



Jesus as Agent of Change: Leadership in John 21

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Chapter 21 in the book of John provides a snapshot of Jesus interacting with a few of his disciples, which provides insight into his leadership style and tactics. An inner-textual analysis of the chapter based on socio-rhetorical criticism and the contemporary leadership styles of leader-member exchange, servant leadership, charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and mentorship, help demonstrate how Jesus changed their lives and guided their ministries. The model assesses the Johannine text in terms of (a) repetitive-progression, (b) opening-middle-closing, (c) narrational, (d) argumentative, and (e) sensory-aesthetic methods. These elements of texture reveal more of the author's intention for this particular narrative, and provide a deeper understanding of how to apply Jesus' principles in contemporary organizational leadership.

Chapter 21 in the book of John provides a snapshot of Jesus interacting with a few of his disciples, which gives insight into his leadership style and tactics. Contemporary leadership theories provide rich texture to analyze the intricacies of this seemingly simplistic dialogue. Because considering Jesus' action in this example from the perspective of one singular leadership theory would oversimplify vast complexities, this work discusses his actions in light of an extant of contemporary theories as well as related scriptures. Examples include leader-member exchange (LMX), servant leadership, charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and mentorship.

An inner-textual analysis of the chapter based on Robbins' (1996) model helps to demonstrate the relationship that Jesus had with his followers and how he changed their lives and guided their ministries. This model assesses the text in terms of (a) repetitive-progression, (b) opening-middle-closing, (c) narrational, (d) argumentative, and (e) sensory-aesthetic. These elements of texture reveal more of the author's intention for this particular narrative, and provide a deeper understanding of how to apply Jesus' principles in contemporary organizational leadership.

Background: Narrative Agents

Table 1 shows the narrative agents of the passage following the example that Robbins (1996, p. 50) provided. Based on the textual analysis, Jesus is the character in the narrative at the beginning and the end of the chapter and Peter is the other prominent character; “there is [a] . . . steady focus on Jesus as the one who confronts Peter at every stage in the narrative, upsetting his equilibrium and challenging him to make decisions and take new action” (Wiarda, 1992, p. 53). Early on the descriptive focus was on all the disciples present, “Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee [which would include John (Matt 4:21)] and two others of his disciples” (John 21:1-2, New Revised Standard Version). O’Brien (2005) pointed out the fact “that readers identify with characters is one of narratives' most powerful

Table 1: Narrative Agents in John 21:1-25

Verse	Jesus	Disciples	Simon Peter	John (beloved disciple/author)
1	Jesus	Disciples		
2		Disciples	Simon Peter	Sons of Zebedee
3		Them/they/we	Simon Peter	
4	Jesus	Disciples		
5	Jesus	Children/you/they		
6	He	Them/you(pl)/they		
7	Jesus/Lord		Simon Peter/he	Disciple
8		Disciples/they		
9		They		
10	Jesus	You		
11			Simon Peter	
12	Jesus/him/Lord	Them/disciples		
13	Jesus	Them		
14	Jesus	Disciples		
15	Jesus/him/Lord		Simon Peter	
16	Jesus		Simon Peter	
17	He/Lord/Jesus		Simon Peter	
18	I		You	

tools. Readers generally identify with characters with whom they have something in common” (p. 292). The table illustrates how as the narrative progressed, the focus shifted to Simon Peter. Finally, the closing verses focused on John, even though he did not name himself directly by referring to himself as one of the Sons of Zebedee, the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20) or “the disciple who is testifying to these things” (John 21:24). Belsterling (2006) observed, “One also sees Jesus and Peter engaging in heartfelt dialogue, not minding that the others were present. John and Peter were two of three with whom Jesus spent the most time” (p. 84). While the stronger focus in this passage is on the dyad linkage between Jesus and Peter, the corresponding dyad between Jesus and John is evident in the table as well.

Repetitive-Progression

Robbins (1996) suggested analysis of repetitive-progressive texture in terms of the following questions:

1. What patterns emerge from the repetition of certain topics in the text?
2. What topics replace other topics in the progression of the text?
3. Is there a continual repetition of the same word throughout the unit, or is there a slight modification at almost every progressive stage?
4. Does the progression bring certain kinds of words together but not others?
5. Is there repetition that occurs in steps that create a context for a new word in the progression? (p. 50)

The six most used words in this passage of verses are: (a) you, (b) said, (c) Jesus, (d) him, (e) them, and (f) Peter. These highly used words affirm the narrative approach that John the author chose.

Patterns from the Repetition

In terms of narrative agents described in the previous section, Jesus is only absent in six of the 25 verses (see Table 1). This is significant since the likely first impression for the reader is that the disciples or even Simon Peter are the focal point of this particular passage. Further, John made more prominent reference to himself than is initially apparent largely given that he did not identify himself directly. Both of these relationships demonstrate different LMX dyads between Jesus and each of the disciples. “[Jesus] realized that He would multiply God’s message of love most clearly by making Himself entirely available to a select few disciples” (Belsterling, 2006, p. 87). According to Harris, Wheeler, and Kacmar (2009), “The LMX model suggests that supervisors form differential relationships with their subordinates. These relationships range in quality from high to low” (p. 372). This is also in alignment with transformational leadership as Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) suggested, “The transformational leader treats each follower as an individual and provides coaching, mentoring and growth opportunities” (p. 189). John suggested that he was uniquely “loved” by Jesus, yet he did not swim to shore. “John recognizes [Jesus] immediately while still a hundred yards from the shore. Then Peter, in characteristic Peter fashion, makes a big splash, noisily advertising his recognition by swimming to greet Jesus” (Peterson, 2002, p. 15). Peter having receded in his exchange level seemed eager to return to his previous standing. Jesus facilitated this redemption out of love, but as a leader, Jesus established a development path for Peter. These instructions from Jesus to Peter concluded in verse 22,

“Follow Me!” Peter had to decide if he was willing to accept the new LMX level that Jesus proposed; “the conversation begs the question of whether Peter can accept a new relationship with Jesus” (Wells, 2007, p. 25). There was almost a sibling rivalry between Peter and the beloved disciple. Wells noted, “Peter is still anxious that the role of the so-called Beloved Disciple will somehow get in the way” (p. 28). “As soon as Peter is recommissioned by the lakeshore, he is immediately anxious about his status in relation to another disciple” (p. 28). Jesus carefully balanced these two distinct LMX linkages, validating and empowering both.

Another pattern that emerges is the many references to food, specifically fish and bread (see Table 2). The parallels with the story of feeding the 5,000 and the last supper are set aside for this analysis but require acknowledgement. The pattern moves from no fish in early verses resulting from only human effort, to an abundance of fish provided by God alongside human effort, and finally the provision of bread absent any effort on their part.

Table 2: Fish/Bread References in John 21:1-25

Verse	No fish	Fish	Bread
1			
2			
3	No fish (caught)		
4			
5	No fish		
6			
7			
8		Fish	
9		Fish	Bread
10		Fish	
11		Fish	
12			
13		Fish	Bread

Topics that Replace Other Topics in Progression

Jesus used food in the form of fish and bread to remind the disciples that they were to look to him to provide sustenance and success. It also offers a reminder of service and sacrifice; “deeply embedded in the common meal, is the experience of sacrifice. One life is given so that

another may live” (Peterson, 2002, p. 17). As the narrative continues, the use of lambs/sheep replaces food as the focus shifts onto redemption and guidance for the ministry ahead. The belt aids the transition of the discussion to prophecy about Peter’s death and demonstrates that such end will glorify God. Verses 20-24 take on the form of a prologue launched from the discussion about Peter’s death and demonstrate that the focus of each member should be on their particular relationship with the leader and not the dyad linkage between the leader and another member; “no comparisons are to be made with others who seem to receive an easier assignment” (Wiarda, 1992, p. 69).

Table 3: Peter’s Redemption in John 21:15-17

Verse	Love	Lambs	Sheep
15	Love	Lambs (feed)	
16	Love		Sheep (tend)
17	Love		Sheep (feed)

Certain Kinds of Words Are Together—Not Others

There are only two verses where both Peter and the disciples are referenced together, verses 2 and 3 (see Table 1). In all other cases, the narrator separated discussion about Peter from that of the group of disciples. Further, John only mentioned Peter once without Jesus, which is in verse 11. As is evident in Table 2, the reference to bread coincides with the reference to fish in both cases. In the progression analyzed in Table 3, the words “love” and “lambs/sheep” were always connected.

Repetition in Steps

John emphasized the disciples’ failure to catch fish in verses 3 and 5 (see Table 2): “they caught nothing” (John 21:3) and “Children, you have no fish, have you?” (John 21:5). The progression advances after the disciples follow Jesus’ instruction to cast the nets on the other side of the boat: “you will find some” (John 21:6). In verse 8, the disciples were “dragging the net full of fish” (John 21:8).

A second repetition is the use of Peter’s full name all three times during the redemption sequence in verses 15, 16, and 17 respectively: “Simon, son of John” (John 21:15-17). In relation to this sequence, Oladipo (2007) commented, “In Nigeria, especially among the Yoruba people, the use of a full title of an individual implies that an important message is to follow” (p. 65).

A third repetition occurs in steps in verses 15-17 when Jesus redeemed Peter for the three times Peter denied Christ after his arrest (John 18:15-18, 25-27). Jesus pressed Peter to affirm his love three times and each time he gave progressive instructions to feed or tend his lambs/sheep (see Table 3). The metaphor starts with lambs, perhaps representing young Christians. Oladipo

(2007) provided insight into the verb in this case, “The Greek word used here is a very specific word *boske*, meaning to graze or feed on growing grasses” (p. 66). After the second and third affirmation by Peter, Jesus shifted the instruction to “tend” his sheep, perhaps representing discipleship towards mature Christians. Oladipo explained this distinction, “The Greek word used here . . . is *poimaine*, which has broader implications than the term *boske*” (p. 66). In the final charge, he reverts to “feed,” yet maintained the reference to adult sheep, perhaps indicating the mentorship of mature Christians in leadership roles in the church. “Jesus communicated to His disciples an expectation of mutual commitment. Peter was told he could not be part of the mission if he would not submit to the authority of the One who made the plan” (Belsterling, 2006, p. 84). Further, “Jesus did not mind that the disciples had questions. He mentored the disciples through teaching that responded to their questions and confusions” (p. 86). In this sense, Jesus demonstrated mentorship to Peter as he charged him to be a mentor.

Love is another prominent word in this segment. In Jesus’ first challenge, he asked Peter of his love in a relative sense, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” (John 21:15). In the second and third case, the question is more emphatic and uses the same phrase, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” (John 21:16-17). Peter’s response however progressed in the opposite way. His first two responses were, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you” (John 21:15-16). Peter progressed his response in the third, however, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you” (John 21:17). However, according to Oladipo, the form of the word love changes in the Greek, “In verses 15 and 16, Jesus used the word *agape* when he asked Peter, ‘Do you love me?’ But now in verse 17 he used *phileō* when he asked the same question” (p. 66). Wells (2007) suggested, “Peter and Jesus simply seem to have different understandings of love. Peter assumes that the love of a friend is all that is required. . . . Jesus is using the language of utter selfless love, the intimate and self-giving *agape* love” (p. 25). Even after all that happened, Peter was reluctant to accept a higher level of LMX exchange with Jesus.

In this redemption, we see unrestrained forgiveness demonstrated, a direct contrast with contemporary theory, which generally values justice, retribution, or even revenge. “Unlike revenge, the concept of forgiveness has been almost totally ignored in the organizational literature” (Murray & Karl, 1999, p. 610). Murray and Karl further cited four processes for dealing with trespasses, “Peachey (1989) and Gadaez (1986) argued that restorative justice is a distinct justice construct, represented by four different, but not mutually exclusive, processes. These processes are retribution or revenge, forgiveness, restitution, and compensation” (p. 608). Wells (2007) noted, “[This] is a discussion, first of all, of whether Jesus can still love Peter, given what he knows” (p. 24). After all, “it is a feature of reconciliation that the person offering forgiveness cannot expect the other party fully to understand the depths of their offense” (p. 24).

Opening-Middle-Closing

Table 1 provides insight about the transition from the opening to the middle. In verse 4, the center of attention shifts from the disciples to Jesus. The reference to Jesus in the first verse only helps to set the stage, however it is not a reference to Jesus as part of the story yet. This is consistent with Wiarda’s (1992) findings, “Vv. 1-3 may be viewed as providing background significant for our understanding of all the action which follows in vv. 4-22” (p. 57).

It appears that the middle begins at verse 4. Here the narrator began to focus on Jesus and the lessons that he had for the disciples. This includes providing food which demonstrates

servant leadership. “As appealing and refreshing as [Robert] Greenleaf’s conceptualization of servant leadership is, Greenleaf is not the individual who first introduced the notion of servant leadership. . . . It was Christianity’s founder, Jesus Christ, who first taught the concept of servant leadership” (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002, p. 58). Examples of this include Jesus washing of his followers’ feet (John 13:13-15), or his direct statements such as the following:

But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt 20:25-28)

In both his ideology and his action, Jesus served those he encountered. “Serving others is the means by which the servant leader facilitates the accomplishing of their desired goals. Merely serving is not the means by which to get results, but the behavior of serving is the result” (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999, p. 53).

Jesus also used this to illustrate the ministry he was setting before them as described previously. Peter’s redemption is also part of the middle, as well as the use of the belt in verse 18 as a bookend between Peter’s youth and his old age when he will be martyred. The middle begins the transition to the closing as Jesus reminds Peter that God’s plan is unique and different for each follower alone.

There is overlap between the narrator’s discussion of Peter and John (referenced indirectly) for several verses (see Table 4). Starting with verse 23, there is no longer any reference to Peter and the focus shifts exclusively to the narrator and Jesus. This shift suggests the transition from the middle to the closing. This is also consistent with Wiarda’s (1992) findings stated earlier in this article.

Table 4: Jesus, Peter, and John in John 21:1-25

Verse	Jesus	Simon Peter	John (beloved disciple/author)
18	I	You	
19	He	Him	
20	Jesus/Lord	Peter	Disciple
21	Jesus/Lord	Peter	Him
22	Jesus	You	He
23	Jesus		Disciple
24			Disciple/his
25	Jesus		

Narrational

That John is the narrator of this passage and a direct participant in the discourse seems to cause some ambiguity. In particular, John's refusal to identify himself directly seems in need of some analysis from a narrational perspective. Robbins (1996) explained that "narrational texture . . . distinguish[es] between real author, implied author, narrator, characters, narratee, implied reader and real reader" (p. 54). Robbins went on to caution readers of "the narrator's seduction of the interpreter" (p. 55). Since John was likely the real author, certainly the implied author, assumedly the narrator and also one of the characters in the narration deprives the narratee of this distinction.

Based on the literature, John's authorship does not appear to be in dispute. Belsterling (2006) reported, "Internal and external evidence seems to clearly confirm that John did write the Gospel of John" (p. 79). Therefore, John serves as the real and implied author for purposes of this analysis. "John 21:24 asserts that the Fourth Gospel is itself a testimony" (O'Brien, 2005, p. 292). It would seem that John was taking the tone of a neutral narrator, however, he did make specific reference to himself as the author and narrator in verse 24. The characters are all identified in the first two verses.

Understanding the reader, both the implied reader and the actual expected reader, makes it possible to learn more from the text than initially appears on the surface:

Instead of using a method that explores the distinctive nature of the text in its Mediterranean context, many interpreters use a method that stays within the confines of the discourse and the approach to the world that the interpreter presupposes for the text as the interpretation begins. (Robbins, 1996, p. 56)

O'Brien (2005) argued, "[John] is not simply a report of others' experience, but it provides the possibility of a substitute experience for the reader . . . that is certainly not the same as being there but can be significant nonetheless" (p. 285). The implied audience was likely 1st or 2nd-century Christians. "Evidence in the Fourth Gospel, however, points to the intended audience as Christian, quite possibly belonging to the Johannine community" (p. 289). Belsterling (2006) specified further detail of John's intended audience, "While John's original audience seems to have consisted primarily of Diaspora Jews and proselytes . . . the book appeals as a treatise to unbelievers" (p. 79). However, the real reader can take many forms over many centuries, in many languages and in many cultures. "Like the characters in the Gospel, readers must learn from their mistakes and reevaluate both Jesus and the world" (O'Brien, p. 288).

Argumentative

This particular "chreia . . . the anecdote in which a narrator attributes speech and/or action to a specific personage" (Robbins, 1996, p. 61), depends heavily on the reader being familiar with the cultural context of power distance in the "Mediterranean society and culture" (p. 64) that would contrast to such norms. This illustrates an element of argumentation that Robbins defined as logical argumentation: "the function of unstated premise in the discourse" (p. 59). Some possible examples in this passage include (a) Jesus was serving food to the disciples and taking care of details that would have been left to the most lowly follower in traditional Jewish culture; (b) human leaders would likely be reluctant to restore Peter after his disloyalty; (c) most of the disciples present in the scene are silent and don't have a role in the discourse; and

(d) Jesus revealed information about Peter's future, particular his martyrdom, a disclosure that could dissuade him from the mission.

Further, there is an implicit *modus ponens* pattern or "if . . . then" (Robbins, 1996, p. 59) condition in the dialog between Jesus and Peter. Robbins called this an "enthymeme" based on the definition provided by Kennedy: "a statement with a supporting reason introduced by for, because or since or an if . . . then statement" (p. 59). Wiarda (1992) stated emphatically, "It is undeniable that the writer intends to portray a cause and effect relationship between the prediction of v. 18 and the dialogue of vv. 21-22" (p. 66). Jesus asked, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15) to which Peter replied in the affirmative. The statement that follows, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15), implies the former should lead to the latter: *if* you love me, *then* feed my lambs. Jesus reveals transformational leadership qualities in this approach. "Jesus cast vision to His disciples to give them direction for how they ought to live their lives" (Belsterling, 2006, p. 89). "In communicating His vision, Jesus also made clear to His disciples that He expected the same type of relational commitment from them" (p. 89). Even though Peter was the object of Jesus guidance, the setting allowed the other disciples to learn from the lesson as well. Further, through John's account of the event, the message is revealed to Christian leaders for centuries to come. In this, Jesus was demonstrating charismatic leadership defined by a "focus on a future-oriented timeframe—a focus that is most often evidenced by their use of an emotionally evocative, future oriented vision" (Bendall-Avers, Hunter, Angie, Eubanks, & Mumford, 2009, p. 300).

One final element that seems unaddressed in this text is why Peter and the others were engaged in a commercial fishing operation. "For reasons we are not told, seven of the original eleven are back at their old fishing grounds, the Sea of Galilee, not doing what they had so recently been told to do" (Peterson, 2002, p. 13). Had they been fishing to produce their breakfast, the effort required would have been a lot less than taking a boat out all night with large nets. It seems perhaps that they were starting to settle back into their lives prior to Jesus ministry. Wiarda (1992) observed, "Peter is engaging in an occupation—one not lightly undertaken, but requiring both experience and equipment—different from that which he had been doing during the period he was with Jesus as a disciple" (p. 58). Perhaps the entire scene depicts an exercise in transactional leadership since it "involves contingent reinforcement. Followers are motivated by the leaders' promises, praise, and rewards, or they are corrected by negative feedback, reproof, threats, or disciplinary actions" (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 184). According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), "When leaders engage in active management by-exception, [a form of transactional leadership], they monitor follower performance and correct followers' mistakes" (p. 184). Jesus reminded them that he would provide for them just as he did for their breakfast, and that it was time to get to work spreading the gospel: "Feed my lambs. . . . Tend my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Follow me. . . . Follow me!" (John 21:15-22). In this Jesus progresses further to transformational leadership by "inducing [the disciples] to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the [his vision, spread of the gospel]" (Yukl, 2006, p. 262).

Sensory-Aesthetic

Robbins (1996) described sensory-aesthetic texture as "the images in this passage, [that] concern people's imagination" (p. 65). To analyze this, Robbins suggested the following questions: "How do humans imagine new possibilities for their lives? How do they imagine the

present concrete realities of their lives? How do they imagine the past and link their imagination of the past with their imagination of the present?” (p. 65). For the disciples, out on the boat, they were still limited in their imagination regarding the possibilities for their lives. They were still fishing for fish rather than “fish[ing] for people” (Matt 5:19). Jesus reminded the disciples that the possibilities were endless for them if they would follow him. Peter and the others still had not let go of their imagined “present concrete reality” (p. 65). Jesus was helping them to link their lost and hopeless past as sinners with their empty nets, so that they could let go their own efforts and trust in him for all things. In this, he was unlocking their imagination of the future that he had planned for them.

This text deals also with the physical senses throughout. The experience of fishing and coming up empty evokes the feeling of helplessness and disappointment in the early verses. Daybreak revealed the beach and implied calmness as Jesus called to them. The declaration, “It is the Lord!” (John 21:7), illustrates elation and excitement over the unexpected catch. That Peter was naked suggests that during the night the air was hot and humid and that they were working hard such that heavy clothes were uncomfortable. The leap into the lake suggests a cool refreshing end to the futile rigor of the previous night and the excitement of an unexpected reunion with Jesus face-to-face. Once ashore, the reader’s nostrils are filled with the scent of charcoal and cooked fish as if they too had crossed onto the beachhead alongside the disciples. These aromas likely dissipated a bit as they dragged 153 recently caught fish ashore. The NRSV uses the term “breakfast” (John 21:12, 15) as their overnight fast, along with their empty nets abruptly came to a satisfying end. “Jesus prepares and eats breakfast with seven of his disciples on a Galilee beach. The positioning is emphatic, attention-getting” (Peterson, 2002, p. 13). The narrator shifts the sensory tone of the text away from images of basic sustenance to that of emotional healing. Each time Jesus asked Peter to affirm his love, the reader feels Peter reduced from pride to humbleness and shame as his heart breaks. All the while, Jesus is building Peter up during this redemptive dialog.

Leadership Applications

As described in this article, multiple contemporary leadership theories together only begin to reveal the divine model of leadership personified by Jesus. The attributes revealed in the Johannine text include (a) the careful balance of distinct relationships between Jesus and each of the disciples characterizing LMX (Belsterling, 2006); (b) the redemption that comes from true forgiveness and redemption that seems to be so counter-intuitive in human terms that it falls outside contemporary leadership theory altogether (Murray & Karl, 1999); (c) the development path that Jesus laid before Peter in a fashion consistent with active management-by-exception and clear directives consistent with contingent reinforcement, forms of transactional leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999); (d) the humble service to followers basic needs illustrative of servant leadership (Sendjaya & Sarros); (e) the expectation of mutual commitment from followers towards the vision of the future, illustrative of charismatic leadership; (f) the inducement that followers set aside their own interests and follow him, the nature of transformational leadership; and finally (g) the demonstration of mentorship in a model that the disciples could easily follow. Any contemporary leader might spend years or an entire career thoroughly developing just one of these attributes. However, Jesus demonstrated that there is tremendous value in synthesizing characteristics from multiple models and theories. For

instance, Goldman (2000) suggested, “Leaders who have mastered four or more [aspects of leadership] have the very best climate and business performance” (p. 87).

The challenge for a contemporary leader is to integrate a plethora of elements at once as Jesus did. A Johannine model of leadership would rely heavily on a strong individualized relationship with each follower that is unique from all others. Forgiveness for mistakes, missteps, and disloyalties would be a regular part of each relationship with redemption displayed publically as a complete restoration. When necessary, the Johannine leader would observe behaviors and praise or correct actions of followers with clear and concise guidance. This leader would call upon followers to commit fully to the leader’s vision and set aside their own interests when they conflict with said vision. Finally, the leader would act as an effective mentor, guiding each follower along and encouraging them in turn to mentor others. Whether explicitly or implicitly, the mantra of a Johannine leader would echo Jesus: “Follow me!” (John 21:22).

Conclusion

The preceding inner-textual analysis of this text depicts Jesus’ interaction with Peter as such that reveals an extant of leadership styles and tactics. Jesus demonstrated LMX given the varying levels of relationship with each individual follower based on their willingness to commit to his mission. Jesus personified servant leadership as he prepared and served a meal to the group even though their actions seem to deviate from the course he directed. Jesus is transformational in the way he inspired each individual to follow him and to spread the gospel based on the unique relationship that he had with each using Peter as a prominent example. Finally, Jesus both demonstrated mentorship while he directed Peter and the other disciples to be mentors.

Based on the assumption that Jesus is God in human form, the methods of leadership he deployed are not flawed shadows of an ideal, but rather the ideal itself. Therefore, contemporary leadership theory constructed by flawed humanity can merely illuminate some perceptible elements of leadership in its perfect form. However, such illumination informs our understanding of Jesus, while validating and calibrating our instruments of understanding leadership in human terms. Studying Jesus’ example provides contemporary leaders with a model that can transform authentic relationships into meaningful change in the lives of their followers.

About the Author

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