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JOHN 21: A JOHANNINE MODEL OF LEADERSHIP

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In John 21:1-25, the author, John, retells his personal account of an encounter between his fellow disciples and Jesus following His resurrection. Utilizing inner texture analysis in the socio-rhetorical tradition, I examine the text and look to John's perspective of Jesus as a leader. My analysis also examines from the Johannine viewpoint Jesus' role as change agent and guide with a focus on Jesus' interaction with Peter. I compare and contrast this insight with current social theories and models of leadership, as well as outline the social and cultural dynamics of leadership.

I: Inner Texture Analysis of John 21:1-25

The use of socio-rhetorical criticism, a multi-dimensional approach to textual analysis introduced by Robbins, allows us to use multiple layers or textures to interpret the text. While his approach involves several perspectives in which to explore the various textures, we focus on the first of these perspectives, the inner texture. He suggests that this involves looking at "the repetition of particular words, the creation of beginnings and endings, alternation of speech and storytelling, particular ways in which the words present arguments, and the particular 'feel' or aesthetic of the text."¹

¹ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 3.

Narratological Units

In commencing this socio-rhetorical interpretation of John 21:1-25, it would appear there are three narratological units within the text, each beginning with a narrative account. The first unit begins and ends with the voice of the narrator in v. 1 setting the scene of Jesus' encounter with His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. In the second unit, the voice of narrator prepares the reader for Jesus' discussion with Peter in v. 15 and ends with the voice of Jesus (attributed speech) in v. 19. The third unit also begins with the voice of narrator in v. 20 regarding Peter's reaction to his fate and that of the beloved disciple, and ends with the voice of the narrator who reminds us that he is a witness to these accounts. The three textual units within John 21:1-25 are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Narratological Units in John 21:1-25 (NRSV)

Introduction: John 21:1-14

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. |
| 2 | Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. |
| 3 | Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. |
| 4 | Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. |
| 5 | Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." |
| 6 | He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. |
| 7 | That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. |
| 8 | But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. |
| 9 | When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. |
| 10 | Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." |
| 11 | So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. |
| 12 | Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. |
| 13 | Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. |
| 14 | This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. |

Body: John 21:15-19

- 15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."
- 16 A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."
- 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."
- 18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go."
- 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."
-

Conclusion: John 21:20-25

- 20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?"
- 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"
- 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!"
- 23 So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die.
- 24 Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true.
- 25 But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.
-

Repetitive-Progressive Texture and Pattern in John 21:1-25

The first element of the inner texture analysis begins by examining the repetitive-progressive texture and pattern in John 21:1-25. This section looks at the patterns that emerge through the repetition and progression of key words and topics.

Repetitive texture and pattern in John 21:1-25. Table 2 outlines the words and phrases that are repeated in the text. The list highlights the characters, actions, phrases, and emotions presented throughout the pericope.

In analyzing the repetitive texture and pattern, the following characters stand out in the text: Jesus, Peter, John (also referred to as the "disciple whom Jesus loved"), and the other disciples (to a lesser extent). The important objects that are repeated throughout the text include: references to fish or fishing, the boat, and breakfast or bread. Important questions, statements, or commands that are repeated by either Jesus or Peter include: "Do you love me?", "You know that I love you," "Feed/tend my lambs/sheep," and "Follow me."

Table 2. Repetitive and Progressive Texture and Pattern in John 21:1-25

| Introduction: John 21:1-14 | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|------|---------------------------------|-----------|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Jesus | | | disciples | | | | | |
| 2 | | | Simon Peter | disciples | sons of Zebedee | | | | |
| 3 | Jesus | | Simon Peter | disciples | | | | go fishing | boat |
| 4 | Jesus | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Jesus | | | | | | | no fish | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | so many fish | boat |
| 7 | Jesus | Lord | Simon Peter /Peter | | disciple whom Jesus loved | | | | |
| 8 | | | | disciples | | | | net full of fish | boat |
| 9 | | | | | | | charcoal fire | fish | bread |
| 10 | Jesus | | | | | | | some of the fish | |
| 11 | | | Simon Peter | | | | | full of large fish | |
| 12 | Jesus | Lord | | disciples | | | | | breakfast |
| 13 | Jesus | | | | | | | fish | bread |
| 14 | Jesus | | | disciples | | | | | |
| Body: John 21:15-19 | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | Jesus | Lord | Simon Peter / Simon son of John | | | Do you love me more than these? | You know that I love you | feed my lambs | breakfast |
| 16 | Jesus | Lord | Simon son of John | | | Do you love me? | You know that I love you | tend my sheep | |
| 17 | Jesus | Lord | Simon son of John / Peter | | | Do you love me? | You know that I love you | feed my sheep | |
| 19 | | | | | | | | | follow me |
| Conclusion: John 21:20-25 | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | Jesus | | Peter | | disciple whom Jesus loved, one who reclined next to Jesus | | | | following them |
| 21 | Jesus | Lord | Peter | | | | | | |
| 22 | Jesus | | | | this disciple | | | | follow me |
| 23 | Jesus | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | | | | | the disciple | | | | |
| 25 | Jesus | | | | | | | | |

Progressive texture and pattern in John 21:1-25. Progressive textures (i.e., progressions of words or phrases) weave their way throughout this text. They include: progressive patterns of the names used of Jesus, progressive patterns of characters (more specifically, Peter), and progressive patterns of speech (i.e., Jesus' dialogue with Peter). These particular progressive textures are also outlined in Table 2 and are discussed below.

Jesus' name is used seventeen times in this pericope. Each time it is used in a narrative context by the author. Jesus is referred to as 'Lord' six times: once in a narrative context, once by the disciple whom Jesus loved (i.e. John), and four times by Peter. The disciples only refer to Jesus as 'Lord' in this text.

Throughout the book of John, the disciples refer to Jesus as either 'Rabbi' (*rhabbī*²) which is also translated as 'Teacher' or 'Master,' or 'Lord' (*kyrios*³) which is also translated as 'Sir.' At the outset of this gospel the title, Rabbi is used more frequently. Following the 11th chapter, the title 'Lord' is the only form utilized by the disciples. In John 20:16, Mary uses the title 'Rabboni' (only one of two occasions where this most honored form of *rhabbi* is used to refer to Jesus and which also means 'Lord') to address Jesus.

The frequent references to Jesus highlight His central role in this pericope. As I indicate in the following section, the other central character in this passage is His disciple, Peter. The other disciples, including the beloved disciple, play a lesser role.

The disciple, Peter, is referred to 13 times in this text. He is called Peter, Simon Peter, and Simon son of John. As a group, the disciples are referenced six times. The author also refers to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" six times (once as one of the sons of Zebedee). This expression is found only in this gospel and is used four times (all taking place after Jesus' resurrection).

In the opening and middle unit, the author, in a narrative context, refers to Peter primarily as 'Simon Peter.' Jesus addresses (attributed speech) Peter, in the middle unit, as 'Simon, son of John.' In the final unit, the author refers to Peter simply as 'Peter.'

Peter's encounter with Jesus by the Sea of Tiberius represents the first substantial conversation that is recorded in Scripture between the two of them following Peter's denial of Jesus. As such, this may reflect the tension that appears to permeate their reunion. Jesus' intentional use of Peter's original name initially leaves the impression that Jesus might have had some second thoughts about bestowing the name 'Cephas' (the Aramaic equivalent to 'Peter') on Simon, Son of John, in John 1:42.⁴ The author's repeated use of the name 'Simon Peter' or 'Peter' throughout this chapter seems to indicate that the author did not have any doubts as to the continued appropriateness of Peter's title. In fact, the author's last two references to Peter in the closing unit drop the name 'Simon' and refer to the disciple simply as 'Peter.'

The repetition and progression of speech and actions in this pericope focuses the attention on three key memories or events in Peter's life as a disciple. These events

² James A Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domain: Greek (New Testament)*, Electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 4806.

³ *Ibid.*, 3261.

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Electronic ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), s.v. 'John 21, verses 15-19', para. 6.

(found within each of the narratological units) include: Jesus' first encounter with the disciples (John 1:37-51), Peter's denial of Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest while he stood warming himself near the charcoal fire (John 18:18), and Jesus' renewed call for Peter to follow Him.

In the opening unit, Peter's seemingly resigned decision to return to his fishing roots (John 21:3) suggests a hint of despair⁵ or purposelessness⁶. Yet once more he encounters a layman who, despite the fisherman's more experienced judgment, tells him to throw out his nets whereupon the nets become overloaded with fish. As if to heighten Peter's disconnected state of mind, the author emphasizes that it is the beloved disciple who realizes that it is Jesus who calls to them from ashore. When Peter grasps that it is his Lord who stands on the shoreline, in many ways his excitement to hastily jump into the sea to meet Him reflects the powerful impact of his relationship with Jesus. Next to Jesus once again, Peter is then reminded of a second key event from his past.

The smell and warmth of the charcoal fire likely bring back another set of powerful memories for Peter, although this time the recollections are not as pleasant. Jesus' dialogue with Peter in the middle unit mirrors the manner in which Peter denied Jesus. Three times Jesus asks Peter whether he loves Him. Yet Jesus' methods are not designed to dwell on the past but rather to restore and re-commission Peter to be the leader he was called to be.⁷ As such, Jesus asks him to feed/tend to his lambs/sheep. In the first instance, Jesus calls Peter to feed His lambs, that is, to care for the young ones in the flock. Then Jesus calls Peter to shepherd the more mature members of the flock. His third call asks Peter to feed these same individuals. The three-fold repetition of Jesus' question, Peter's insistent reply, followed by Jesus' command also underscores the gravity of Jesus' call.⁸ His call for Peter's commitment would take on a more serious tone.

The closing unit highlights the third memory in Peter's ministry. In John 13:36-37, Peter commits himself to follow Jesus no matter what the price. In verse 38, Jesus challenges this notion indicating that Peter would first deny Jesus three times. Returning to our text, Jesus indicates that Peter's call to follow Him will, in fact, require him to lay down his life for Jesus. In this final unit, some clarification is also provided regarding John's fate. While Peter is said to face martyrdom for his faith, there had been some speculation in the early church that John would not die. Jesus' rebuttal to Peter is clear, regardless of his fate or that of the other disciples; Peter's response is simply to follow his Master.

⁵ D. Guthrie et al., eds., *The New Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdsman, 1970), 966.

⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman, 1971), 862.

⁷ Andreas J. Kostenberger, "John," in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 597.

⁸ Patrick E. Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22, no. 75 (1999): 61-62, Kostenberger, "John," 597.

Opening-Middle-Closing Texture in John 21:1-25

Shifting from the repetitive-progressive texture and pattern analysis, the attention centers on a review of the opening-middle-closing texture. As noted earlier, there appear to be three units within John 21:1-25: an introductory unit found in John 21:1-14, a middle unit in John 21:15-19, and a concluding unit in John 21:20-25.

The nature of opening unit in relation to its closure. Within the introductory unit, the author sets the stage for another of Jesus’ encounters with His disciples following His resurrection. The elements within this unit include an opening section in John 21:1-3, a middle section in John 21:4-8, and an ending section in John 21:9-14. Both the middle and ending sections could be further broken down into subsequent opening-middle-ending units. These are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Opening, Middle, and Closing Texture and Pattern of John 21:1-25

| Introduction: John 21:1-14 | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Opening | v. 1-3 | Narrative account which sets the stage for Jesus’ encounter with the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias |
| Middle | v. 4-8 | Narrative account and dialogue between Peter, the other disciples, and Jesus while the disciples are fishing at sea |
| | Beginning v. 4 | Narrative account which introduces Jesus’ arrival on the scene |
| | Middle v. 5-6 | Dialogue between Jesus (standing ashore) and the disciples (who are still out at sea fishing). At this point the disciples do not know that it is Jesus with whom they are speaking. |
| | End v. 7-8 | Narrative account describing the disciples’ recognition that it is Jesus with whom they are speaking |
| Closing | v. 9-14 | Narrative account, as well as Jesus’ conversation with the disciples, describing their encounter ashore |
| | Beginning v. 9 | Narrative account setting the scene ashore with Jesus and the disciples |
| | Middle v. 10-12a | Jesus’ conversation with Peter and the other disciples inviting them to join him at the campfire and to bring the fish ashore |
| | End v. 12b-14 | Narrative account describing the disciples breakfast with Jesus |
| Body: John 21:15-19 | | |
| Opening | v. 15a | Narrative account which links the opening and middle scenes and prepares the reader for the subsequent conversation between Jesus and Peter |
| Middle | v. 15b-17 | Jesus and Peter’s exchange regarding Peter’s love for Jesus and Jesus’ subsequent command to Peter |
| Closing | v. 18-19 | Jesus prophetic utterance of Peter’s fate and a call for Peter to once again follow Jesus |
| Conclusion: John 21:20-25 | | |
| Opening | v. 20 | Narrative account which turns the discussion to John’s fate |
| Middle | v. 21-23 | Jesus and Peter’s conversation regarding John’s fate and Jesus’ requirement for Peter to follow Him regardless of the circumstances |
| Closing | v. 24-25 | Narrative account closing the book of John and stating the authorship of the book as belonging to the disciple John |

The body of this pericope begins with a narrative account (John 21:15a) linking the change in focus from the breakfast to Jesus and Peter’s conversation. The middle section consists of the three verses (John 21:15b-17) describing the exchange between Jesus and Peter regarding Peter’s love for Jesus and Jesus’ subsequent commands to Peter. It is within these verses that Jesus both challenges and restores Peter to minister to and serve the Church. Closing out the body (John 21:18-19), the author addresses the implications of Peter’s ministry and service with a prophetic utterance regarding Peter’s future. Jesus’ call for Peter to once again follow Him would come with a heavy price.

The concluding unit in the text turns the attention to beloved disciple’s fate and the need for Peter to follow Jesus regardless of the circumstance. The opening section provides a narrative account (John 21:20) in which Peter turns the attention to John. In the middle section (John 21:21-23) Peter, concerned about the prophetic remarks regarding his future, challenges Jesus about John’s fate. Jesus does not waver and calls Peter to follow Him in spite of the cost. The concluding section to this unit (John 21:24-25), this pericope, and ultimately this gospel, reminds readers of the gospel’s authorship, the veracity of the testimony which it includes, and the stories about Jesus that remain untold.

In summary, the introductory unit sets the stage for the exchange between Jesus and Peter in the body of the pericope. The middle unit highlights Jesus’ unwavering commitment to His disciple, Peter, in spite of his stumbles in the courtyard prior to Jesus’ crucifixion. The concluding unit addresses the fate of both Peter and John with respect to the cost of following Jesus, while also bringing closure to the gospel.

The nature of the topics that replace topics at the beginning. The transition between and within each of the units can also be depicted by reviewing the topic that opens each unit and how it is replaced by subsequent topics. The nature of the replacement of the topics in John 21:1-25 is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Nature of topics that replace topics at the beginning of John 21:1-25

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--|
| Introduction: John 21:1-14 | | |
| Opening | v. 1 | A <u>narrative statement</u> concerning Jesus’ appearance to the disciples |
| Closing | v. 14 | A <u>narrative statement</u> explaining that this was Jesus’ third appearance to them |
| Body: John 21:15-19 | | |
| Opening | v. 15 | An initial <u>question</u> by Jesus regarding Peter’s love for and commitment to Jesus and His subsequent command to Peter |
| Closing | v. 18 | A <u>prophetic utterance</u> of Jesus regarding the cost of Peter’s commitment to Him |
| Conclusion: John 21:20-25 | | |
| Opening | v. 18 | A <u>narrative statement</u> regarding Peter’s inquiry as to John’s fate |
| Closing | v. 24 | A <u>narrative statement</u> concerning the book’s authorship and veracity |

Function of the parts of the text in relation to the entire text. The story that is weaved through this pericope focuses on Jesus and the restoration and re-commissioning of Peter to follow Jesus and to tend to His followers. The introductory

unit not only sets the stage for this restoration but also provides a memory-laden backdrop (as previously discussed) for Jesus and Peter's exchange in the middle unit. Their interaction also draws upon the context of Peter's denial of Jesus in the form of His questions and commands. It is not a trite discussion. Jesus uses the occasion to seriously ascertain Peter's love for and commitment to Him. This leads into the concluding unit that continues the theme of commitment using the backdrop of the beloved disciple's fate.

Narrational Texture and Pattern in John 21:1-25

Turning to the narrational texture and pattern in the text, I examine the "scenes" within the narrative, the active "voices," the sequence of the narrative, and its plot. Table 5 outlines the three major scenes and the alternation of active voices in John 21:1-25.

The "scenes" in John 21:1-25. There appear to be three separate scenes in this pericope. Each of the scenes begins with an introduction by the implied narrator. The first scene (John 21:1-14) takes place on or along the Sea of Tiberias and involves Jesus and the disciples. It opens with Peter and the disciples deciding to go fishing and eventually encountering Jesus. Following their time at sea, Jesus invites them to join him around the campfire to have some breakfast. The second scene (John 21:15-19) occurs after the meal and focuses on Peter alone with Jesus. Some time after their discussion, the third scene (John 21:20-25) depicts Jesus, Peter, and (at least) John walking from the location of the second scene, whereby Peter turns and notices John. While the attention does turn to John, he is not directly involved in the conversation.

The "voices" and sequence of the narrative. There are four distinct voices in this text. They include: the narrator, Jesus, Peter, and the six other disciples that were present at the time. Scene one begins with the voice of the narrator describing the setting for Jesus' third encounter with the disciples following his resurrection. The narrator's voice flows in and out of the scene, marking out the insertion of other voices in this scene. Each of the voices interjects quickly without any prolonged emphasis on any of their statements. Jesus plays the main role in this scene (as He does in every scene) interacting with the disciples collectively and then later on alone with Peter. While Peter is a central character in subsequent scenes, his voice is more subdued initially. The author also notes the presence of the beloved disciple in the scene through his recognition that it was Jesus to whom the disciples were speaking. In addition, this disciple points out Peter's attire (or lack of it) while the disciples were out at sea fishing.

Scene two reduces the number of voices to that of Jesus, Peter, and the narrator. While the narrator opens the scene by introducing Jesus and Peter's exchange, his role is fairly muted in scene two. Once again, Jesus plays the central role in the scene with Peter's prominence in the text increasing significantly. The reader likely now understands that the text is focused on this tense encounter between Jesus and Peter. Although the dialogue is not lengthy, the manner in which Jesus repeats the question and command draws significant attention to the exchange.

The narrator's voice takes the more dominant position in the final scene; the dialogue in this scene is substantially reduced from the previous scene. The author

introduces this brief sequence with Peter inquiring of Jesus as to the beloved disciple’s own fate. Following Peter and Jesus’ short interaction, the narrator takes the time to clarify the false rumor that the beloved disciple would not die. The narrator also concludes the pericope (and gospel) emphasizing the gospel’s veracity and the fact that the narrator personally witnessed Jesus’ ministry.

Table 5. Major “Scenes” and Alternation of Active “Voices” in John 21:1-25

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---|
| A: John 21:1-14 | | |
| | Narrator | “After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples...” |
| | Peter | “I am going fishing.” |
| | Other disciples | “We will go with you.” |
| | Narrator | “They went out and got into the boat...” |
| | Jesus | “Children, you have no fish, have you?” |
| | Disciples | “No.” |
| | Jesus | “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” |
| | Narrator | So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in...” |
| | John | “It is the Lord!” |
| | Narrator | “When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord...” |
| | Jesus | “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” |
| | Narrator | So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore... |
| | Jesus | “Come and have breakfast.” |
| | Narrator | Now none of the disciples dared to ask him...This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.” |
| B: John 21:15-19 | | |
| | Jesus | “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” |
| | Peter | “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” |
| | Jesus | “Feed my lambs.... Simon son of John, do you love me?” |
| | Peter | “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” |
| | Jesus | “Tend my sheep....Simon son of John, do you love me?” |
| | Narrator | Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time... |
| | Peter | “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” |
| | Jesus | “Feed my sheep...” |
| | Narrator | (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) |
| | Jesus | “Follow me.” |
| C: John 21:20-25 | | |
| | Narrator | Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them... |
| | Peter | “Lord, what about him?” |
| | Jesus | “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!” |
| | Narrator | So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die... |

The “plot” of the narrative. The “plot” of the narrative of John 21:1-25 focuses on Peter’s restoration following his denial of Jesus. While the other disciples also turned and ran from the courtyard, the author portrays Peter as an example for all of the

disciples. His restoration is their restoration.⁹ This is not to say that Peter plays an equal role to the remaining disciples. *Petros* is still the rock upon whom Jesus would build His church. The author's portrayal of the disciples' resignation at the start of the pericope and the scene by the Sea of Tiberias complete with all of the allusions to previous memories is further highlighted by Jesus' frank interaction with Peter. While his restoration would signal a new beginning, the past is not to be forgotten. Jesus' threefold inquiry of Peter is not lost on the headstrong disciple. He likely knows very well of his Lord's intentions. Would he run away again as he once did in the courtyard? Not this time for despite his hurt he chooses to reaffirm his commitment to Jesus. Humility and restoration emerge from failure and despair.¹⁰ From the author's perspective, Simon who had been given the name *Cephas* or Peter (John 1:42), who is briefly referred to as Simon, son of John in the middle unit, receives the name Peter once more by the end of the text.

Yet this rebirth does not exist unto itself. As quickly as Jesus restores Peter, He conveys to him the cost of discipleship. In many ways, the very pain which Peter sought to avoid through denying Jesus and the fact that He had to be crucified will now come full circle through Jesus' prophetic utterance of Peter's own fate, one that will likely lead to martyrdom.¹¹ Although Peter's future demise would not necessarily be prescriptive for all who follow Jesus, the call to do exactly that regardless of the circumstances reflects the author's concluding message. Peter's capacity, along with that of his fellow disciples, has been revitalized and it is with this renewed sense of hope that the disciples are sent out again into their surrounding world. The message for John's readers at the end of his gospel is that despite our failures we can be restored back to Him and into ministry and service as we authentically respond to Jesus in love and with a resolute commitment.

Argumentative Texture and Pattern in John 21:1-25

The next step in the inner texture analysis is to review the argumentative texture and pattern of John 21:1-25. As outlined in Table 6, the author frequently utilizes a structure which begins with Jesus asking a question, Peter responding to the question, followed by Jesus commanding Peter to take a particular course of action. Unlike earlier sections in the gospels where the emphasis is placed on Jesus as teacher with an underlying argumentative texture and pattern of a question followed by an answer¹², John's focus is on Jesus as agent of change and guide. The text closes off the gospel and accordingly, the author takes the opportunity to challenge and motivate the implied reader to action. Jesus' emphasis is on commissioning His disciples to take responsibility in fulfilling their called upon role. Jesus' command for Peter to tend and feed the flock is no longer simply a call to follow, but rather a call to lead.

⁹ Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," 65.

¹⁰ Kostenberger, "John," 598-99.

¹¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 713-14.

¹² Corne J. Bekker, "Exploring Leadership through Exegesis," *Regent University, School of Leadership Studies Guide* (2006): 41-42.

Table 6. Argumentative Texture and Pattern in John 21:1-25

| Text Reference | Argumentative Texture and Pattern | Character |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| v. 3 | Statement | Peter and the other disciples |
| v. 5 | Question | Jesus |
| v. 5 | Answer | Disciples |
| v. 6 | Command | Jesus |
| v. 7 | Exclamation | John |
| v. 10 | Command | Jesus |
| v. 12 | Statement | Jesus |
| v. 15 | Question | Jesus |
| v. 15 | Answer | Peter |
| v. 15 | Command | Jesus |
| v. 16 | Re-direct of original question | Jesus |
| v. 16 | Answer | Peter |
| v. 16 | Command | Jesus |
| v. 17 | Re-direct of original question | Jesus |
| v. 17 | Answer | Peter |
| v. 17 | Command | Jesus |
| v. 18 | Prophetic utterance | Jesus |
| v. 18 | Command | Jesus |
| v. 21 | Question | Peter |
| v. 22 | Question | Jesus |
| v. 22 | Command | Jesus |

The first series of question-answer-commands pertains to the scene at the Sea of Tiberias. Jesus’ question to the disciples is whether they have caught any fish. They respond that they have not caught anything to which Jesus commands them to cast their net once again. This reference to Jesus’ original call for Peter and the other disciples to trust and follow Him takes on renewed meaning. While the disciples may feel they have gravely faltered in their mission, Jesus reminds them that this call has not changed. Their nets are to be filled with again.

The next three series of question-answer-commands shift to the second scene and isolate the focus on Jesus and Peter. However, the tone of these questions penetrates far deeper than the initial question in the first scene. The nature of the questions and their repeated use directly target the nature of Peter’s love and commitment to Jesus. Had Jesus asked the question only once, it may have appeared to have been rhetorical. To ask the question over and over again is to break through the outer core of superficiality and to search inside the heart of this disciple.

In the second scene, Jesus’ commands prompt Peter to serve and care for the others in response to his love for Jesus. In the final scene, He calls Peter to follow Him, not just anywhere but unto death. The culmination of Peter’s restoration is to obey Jesus’ commands and to receive the mantle of responsibility which was being passed on to him. Again, while the focus is place on Peter, the message for the implied reader is that they, too, are to obey His commands in response to their love for Jesus and to follow Him wherever that might lead.

Sensory-Aesthetic Texture and Pattern in John 21:1-25

Turning to the final element of the inner texture analysis, the focus turns to the sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern in the text. As previously mentioned, Jesus uses this third encounter with His disciples to bring into the picture the memory-laden past, the opportunity to restore Peter (and ultimately the rest of the disciples), and the mission that still lay ahead of them. The author uses both emotion-fused thought and self-expressive speech (Table 7) to create vivid images in the mind of the implied reader.

In the first scene, there is the portrait of the confused disciples.¹³ They have already encountered the risen Lord, yet they do not understand what lies ahead for them. Somewhat bewildered and direction-less they decide to go fishing. The beloved disciple is the first to grasp Jesus' presence. The Lord stands on the shore guiding them through a seemingly unproductive fishing expedition. Not only does the author highlight John's excitement, but he also places an exclamation point on Peter's reaction to Jesus' presence. There is much anticipation in the air. As the disciples gather around the charcoal fire there is also the presence of familiar smells sending them back to a darker time.

The second scene brings the image of the emotionally tense exchange between Jesus and Peter. Jesus probes the depth of His disciple's love and commitment. Is he ready for the next phase? Peter inwardly squirms as he listens to the penetrating and disturbing questions of his Lord. At the heart of following Jesus is love. But this love is not merely an ephemeral emotion, but rather the foundation for their subsequent commitment and service. John conveys Peter's feeling of dismay and disappointment as Jesus continues to question Peter's love for the Lord. There is a sense of exasperation in Peter's third reply, "Lord, you know everything..." (John 21:17b). Jesus persists, "Feed my sheep." Then leading into the third scene, Jesus raises the bar even higher for Peter by foretelling his fate and the cost of following Jesus. The implied reader understands that this cost is also their own. There would come a time when they, too, might have to pay a price.

At the outset of this text, the mood is uncertain perhaps even despairing. The author moves the implied reader through the excitement and familiarity of when Jesus first encountered the disciples at the beginning of His ministry. There is a shift in the second scene to a mood of relief as we come to discover Jesus' renewed love for Peter. Yet there is also a more somber mood as the reader comes to understand that with restoration also comes responsibility. As John concludes his gospel, there is a sense of both anticipation and gravity. The author ends by stating that the world could not contain all the volumes that could be written of Jesus' exploits. We are left with impression that within these volumes may one day include our own exploits of love, devotion, and service to the Lord.

¹³ Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," 57-59.

Table 7. Zone of Emotion-Fused Thought and Self-Expressive Speech in John 21:1-25

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Introduction: John 21:1-14 | |
| 3 | [Peter stating] I am going fishing. |
| 5 | [Jesus asking] Children, you have no fish, have you? |
| 6 | [Jesus commanding] Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some. |
| 7 | [The disciple whom Jesus loved exclaiming] It is the Lord! When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea |
| 9 | They saw a charcoal fire there |
| Body: John 21:15-19 | |
| 15 | [Jesus asking] Do you love me more than these? [Peter responding] You know that I love You [Jesus commanding] Feed my lambs |
| 16 | [Jesus asking] Do you love me? [Peter responding] You know that I love you. [Jesus commanding] Tend my sheep |
| 17 | [Jesus asking] Do you love me? Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time... [Peter responding] Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. [Jesus commanding] Feed my sheep |
| 18 | [Jesus stating] But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God |
| 19 | [Jesus commanding] Follow me |
| Conclusion: John 21:20-25 | |
| 20 | Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them |
| 21 | [Peter asking] What about him? |
| 22 | [Jesus asking] If it is my will that he remain until I come what is that to you? [Jesus commanding] Follow me |

II: Jesus as Agent of Change and Guiding

In summarizing the various layers to the inner texture analysis of this pericope, several elements stand out. Despite the sense of discouragement that the disciples, and in particular Peter, feel, Jesus takes the initiative to reaffirm and restore them. Peter's restoration, though likely somewhat discomfiting, also serves as his re-commissioning.¹⁴ With respect to this renewed call to now tend and shepherd the flock, Peter realizes that it must first be grounded in love¹⁵ and second, that it comes with a price¹⁶. He better recognizes what it means to follow His Master.

Stemming from these summary elements, what do they say to Christian leaders regarding their interaction with followers? How does Jesus' restoration of Simon, son of John, speak to a contemporary application of our text? Moving from the exegetical analysis and looking at John's perspective and understanding of leadership, a number of key themes and principles seem to emerge that will be explored and discussed in the following sections. Leadership is first love-based; second, it restoratively prepares individuals; third, it nurtures a deep-rooted sense of commitment; and finally, it guides individuals to the fulfillment of higher-order personal and organizational objectives.

Leadership as Love

John's depiction of Jesus' leadership approach centers in a love that flows from heaven and extends toward those He serves and leads. Love is at the core. Jesus' persistence in questioning Peter focuses on the one main point, "Do you love me? That is, is love at core of who you are?" Earlier in the gospel, the author clearly emphasizes this affective nature in Jesus. More than any of the other gospel writers, John reinforces this central premise in Jesus' teaching. The word "love" appears 15 times in both Matthew and Luke, 6 times in Mark, and 37 times in John's gospel. The author records in John 14:23 (NRSV), "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." This is the means in which He reveals Himself to His followers.

In the middle unit of John 21:1-25, each time that Jesus inquires of Peter's love for Him, Jesus also commands Peter to tend/feed His lambs/sheep. Minear suggests, "Love for Jesus must be seen to be inseparable from care for his flock."¹⁷ He adds that Peter's love for the flock would emanate from his love for Jesus and it would reflect the love that Jesus had for His disciples (John 13:34, 14:21, 15:9, 10, 12).

The premise of an others-focused, moral love as the basis for one's leading is also found in leadership theories. Patterson's¹⁸ servant leadership model and

¹⁴ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 875.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kostenberger, "John," 598-99.

¹⁷ Paul S. Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102, no. 1 (1983): 94.

¹⁸ Kathleen Ann Patterson, "Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model," *Dissertation Abstracts International* 64, no. 2 (2003): 10.

subsequently Winston's¹⁹ extension of Patterson's model both posit that servant leadership begins with an *agapao*²⁰ love. Winston writes, "Agapao, as a moral love, means that today's leaders must consider the human and spiritual aspects of their employees/followers."²¹ In the context of his spiritual leadership theory, Fry asserts that spiritual leadership takes the form of intrinsic motivation demonstrated through vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love.²² He adds that love has the power to mitigate the destructive influence of emotions such as fear, anger, failure, and pride. Building on this, Quinn offers that tough love is an essential element of leadership.²³ He argues that taken too far, love in the context of compassion and caring can become indulgent and permissive. On the other hand, tough love is both compassionate and assertive, calling "others to higher objectives and standards while also showing empathic, relational support."²⁴ In our text, Jesus' emphasis on a compassionate and assertive love provides the necessary remedy for Peter's sense of failure stemming from his denial of Jesus. This leads us to the second major aspect of John's perspective of Jesus' leadership.

Leadership as Restorative Preparation

Fry writes that, "Focusing on care and concern for both self and others, independent of one's own needs, drives out fears and worries, anger and jealousies, failures and guilt, and provides the foundation for well-being..."²⁵ In many ways, these are the issues that the disciples, and in particular Peter, face. Spencer suggests that collectively the disciples are a group eagerly seeking restoration.²⁶ He offers that on several occasions, the implied audience must be left somewhat bewildered at the disciples' actions in John 21. In the previous chapter, Thomas required physical evidence to corroborate that his colleagues had indeed seen Jesus (John 20:24-29). Jesus takes note of this and asks, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (John 20:29). Yet in spite of this, the author highlights in the very next chapter that the disciples do not initially recognize Jesus when they are first out at sea attempting to catch fish.

Even the disciples outing at sea might be construed by the readers in the 1st century church to be irresponsible and neglecting their responsibility as disciples. As previously noted, Jesus addresses Peter merely as Simon, son of John, leading the implied audience to believe that "Peter, who represents the disciples as a character group in ch. 21, is depicted as undergoing a reversion in discipleship."²⁷ Given this, the authorial audience is quite likely aware of the need for Peter's restoration. In some

¹⁹ B. Winston, "Extending Patterson's Servant Leadership Model: Coming Full Circle" (paper presented at the Servant Leadership Research Roundtable, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, October 16 2003), 2.

²⁰ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domain: Greek (New Testament)*, 26.

²¹ Bruce Winston, *Be a Leader for God's Sake* (Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University, 2002), 8.

²² Louis W. Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 14, no. 6 (2003): 719.

²³ Robert E. Quinn, *Building the Bridge as You Walk on It: A Guide for Leading Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 184-194.

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 186.

²⁵ Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," 713.

²⁶ Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," 65.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 58.

aspects, their reading of this pericope reminds them that the door is open for them as well to experience this restoration. It is in this context and building from the foundation of love that Jesus' seeks to restore His disciple and prepare him for his future ministry and service.²⁸

Similarly, Fry's spiritual leadership model offers that altruistic love forms the basis for the development of hope and faith in the life of team members and that this results in empowered teams. In this manner, spiritual leadership leaves a legacy of changed lives of individual team members.²⁹ Avolio and Gardner posit, in their model of authentic leadership, that leaders, in the process of being role models for team members, actively engage in a mutual developmental process.³⁰ One way that leaders can facilitate this engagement is by embracing both competence and failure.³¹ To a large degree, restoration emerges from the tension that exists between these seemingly opposing values. Our pursuit of competence inevitably encompasses failure. Jesus' restoration of Peter exemplifies the skillful management of that tension.

Leadership as restorative preparation also parallels the role leaders have as mentors and their role in preparing and developing followers. Stanley and Clinton speak to the responsibility that leaders have to empower their followers and help them reach their potential.³² De Pree and Wright remark, "What we do in life will always be a consequence of who we are. The mentor and the mentoree have joined together in a process of becoming."³³ Coupled with a foundation of love, mentoring can also a restorative impact. Nouwen notes,

To care means first of all to be present to each other. From experience you know that those who care for you become present to you. When they listen, they listen to you. When they speak, they speak to you. Their presence is a healing presence because they accept you on your terms, and they encourage you to take your own life seriously.³⁴

Leadership as the Nurturing of Commitment

In Hersey's situational leadership model, he refers to the concept of follower readiness.³⁵ The two major elements of readiness are ability (capacity) and willingness (commitment). This also follows the work of others such as Maier³⁶ and Vroom³⁷ who

²⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdsman, 1983), 405.

²⁹ J. Lee Whittington et al., "Legacy Leadership: The Leadership Wisdom of the Apostle Paul," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 5 (2005): 753.

³⁰ Bruce J. Avolio and William L. Gardner, "Authentic Leadership Development: Getting to the Root of Positive Forms of Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2005): 327.

³¹ Fiona Lee et al., "New Knowledge Creation in Organizations," in *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, ed. Kim S. Cameron, Jane E. Dutton, and Robert E. Quinn (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2003), 199-202.

³² Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 40.

³³ Max DePree and Walter C. Wright, "Mentoring: Two Voices," www.depree.org/pressreleases/2voices-august2003.html (accessed July 27, 2006).

³⁴ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude* (Notre Dame, IN: Ava Maria Press, 1974), 36.

³⁵ Paul Hersey, *The Situational Leader* (Escondido, CA: Center for Leadership Studies, 2004), 43-48.

³⁶ Norman Raymond Frederick Maier, *Psychology in Industry*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955).

posit that work performance is a function of ability and motivation. If leadership as restorative preparation facilitates the development of the follower's ability or capacity, then it would seem that leaders must also nurture willingness and commitment in the life of their followers in order to increase follower readiness.

As Jesus prepared His disciples' readiness for ministry, not only would He have to restoratively prepare them, He would also have to ensure that they were sufficiently committed to what lay ahead. While Jesus' climatic three-fold inquiry of Peter in the second narratological unit best highlights this third leadership theme, the author also utilizes the first unit to aptly set the stage.

The author's recurring mention in John 21 of past events in the disciples' time with Jesus reminds the disciples from where they have come and the journey on which they have traveled. The implied audience is also cognizant of the author's intentions. These narrative "echoes" help the reader remember what took place on the road to the cross.³⁷ Some of these echoes have been previously noted, such as the disciples' call to follow Jesus and the scent of the charcoal fire. An additional echo exists in the location of the disciples' encounter with Jesus in John 21. The miraculous feeding of the five thousand also took place along the Sea of Tiberias. Jesus' offer of fish (*opsarion*³⁹) and bread (*artos*⁴⁰) to the disciples in John 21:13 parallels Jesus' feeding of the masses with the multiplied *opsarion* and *artos* in John 6:1-14.

Together these echoes create a mental and emotional image of their past experience with Jesus. They serve to create a mental model of what it means to follow Him. Senge suggests that "our 'mental models' determine not only how we make sense of the world, but how we take action."⁴¹ Argyris adds that people more often behave in accordance with their theories-in-use (i.e. mental models) rather than with their espoused theories.⁴² Senge notes that these mental models provide an objective view of reality that serve to focus our energy and clarify our personal vision.

While it may be frustrating and disappointing for Peter to be asked repeatedly of his love for Jesus, the day's experience on the Sea of Tiberias likely helps Peter realize that he cannot impulsively agree to care for the flock and follow Jesus. His conversation with Jesus reminds him that he has over promised and under delivered once before (John 13:37). There is a price he has to pay. He has to know for himself that he is ready to take on the responsibilities that Jesus sets before him and that he is indeed ready to obey his Lord as a sign of his love for Him (John 14:15). Burns writes that, "The transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower."⁴³ Jesus' encounter with Peter that day engages the headstrong disciple and helps him decide intrinsically whether he is committed and willing to follow Jesus.

³⁷ Victor Harold Vroom, *Work and Motivation* (New York: Wiley, 1964).

³⁸ Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," 57-64.

³⁹ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domain: Greek (New Testament)*, 4066.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 788.

⁴¹ Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 175.

⁴² Chris Argyris, *Reasoning, Learning and Action: Individual and Organizational* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982), 86-89.

⁴³ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 4.

Leadership as Guidance toward Higher-Order Objectives

Along with restorative preparation and nurturing commitment, leaders must also provide an opportunity and the vision toward which the followers' preparation and commitment will be directed. It is in the pursuit of higher-order objectives that commitment is reinforced.⁴⁴ Emergent leadership theories such as transformational, servant, spiritual, and authentic leadership share this feature in common; it is what Burns refers to as the "elevating power" of leadership. For example, Fry offers that spiritual leadership creates "a vision wherein organizational members experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference."⁴⁵ Bass and Avolio assert that transformational leaders "align others around the vision and empower others to take greater responsibility for achieving the vision."⁴⁶

Jesus' command to Peter to follow Him in John 21:19, 22 is likely now better understood than it was when Peter first met Jesus. Peter has a more elucidated answer to his question to Jesus in John 13:36. Jesus' reply, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward" (John 13:36b), now takes on new meaning. While Peter sincerely responded at that time that he would lay down his life for his Lord, it was a premature promise. Peter knows that Jesus is still asking him to lay down his life for Jesus, but he has a clearer picture. He is being restoratively prepared, his commitment and willingness to follow is being nurtured, and he knows where this will lead. He is being asked to take on the role of the good shepherd who willingly lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:1-18). The authorial audience understands this as well. John's text is a reminder to them that in their context discipleship and martyrdom are indelibly linked.⁴⁷ There would be no impetuous assent to follow Jesus. The decision to follow would cost them everything.

Johannine Model of Leadership

In many aspects, Jesus is very aware of what He is asking His followers to undertake. The author's account in John 21:1-25 presents a perspective of Jesus' leadership that speaks to a change process that guides His followers to action. It begins with an incontrovertible foundation of *agapao* love. John amply lays out in his gospel, Jesus' love for His followers. His command is that His followers sacrificially reflect that same love to those they will lead (John 15:9-14).

This foundation of *agapao* love then provides the basis and energy for the following three aspects of Jesus' leadership which draws from Blumberg and Pringle's three-dimensional interactive theory of work performance: through restorative

⁴⁴ Avolio and Gardner, "Authentic Leadership Development: Getting to the Root of Positive Forms of Leadership," 331-32, Bernard M. Bass, "Leadership: Good, Better, Best," *Organizational Dynamics* 13, no. 3 (1985): 31, Burns, *Leadership*, 41-46, Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, and Barbara Bloch Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1959), 132, Patterson, "Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model," 23-25.

⁴⁵ Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," 695.

⁴⁶ Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, "Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture," *Public Administration Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1993): 113.

⁴⁷ Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," 66-67.

preparation, leaders develop the capacity to perform; through the nurturing of commitment, they facilitate the willingness to perform; and through higher-order visioning, they provide the opportunity to perform.⁴⁸ Together these elements contribute to enhanced follower work performance as illustrated in Figure 1. Ivancevich et al. additionally note that the presence of these three elements may not ensure high performance levels. They suggest the underlying motivation (including direction, intensity, and persistence) must be “channeled in the right direction at an appropriate level of intensity and continues over time.”⁴⁹ I might also submit that in the Johannine leadership model that *agapao* love (in combination with the capacity, willingness, and opportunity to perform) provides the necessary motivation to guide performance.

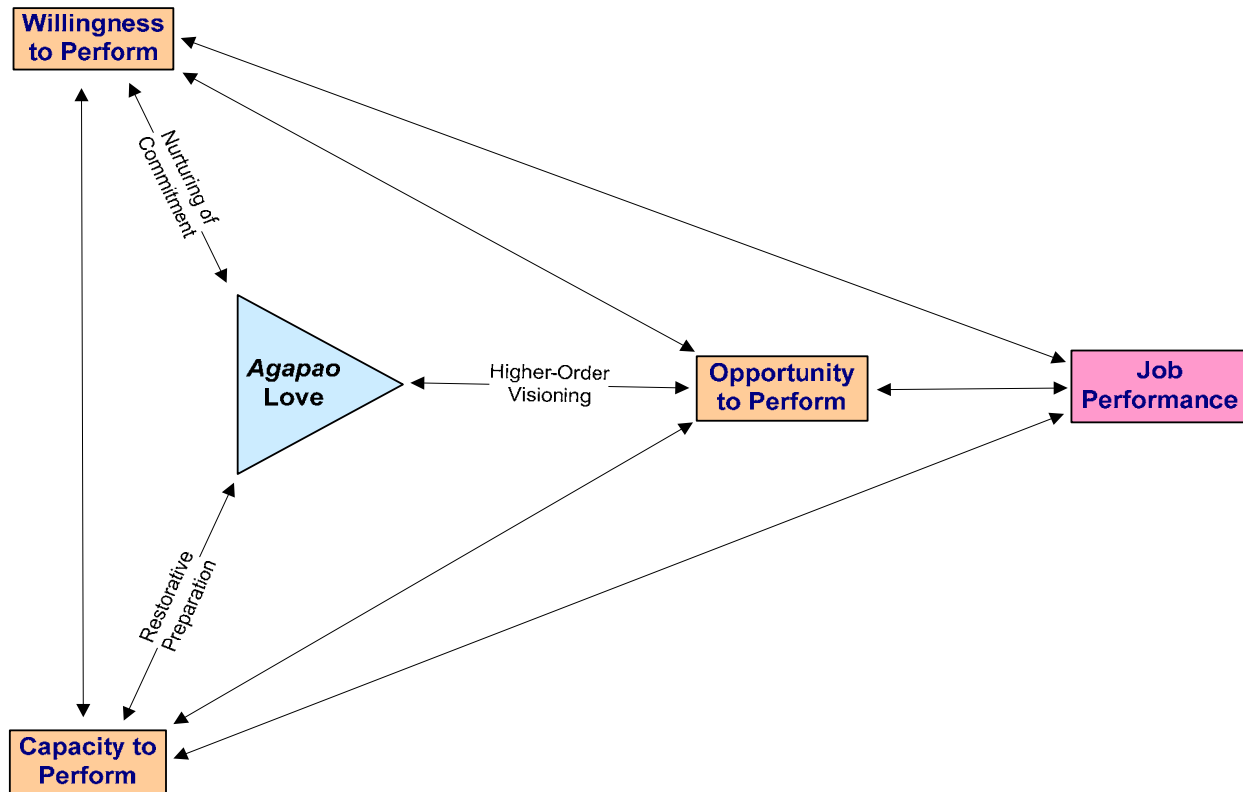


Figure 1. Johannine leadership model

John’s perspective of Jesus’ leadership would likely resonate with the authorial audience in that the emphasis on restoration, understanding the “why” behind their beliefs, and the call to follow in spite of the circumstances, speaks to a community struggling with issues such as internal conflict, and doctrinal and moral issues. The conclusion to John’s gospel provides a galvanizing force for this community as well as a point of re-entry for those members who have grappled with their faith. However, it is

⁴⁸ Melvin Blumberg and Charles D. Pringle, "The Missing Opportunity in Organizational Research: Some Implications for a Theory of Work Performance," *Academy of Management Review* 7, no. 4 (1982): 565.

⁴⁹ John M. Ivancevich, Robert Konopaske, and Michael T. Matteson, *Organizational Behavior and Management*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 138.

not a gratuitous re-entry. As Spencer offers, "Reconciliation is contingent upon their willingness to accept the responsibilities of discipleship."⁵⁰

The primary responsibility in the mind of the author is largely stated at the conclusion to both chapters 20 and 21. As a witness to Jesus' ministry, the author's desire is to testify to others what transpired and that those who read and listen to this testimony might "come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing [they] may have life in his name" (John 20:31b). Jesus' leadership approach to dealing with Peter and his fellow disciples begins with *agapao* love and ends with the nurturing, development, and growth of the flock, the early church. The approach involves the facilitation of the followers' capacity, willingness, and opportunity to perform. It continues to be an approach that is consistent and appropriate for leaders and followers in the 21st century.

Christian Leadership Today

In the context of Jesus call to abide in and model His love, Christian leadership must also take a similar holistic approach to guide and facilitate change. The development of capacity and willingness are more than just cognitive processes. In most circumstances there is a restorative nature to our dealings with others. Broken trust, disappointment, misplaced expectations, and failures are all examples of impediments to an authentic nurturing and growth dynamic between leaders and followers. As leaders engage the full person, they will discover that they will eventually receive in return a deeper, more fulsome commitment that realistically understands the work at hand. These elements cannot be understated. Much of contemporary Christian leadership has emphasized the visionary elements of ministry. There have been no lack of opportunities to perform, but these opportunities must coincide and align with the persons who are following. Without first restoratively preparing and then nurturing "whole" person commitment, our leadership is incomplete and the resulting followership, unhealthy. Scazzero's suggestion that emotional and spiritual health are inseparable is a step in the right direction.⁵¹

Of course, all of this is empty words without the foundation of an *agapao* love. Ivancevich et al.'s three-fold delineation of motivation into the elements of direction, intensity, and persistence⁵² are fully captured in Jesus' command for us to abide in His love (John 15:9-13). We know the direction and object of our love, we understand the intensity and passion in which we were first loved, and we realize the persistent and timeless nature of that love. This is the fuel which must drive Christian leaders in relationship to those they are privileged to serve and lead. This is the model of leadership which has been so fittingly depicted by John in his description of Jesus' leadership and relationship with His disciples.

⁵⁰ Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," 65.

⁵¹ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 50.

⁵² Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matteson, *Organizational Behavior and Management*, 137-38.

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