outsiders should find church leaders respectable.<sup>22</sup> He also noted that church leaders were to be serious, ethical, strong in faith, and of clear conscience.<sup>23</sup> He specified that they should be tested and proven blameless.<sup>24</sup> He noted that they were to be married only once,<sup>25</sup> and that they should have achieved “a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>26</sup>

Paul’s writings<sup>27</sup> attest to the deity of God and Jesus Christ. These “sacred texts”<sup>28</sup> reveal the nature of God and the unique, holy relationships of Jesus Christ to God and his church. They reveal a divine history and God’s redemptive plan for humankind through Jesus Christ. They also reveal the commitment required of disciples and apostles. This commitment to righteous living and obedience to Christ helped to establish religious community; however, ensuring that future Christians would meet these standards in perpetuity required training, coaching, and mentoring for the development of ethical church leadership.

Christianity was a fledgling counterculture,<sup>29</sup> struggling to survive amongst the dominant culture<sup>30</sup> of Rome and the subculture<sup>31</sup> of second temple Judaism.<sup>32</sup> In an attempt to establish a better society, the Apostle Paul advocated grace in contrast to violence or legalism.<sup>33</sup> Christ provided an alternative to rebelling against Rome or submitting to extreme Jewish legalism. In Christ, Christians could find new hope and a constructive image of how people and society should behave. For this counterculture to survive, Christianity needed a clear mission, consistent core values, and leadership grounded in Christian faith. Paul’s instructions, teachings, and leadership development efforts established a succession planning program to perpetuate these essential constructs.

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<sup>16</sup> 1 Tm 3:1.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Tm 3:2-3.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Tm 3:2.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Tm 3:4-5.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Tm 3:6.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Tm 3:3.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Tm 3:7.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Tm 3:8-9.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Tm 3:10.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Tm 3:12.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Tm 3:13.

<sup>27</sup> Rom, 1 and 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1 and 2 Thes, 1 and 2 Tm, Ti, and Heb.

<sup>28</sup> Vernon Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 120-131.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>32</sup> Richard A. Horsley and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World* (New York: Grossett/Putnam, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> Acts; Horsley and Silberman, *The Message*.



#### IV. IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS

Contemporary succession planning involves a progressive, generational approach to ensure organizational sustainability and leadership development.<sup>34</sup> By progressively planning for succession at the chief executive level, the direct reports of the chief executive, and then mid-level managers, organizations can help to ensure continuity. By developing talent pools, an organization can ensure bench strength and mitigate the impact of both planned and unplanned turnover.<sup>35</sup> At the highest level of preparation, organizations account for external talent pools as well as those within the organization. Rothwell<sup>36</sup> established a range of criterion for “systematic succession planning and management”<sup>37</sup> in a “fifth-generation approach.”<sup>38</sup> The following list highlights some of those considerations:

- Assessment of present requirements
- Assessment of future requirements
- Appraisal of individual performance
- Assessment of an individual’s future potential
- Establishing individual development plans
- Establishing competency models for targeted groups
- Evaluating the succession planning program
- Providing a statement of values to govern the effort<sup>39</sup>

Similar to the succession planning criteria of the early church, today’s SP&M programs provide consideration for experience and capability. Both programs include formal guidelines, and they both have guidelines for the values driving the effort. Then, as now, it was important for leaders to achieve good standing and be bold in their convictions. However, the early church had some unique and valuable characteristics. The vision, mission, purpose, and objectives of the early Christian church were centered on Christ. Leadership development focused on the ability of future leaders to *teach* and spread the gospel of Christ through a process that reflected Christ’s righteousness and obedience to God. This involved training, coaching, and mentoring to provide support for tactical application and strategic direction. The competency model for the early church set very high moral expectations for the experience, character, and capabilities of future leaders.<sup>40</sup>

Although today’s selection committees claim that high ethical standards are important for today’s leaders, charisma, experience in a high profile organization, and perceived persona play a much stronger role.<sup>41</sup> Values congruency, perpetuation of

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<sup>34</sup> William Rothwell, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*, 3rd ed. (New York: AMACOM, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-81.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Tm and Ti.

<sup>41</sup> Rakesh Khurana, *Searching for a Corporate Savior: The Irrational Quest for Charismatic CEOs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

values, and long-term organizational consequences do not seem to have nearly as strong of an influence in today's decision process. Furthermore, in contrast to the early church, where money and material gain were not of primary concern, in today's organizations, shareholder value and material wealth have taken on a much greater motivating force.<sup>42</sup> CEO turnover may be one consequence of this phenomenon.<sup>43</sup>

There are many obstacles to accomplishing effective succession planning programs: lack of support, politics, a quick-fix mentality, poor visibility, dramatic change, excessive paperwork, and too many meetings can hamper SP&M efforts.<sup>44</sup> Other barriers to succession planning include "inadequate funding, weak development plans, and difficulty in tracking performance."<sup>45</sup>

Recently, there has been a migration from promotion to knowledge transfer,<sup>46</sup> as disruptive restructuring and reorganization place an increased premium on knowledge management and leadership development.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, for the reasons stated above, the reality is that most organizations do not have a defined and structured program.<sup>48</sup> Many CEO's have not identified a successor to their position,<sup>49</sup> and far too many organizations do not know who would replace their president or chief executive if they were to resign unexpectedly.<sup>50</sup>

Another troubling issue with succession planning is a trend in recent decades for organizations to look externally for a charismatic corporate savior.<sup>51</sup> A constrained market for a limited number of candidates in a very secretive process leads to CEO selections that are less analytical and less rigorous than they should be.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the rise of power in the external constituency base of large, public organizations encourages selection of charismatic personas instead of candidates that may be better suited for the long-term interests of the organizations hiring them.<sup>53</sup> The social construction of boards and member relationships with other executives and search firms tends to "hijack" the process and limit the number of plausible outcomes.<sup>54</sup>

The preceding consequences create an environment that challenges the legitimacy of today's SP&M process and the outcomes of that process. In an effort to meet the high expectations of the constituency groups involved, CEO's often look for short-term solutions for raising shareholder prices. They frequently ignore the "human

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Eileen McKeown, "Turbulent Times Highlight the Need for Succession Planning," *T+D* 64, no. 1 (January 2010): 18-19; John Helyar and Carol Hymowitz, "The Recession is Gone, and The CEO Could Be Next," *Bloomberg Businessweek* (February 7-13, 2011): 24-26.

<sup>44</sup> Rothwell, *Effective Succession*, 69-76.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew Paradise, "Many Barriers Inhibit Success of Succession Planning," *T+D* 64, no. 6 (June 2010): 60-61.

<sup>46</sup> William J. Rothwell, "The Future of Succession Planning," *T+D* 64, no. 9 (September 2010): 50-54.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Kleinsorge, "Expanding the Role of Succession Planning," *T+D* 64, no. 4 (April 2010): 66-69.

<sup>48</sup> "Succession Planning in C-Suite Is Lagging," *T+D* 64, no. 1 (2010): 23; Paradise, "Many Barriers Inhibit."

<sup>49</sup> "Succession Planning," 23.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Rakesh Khurana, *Searching for a Corporate Savior: The Irrational Quest for Charismatic CEOs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> Khurana, *Searching for a Corporate Savior*.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

equation”<sup>55</sup> and overlook the cultural impact of downsizing, re-engineering, outsourcing, and other cost cutting processes. Those attempts to improve organizational performance in the short-term often fail because leaders do not fully appreciate their long-term impact on people and organizational culture.<sup>56</sup>

## V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Succession planning is essential for continuity and leadership development. That was true for the early Christian church, and it is true for contemporary organizations. Then, as now, leaders recognized the need to have a succession planning program. Nevertheless, too many contemporary organizations are practicing an approach to succession planning that is not working. Instead of establishing SP&M programs that develop leaders for the future, many organizations do not even have formal plans in place to replace senior leaders. This places many of today’s organizations in a weak position, lacking leadership bench-strength and making them vulnerable to an environment that is more demanding than ever.

It is worth noting that Paul was not one of the twelve original apostles. Sometimes it is necessary to bring someone into an organization from the outside. However, Paul’s Jewish heritage and powerful conversion uniquely qualified him for his new responsibilities. He was committed to the vision of Christ, he studied under the tutelage of Christ and those that had been with Jesus during his earthly ministry, and he was familiar with Roman and Jewish culture. Furthermore, Paul was passionate about developing future leaders, equipping them through training, coaching, and mentoring processes that ensured consistent values.

When contemporary organizations look for a charismatic leader from the outside, too much of their motive is to impress external constituents. Since the process sometimes lacks appropriate scrutiny, organizations select leaders that do not always meet the long-term needs of the organization. This process can also fail to develop internal leaders.

Today’s organizations should dedicate more effort to SP&M programs. Furthermore, they should take the development of future leaders more seriously. The goal should be for replacement continuity and leadership development to ensure long-term sustainability. When these organizations establish succession planning and management programs, they would benefit from the simplicity of the three core constructs of the early church: select leaders with the right experience, select leaders with the right character, and select leaders with the right competencies for the job. Finally, they should have the will to ensure the viability of their organizations by training, developing, and nurturing future leaders.

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<sup>55</sup> Jeffrey Pfeffer, *The Human Equation* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 1998).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

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Tom Hollinger is the founder of Leadership Learning Initiatives, a coaching and consulting practice focusing on communication, leadership, organizational development, and change management. As a lifelong learner, Tom has completed a BBA and an MBA from the Pennsylvania State University and a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Regent University. He has a Certificate in Biblical Studies from the Institute of Biblical Studies, a Certificate in Human Resource Management from the Harrisburg Area Community College, and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Strategic Leadership from Regent University. Most recently, Tom completed the Doctor of Strategic Leadership program at Regent University.

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## **LEADERSHIP REFLECTION: BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS LIKE JESUS DID**

KAY M. BOWER

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This essay seeks to explore building of the Christian community, exemplified by Jesus' interactions with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, as a model for strategic leadership and the promise this model holds for twenty-first century organizations and leaders. Leadership strategy, as explored in this essay, will demonstrate how organizations can use Christ's example to help make the "leap" from knowledge to understanding, to value service and honoring as basic tenets of the organizational culture, and to invest in people as a foundational element of the organization.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The model of Jesus' interactions with the disciples on the road to Emmaus has many implications for the twenty-first century organization and its leaders. In this story, Jesus challenges the disciples' cultural boundaries and turns the status quo upside down with his lack of concern for his position and honor. Rather than conform to the expected behaviors of first-century society, the risen Savior reaches out to two hurting, discouraged disciples with compassion, serving them and creating the foundation for how the Christian community will operate. Jesus establishes that knowing him and understanding his mission flows from the study of scripture and the breaking of bread.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas M. Rosica, "The Road to Emmaus and the Road to Gaza: Luke 24:13-35 and Acts 8:26-40," *Worship* 68 (1994): 117-131.

In this essay, I will highlight three of Jesus' actions that founded the Christian community and explore how those actions would be effective for contemporary organizations and leaders. In the Emmaus passage, Luke 24:13-35,<sup>2</sup> Jesus acts to:

- Help those around him make the “leap” from knowledge to understanding
- Place the values of service to others and hospitality to all above personal honor or “rightful” place in the organization
- Treat his disciples as individuals worthy of dignity and honor

### *Making the Leap to Understanding*

The strategic design of the early Church communities was founded on two pillars: knowing Christ through scripture and through the breaking of bread. In the first half of this passage, verses 13-27 establish the first pillar and demonstrate the impacts of Jesus' teaching his fulfillment of the scriptures, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” (v. 27). The contrast between the knowledge the disciples on the road to Emmaus had and their inability to apply that knowledge to the events around them *until* Jesus himself made understanding known is clearly shown.

Knowing Christ through scripture is more than just having knowledge. It's even more than being present in the time that history-making events are occurring. The disciples walking to Emmaus had been with Christ. They had met him, followed him, heard him speak, and seen him heal; they'd eaten with him and prayed with him. Yet that didn't make them able to see Christ in scripture. Cleopas and his companion were Jews. They had studied the scripture and knew the Torah. But their conception of Jesus as the Messiah—the one who would take away the Roman oppression and create a free Israel<sup>3</sup>—blinded them to seeing his true mission and deafened their ears to hearing his true words. Even when Jesus clearly stated what would happen (cf. Lk 9:22, 18:31-34), the meaning of his words was hidden from the disciples and they truly did not understand.<sup>4</sup>

So, on that Sunday after Jesus was crucified, these two disciples leave Jerusalem, the known center of Israel, and head toward Emmaus. The disciples are discouraged, sad, confused,<sup>5</sup> and, even though they had heard the reports that the tomb is empty, they are walking away from their calling as disciples. On their journey, they meet a stranger who questions them and learns of their experiences, disappointment, and their lack of understanding. Imagine their astonishment, perhaps even their affront, at having this stranger rebuke them for

<sup>2</sup> All scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> James Maxey, “The Road to Emmaus: Changing Expectations,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 32 (2005): 112-123.

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, “They Recognized Him; and He Became Invisible to Them,” *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 145-152.

<sup>5</sup> Maxey, “The Road to Emmaus,” 117.

their foolishness and lack of comprehension. But Jesus does not leave them in their uncomprehending state. Instead, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures” (Lk 24:27).

The significance of this “session” of teaching cannot be overstated. Not only did understanding dawn as Jesus taught these disciples, but he laid the foundation for the first pillar of the Christian community—study of the scriptures as a means to know him.<sup>6</sup> This meant that one could know Jesus without having physically met Jesus. A powerful certainty of the “rightness” of following Jesus could be assured simply through seeking to know him by reading and studying scripture. Thus Jesus’ fulfillment of the scriptures assured the vision of God’s salvation could progress throughout the ages.

As leaders, part of our strategy must be to help those around us make the “leap” from knowledge to understanding so that they, like the disciples, are enabled to progress.<sup>7</sup> Organizations that develop the ability to draw understanding from knowledge are able to harvest the diverse insights that result and deepen strategic thinking.<sup>8</sup> These individual contributions enable the organization to meet the challenges facing the business.<sup>9</sup> The disciples had the knowledge of the scriptures but no understanding of how to apply that knowledge to the current situation. Contemporary organizations must make sure that beyond knowing the strategy, everyone understands that strategy so that they are able to apply that knowledge to the current situation. To accomplish this, the organization, its leaders, and its followers, must be willing to study and to learn with the goal of building not just knowledge but understanding.

The strength of learning organizations is in the ability not just to acquire knowledge but to reflect on the implications, analyze how what they do contributes to organizational issues, and find ways to change for improvement.<sup>10</sup> This becomes then a “knowing” of the self within the context of the organization, much like Jesus became known to the disciples within the context of the scriptures. This study and learning allows people in the organization to connect with, to “know” the organization, and encourages the deepening of knowledge to understanding that leads to progress and improvement.

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond A. Blacketer, “Word and Sacrament on the Road to Emmaus: Homiletical Reflections on Luke 24:13-35,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 38 (2003): 321-329.

<sup>7</sup> David Gyertson, (2009). “The Fabric of Christian Leadership: Stretching Minds, Cradling Hearts, and Equipping Hands for Noble, Effective, and Sacrificial Service,” *Inner Resources for Leaders*, 2 (2009): 1-12, [http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/innerresources/vol2iss1/gyertson\\_spirituality.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/innerresources/vol2iss1/gyertson_spirituality.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> T. Irene Sanders, *Strategic Thinking and the New Science: Planning in the Midst of Chaos, Complexity, and Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Richard L. Hughes and Katherine Colarelli Beatty, *Becoming A Strategic Leader: Your Role in Your Organization’s Enduring Success* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Henry Mintzberg, Bruce Ahlstrand, and Joseph Lampel, *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through the Wilds of Strategic Management* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

### *Conferring Honor and Value by Serving*

In the actions of Jesus in this passage, the social and cultural norms of honor<sup>11</sup> and the place of privilege are shown in contrast against the learning the disciples have absorbed regarding hospitality to the poor, sick, hungry—“sinners.” During this encounter, Jesus ignores the standard cultural expectations that those who invite someone to stay with them are the hosts. In this case, Cleopas and his friend have asked, really pleaded, with Jesus to stay the night with them rather than journey further.<sup>12</sup> As those who extended the invitation, the disciples would be expected to provide for their guest and “host” the evening meal. Were he following cultural and social norms, Jesus should expect to be given the place of honor and served, as was his due as the stranger and invited guest.<sup>13</sup>

But that is not what happens. Without great fuss or fanfare, Jesus takes over the start of the meal, and seated with the disciples he “took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them” (v. 30). In these very ordinary circumstances, the most extraordinary of things happens: the disciples realize they are in the presence of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord.<sup>14</sup>

Through these actions Jesus sets into place a foundational act for the early Christian church—the breaking of bread. The act of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving was one the disciples had seen many times.<sup>15</sup> Jesus’ actions set this act as a second method of knowing him. Studying and understanding the scriptures reveals Christ’s fulfillment of them and shows a way to know Jesus Christ through God’s Word. Participating in the breaking of bread provides a second method of knowing Jesus, through the symbolic act of entering into partaking of the body and blood of the Savior.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus never did anything he did not want his disciples to emulate. Jesus never said anything he did not want his disciples to hear, repeat, know, and understand. His leadership was 100 percent authentic, actionable, and pleasing to God. He was willing to repeat, over and over, those actions that were the central themes of his ministry in order to allow the significance and the familiarity of those acts to become a method for knowing and recognizing him.<sup>17</sup>

As leaders in the twenty-first century, Christians are called to place the value of service to others<sup>18</sup> above personal honor or our “rightful” place in the

<sup>11</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Stanley P. Saunders, “Discernment on the Way to Emmaus: Resurrection Imagination and Practices in Luke 24:13-35,” *Journal for Preachers* (Easter 1997): 44-49.

<sup>13</sup> Maxey, “The Road to Emmaus.”

<sup>14</sup> Hans Deiter Betz, “The Origin and Nature of Christian Faith According to the Emmaus Legend (Luke 24:13-32),” *Interpretation* 23 (1969): 32-46.

<sup>15</sup> Saunders, “Discernment on the Way.”

<sup>16</sup> Joseph M. Grassi, “Emmaus Revisited,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 26 (1964): 463-467.

<sup>17</sup> Maxey, “The Road to Emmaus.”

<sup>18</sup> Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *The Servant Leader: Transforming Your Heart, Head, Hands & Habits* (Nashville: J. Countryman, 2003).



organization, just as Jesus demonstrated. Jesus' actions can be integrated into the culture of an organization through the taking of both symbolic and substantive actions.<sup>19</sup> Equalizing the physical environment so that all members of the organization have equivalent space, common language, and elimination of executive "perks" such as reserved parking and rooms only for executives' use contribute to the symbolic leveling of an organization. Eliminating pay inequalities and providing everyone in the organization with the opportunity to benefit from achieved profit are substantive equalizing actions.<sup>20</sup> These actions contribute to an environment of equality that clearly demonstrates individuals in the organization are equally valued and expected to value others.

A contemporary example of this principle at work can be found in Southwest Airlines. In an industry rife with exploding costs and shrinking profits, Southwest posted a profit for a record thirty-three straight years as of 2006.<sup>21</sup> This remarkable performance has at its roots the valuing of employees as partners, innovators, and empowered decision makers. Employees are valued and invested in, a concept made evident not only by the organization's excellent performance but by the fact that Southwest does not have a Human Resources department—it has a People and Leadership Development department.<sup>22</sup>

Jesus taught his disciples through his words, in parables, in demonstrations of healing, through prayer, and obedience to God. His actions, words, and behavior were a metaphor encouraging the disciples to think and act beyond their culture and circumstances.<sup>23</sup>

Leadership in the twenty-first century needs this same ability to find metaphors that offer pictures of the values held. Metaphors challenge the entire organization to develop strategy for understanding and acting appropriately to fulfill the purposes of the organization.<sup>24</sup> The power of providing different ways for the vision and mission of the organization to be represented and communicated enables the strategy of the organization to be known and understood by everyone.<sup>25</sup> The use of metaphors clarifies and enforces the decision making and action that aligns with the vision and mission allowing each member of the organization to address complex problems, to think and act beyond the current culture and circumstances.

### *Investing in Our People*

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<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Pfeffer, *The Human Equation: Building Profits by Putting People First* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> "Southwest Airlines and the MBTI Assessment Creating a Culture That Soars: A Case Study of Southwest Airlines," *CPP.com*, [http://www.cpp.com/pr/southwest\\_airlines\\_2006.pdf](http://www.cpp.com/pr/southwest_airlines_2006.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Context, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Sanders, "Discernment on the Way."

In this passage is also a demonstration of the tremendous patience of God. Jesus, while upbraiding the disciples for their slowness to believe, does not leave them in this state. Nor does he direct them to “make sense” of all they have learned and seen on their own.<sup>26</sup> After three full years of mentoring, guiding, teaching, leading, and serving the disciples, after clearly stating the course of his life and death and the purposes of both, what does Jesus do when he finds these two disciples discouraged and leaving the city? He teaches them again, spends more time with them, and has a meal with them, demonstrating through his words and his actions who their companion is and the ways to know him.

In this act, Jesus establishes the early Christian church as a place to learn and be upheld by those in the community with the goal of becoming a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> His actions move against the cultural norm of “wantlessness.” This concept permeated the culture of Jesus’ time with the belief that local group obligations, limited resources, the requirement to pay rent, and supply a household meant there was no “extra” leftover. Each person not of the wealthy classes would have to make do only with what was available.<sup>28</sup> Rather than underscore that there is “only so much” of God’s kingdom available to the disciples, Jesus instead demonstrates limitless patience and abundance of life found in the scriptures and through the breaking of bread.<sup>29</sup>

In today’s economy, there is kind of corollary “wantlessness” in many organizations. Rather than seeking to be challenged, invested in, and nurtured, employees are instead told they should be “grateful” simply to have any job. The message is to continually do more with less<sup>30</sup> and just be glad to still be paid. As a result, many contemporary organizations are unwilling to “waste” time on teaching and mentoring resources. Unlike the time Jesus invested in his disciples, the semi-annual or annual performance review process in our contemporary organizations does not tolerate three years of incomprehension, mistaken purpose, and inability to enter fully into the performance of the assigned duties, even under the extraordinary circumstances of the loss of the leader. Contemporary organizations want performance that benefits the bottom line; human capital that contributes to the mission and goals of the organization and adds value without increasing expense.<sup>31</sup>

Jesus had disciples—followers if you will. But they weren’t just “resources” that followed Jesus around, doing what he did. They were people. In the intimate act of sharing a meal, an act Jesus repeated with his disciples many times, Jesus’ true identity was made clear. As he treated them as people to be served,

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<sup>26</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, “Sermon on Luke 24:13-35,” *Interpretation* (July 2008): 294-303.

<sup>27</sup> Betz, “The Origin and Nature.”

<sup>28</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*.

<sup>29</sup> Robert J. Karris, “Luke 24:13-35,” *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 57-61.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Kanazawa, *Never Say ‘Do More with Less Again,’* <http://www.slackermanager.com/2008/03/no-more-do-more-with-less.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Phil Goldstein, “Doing More with Less: Obstacle or Opportunity for IT?” *Educause Review* (November/December 2004): 14-36.

their eyes were opened and they recognized him.<sup>32</sup> Jesus' ability to see each disciple as a person, to treat each in a way that allowed them to learn from him, know him, recognize him, and demonstrate his teaching to others conferred dignity and honor on each disciple without regard for their social standing, family background, wealth, or personality.

Contemporary organizations need to treat their resources not as "human capital" but as *people*, individuals with unique capabilities, worthy of dignity and honor. There must be an acknowledgement of the power of dealing intimately and repeatedly with each person as an individual and not just as a piece of human capital whose worth to the organization is measured solely as a part of the pool of human capital that propels the organization to success.

Consider TDIndustries (TDI), an "employee-owned company with corporate offices in Dallas, Texas. The firm has become one of America's premier facilities management and specialty construction companies with annual revenues of approximately \$300 million, more than 1700 'TDPartners,' and offices in Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Fort Worth and Phoenix."<sup>33</sup> TDI has been named to *Fortune* magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" list every year since 1998.

How does TDI achieve such significant results? Through implementation of and an on-going commitment to servant leadership as the foundation on which the culture of the organization is built. TDI's website describes the culture this way: "TDIndustries strives to model the management style defined by Robert Greenleaf as 'Servant Leadership.' We firmly believe our shift to this culture during the 70s has made us one of the most unique companies in the country—it is to this practice that we attribute our many years of success."<sup>34</sup> Quoted in the *Fortune* magazine article "The Top 100 Best Companies to Work for in America," one employee of TDI described the impact of the culture of the organization by saying, "This company makes you feel like a human being again."<sup>35</sup>

By making service to others a key tenet of the organization, TDI has made each employee a partner rather than a piece of human capital. Doing so has not only made employee feel human, it has built an unarguable record of success as both an organization and an employer.

### *Conclusion*

Jesus' teaching of his fulfillment of the scriptures and modeling of service through the breaking of bread served to establish the foundation of the Christian community.<sup>36</sup> Jesus used these principles to found the early Christian community

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<sup>32</sup> Joseph Plevnik, "The Eyewitnesses of the Risen Jesus in Luke 24," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 90-103.

<sup>33</sup> TDIndustries, <http://www.tdindustries.com>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Robert Levering and Milton Moskowitz, "The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America," *Fortune* 137 (1998): 84-95.

<sup>36</sup> Von Rad, "Sermon on Luke 24."

and created churches that continue to flourish and thrive 2,000+ years after their establishment.

As a result, the strategies Jesus used on the road to Emmaus present a compelling model for the contemporary leader and organization. As we seek to emulate Christ, to assist others in making the “leap” from knowledge to understanding, to serve without regard for personal honor or place and treat members of the organization like valued and respected partners, we can build effective contemporary organizations and leaders with the strategies Jesus used on the road to Emmaus.

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### **About the Author**

Dr. Kay M. Bower, PMP, holds a Doctorate in strategic leadership and entrepreneurship from Regent University and a Master of Science in Information Science from Penn State University. In more than twenty-five years of professional business experience, Kay has successfully held positions as an individual contributor, team member, team leader, manager, and in upper management. Kay is also a published author, with articles in journals and online magazines such as *Leadership Advance Online*, *Leading Today*, *The Journal of Strategic Leadership*, and *The Journal of Practical Consulting*.  
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