



## EQUIPPING FOLLOWERS TO LEAD WITH LOVE: AN ANALYSIS OF LUKE 9:10-17

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The purpose of this article is to examine how leaders being motivated by love can equip their followers to also lead from a foundation of love by enacting five key principles extracted from Luke 9:10-17 that Christ exemplified as the quintessential loving leader by (a) treating followers as ends rather than means; (b) spending quality time with followers and influencing them so they will begin to emulate the loving leader; (c) providing followers with a sense of calling and transcendence; (d) cultivating followers' creativity and solutions-based problem solving; and (e) including followers in the planning process and execution of the organization's plan. Leaders who incorporate these five principles drawn from Christ's example in Scripture will cause their followers to flourish and lead with love as Christ did, bringing honor and glory to God, the ultimate giver of love.

**Keywords:** equip followers, lead with love, hands-on leadership, leadership principles, transformational leadership, human flourishing

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### INTRODUCTION

A leader cannot consider themselves effective until they have reproduced themselves in such a way that the vision and mission of the organization continue to live and thrive beyond their life. This is flourishing. This is legacy. Leadership is the art of being able to inspire others to want to struggle for the same shared vision and aspirations who then are voluntarily mobilized to participate in the struggle, freely

contributing to a group of like-minded followers and the organization's cause, which are all essential (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) not just for organizational success but for personal development, growth, and reproduction on a multiplication scale. The first law of leadership states that if a person does not believe in the messenger, he or she will not believe the message (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Jesus's integrity in both word and deed gave Him unsurmountable credibility with His followers in His enacted message that was premised on love. He influenced His followers' desire to willingly join in His mission that would eventually lead them to carry them to their own crosses even unto death just as He did (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

### *Background of Luke*

The Book of Luke is the first of two volumes of a single written work that must not be read in isolation from its second volume, the Book of Acts, to truly understand how the connectedness of both books apply the literary skill to Jesus's life and teaching, weds His life and teachings to the genre of historiography, preserves Jesus's traditions that express the nature of the community of disciples Jesus formed, reveals the heart of God for the lost and marginalized, and challenges the people of God to mirror God's heart (DeSilva, 2004). The books of Luke and Acts, often referred to as Luke-Acts, are intended to be read as one single story and are organized structurally according to chronology and geography (Fitzmyer, 1998). Jesus's prayer life demonstrated His dependence on the Father and His selfless, passionate commitment to accomplish His Messianic mission (Strauss, 2016). The Lukan author's focus on Jesus's relationship with the Holy Spirit through His prayer life, ministry, and relationships is a foreshadowing of the Church's much-needed dependence, guidance, and infilling of the Holy Spirit to continue Christ's work (Strauss, 2016). Both volumes of Luke-Acts confirm God's salvific plan through the recorded death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ as the Messiah and God's intended plan for the growth and expansion of Christ's bride, the Church (Strauss, 2016).

Although the author of Luke-Acts does not formally name himself, Irenaeus (*Haer.* 3.1.1), an early church father, Greek bishop, and theologian, offered an early witness to Luke in his writings, speaking of Luke's direct activity in the Luke-Acts prologues (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1, 2). Although Luke's authorship has been debated among scholars due to the lack of attribution and chronological discrepancy (Wright & Bird, 2019), the author is generally recognized as the physician Luke (Caulton, 2022), a disciple and colleague of the Apostle Paul and accredited as the theologian of the Holy Spirit (DeSilva, 2004). Internal evidence for Luke's authorship is found in the richer terminology of medical conditions in Luke-Acts (DeSilva, 2004) that nonphysicians in the Hellenistic period used (Cadbury, 1920; Johnson, 1996; Lohse, 1981). The rich language reveals Luke's higher level of education when compared to his evangelistic counterparts, often autobiographically referencing himself as a firsthand participant, which ancient historians commonly did to validate their involvement in historical events, making their narratives more vivid (DeSilva, 2004).

Luke-Acts is the only New Testament narrative that is written to a specific reader, Theophilus, who is mentioned in the prologue of each volume (Luke 1:3; Acts

1:1), who served as Luke's literary patron (DeSilva, 2004). Although the text is addressed to Theophilus, it should not be assumed that he represents the total of Luke's audience. Luke was aware that Theophilus would share his writings with other well-placed Christians in the community of faith whom the early church largely depended on for gatherings, as he spoke on issues of wealth, possessions, and the need to care for those less fortunate which served as reminders to the early church community and patrons of the charge God placed on them as believers (DeSilva, 2004).

The location where the Book of Luke was written is uncertain, although DeSilva (2004) posited that Ephesus is a likely location due to its urban setting as opposed to a rural location, since Christianity spread predominantly as an urban phenomenon, reaching rural communities much later. Luke begins his narrative with Jesus in Nazareth, moving through to Jerusalem and ending with Paul's imprisonment in Rome between 61 A.D. and 63 A.D., although Luke-Acts was not written until approximately 85 A.D., spanning the writing of the Lukan texts to ninety years (Kilgallen, 2007). Some have questioned why Luke would end his narrative in Rome in the approximate year 61 A.D., leaving a gap between the end of the narrative, 61 A.D., and the time Luke penned it. Kilgallen (2007) asserted that once Luke's writings reached Rome at the same timeframe of Paul's arrest in Rome in 61 A.D., he had fulfilled his literary promise that the witness to Christ would reach "to the ends of the earth" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Acts 1:8). Considering that Rome was the center and apex of the known Mediterranean world at the time, such would allow the witness of Christ to radiate from Rome eventually to the ends of the earth (Kilgallen, 2007).

### *Intertexture Analysis*

Exploring the intertexture of Scripture focuses on the interactive world of a text that utilizes phenomena in the world outside of the text being interpreted. The intertexture of Scripture displays the interaction of language in the text with outside phenomena such as physical objects, historical events, values, customs, institutions, and systems (Robbins, 1996). Robbins (1996) introduced a four-arena approach to socio-rhetorical analysis that programmatically addresses the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture when conducting exegetical interpretation; however, the scope of this analysis focuses on the intertextual approach, further examining the oral-scribal, cultural, social, and historical components of the pericope. Such analysis suggests how the author amplified the equipping of followers to lead with love narrative through Christ's interaction with the disciples from an oral-scribal, cultural, social, and historical context.

### *Oral-Scribal Intertexture*

Texts configure and reconfigure language by utilizing language from other texts through the five mediums of (a) recitation; (b) recontextualization; (c) reconfiguration; (d) narrative amplification; and (e) thematic elaboration (Robbins, 1996). Oral-scribal intertexture involves using a text's use of language outside of itself that either supports

the foreground text or modifies the context of the background text (Huizing, 2003; Robbins, 1996).

*Recitation.* Recitation occurs when speech or narrative is transmitted, whether from an oral or written tradition, in the exact format it was originally received, as if photocopied as an exact duplicate of words in another written text (Robbins, 1996). Luke's account of Christ feeding the five thousand (Luke 9:10-17) recites multiple words and speech patterns found throughout Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments.

*Recontextualization.* Recontextualization presents wording from a biblical source without inferring or implying the words are written elsewhere (Robbins, 1996). The Lukan 9:10-17 narrative is a recontextualization of 2 Kings 4:42-44, where the feeding of the five thousand mirrors Elisha's prophetic experience. God made manifest His presence and miracle-working power through His prophet, Elisha, and it was through the recontextualization of Elisha's miracle in 2 Kings when compared to Christ's miracle in Luke 9, where Jesus was foreshadowed not only as a great prophet, which is how the Jews recognized Him, but most importantly as the prophesied Son of God.

**Table 1**

*Recontextualization from 2 Kings 4:42-44 & Luke 9:10-17*

2 Kings 4:42-44	Luke 9:10-17
100 men in attendance	5,000 men in attendance
20 loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain	5 loaves of bread and 2 fish
Elisha: "Give it to the people and let them eat."	Jesus: "You give them something to eat."
The servant sets the 20 loaves of bread and fresh ears of grain before the people.	The disciples set the fish and loaves before the crowd.
All ate and had food left over.	All ate until they were satisfied and had 12 baskets of food left over.

*Reconfiguration.* Reconfiguration occurs when a situation is recounted in such a way that makes the more recent event new when compared to a previous event, where the latest event outshines the last event, causing the older event to serve as a foreshadowing of the recent event (Robbins, 1996).

*Narrative Amplification.* Narrative amplification serves as an extended composition of a phrase that amplifies a narrative's meaning to more than just a certain highlighted phrase (Robbins, 1996). As the disciples bid Jesus to send away the crowd for concern of not having lodging or sustenance, Jesus responded by giving a command saying, "You, give them something to eat" (Luke 9:13, ESV) and created an expanded chreia that contains extended narration alluding to Christ being the nourishing Bread of Life (John 6:35) and the sending of the disciples to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

Although Jesus stood before the disciples as the giver (Ps. 36:9) and sustainer of life (Ps. 54:4), they failed to recognize Him as such and wanted to send away the crowd out of fear (Luke 9:12). The disciples' lack of faith is further revealed as they proceed to tell Jesus of their limited funds and resources (Luke 9:12). Jesus commanding the disciples to feed the crowd despite their concern of lack amplifies Christ's identity as the Bread of Life (John 6:35). Jesus further amplifies the narrative that all life and sustenance comes from God, the Father, in heaven when He lifted the food to the heavens and prayed to signify how Jesus, Himself, was the food that would be lifted to the heavens and would be multiplied to fill and satisfy not just the multitude but all of humanity.

Jesus, instructing the disciples to feed the crowd despite their limited resources, also amplifies His command to the disciples of going into all the world to make disciples, baptize and teach them, assuring them of His own authority and of His presence being with them unto the end of the age (Matt. 28:18-20). Essentially, Jesus is commanding the disciples to give the crowd what they need and already have, which is Himself. Rather than Jesus distributing the food Himself, assigning the disciples was intentional in foreshadowing their role in advancing the kingdom. Jesus further amplified this point in a different conversation with Peter when He asked Peter three times if he loved Him (John 21:15-17). When Peter responded, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (John 21:17, ESV). Jesus responded to him with a command: "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17, ESV). Jesus wanted to ensure not only that His word would go forth in the making of new disciples, but He also wanted to iterate the crucial importance of Peter and the other disciples being obedient to their kingdom mission that would require being premised on their love for Christ as He told them if they loved him that they would need to keep His commandments (John 14:15, ESV). If we love Jesus, that love calls us to action in keeping His commandments of feeding His sheep and sharing with them the Bread of Life we have discovered in Christ as His disciples.

*Thematic Elaboration.* Elaboration serves as an alternative to narrative amplification as a theme emerges in the form of a thesis or chreia whose meanings and effects unfold through argumentation (Robbins, 1996). Elaboration is an

argumentative mode that is central to early Christian discourse, as it, along with narrative amplification, provides an effective way to communicate the worldview of a religious movement such as Christianity (Robbins, 1996).

Theme: God provides through His Son (Luke 9:16).

- *Rationale*: God multiplied the five loaves and two fish as Jesus lifted them and blessed them to provide sustenance for the multitude (Luke 9:16).
- *Confirmation of the Rationale*: “And taking the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces” (Luke 9:16, 17, ESV).
- *Argument from the Contrary*: “The twelve came and said to him, ‘Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.’ But he said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ They said, ‘We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people’” (Luke 9:13, ESV).
- *Argument from Ancient Testimony*: Jesus welcomed the crowd as they followed Him (Luke 9:11). The first reference to God sending His son is found in Genesis, where God curses the serpent and tells him: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel” (3:15, ESV). However, the first of many inferences made as Jesus being sent as the Bread of Life when “the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not’ (Ex. 16:4, ESV).

*Argument from Example*. Jesus did not succumb to the flesh but overcame it, focusing on the Spirit from where true life and satisfaction come. While Jesus fasted and prayed in the wilderness, Satan tempted him to turn rocks into bread, to satiate His hunger, the flesh, but Jesus responded with Scripture stating: “It is written, ‘man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4, ESV). Like Christ, man can also overcome temptation and obtain true fulfillment upon sacrificing fleshly desires and walking in the Spirit in constant communion and fellowship with God.

*Argument from Analogy*. Jesus fills to satisfaction and leaves no room for hunger or thirst (Luke 9:17). People who are in search of fulfillment often resort to physical fulfillment and satisfaction through addictions and harmful habits, leaving them broken and empty; however, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35, ESV).

*Synthesis of the Argument.* Although the crowd is hungry, the disciples do not have enough money or food to provide for the multitude (Luke 9:12, 16). However, Jesus takes the little they do have, blesses it, and begins distributing it to the disciples to give to the crowd of 5,000, not including the women and children who were also in attendance. They ate until they were satisfied and gathered twelve baskets worth of leftover food (Luke 9:17).

*Conclusion.* The crowd follows Jesus. He welcomes them, teaches them, and heals them (Luke 9: 11). God provides acceptance, knowledge, and healing through His Son, Jesus. The disciples want to send the crowd away for lack of lodging and sustenance, but Jesus commands them to feed the people (Luke 9:12, 13). God provides purpose and foretells the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) through Jesus' command to the disciples. Jesus executes a plan amid chaos as He tells the disciples how to seat and organize the crowd to prepare them to eat, although it appeared there would not be enough food. God provided security and a challenge of faith to the disciples through Jesus's actions (Luke 9:14,15). Jesus lifts the five loaves and two fish toward heaven, asks God to bless them, and began distributing them to the disciples to give to the multitude, showing that God would also lift Jesus, his Son, the bread of life, and would draw all men to him as a sacrifice for all mankind (Luke 9: 16). Finally, the crowd was satisfied while the remaining twelve baskets of broken pieces were retrieved, signifying God's provision of His Son as savior would be complete in fulfilling God's plan of salvation lacking nothing (Luke 9:17).

### *Cultural Intertexture*

Cultural knowledge is obtained by a person or a people group living within a certain culture who has learned the culture by interacting with it firsthand (Robbins, 1996). New Testament discourse often evokes or echoes Jewish tradition and culture (Robbins, 1996), as noted in the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:10-17), echoing the Jewish cultural tradition of Passover. As the crowd followed Jesus and His disciples by foot as they crossed the Sea of Galilee by boat, Aus (2010) posited that the people were walking in preparation for Passover as the mirrored pericope states that Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand (John 6:4). Passover is a sacred, cultural holiday for the Jewish people as they commemorate and celebrate Israeli liberation from Egyptian slavery (Num. 9:2) beginning with a feast of unleavened bread (Num. 9:11). Although Luke does not explicitly reference the Passover, Jesus organizing the crowd into groups of 50 suggests that a banquet is being prepared in the presence of royalty for a celebration. Jesus, lifting the bread toward heaven to bless it as God multiplied it (Luke 9:16) correlates with the Jewish history of God providing manna from heaven for His people, the Israelites while traveling through the wilderness (Ex. 16:4). The twelve baskets of leftover bread (Luke 9:17) also echoes the Jewish knowledge of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 49:28) as well as the twelve disciples (Luke 6:13-16) representing twelve Jewish tribes.

Another cultural echo occurs as manna from heaven is provided for the children of Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4), just as the loaves of bread and fish were multiplied as Christ lifted them toward heaven for the multitude. Both instances are a

foreshadowing of Jesus Himself being sent from heaven by the Father to fulfill man's spiritual hunger and void as He declared that anyone who eats of the bread, His body, will never hunger again (John 6:35). As Moses led the children of Israel out of slavery, they grumbled and complained of hunger (Ex. 16:3). God promised that He would rain down bread from heaven for them (Ex. 16:4) while Moses assured them that they would see the glory of the Lord (Ex. 16:7) as a result of the miracle of God's provision for them coming from heaven.

In all four Gospels, namely the Lukan pericope, the disciples want to send the crowd away as evening draws near due to their lack of adequate lodging and food for the 5,000 men, their wives, and children. Jesus lifted the five loaves of bread and two fish to heaven, blessed them, broke the loaves into pieces, and gave the baskets of food to the disciples to distribute to the people who all ate and were satisfied (Luke 9:16,17). Following John's account of the feeding of the five thousand, it is intentional that Jesus refers to Moses saying, "our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'"/Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven/ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:31-33, ESV). Being familiar with their historical, cultural, and religious context, Jews would have immediately recognized the manna being multiplied as a reminder of what God had done for their ancestors in the wilderness as they fled Egyptian slavery by providing manna and quail from heaven. John's account of the feeding of the five thousand includes Jesus asserting Himself as the Bread of Life, declaring, "Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35, ESV).

### *Social Intertexture*

Social knowledge is commonly held by all people within a region, is visible, and is readily accessible to people by generally interacting with others, as opposed to cultural knowledge that is taught with the use of certain languages and the transmission of traditions (Robbins, 1996). Social knowledge is often transmitted through the categories of (a) social identity, (b) social code, and (c) social role (Robbins, 1996).

*Social Identity.* Luke 9:10-17 commences with Jesus and His disciples retreating from their familiar home on the west side of Galilee to the foreign, east side of Bethsaida, a city known as a "lonely, wild, uncultivated, and desolate place" (Gill, 1746-48). In a normal social setting, Jews did not dare associate themselves with Gentiles; however, Jesus was intentional in traveling to Bethsaida, which was a well-known Gentile community, symbolizing that His ministry would extend across the sea, therefore, nullifying the racial tensions and prejudices between the Jews and Gentiles, becoming instead a bridge to unify the two (Mason, 2015). Despite Jews not associating themselves with Gentiles and the socially outcast, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee making it a point to welcome followers who were among the socially outcast as the Gentiles in that region were people of lower social groups with despised occupations such as tanners, innkeepers, and prostitutes while at the outskirts of

Bethsaida beyond the city walls lie beggars and outcasts whom Christ sought out and interacted with (Moxnes, 1994). Jesus foreshadows that salvation is for all people, despite their identity or hierarchical social status.

*Social Code of Hospitality.* Jesus not only acted as a bridge between the Jews and Gentiles as he crossed over the Sea of Galilee, but He also chose to share a meal with the Gentiles, implying His acceptance of new members into His community, which Moxnes (1994) asserted traditionally took place at the sharing of a meal. Meals were often an integral part of temple worship and giving offerings, which signify Christ's position as both savior and king, because city-wide banquets were often an expression of honor and status for the ruling elite (Moxnes, 1994). The multitude was not only fed to satisfaction, but the banquet also yielded leftovers, signifying that Jews and Gentiles alike will reign in abundance with Christ as new creations for eternity as we sup with Him at an even greater banquet yet to come (Scorgie et al., 2016).

*Social Role.* Luke accounts for the men numbering at 5,000; however, he fails to mention the women and children who accompanied the men (Gill, 1746-48), signifying the cultural tradition of gender social roles. Moxnes (1994) explains that women are seldom mentioned as guests at meals with Jesus because women held strong positions in the home but not in the public sphere of the city. Women were socially restricted and often confined to closed quarters, although they were considered equal heirs in the kingdom of God (1 Pet. 3:7; Scorgie, 2016).

### *Historical Intertexture*

Historical intertexture references specific events that have occurred at specific times at specific locations. Because the term *historical* in socio-rhetorical criticism involves historical, social, political, economic, and cultural events, having knowledge of the social, cultural, and ideological context operating at the time of the event is crucial to interpretation (Robbins, 1996).

*Multiplicity of the Data.* Robbins (1996) explained that historical intertexture occurs when multiple speakers iterate the same event, and each account agrees on the same basic issues. Although Luke tells the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, Matthew, Mark, and John also give their view of the same account, including a few more in-depth details in their gospels that Luke does not include.

*Nature of the Data.* Bethsaida is the city Jesus and His disciples traveled to when feeding the five thousand, mentioned not only in Scripture but also in other Christian sources. Bethsaida was located east of the Sea of Galilee and was often referred to as a lonely, wild, uncultivated, and desolate place (Gill, 1746-48). The disciples, knowing Bethsaida's reputation, pleaded with Jesus to send the people away due to a lack of resources for the crowd (Luke 9:12). In Mark's account of Bethsaida, he portrayed it as a Gentile city, whereas Matthew, Luke, and John portrayed Bethsaida from a Jewish context as a result of a contemporary shift in Bethsaida's reputation (Mason, 2015). Mason (2015) further posited that non-biblical literary sources affirmed that Bethsaida had indeed shifted from a non-Galilean town to a

Galilean town. In addition, the archeological record of Et-Tell, which has been identified as Bethsaida (Freund, 2014), shows an influx of a Jewish presence beginning near the first century B.C.E. (Mason, 2015; Savage, 2011). Josephus, a Jewish historian, also recorded the existence of the city of Bethsaida in his text, *Antiquities of the Jews*, which he wrote in ca. 93 C.E., asserting that Bethsaida was made into a city and was renamed Julias in honor of Caesar's daughter, Julia (Mason, 2015). The existence of the city of Bethsaida was also recorded in other non-biblical sources written by Pliny, a Roman author, and Ptolemy, a scientific geographer. Dr. Rami Arav discovered the site of Et-tell, identifying it as Bethsaida along with Carl Savage, a lead excavator, who affirmed the shift from a Gentile population to a predominantly Jewish population. In Savage's excavation of Bethsaida, he recorded a timeline showing that Bethsaida, along with the entire region of Galilee, was destroyed during the first phase of the Assyrian battle campaigns in 722 B.C.E. and remained vacant until the Jewish resurgence and resettlement (Mason, 2015).

*Application.* Jesus fulfilled His role as the quintessential transformational leader in Luke's narrative by (a) inspiring His followers; (b) idealizing His leadership; (c) intellectually stimulating His followers; and (d) being individually concerned for each of His followers thus fulfilling all of the four I's of the TL theory as He demonstrated His commitment to His followers by treating them as ends rather than means (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999) and constantly pointing their hearts back to the Father.

*Love Principle 1: Leaders who lead with love equip their followers to also lead with love by treating them as ends rather than means.* The ideal transformational leader is a confident visionary who maintains a high standard for his followers to emulate (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Jesus influenced His followers not only by word but also in deed expanding His influence beyond His native Jewish race, crossing social and racial boundaries when He traveled to the Eastern side of the Sea of Galilee to the desolate city of Bethesda welcoming, and embracing the Gentiles (Luke 9:10). Although the disciples sought a solution to their lack in the natural, Jesus set a high standard when He responded by faith in the supernatural, looking to heaven and His Father for the solution just as Moses did when he led the Israelites out of slavery. Just as God supernaturally provided manna from heaven for His children, He also provided manna from heaven as the bread was multiplied, as well as supernatural manna through the incarnation of His son, the Bread of Life (John 6:35), for all of humanity. Just as Christ spent time with His followers, leading by word and deed, so must leaders spend time with their followers if they are to impact and transform their followers into leaders who also lead by word and deed. As a result of Jesus spending time with and training His followers, He caused them to reproduce more followers or disciples, not after their own likeness but after Christ's likeness and example. Kouzes and Posner (2002) asserted that when a leader challenges the status quo, he enhances his followers' perception of himself as being dynamic and competent, which Jesus often did, causing much debate and anger among the community's religious and elite.

*Love Principle 2: Leaders who lead with love equip their followers to also lead with love by spending quality time with their followers and influencing them so they will*

*begin to emulate the loving leader.* The transformational leader inspires his followers by providing meaningful and challenging opportunities for growth through engaging in shared goals and undertakings (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Jesus kept His father's vision at the forefront when He reminded His followers of their purpose, telling them to give the people something to eat (Luke 9:13). Fry (2003) asserted that people need a sense of transcendence and a sense of calling to their work. Jesus gave His disciples this sense of calling and transcendence when He challenged them to think outside of the box, not only in providing the people something to eat despite their visible lack and desolation of the land, but He also challenged them to overcome their social, cultural, and religious barriers by associating with and serving the new demographic of people whom they historically despised. It was not Jesus's intention to send the people away which would have been the easiest most convenient solution (the flesh); however, Jesus intended to engage the people whom others rejected and provide for their needs spirit, soul, and body so that the Father's ultimate goal would be accomplished through their fulfillment and recognizing and glorifying the one true God, Yahweh.

*Love Principle 3: Leaders who lead with love equip their followers to also lead with love by providing their followers with a sense of calling and transcendence.* Transformational leaders stimulate their followers intellectually on a spiritual level and help followers to question assumptions and generate creative solutions (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Jesus did this by addressing the total man in the Lukan pericope. Before Jesus fed the crowd, he welcomed them, healed them, and taught them about the kingdom. Rather than instantly sending the crowd away, Jesus challenged the disciples to think of a creative solution to care for and feed the people. Upon Jesus refusing the disciples' initial request to send the crowd away, they were forced to act by faith and present their solution of five loaves of bread and two fish, although meager, to Jesus. Jesus needed something to work with, and the disciples obliged. An effective leader understands his followers' needs and can tap into the needs and motives of his followers to reach both the followers' and the leader's shared goals. Jesus could have easily provided an ample amount of sustenance for the crowd all on His own; however, Jesus helped to grow His disciples in their faith and in their humility by forcing them to offer the little they had.

*Love Principle 4: Leaders who lead with love equip their followers to also lead with love by cultivating creativity and solutions-based problem-solving.* The transformational leader focuses his efforts on developing his followers as individuals by providing personalized coaching, mentoring, and growth opportunities for leadership roles (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Jesus was attuned to the needs not only of His followers but also of His disciples. He was aware that they required further development of their faith in Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6:35) and in God the Father as the source and giver of good things (Ps. 84:11) that hold eternal value. As Jesus did not heed the disciples' request to send away the crowd, not only was the disciples' faith challenged and increased but the crowd's faith was also challenged and increased as they, too, witnessed how Jesus would develop a plan of action or more accurately explained as a plan of faith by organizing the crowd into groups of 50 and miraculously multiplying the loaves and fish for the people. Rather than Jesus doing all the work by Himself and distributing the food amongst the multitude, he seized the

moment as a teaching opportunity and allowed the disciples to personally partake in the miracle by giving them the multiplied baskets of food and tasking them with distributing the food themselves to the people. Integrating spirituality with work by serving others provides meaning and purpose in life (Fry, 2003), which is why Jesus took a hands-on training approach with the disciples by involving them in serving the people whom they would normally shun. Through this hands-on experience, the disciples were able to grasp the heavenly vision, take ownership of their calling and place in the heavenly vision, and make it their own, thus replicating the vision and calling in others to lead.

*Love Principle 5: Leaders who lead with love equip their followers to also lead with love by including their followers in the planning and execution of the organization's vision.* Leaders who lead with love do not merely cast vision. They invite their followers into the shared ownership, planning, and execution of that vision. Transformational leadership emphasizes empowerment through participation, allowing followers to move from passive recipients to active contributors in accomplishing collective goals (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Jesus consistently modeled this inclusive leadership approach by involving His disciples directly in both the discernment and enactment of God's redemptive work. Rather than functioning as detached observers, the disciples were repeatedly entrusted with responsibility, authority, and agency, as evidenced in Jesus's commissioning of the twelve to preach, heal, and serve (Luke 9:1-6). By involving His followers in the work itself, Jesus affirmed their value, strengthened their confidence, and cultivated a sense of shared mission rooted in love rather than obligation. Christ's calling of His disciples did not cease 2,000 years ago. His call extends to modern-day believers, commanding them to go into all the world, preach the gospel, and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Including followers in the planning and execution of the vision fosters deeper commitment, accountability, and relational trust. Spiritual leadership theory suggests that when leaders create environments of inclusion and shared meaning, followers experience greater alignment with the organization's purpose and are more likely to internalize its values (Fry, 2003). Jesus demonstrated this by allowing His disciples to wrestle with uncertainty, participate in decision-making, and learn through experience, even when outcomes were uncertain, or faith was required. This participatory approach not only advanced the immediate mission but also prepared the disciples to carry the vision forward independently. By entrusting followers with meaningful responsibility, leaders who lead with love cultivate future leaders who can replicate the vision, empowering others, and leading with the same love they have received.

## CONCLUSION

A spiritual leader walks in front when his followers need someone to follow, walks behind when his followers need encouragement, and walks beside when his followers need a friend (Fry, 2003). Jesus took His rightful place as a transformational leader and as a friend among His disciples and many others who followed His ministry. McCabe (2008) asserted that Jesus was arguably the most effective leader and change agent the world has ever known. Christ's commitment to His life-bringing

mission (Fryar, 2007) of reconciling man to God and displaying the light of God's glory amidst a dark and fallen world brought eternal life to humanity, causing us to live a free and flourishing life in Him and through Him. Examining the Lukan pericope intertextually reveals the common thread of Jesus being the Bread of Life and further reveals God the Father as the provider for humanity's spiritual famine. It is only through Christ's work on the Cross and His working in us and through us that man is fulfilled, never hungering or thirsting again for anything other than the Bread of Life, to whose reign and fulfillment are never-ending.

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### About the Author

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