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journal of biblical perspectives in leadership

Table of Contents

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026).

ISSN 1941-4692

BOOK REVIEWS

ISSN 1941-4692

journal of biblical perspectives in leadership

From the Editor: Celebrating 20 Years

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On behalf of Regent University's School of Business and Leadership (SBL) and the editorial board of the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, I extend my deepest gratitude to you for supporting the journal.

This issue continues our mission of exploring, engaging, and extending the field of knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of leadership as found within the context of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. The continuing conversation of human flourishing, particularly as understood through the eyes of servant leadership, supplied a compelling catalyst for this issue.

I am honored to carry on, with my co-editor Dr. Alex Wright, the mantle of editorial leadership handed down by former co-editor Dr. Joshua Henson. This year, we celebrate 20 years of JBPL scholarship. The journal's distinguished history is indebted to the founding vision of Dr. Kathaleen Reid-Martinez when she was Dean of the School of Leadership Studies (a predecessor of the current SBL). Such vision reached fruition in 2006 under the then Dean of SBL, Dr. Bruce Winston. We remain immensely grateful for the leadership and engagement of Dr. Winston and the current SBL Dean, Dr. Doris Gomez. Because of their faithful support, the reach of JBPL encompasses an ever-expanding body of exemplary scholars and practitioners.

In commemoration of 20 years of stalwart biblical scholarship, JBPL is transitioning this year to semiannual issues released in the Winter and Summer. Thank you for the joy and privilege of serving.

Grace and peace in the name of Christ.

Paul J. Palma

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 1 – 2.

ISSN 1941-4692

journal of biblical perspectives in leadership

The Editorial Board

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Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 1 – 2.

ISSN 1941-4692

journal of biblical perspectives in leadership

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

Michelle Gonzalez Segundo

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

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

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 3 – 16.

ISSN 1941-4692

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

ISSN 1941-4692

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

ISSN 1941-4692

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.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 3 – 16.

ISSN 1941-4692

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

ISSN 1941-4692

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).

ISSN 1941-4692

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

ISSN 1941-4692

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

ISSN 1941-4692

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

ISSN 1941-4692

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.

ISSN 1941-4692

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

ISSN 1941-4692

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.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 3 – 16.

ISSN 1941-4692

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.

About the Author

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THE HOUR OF HUMILITY: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SACRED TEXTURE IN JOHN 13 FOR CHURCH PLANTING IN HONOR-SHAME CULTURES

Matthew Hattabaugh

This study analyzes John 13:1-17 through sacred texture analysis to explore how Jesus models transformational leadership (TL) in a culturally resonant way for church planting in honor-shame contexts. TL theory—defined by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—has seen wide application in ministry but remains underdeveloped in exegetical engagement with Gospel narratives. Using sacred texture and the socio-rhetorical framework developed by Robbins (1996) and Henson et al. (2020), the foot-washing passage is examined as a sacred leadership event.

The findings reveal that each TL trait aligns naturally with elements of sacred texture: divine action, holy personhood, sacred space, sacred time, and ethical instruction. Jesus' leadership emerges as morally grounded, relationally attentive, and strategically timed. This model provides a biblically faithful, culturally adaptive approach for training leaders in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) church planting. This study offers an exegetically grounded integration of sacred texture analysis and transformational leadership theory to clarify how John 13:1–17 depicts leadership formation and cultural translation in honor–shame settings.

Keywords: transformational leadership, sacred texture, socio-rhetorical criticism, John 13, church planting, honor-shame culture, Middle East, biblical leadership, servant leadership, organizational theology.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 17–39.

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THE HOUR OF HUMILITY: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SACRED TEXTURE IN JOHN 13 FOR CHURCH PLANTING IN HONOR-SHAME CULTURES

Transformational leadership (TL) theory, emphasizing moral authority, visionary influence, cognitive challenge, and relational care, has been widely applied in organizational and ministry settings to inspire change and develop followers (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass & Riggio, 2006). John 13:1–17 uniquely presents leadership not merely as a moral ideal but as an enacted, covenantal threshold "sign-act" that redefines authority through relational service and explicitly commands imitation as the community's norm of leadership. Defined by four core components—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—TL has proven effective in diverse cultural contexts and has gained traction in Christian leadership literature. While numerous studies examine TL's use in church leadership, few offer sustained exegetical engagement with Gospel narratives to explore how Jesus models these traits. Most biblical leadership studies focus on the Apostle Paul (Wolak, 2016), often overlooking the formative leadership moments found in Jesus' ministry. Gregory (2023) emphasized transformational pastoral leadership as being rooted in theological vision and spiritual formation, aligning with the sacred leadership model exemplified by Jesus. This study addresses that gap by examining John 13:1-17, the foot-washing narrative, using sacred texture analysis to explore the theological, ethical, and leadership dimensions of Jesus' actions. Jatau (2023) analyzes John 13:1-17 as a culturally resonant model of leadership in the Nigerian church context, showing how Jesus' act of foot washing shapes servant leadership praxis.

Recent scholarship has expanded TL's relevance for spiritual formation and cross-cultural leadership. Whittington et al. (2005) and Prinz (2022) affirm TL's effectiveness in spiritual growth and church planting when leaders demonstrate integrity, vision, and relational attentiveness. Mutua et al. (2023) show strong correlations between TL traits and youth engagement and church vitality. Georges and Baker (2016), Elmer (2006), and Flanders and Mischke (2020) emphasize the importance of cultural intelligence and honor-shame sensitivity in cross-cultural ministry, particularly in Muslim-majority societies. Livermore (2015) and Trompenaars and Voerman (2010) further argue that effective leadership must align with local cultural frameworks—especially in collectivist and relationally complex environments like the Arab world.

Exegetically, this study builds on the sacred texture dimension of socio-rhetorical criticism, as developed by Robbins (1996), and expanded by Henson et al. (2020). Sacred texture explores how biblical texts communicate divine action, holy personhood, sacred space and time, and ethical instruction. These dimensions provide a theological lens for analyzing Jesus' foot-washing as more than symbolic humility—it becomes a sacred leadership moment that reveals the nature of divine authority and redemptive mission. DeSilva (2018) further refines this methodology by illustrating how sacred

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 17–39.

ISSN 1941-4692

texture shapes the moral imagination and spiritual identity of faith communities through Scripture.

Despite these advances, three key deficiencies persist in the literature. First, there is a lack of direct exegetical integration between TL theory and the Gospel narratives. Second, Jesus' leadership is underutilized as a formative model, even though His actions carry profound theological and practical implications. Third, few leadership studies contextualize TL for honor-shame cultures, limiting their application for church planting across the Middle East and North Africa. While Dvir et al. (2002) empirically validated TL's effectiveness in follower development, their findings remain disconnected from biblical foundations and theological interpretation. Accordingly, sacred texture analysis addresses these deficiencies by supplying text-controlled categories for mapping leadership dynamics (deficiency one), keeping Jesus' identity and agency central as the interpretive anchor (deficiency two), and generating culturally portable yet biblically constrained implications for honor–shame contexts (deficiency three).

This study addresses those deficiencies by examining how the Four I's of transformational leadership are revealed through sacred texture in John 13. Jesus embodies idealized influence through humble authority, inspirational motivation through vocational modeling, intellectual stimulation through norm disruption, and individualized consideration through personal engagement. This study argues that Jesus models a transformational leadership paradigm through sacred action in John 13, offering a compelling and culturally adaptive template for church planting in honor-shame cultures. The project proceeds by reviewing key literature on transformational leadership and sacred texture analysis, outlining the methodological framework, presenting exegetical findings from John 13:1-17, and concluding with implications for leadership formation and church planting in honor-shame cultures.

LITERATURE REVIEW OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership (TL) emerged as a moral-political concept in Burns's (1978) foundational work, which distinguished transactional leadership—based on exchange and compliance—from transformational leadership, which elevates followers through shared vision and ethical commitment. Burns proposed that transformational leaders prioritize the moral development of both themselves and their followers, thereby inspiring change that transcends personal interest. Longshore and Bass (1987) extended this idea into organizational theory by offering an empirically testable model that defined four core components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These components, often referred to as the "Four I's," have since become the foundation of transformational leadership theory.

The subsequent work of Bass and Avolio (1994) led to the development of the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which established TL's effectiveness across corporate, nonprofit, and public-

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 17–39.

ISSN 1941-4692

sector environments. Judge and Piccolo (2004), through meta-analytic research, confirmed the positive correlations between TL behaviors and employee satisfaction, performance, and organizational commitment. Later research (Lowe et al., 1996; Wang et al., 2011) reaffirmed that TL fosters higher levels of motivation and organizational citizenship, particularly in mission-driven contexts. Rafferty and Griffin (2004) expanded the conceptual framework of TL by introducing empirically grounded dimensions such as vision and supportive leadership, which align well with Jesus' actions in John 13.

Each of the Four I's contributes uniquely to leadership effectiveness. Idealized influence refers to the leader's moral authority and ability to model integrity and purpose. Inspirational motivation centers on the articulation of a compelling vision that inspires collective pursuit. Intellectual stimulation involves encouraging innovation and critical thinking, even when it challenges the status quo. Individualized consideration focuses on recognizing and nurturing the unique strengths and developmental needs of followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). These elements align closely with biblical themes, particularly as demonstrated in Jesus' ministry, where leadership is grounded in humility, relational attentiveness, and ethical disruption.

Despite widespread validation, TL theory has faced critique. While servant leadership foregrounds the moral posture of downward service, transformational leadership functions as an analytic vocabulary for influence and follower development, describing how Jesus' enacted service forms disciples without displacing the biblical servant model. Yukl (1999) argues that the model often overlaps with other leadership paradigms—particularly servant and charismatic leadership—making it conceptually vague. Gossmann (2020) explored TL traits in the interaction with the rich young ruler (Luke 18), offering a potential comparative framework to Jesus' sacred modeling in John 13. Piccolo and Colquitt (2006) found it difficult to isolate TL's distinct effects from other prosocial behaviors in leadership. Furthermore, TL's emphasis on visionary leadership can unintentionally reinforce top-down hierarchies unless balanced by servant leadership or contextual sensitivity.

In cross-cultural contexts, the effectiveness of TL is influenced by local values and leadership norms. Nguni et al. (2006) observed that TL traits were less effective in highly hierarchical cultures where conformity was expected. Yet others, including Weixler (n.d.) and Trompenaars and Voerman (2010), emphasize that when contextualized properly, TL offers powerful tools for adaptive leadership in collectivist societies. Hiebert (2009) emphasized the importance of contextualization in cross-cultural ministry, arguing that effective leadership must account for cultural frameworks to ensure the gospel's relevance and authenticity. Livermore (2015) further argues that cultural intelligence (CQ) is essential for leaders to interpret and apply TL behaviors across varying cultural scripts. In this light, Georges and Baker (2016) provide a particularly valuable lens by examining how biblical models of servanthood interact with the dynamics of honor and shame—suggesting that Jesus' leadership style, particularly in John 13, subverts status-based expectations and redefines greatness in relational terms. Şahin and Bilir (2024) identify that transformational leadership traits such as inspirational motivation and individualized consideration are most effective when aligned

ISSN 1941-4692

with personal cultural values, including collectivism and power-distance. Their cross-cultural study reveals that TL contributes to learning organization development *only* when leaders attune themselves to specific cultural value dimensions.

In ministry and church planting contexts, transformational leadership has been recognized as an effective tool for fostering spiritual formation and team mobilization. Whittington et al. (2005) argue that TL reflects the legacy of the Apostle Paul, whose moral vision, relational influence, and adaptability exemplify the Four I's. Prinz (2022) identifies transformational competencies as key markers of effective church planting catalysts in Muslim-majority nations, especially when coupled with humility and contextual fluency. Irving and Strauss (2019) offer a model of Christian leadership that blends biblical fidelity with servant leadership practices, reinforcing the transformational potential found in humble, Christ-centered leadership. Mutua et al. (2023) link TL traits to stronger church performance and youth engagement, suggesting that leadership behaviors rooted in moral clarity and relationship-building are essential for sustainable ministry. However, most of these studies focus on Pauline literature or generalized leadership practice, without grounding TL theory in Gospel exegesis.

Thus, three notable gaps remain in the current literature. First, there is a lack of exegetical integration between TL theory and Gospel narratives—particularly in the person and actions of Jesus. Second, most models emphasize Paul as the primary NT leadership example, while underutilizing Jesus' teachings and actions in leadership formation. Third, few studies contextualize TL for honor-shame cultures in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where leadership authority often relies on social hierarchy, family lineage, or religious status.

This study seeks to address those gaps by analyzing John 13:1-17 through the lens of sacred texture, aligning the theological and narrative dimensions of Jesus' foot washing with the Four I's of transformational leadership. In doing so, it offers a biblically faithful, theologically sound, and culturally adaptive leadership model for church planters serving in honor-shame contexts.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a socio-rhetorical exegetical framework to analyze John 13:1-17, focusing specifically on the sacred texture dimensions defined by Henson et al. (2020). This approach enables a rich theological reading of the text by examining how divine action, sacred space, moral authority, and relational dynamics are embedded in the narrative. By correlating these sacred elements with transformational leadership (TL) traits, the research aims to uncover how the Gospel text itself reveals a leadership model suited to culturally complex and honor-based contexts.

The socio-rhetorical method, first developed by Robbins (1996), views the biblical text as a multilayered discourse with rhetorical, cultural, and theological textures. Within this model, sacred texture explores how a passage communicates divine presence, holy behavior, covenantal purpose, and moral expectations. According to Henson et al.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 17–39.

ISSN 1941-4692

(2020), sacred texture comprises five elements: (1) divine action, (2) holy person, (3) sacred space, (4) sacred time, and (5) ethical and moral judgment. These dimensions are not abstractions; they are rhetorical signals that shape how leadership, discipleship, and authority are to be understood within a covenantal community.

This research applies sacred texture not to extract timeless leadership principles, but to discern how the biblical narrative itself frames leadership through theological and relational actions. In doing so, the project avoids the eisegetical danger of imposing contemporary leadership theories onto Scripture. DeSilva (2018) emphasizes the necessity of guarding against such projection, advocating instead for hermeneutical models that allow ancient texts to speak from within their own theological frameworks. Sacred texture provides such a model—offering a theologically faithful way to observe how Jesus leads through action, embodiment, and covenantal reversal.

The passage chosen—John 13:1-17—meets Creswell and Poth's (2018) criteria for qualitative research selection: it is bounded (a complete narrative unit), information-rich (with cultural, theological, and ethical layers), and tied to real-world applications. John's Gospel uniquely emphasizes Jesus' awareness of His divine mission and "hour," linking His actions to sacred time and redemptive purpose (John 13:1-3). The foot washing is not a private moral act; it is a sacred demonstration of leadership that challenges social structures and reframes relational power. Therefore, this pericope serves as an ideal case for exegetical inquiry that connects sacred narrative with transformational praxis.

The research process follows a step-by-step sacred texture analysis, structured around the five sacred elements. In this study, the Four I's operate as analytical lenses for describing leadership dynamics that emerge from the pericope's sacred texture rather than as controlling categories imposed upon the text. Each section of the analysis will examine how John's text reveals divine intent and relational interaction through these elements, followed by theological reflection on how those dynamics align with one of the Four I's of transformational leadership:

- Idealized Influence (through divine action),
- Inspirational Motivation (through holy person and sacred time),
- Individualized Consideration (through sacred space),
- Intellectual Stimulation (through moral and ethical judgment).

Rather than applying the Four I's as a prescriptive grid, the project treats them as diagnostic markers—emerging only where the text naturally reflects transformational leadership dynamics. This safeguards against distorting the meaning of the text while also providing a faithful bridge to real-world ministry leadership challenges, particularly in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) contexts. The sacred texture method thus

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 17–39.

ISSN 1941-4692

functions both as an exegetical lens and as a theological filter for interpreting leadership action within Scripture.

By following this methodology, the study aims to answer the central research question: How are the core components of transformational leadership exemplified in Jesus' actions in John 13:1-17? It also seeks to uncover culturally meaningful insights that can inform leadership training and church planting strategies in honor-shame contexts, especially among emerging Pentecostal and evangelical communities.

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents the results of a sacred texture analysis of John 13:1-17, demonstrating how each sacred dimension within the text aligns with the core components of transformational leadership. Rather than imposing modern leadership theory onto the biblical narrative, the analysis reveals that Jesus' actions organically embody the Four I's—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Each subsection below explores one sacred texture element and shows how it naturally reflects a transformational trait. Together, these findings answer the central research question: *How are the core components of transformational leadership exemplified in Jesus' actions in John 13:1-17?* The Results section traces a coherent interpretive arc from divine initiative through identity-shaped influence to ethical disruption, showing how the narrative's sacred dynamics cumulatively produce transformational formation.

Divine Action: Idealized Influence

The sacred texture element of divine action in John 13:1-17 is foundational to understanding Jesus' model of transformational leadership. The Gospel writer introduces the scene with theological gravity: "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God…" (*New American Standard Bible*, 2020, John 13:3). This assertion of divine sovereignty sets the stage for an extraordinary inversion—Jesus, fully conscious of His divine authority, sets aside His garments, assumes the position of a servant, and begins to wash the feet of His disciples. This moment reveals a paradox: divine initiative expressed through radical humility.

In sacred texture analysis, divine action refers to how the text portrays God's self-revelation and redemptive involvement within the narrative. Jesus' actions in John 13 constitute not just ethical behavior, but a theophanic moment—a divine unveiling through sacred servanthood. According to DeSilva (2018), such acts in John's Gospel are designed to disclose divine character in ways that compel imitation and shape community identity. Henson et al. (2020) affirm that sacred actions often serve as a model for spiritual leadership, embedding divine values into the moral imagination of the faith community.

Lexical analysis reinforces this reading. The verb νίπτω (niptō, "to wash") in John 13:5 evokes Old Testament purification rites (cf. Ex. 30:18-21), suggesting that Jesus

ISSN 1941-4692

redefines ritual cleansing as relational humility. Moreover, His use of the word δοῦλος (doulos, “slave”) in verse 16 aligns leadership with the lowest social status, reframing authority as service. As Verbrugge (2000) and Brown (1978) note, doulos in Johannine usage does not imply dehumanizing subservience but rather identity-shaping voluntary submission. These terms ground divine action not in displays of dominance, but in actions that elevate others through sacrificial initiative.

This sacred inversion directly parallels idealized influence, the first of the Four I’s in transformational leadership theory. Idealized influence refers to the leader’s ability to model integrity, moral clarity, and self-sacrificing commitment that inspires trust and emulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Jesus’ deliberate choice to serve despite possessing ultimate authority exemplifies this principle. Avolio and Gardner (2005) argue that transformational leaders must embody their core values in moments of decision and visibility—precisely what Jesus does here. He does not merely teach about humility; He performs it in a way that challenges deeply held assumptions about greatness and power.

The sacred nature of Jesus’ actions also reorients the disciples’ understanding of God’s character. Carson (2020) writes that the foot washing is not just a lesson in humility, but a revelation of divine love enacted in service. By engaging in a socially scandalous act, Jesus simultaneously lowers Himself and elevates servanthood as the measure of divine greatness. Witherington (1998) emphasizes that such symbolic acts in John function as “sign-events,” offering embodied theology that shapes ethical practice. Here, the divine action becomes not only a leadership moment but a sacred blueprint for how Christian leaders are to exercise influence.

This theological model is particularly significant for church planting in honor-shame cultures. As Georges and Baker (2016) explain, status and dignity in Arab societies are often tied to social visibility, hierarchy, and public affirmation. Jesus subverts those norms by leveraging His divine status in private, not to demand honor, but to bestow it. This action invites leaders in honor-shame contexts to adopt a leadership style rooted in moral vision, humility, and identity-redefining influence. Far from weakening authority, such behavior deepens its moral foundation and fosters trust across cultural boundaries (Greenlee, 2009; Livermore, 2015).

In summary, the sacred texture of divine action in John 13:1-17 reveals Jesus as the ideal transformational leader—one whose influence is derived not from position but from sacrificial service. His actions embody divine initiative and ethical clarity, aligning fully with the transformational trait of idealized influence. For church planters in the Middle East and North Africa, this paradigm offers a culturally disruptive yet biblically faithful model of leadership—one that reshapes authority through humility and reframes greatness through sacred servanthood.

ISSN 1941-4692

Holy Person: Inspirational Motivation

The sacred texture element of holy person focuses on how a biblical narrative presents individuals as carriers of divine authority, spiritual purity, and theological purpose (Henson et al., 2020; Robbins, 1996). In John 13:1-17, Jesus is portrayed not only as the Son of God but as the consecrated agent of divine mission who leads through relational humility. The Gospel explicitly affirms His divine self-awareness: "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God…" (John 13:3, NASB). His identity as the holy one is not detached from action—it is demonstrated through a shocking gesture of servanthood. In sacred terms, His holiness is made visible through ethical embodiment rather than ritual separation (DeSilva, 2018).

This portrayal of Jesus aligns with the transformational leadership trait of inspirational motivation, which involves articulating a compelling vision, demonstrating conviction, and mobilizing others through example (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Inspirational leaders foster hope and meaning, calling followers to a higher purpose. In this moment, Jesus does not deliver a sermon on humility—He enacts it. After washing His disciples' feet, He proclaims: "For I gave you an example, so that you also would do just as I did for you" (John 13:15, NASB). This action-oriented declaration frames His leadership not as instruction alone, but as a vision to be embodied.

Jesus' holy personhood is thus inseparable from His leadership. He models what He calls others to do—servant-heartedness, mutual honor, and covenantal love. As Whittington et al. (2005) explain, transformational leaders inspire others by living out the ideals they promote. Jesus' moral clarity and sacrificial initiative motivate the disciples to reimagine what greatness means in the kingdom of God. Köstenberger (2004) affirms that the foot washing functions as a paradigm of community life—one in which leadership is measured by love rather than by hierarchy.

The relational dimension of holiness is further emphasized in Jesus' treatment of Peter. Though Peter protests the act (John 13:6-8), Jesus responds patiently, reinforcing that true leadership requires both humility and vulnerability. His holy identity is not threatened by intimacy or discomfort. As Avolio and Luthans (2006) observe, transformational leaders leverage formative moments—especially those involving resistance—to cast vision with lasting impact. Jesus' response to Peter invites reflection, not rejection, and thus models a style of leadership that is both inspiring and pastoral.

In honor-shame cultures, where leadership often reflects social dominance, Jesus' holy personhood subverts expectations. Georges and Baker (2016) note that leaders in Arab societies are frequently evaluated based on status, distance, and command authority. Jesus reverses this model by making His holiness accessible through humble action. His authority is not diminished by servanthood—it is clarified. As Greenlee (2009) and Elmer (2006) argue, culturally intelligent leadership must confront hierarchical norms with incarnational presence. Jesus' embodiment of holiness

ISSN 1941-4692

becomes the very means by which He mobilizes His followers to adopt a radically different kind of greatness.

This model of inspirational motivation is particularly effective in cross-cultural church planting. Prinz (2022) notes that effective church planters among Muslim-majority peoples often lead not through charismatic speech alone, but by consistent modeling of the values they preach. Jesus' example in John 13 reinforces this principle. His holiness is not abstract—it is formative, initiating a new pattern of relational leadership that speaks powerfully to collectivist societies in which public action shapes communal identity.

In summary, Jesus is presented in John 13 as the holy person who inspires transformation through action and example. His leadership mobilizes others not through fear or power, but through a vision of humility rooted in divine mission. This sacred portrayal aligns fully with inspirational motivation, revealing how holiness, when embodied in love, becomes the catalyst for spiritual leadership. For emerging leaders in honor-shame cultures, Jesus' model provides an aspirational identity that fuses authority with intimacy and sanctity with service.

Sacred Space: Individualized Consideration

The sacred texture element of sacred space identifies how physical or symbolic locations within a biblical narrative carry spiritual significance and become the setting for divine-human interaction (Henson et al., 2020; Robbins, 1996). In John 13:1-17, the Upper Room functions as more than a geographical setting; it becomes a sacred environment where intimacy, covenantal preparation, and leadership transformation converge. Jesus does not choose a public forum or temple setting to deliver this lesson—He selects a private, trusted space among His disciples, reinforcing that transformational leadership often occurs in relationally safe and spiritually charged environments.

The Upper Room, in Johannine theology, is a setting for formation and transition. It is the location where Jesus institutes not only the foot washing, but also delivers His final teachings and intercessory prayer (John 13-17). As Beasley-Murray (1987) and Carson (2020) observe, this space is theologically charged—it marks the threshold between the old covenant and the new, between Jesus' earthly ministry and His glorification. The foot washing, set in this sacred space, becomes a covenantal act that redefines community identity around servanthood and love.

This sacred space dynamic corresponds to the transformational leadership trait of individualized consideration, which refers to a leader's attentiveness to the unique needs, growth trajectories, and relational dynamics of followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In this passage, Jesus interacts personally with His disciples—not as a mass audience, but as individuals. His exchange with Peter is especially revealing. Peter resists being washed, and Jesus responds not with rebuke, but with theological explanation and

ISSN 1941-4692

relational grace (John 13:6-10). This is a moment of spiritual mentoring, not public correction.

Transformational leaders engage individuals within sacred or intentional environments to foster trust, identity, and developmental change. Avolio and Gardner (2005) argue that leaders must create conditions for personal transformation, often through context-rich, emotionally safe interactions. Jesus does precisely this. In the sacred space of the Upper Room, He initiates a moment of uncomfortable intimacy that challenges ego, pride, and fear—yet does so with pastoral care and relational intentionality. Peter's discomfort is not ignored but becomes a teaching moment that deepens his understanding of both leadership and grace.

In collectivist and honor-shame cultures, personal interaction within trusted spaces carries amplified meaning. Georges and Baker (2016) explain that honor is often preserved or lost in highly relational settings. Public correction brings shame; private instruction preserves dignity. Jesus' decision to wash the disciples' feet in an intimate setting—away from public view—demonstrates culturally intelligent leadership. He upholds their honor even as He challenges their assumptions. This integration of care and challenge models individualized consideration at its highest level.

Theological interpretation of the sacred space also draws on covenantal imagery. Coloe (2004) argues that the foot washing scene parallels Old Testament covenant rituals of purification and commission (cf. Ex. 29:4; Lev. 8:6), suggesting that Jesus prepares His disciples for priestly mission. Within this space, each disciple receives direct engagement and commissioning. Jesus dignifies them not by exalting their status, but by lowering Himself to serve them personally—a leadership strategy that elevates the follower's identity by demonstrating worth through relational investment.

Elmer (2006) emphasizes that culturally effective leadership in cross-cultural ministry requires humility, listening, and adaptability. Sacred space is not merely physical—it is relationally and theologically constructed. The Upper Room becomes such a space because of Jesus' intentional presence and individualized care. As Livermore (2015) notes, culturally intelligent leaders understand when and how to engage followers personally, discerning the timing, tone, and setting of formative interactions.

In summary, the sacred texture of space in John 13 reveals a leadership moment grounded in personalized transformation. Jesus engages His disciples one-on-one within a spiritually charged environment that communicates safety, purpose, and love. This corresponds directly with individualized consideration, demonstrating that spiritual leadership flourishes in sacred spaces where relational trust, theological vision, and cultural sensitivity converge. For church planters and ministry leaders in honor-shame cultures, this model provides a vital template for discipling others through meaningful, relationally appropriate engagement.

ISSN 1941-4692

Sacred Time: (Reinforced) Inspirational Motivation

The sacred texture of sacred time refers to how a biblical text situates its narrative within moments of divine significance—events tied to covenant, redemption, or eschatological fulfillment (Henson et al., 2020; Robbins, 1996). Although inspirational motivation appears under holy personhood, John's sacred time framing reinforces the same trait through a distinct mechanism, since narrative timing intensifies meaning and mobilizes discipleship resolve beyond identity claims alone. In John 13:1-17, time is not merely a chronological marker but a theologically loaded signal of divine intentionality. The narrative begins with a temporal declaration: *"Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come…"* (John 13:1, NASB). This phrase signals the arrival of Jesus' "hour"—ὥρα (*hōra*)—a key Johannine motif that marks the transition from public ministry to redemptive suffering and glorification (cf. John 2:4; 7:30; 12:23).

Sacred time in this passage functions as kairos—a decisive moment in salvation history where Jesus initiates a leadership act that embodies the meaning of His mission. According to Beasley-Murray (1987) and Köstenberger (2004), the use of Passover imagery links this moment to Israel's covenantal deliverance, suggesting that Jesus reinterprets that deliverance through servanthood and sacrifice. His foot washing is not random—it is embedded in God's redemptive timetable and charged with eschatological weight. As DeSilva (2018) notes, sacred time in John's Gospel often fuses past covenantal patterns with future-oriented mission.

This temporal setting reinforces the TL trait of inspirational motivation, already introduced in VI.B, by demonstrating Jesus' awareness of divine timing and His strategic use of leadership acts to cast a vision for the disciples' future. Jesus leads with purpose precisely *because* the time is urgent. He is not reacting—He is initiating. As Bass and Riggio (2006) explain, inspirational motivation involves articulating a compelling purpose that mobilizes others toward a shared destiny. Jesus' foot washing becomes that moment: a symbolic act that both reflects and catalyzes the transformation of His disciples from followers to future leaders.

The phrase *"having loved His own… He loved them to the end"* (John 13:1) further amplifies the sacred nature of the moment. The Greek word τέλος (*telos*, "the end" or "completion") underscores Jesus' resolve to carry His mission to full consummation. His leadership here is not sentimental—it is covenantal. Avolio and Gardner (2005) emphasize that transformational leaders operate with long-range vision rooted in ethical resolve. Jesus' act is grounded in divine love with eschatological foresight, not mere human compassion. This visionary intentionality motivates the disciples beyond the immediate moment and anchors their leadership identity in a larger narrative.

In honor-shame cultures, time-bound rituals often function as public markers of identity, hierarchy, and group values. Georges and Baker (2016) highlight how religious festivals and rites confer communal meaning and shape leadership transitions. Jesus

ISSN 1941-4692

inserts His radical act of servanthood into precisely such a moment—the Passover festival—thereby redefining leadership at the very site of cultural and religious expectation. Rather than assert dominance, He transforms the meaning of leadership itself, inspiring His followers with a vision of greatness through humility.

Prinz (2022) underscores that effective leadership in Muslim-majority contexts often hinges on timely, symbolic acts that demonstrate moral clarity and communal commitment. By embedding His example within a sacred time frame, Jesus connects His leadership with covenantal memory and prophetic fulfillment—an approach deeply resonant in cultures where symbolic timing carries deep weight. Tennent (2010) similarly argues that missional leadership must recognize kairos moments when spiritual authority can be redefined in culturally transformative ways.

In summary, the foot-washing narrative is framed by sacred time that reflects divine purpose, covenantal continuity, and redemptive urgency. Jesus' action, situated on the eve of His crucifixion, reinforces the TL trait of inspirational motivation, not simply through vision casting but through timely embodiment of mission. For leaders in honor-shame societies, this reinforces the importance of recognizing God-appointed moments—kairos settings—where leadership must move from abstract teaching to embodied action that mobilizes transformational change.

Ethical and Moral Judgment: Intellectual Stimulation

The sacred texture element of ethical and moral judgment explores how a biblical text presents divine standards for human behavior, challenges societal norms, and communicates the moral implications of covenantal identity (Henson et al., 2020; Robbins, 1996). In John 13:1-17, the ethical weight of Jesus' foot washing is unmistakable. He performs a socially scandalous act that reverses conventional hierarchies of honor and shame, then commands His disciples: *"If I, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet"* (John 13:14, NASB). What might appear as simple hospitality or humility is, in fact, a radical moral instruction embedded within a sacred act.

In Greco-Roman and Jewish culture, foot washing was a task reserved for the lowest of slaves. According to Brown (1978), even Jewish servants were often exempt from this duty; it was considered beneath their dignity. Jesus' decision to adopt this role was not only countercultural but ethically provocative—it challenged both Roman honor codes and Jewish purity expectations. By assuming the lowest social position, He subverts every conventional measure of status and power. As DeSilva (2018) argues, such moments in the Gospels are not merely symbolic but confrontational, redefining what is honorable in God's kingdom.

This aligns directly with the transformational leadership trait of intellectual stimulation, which refers to the leader's ability to challenge assumptions, question cultural norms, and encourage followers to think differently (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Jesus uses this moment to reframe the disciples' understanding of authority, identity,

ISSN 1941-4692

and leadership. He asks rhetorical questions: *"Do you know what I have done to you?"* (John 13:12)—not to seek affirmation but to prompt reflection and moral reorientation. His leadership is not passive; it is pedagogical. He draws the disciples into critical reflection through a lived parable of reversal.

Wolak (2016) notes that transformational leaders must foster environments where followers learn to question inherited patterns and imagine new paradigms of behavior. Jesus does this by embodying an ethic that simultaneously shocks and instructs. Avolio and Luthans (2006) emphasize that intellectual stimulation is most effective when paired with modeling, where the leader not only teaches but demonstrates a separate way forward. Jesus' act invites the disciples to reconsider their assumptions about greatness, proximity to power, and spiritual maturity.

In honor-shame cultures, where maintaining face and rank are deeply embedded social values, such a reversal is even more significant. Georges and Baker (2016) explain that ethical instruction in such cultures must confront deeply held collective scripts around hierarchy, purity, and public image. Jesus' foot washing dismantles these scripts—not through public humiliation but through private subversion. His actions redefine what is "clean," who is worthy, and how leaders should behave. In doing so, He initiates a transformational moment that intellectually and morally reconfigures the disciples' worldview. Jesus confronts status expectations through a dignity-preserving, relationally wise disruption that corrects hierarchy without resorting to public shaming, thereby modeling culturally intelligent transformation.

Greenlee (2009) adds that cross-cultural leaders must be willing to gently challenge local norms when Scripture offers a higher ethical vision. Jesus does exactly this—not by criticizing the culture, but by offering a new ethic through enacted truth. The disciples are not shamed; they are invited into a higher standard of mutual honor. Elmer (2006) affirms that culturally intelligent leadership must balance truth and grace, challenge and relationship. Jesus models this balance with precision—engaging His disciples in an act that requires them to rethink both theology and community practice.

Moreover, by embedding this moral inversion within a sacred act, Jesus ensures that the ethical vision is not negotiable. As Tennent (2010) argues, biblical leadership always involves the moral formation of both individuals and communities. The foot washing becomes a new standard—not an optional gesture of piety, but a non-negotiable expectation for Christian leadership: *"You also ought to wash one another's feet"* is not a metaphor alone; it is a redefinition of authority through downward, redemptive action.

In sum, the sacred texture of ethical and moral judgment in John 13 reveals Jesus as a leader who does more than serve—He challenges, disrupts, and transforms. His foot washing is a moral manifesto enacted through self-lowering love. It fully reflects the TL trait of intellectual stimulation, inviting leaders to reconsider cultural assumptions and adopt a leadership model that subverts worldly power with divine humility. For ministry leaders working in culturally complex, hierarchical environments, this offers a

ISSN 1941-4692

clear and courageous path forward: challenge convention with conviction, grounded in sacred example.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The sacred texture analysis of John 13:1-17 reveals a multi-dimensional leadership paradigm that is both theologically grounded and culturally transformative. Each sacred texture element—divine action, holy person, sacred space, sacred time, and ethical and moral judgment—unfolds naturally within the narrative and aligns organically with the core components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation.

Jesus demonstrates idealized influence through divine initiative. Fully aware of His authority and divine origin, He voluntarily lowers Himself to wash the feet of His disciples, modeling moral clarity and humility (John 13:3-5). This sacred act redefines leadership as redemptive self-sacrifice rooted in divine identity, not positional status.

As the holy person, Jesus exemplifies inspirational motivation by casting a vision through example. His foot washing is not merely ethical—it is vocational: “For I gave you an example, so that you also would do just as I did for you” (John 13:15, NASB). He inspires His followers not with rhetoric, but with embodied theology that redefines what it means to be great in the kingdom of God.

The sacred space of the Upper Room facilitates individualized consideration as Jesus engages each disciple personally—especially Peter. Within this intimate and relationally safe environment, He mentors and challenges without shaming. This leadership environment reflects a transformational commitment to personal development and pastoral care.

The narrative’s sacred time—“knowing that His hour had come” (John 13:1)—reinforces inspirational motivation. Jesus’ action is anchored in kairos awareness, aligning His leadership with God’s redemptive timetable. This eschatological intentionality adds urgency and vision to His instruction, positioning servanthood as the interpretive key to the Cross and beyond.

Finally, Jesus’ foot washing communicates profound ethical and moral judgment, activating intellectual stimulation. He disrupts cultural norms surrounding status and cleanliness, provoking reflection and requiring moral reorientation. By challenging the disciples’ assumptions about leadership, honor, and spiritual maturity, Jesus fosters transformation through cognitive and ethical engagement.

Crucially, these transformational traits are not imported into the text—they emerge naturally through close reading using sacred texture analysis. The socio-rhetorical method (Henson et al., 2020; Robbins, 1996) has proven essential in revealing how John 13 functions not merely as a narrative of humility, but as a leadership manifesto rooted in divine action and moral revelation (see Table 1). Reed

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ISSN 1941-4692

(2023) supports this integrative approach through a recent case study that demonstrates how servant leadership in a local church context parallels transformational traits with measurable team development results.

Table 1

Sacred Texture and Transformational Leadership

Sacred Texture Element	Key Verse(s)	TL Trait	Leadership Insight
Divine Action	John 13:3-4	Idealized Influence	Authority expressed through voluntary humility
Holy Person	John 13:7, 13-15	Inspirational Motivation	Vision cast through embodied example
Sacred Space	John 13:5-11	Individualized Consideration	Mentorship in relationally secure environments
Sacred Time	John 13:1	Inspirational Motivation	Eschatological urgency and prophetic leadership timing
Ethical and Moral Judgment	John 13:12-17	Intellectual Stimulation	Challenging norms through redemptive inversion

Note: Table 1 synthesizes emergent patterns observed in the analysis and does not prescribe a fixed leadership formula or universal sequence for all leadership contexts.

This exegetical process confirms that transformational leadership, when grounded in Scripture, gains theological depth and cultural flexibility. Jesus' model does not depend on Western paradigms of leadership. Instead, it speaks powerfully to collectivist, honor-shame contexts by prioritizing character, community formation, and covenantal mission. As Georges and Baker (2016), Elmer (2006), and Livermore (2015) have shown, culturally adaptive leadership requires visible, relational expressions of humility and vision. John 13 exemplifies precisely this.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that the transformational leadership traits seen in John 13 are sacredly anchored, contextually appropriate, and missionally potent. Jesus models a leadership that dignifies others, initiates change through love, and aligns with divine purpose—all within a cultural frame that transcends time and place. This sacred leadership pattern offers a reproducible and biblically faithful foundation for church planting in honor-shame cultures and beyond.

DISCUSSION

This study extends transformational leadership by grounding idealized influence in divine action and by demonstrating how sacred time and sacred space function as

ISSN 1941-4692

narrative mechanisms that intensify motivation and shape follower development. The preceding analysis of John 13:1-17 through the lens of sacred texture reveals a multidimensional leadership model rooted in divine action, moral clarity, and relational intentionality. Each element of sacred texture—divine action, holy person, sacred space, sacred time, and ethical judgment—corresponds to the Four I's of transformational leadership in ways that are both exegetically grounded and contextually relevant. This section now integrates those findings with the broader framework of transformational leadership theory to answer the guiding research question: How are the core components of transformational leadership exemplified in Jesus' actions in John 13, and what implications arise for church planting in honor-shame cultures?

The sacred texture analysis of John 13:1-17 reveals a multilayered leadership model in which divine identity is expressed through radical humility and transformational intent. Rather than exercising power through hierarchical command, Jesus redefines leadership by engaging in an act of servanthood that integrates theological purpose, moral vision, and relational development. This discussion draws together the exegetical findings to reflect on how Jesus' sacred leadership reframes transformational leadership theory, offering a compelling model for church planting and leader development in honor-shame cultures. As Allen (2006) observed, missionary methods rooted in incarnational presence often resemble Jesus' approach in John 13, where authority emerges through embodied service rather than positional dominance. Tidball (2012) notes that effective spiritual leadership arises from the interplay of preaching, pastoring, and prophetic action—all of which are embodied by Jesus in the Upper Room context.

At the heart of John 13 is the paradox of divine authority expressed through self-lowering love. Jesus knew *"that the Father had given all things into His hands"* (v. 3) yet chose to kneel and wash the feet of His followers. This moment challenges any leadership model that equates greatness with control. While Bass and Riggio (2006) define idealized influence as moral credibility and vision-based trust, Jesus displays a more robust form—He leads not only by ethical consistency but by incarnating the very character of God (cf. Phil. 2:6-7). His divine action is not detached from human experience; it penetrates it. In doing so, He elevates service as the truest form of influence.

This sacred model enriches the TL trait of inspirational motivation. Jesus does not merely cast a compelling vision; He makes Himself the embodiment of it. *"For I gave you an example, so that you also would do just as I did for you"* (v. 15). In collectivist cultures, vision is not transferred through abstract goals but through visible example and relational proximity. Jesus speaks the future into existence by performing it in front of His disciples. The implication for church planting is profound: leaders must inspire not by position or charisma, but by visible, embodied faithfulness that creates covenantal identity within the community.

Jesus' actions also redefine individualized consideration. Peter's protest and Jesus' patient correction show how spiritual formation requires direct, relational

ISSN 1941-4692

encounters that honor dignity while inviting growth. Within honor-shame dynamics, where public correction can destroy trust, Jesus models how leadership should preserve face while still challenging the follower toward deeper understanding. The sacred space of the Upper Room—where shame is shielded, and calling is conferred—becomes the blueprint for church planting environments that prioritize safety, trust, and spiritual intimacy. Leaders in Arab cultures must disciple not only with doctrinal clarity but with relational discernment.

In terms of intellectual stimulation, Jesus does not simply teach by explanation but provokes reflection through a morally disruptive act. His question—*"Do you know what I have done to you?"*—demands interpretation. It compels the disciples to reevaluate what they thought they knew about honor, status, and the messianic role. This is leadership as revelation. The foot washing is a "sacred puzzle" (Robbins, 1996), forcing reorientation through both discomfort and grace. In cultures that venerate tradition, transformational leaders must create space for theological surprise—acts or teachings that dislodge inherited patterns and reconfigure identity in Christ.

These findings reinforce the thesis that Jesus models a transformational leadership paradigm through sacred action that is both theologically rich and culturally subversive. Importantly, His model does not mimic Western leadership forms. Instead, it draws from kingdom values embedded in the narrative arc of Scripture and reshapes leadership according to divine example. This is particularly relevant in MENA church planting contexts, where authority structures are often inherited, gendered, or tribal. Jesus offers a third way—one that affirms moral clarity without reinforcing authoritarianism and fosters team development without diluting personal holiness.

This discussion also challenges TL theorists to revisit the Four I's in light of Scripture. While transformational leadership values vision, care, challenge, and credibility, John 13 reveals that each of these traits must be cruciform—shaped by the Cross, not ambition. Idealized influence must include crucified authority. Inspirational motivation must emerge from covenantal vision. Intellectual stimulation must provoke moral repentance. Individualized consideration must be rooted in discipleship and love, not merely performance outcomes.

For leadership formation, this means programs must be structured around sacred practices, not only competencies. Church planters and emerging leaders should be developed in relational environments that reflect the sacred texture of John 13: spaces marked by theological intentionality, moral clarity, and practical servanthood. Sacred action—foot washing, shared meals, confession, healing prayer—becomes not only formative but missional. As Georges and Baker (2016) assert, in honor-shame cultures, transformation is most persuasive when it is incarnated, not argued. Tools like Elmore's (2005) *Habitudes* can reinforce the visual and relational modeling Jesus employed when forming transformational leaders through sacred action.

In practical terms, transformational leadership modeled after Jesus in John 13 can be measured through observable outcomes in church-planting teams. Indicators

ISSN 1941-4692

such as leader replication rates, retention of disciples over two years, and the multiplication of group-centered or micro-churches in high-shame contexts serve as empirical markers of success. As demonstrated by Mutua et al. (2023), TL traits like individualized consideration and inspirational motivation contribute to team cohesion and ministry sustainability—both critical for long-term impact in MENA contexts. A systematic review by Agazu et al. (2025) confirms that transformational leadership positively correlates with organizational performance across diverse global contexts, including innovation and team cohesion, though the strength of this relationship is mediated by cultural and structural variables—underscoring the need for contextually adaptive leadership models. These outcome indicators represent illustrative, practice-oriented implications derived from the exegetical-theoretical integration rather than empirically tested effects within the present study.

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that Jesus' leadership in John 13 is more than a historical moment of humility—it is a transformational template embedded in sacred space, sacred time, and divine mission. When viewed through sacred texture and TL theory, this narrative offers a cross-cultural leadership model capable of forming resilient, relational, Spirit-filled leaders for church planting in the most complex cultural environments of our time.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how the core components of transformational leadership are exemplified in Jesus' actions in John 13:1-17, using sacred texture analysis as outlined by Henson et al. (2020). Through a step-by-step examination of the sacred dimensions embedded in the narrative—divine action, holy person, sacred space, sacred time, and ethical and moral judgment—it became clear that Jesus embodies each of the Four I's of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These traits do not appear artificially imposed onto the text. Instead, they arise organically from the Gospel's sacred narrative, shaped by divine purpose and covenantal love. In sum, this article offers an exegetically disciplined reading of John 13:1–17, advances transformational leadership by specifying text-grounded mechanisms of formative influence, and equips missional leaders to translate Christlike authority credibly within honor–shame cultures.

The thesis has been affirmed: Jesus models a transformational leadership paradigm through sacred action in John 13 that offers a compelling template for church planting in honor-shame cultures. Far from reflecting modern leadership constructs, Jesus' foot washing redefines leadership as theologically grounded, relationally engaged, and culturally subversive. His example challenges prevailing hierarchies not by rejecting leadership but by reconfiguring it around divine humility and moral clarity.

Sacred texture analysis has proven to be an effective exegetical method for uncovering leadership patterns in Scripture. Its strength lies in its ability to honor the theological and rhetorical dimensions of a passage while offering conceptual bridges to

ISSN 1941-4692

contemporary leadership theory. It allows the text to speak from within its own sacred worldview, while still equipping leaders with practical insight for modern ministry.

For church planters and ministry leaders in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) contexts, the implications are significant. Jesus' model demonstrates that transformational leadership is not culturally bound to Western assumptions about charisma, structure, or authority. Instead, it offers a contextually faithful, spiritually powerful alternative that elevates character over control, relational engagement over hierarchical distance, and covenantal purpose over self-promotion. In honor-shame cultures, where leadership is often tied to status and image, Jesus presents a pathway of redemptive inversion that dignifies others and strengthens community through sacred service.

This model is not only exegetically sound but missiologically urgent. As Arab churches grow amidst complexity, persecution, and rapid social change, they need leaders who are both theologically rooted and culturally responsive. The sacred leadership Jesus demonstrates in John 13 offers precisely that—a vision for discipleship-driven teams who lead through love, serve with strategy, and multiply through moral clarity.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To deepen and extend the insights of this project, several areas warrant further investigation:

- Comparative Gospel studies could examine similar leadership moments in texts like Mark 10:42-45 or Luke 22:24-27, to test the reproducibility of the sacred leadership model across diverse narratives.
- Empirical field studies could explore how this model functions within actual church planting teams in MENA, measuring its impact on team cohesion, follower development, and ministry outcomes.
- Theological integration projects could examine how transformational leadership traits intersect with Pentecostal theology, exploring Spirit-led leadership beyond the sociological frames of TL theory.

Ultimately, Jesus' actions in John 13 are not only exegetically sound but missiologically urgent. As churches grow in the Arab world amidst complexity, persecution, and rapid social change, they need leaders who are both theologically rooted and culturally responsive. The sacred leadership Jesus demonstrates in John 13 offers precisely that—a vision for discipleship-driven teams who lead through love, serve with strategy, and multiply through moral clarity. While this paper has offered a theological and exegetical foundation for this leadership model, future research should pursue empirical validation—especially within cross-cultural church planting teams—to evaluate how the Four I's function in field practice. Such studies would strengthen the model's credibility and broaden its applicability across ministry contexts. Future research should pursue interdisciplinary collaboration between biblical studies and

ISSN 1941-4692

leadership research by testing these exegetically derived claims through qualitative or mixed-method studies in ministry training contexts, including honor–shame settings across the Middle East and North Africa.

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EMBRACING THE TOWEL: A BIBLICAL MODEL OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOR HUMAN FLOURISHING

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Dominant cultural values of competition, efficiency, and performance are clearly in tension with human dignity, empowerment, and flourishing. This manuscript will seek to connect the transformative and strategic impact of servant leadership in organizations, weaving together exegetical work done on John 13:1–17, Philippians 2:1–11, and Matthew 20:25–28, to describe the servant leadership that is exhibited by Jesus Christ. The analysis shows how this is relevant in today's modern context, especially as organizational leaders can be transformed into servant leaders who impact institutions with the empowering leadership of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary leadership is often idolized for its decisiveness, innovation, and performance, yet too frequently functions in hierarchies that exalt authority over service. Scripture provides an alternative model in servant leadership, which inverts this ethos by prioritizing the needs of others (Matt. 20:26). Defined by its roots in the life of Jesus Christ, servant leadership is characterized by humility, empathy, and a commitment to the growth of others (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995). Theological and organizational scholars have been discussing this approach for over a century, exploring its capacity for transformative impact on organizations (van Dierendonck, 2011). Recent research has connected servant leadership to organizational outcomes like engagement, trust, and sustainable performance (Eva et al., 2019). However, the biblical basis of this model and its contribution to human flourishing are under-examined. This study roots the practice of servant leadership in John 13, Philippians 2, and Matthew 20,

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 40–48.

ISSN 1941-4692

demonstrating how when it is Christ-centered, it revolutionizes organizational dynamics by nurturing cultures of humility, empowerment, and service. The Christ-based model is also like parts of the transformational model, particularly its focus on inspirational influence and moral example (Bass & Riggio, 2006), as well as to authentic leadership, in terms of the emphasis on relational transparency and ethical grounding (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). These parallels open the possibility for a fuller conversation with biblical interpretation and current leadership research.

EXEGETICAL FOUNDATIONS: JOHN 13:1–17

There are so many powerful passages about leadership in the New Testament, but one of the most powerful is John 13. In this chapter, Jesus, who fully understands His power and authority and is completely aware of the imminent event of his crucifixion, kneels and washes the feet of his disciples. This is not an isolated incident, and it is not a coincidence. This is an extended meditation on servant leadership placed in the narrative immediately before the passion narrative of Jesus' crucifixion. The chapter starts with a clear statement of who Jesus is and his mission: "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God" (John 13:3, NIV). Fully aware of His authority, he did not use it to demand obedience; He bent down to serve.

The exegetical point here is that, fully aware of his authority, he chose to kneel and serve his disciples. Note that the chapter starts with a clear statement of his authority. Also note that in verse 4, when He stands up from the table, the Greek verb egeirō (ἐγείρω), which can be literally translated as "he got up from the meal." The point is, Jesus did not just passively move from the meal to serving; the verb is in the sense of standing up, not just from the meal, but is often used in reference to resurrection and action. Subsequently, Jesus "laid aside his outer garments" (*tithēsin ta himatia, τίθησιν τὰ ἱμάτια*) and "began to wash the disciples' feet" (*ērxato niptein tous podas tōn mathētōn, ἤρξατο νίπτειν τοὺς πόδας τῶν μαθητῶν*, John 13:5). The act of "laying aside" is reminiscent of the kenosis in Philippians 2:7, where it is stated that Christ "emptied himself" to become human. Thus, the foot washing becomes a microcosm of the Incarnation: the very Son of God assuming the very form of a slave.

When Peter objects, Jesus corrects him, saying, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me" (John 13:8, NIV). This statement is not about ritual cleanliness but relational belonging. Jesus is redefining leadership as a means of restoration rather than control. Scholars like Köstenberger (2004) suggest that this act is a foreshadowing of the ultimate cleansing at the Cross, yet it also sets a pattern for spiritual leadership based on sacrificial love.

Crucially, Jesus ends the foot washing with a directive for emulation: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15, NIV). But the call to imitation here is not simply prescriptive; it is a definition of a new norm of leadership. The Greek word here is hypodeigma (ὑπόδειγμα), which means "model" or "pattern"—it is something that is to be imitated or reproduced. Leadership, as Jesus

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 40–48.

ISSN 1941-4692

demonstrates and teaches, is never about power and control but about transformation, and that transformation is grounded in nearness, humility, and service.

For daily life, this passage has a deep message for leadership. In our world, where leadership and authority are synonymous with title and position, and positional leadership is a human and organizational given, Jesus confronts all of us with a call to lead from nearness and action. In an organizational system where dispassionate rules dominate, the foot washing of Jesus is not simply a call to a new ethic of leadership; it is a mandate for an ethic of leadership which grants legitimacy not by power, but by proximity—proximity to those who are led and, because of that nearness, the humility and strength to act on their behalf.

EXEGETICAL FOUNDATIONS: PHILIPPIANS 2:1–11

Servant leadership has been elucidated and explained through many approaches over time, and the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:1–11 offers one of the most theologically substantial attempts. First, there is the communal nature of leadership (Phil. 2:1–2). Leadership must not be a vehicle of self-promotion but rather be used in the community for the common good. The hymn quickly refocuses on the issue of self-exaltation in verses 3–4: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves” (v. 3). Vain conceit (kenodoxia, κενοδοξία) in Greek implies “empty glory,” that is, glory without substance or authenticity (Fee, 1995). Humility (tapeinophrosynē, ταπεινοφροσύνη) is proposed here as the keystone virtue of Christ-like leadership. Humility is not weak leadership, however; on the contrary, Paul offers up the example of Jesus to clarify this: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage” (v. 6). Most scholars have noted that the phrase “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped” (harpagmon, ἁρπαγμὸν) is debated. However, the consensus appears to be that it is a volitional act of relinquishment of privilege (O’Brien, 1991). It is a “setting aside” of status, but not divestment. The resulting kenosis (self-emptying) is what is found in verse 7 (“but made himself nothing”). This is key, for it suggests the functional and theological groundwork for servant leadership: voluntary descent for the sake of others.

Christ, in all his divine glory, descended for all humankind. The result is obedience “to death—even death on a cross!” (v. 8). This is the point of the hymn where I must stop and read it again. Not only is Christ humble, but this humility takes him all the way to the Cross! What is the result of Christ’s descent? His exaltation, of course (vv. 9–11). So this is the lesson: The way to the top is through the bottom. Although it is true, this statement speaks to the paradox of Christ’s humility and exaltation; Paul’s Christology takes us further than the reversal of position. Paul’s presentation of the descent of Christ is rooted in God’s self-giving for the reconciliation of all things (Col. 1:20), not the route to being exalted. Therefore, the “bottom” is not a means to achieve the “top,” but an act of love that redefines what greatness is.

As Patterson (2003) maintained, servant leadership begins with the individual, but it is in the inner parts that the transformation toward servant leadership needs to

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 40–48.

ISSN 1941-4692

take place. This is relational wisdom and self-forgetfulness as practical theology. The Christ hymn confirms this, for this is the transformed life, the result of which has an impact upon others. As community members, we can and must submit to the self-emptying, kenotic leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives so that we might exemplify for the rest of creation what true transformational impact is all about.

EXEGETICAL FOUNDATIONS: MATTHEW 20:25–28

Matthew 20:25–28 provides a significant teaching of Jesus on servant leadership. Jesus, in this passage, is specifically addressing the disciples' misconceived notion of greatness following their mother's request for places of honor at His right and left hand. Jesus immediately intervenes by saying: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you" (vv. 25–26a, NIV). He is teaching here that leaders in this world are domineering and self-promoting. Kingdom leadership, on the other hand, is the polar opposite of world leadership: the former being rulers who serve, the latter being rulers who rule.

The Greek word for "lord it over" is katakurieuousin (κατακυριεύουσιν), which implies the domination and exploitation of others, or, in other words, oppressive leadership (France, 2007). But Jesus said, "Not so with you," which is a startling and countercultural statement that follows this passage's narrative logic. Jesus redefines power not as over- but under-ness, so to speak. As the Son of God, He could have lorded over people, but instead, His leadership model was self-sacrifice (France, 2007). Furthermore, instead of craving for status, Jesus informs His disciples, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (diakonos), and whoever wants to be first must be your slave (doulos)" (vv. 26b–27, NIV).

Two key observations can be made from Jesus' statement, with the first being the double use of "servant" and "slave." The former, diakonos, is a voluntary and (often) joyful service that usually means ministering to others and is most often used as a reference to hospitality in Matthew's Gospel. On the other hand, a doulos is one who is bound and totally surrenders his or her will and entire existence to the one he or she serves, often used to refer to Jesus' submission to the Father. As such, Jesus is not just instructing His followers to be kind to others but to completely re-identify their leadership as one whose identity is forgotten as it is entirely for others (Blomberg, 1992).

The passage's theological climax then comes in the final verse: "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (v. 28, NIV). Jesus here is no longer just an example of servant leadership, but He is servant leadership personified. His self-sacrifice on the Cross is not just for the redemption of the many, but the focal point of redemption, as a "ransom" (lytron, λύτρον) is not just service, but service tied to the atonement narrative (France, 2007). Jesus both teaches and embodies servant leadership as it relates to redemption, where leadership is not just about people but is for people.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 40–48.

ISSN 1941-4692

For leaders in the present day, this passage curtails the typical trajectory of personal influence as the way to leadership effectiveness. Instead, leaders are called to a radical ethic of downward mobility that shatters not only business sense but self-interests altogether. As such, servant leadership, according to Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), is not only ethical and relational, but it is, most importantly, inherently spiritual.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN FLOURISHING: A CONCEPTUAL BRIDGE

Servant leadership's call to humility (John 13), self-emptying (Phil. 2), and redefined greatness (Matt. 20) aligns closely with the biblical vision of *shalom*—holistic flourishing in relationship to God, self, others, and creation (Plantinga, 2002). Today, many secular leadership models also reflect a growing consensus that organizations are healthier and more successful when the people in them are. The Gallup organization, for example, has conducted decades of research on employee engagement, purpose, and well-being, and found these to be closely correlated with specific leadership behaviors—listening, empathy, development—aligning closely with servant leadership (Gallup, 2022). According to Greenleaf (1977), servant leadership originates from an intrinsic desire to prioritize serving others above all else. Spears (1995) later extrapolated ten distinct characteristics of servant leaders, including healing, awareness, stewardship, and growth of people, many of which have strong overlaps with the concept of flourishing.

Theologically, human flourishing can be defined as the state in which people are most deeply and fully human. We flourish, that is, when we live and work in ways that affirm our created dignity as image-bearers of God (Gen. 1:27). Nouwen (1989) once said the biggest temptation of leaders is to be relevant and in power, but the way of Christ is downward mobility: to lead through humility and compassion, not control. Servant leadership often works in secular settings because it resonates with deep human longings for belonging and value. When grounded in Scripture, however, servant leadership goes beyond being merely effective to being faithful. It is not just a recipe for organizational success, but a spiritual calling to make the character of Christ visible in leadership. This practical vision of flourishing comes not from theory, but from the teaching and action of Christ himself. In John 13, flourishing is shown to us through the model of washing the feet of the disciples. In Philippians 2, it is displayed in the Incarnation, an act of emptying that is the very heart of God's mission. In Mathew 20, it is described by a kingdom of reverse discipleship, a turning upside down of all traditional notions of power. In all these scriptures, the flourishing of those we lead is intimately connected with the leader's spiritual life.

APPLICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

It can be difficult to translate the servant leadership of the Gospels to the workplace because it can feel counter-culture to corporate life and can be easily reduced to "pie in the sky" platitudes. Fortunately, and as both research and practice bear out, it is not only feasible but necessary. All the primary ingredients—service, empowerment, self-sacrifice—are as much a part of contemporary organizations as

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 40–48.

ISSN 1941-4692

ever before, and research has proven that, indeed, people thrive best when led in this way (Liden et al., 2008; Eva et al., 2019).

Informed by the towel-and-basin ethic of John 13, the kenotic posture of Philippians 2, and the “not so with you” mandate of Matthew 20, my leadership in global companies such as Citigroup and TD Bank, as well as in startups, has been shaped by these Scriptural imperatives. For example, at Citigroup, one manager impressed me by “multiplying” the voices of his team, by really listening to their ideas and creating a sense of psychological safety in which no one was afraid to speak up; this behavior was the essence of Philippians 2:3, “in humility value others above yourselves.”

At Avec, servant leadership also meant stepping up and taking responsibility for failure, but sharing the credit when succeeding, and helping people to “lift up” one another, as Jesus taught in Matthew 20. As a BI leader in banking, I employed “servant intelligence” by data-wrangling to understand what was burdening frontline employees and then “servant-leader-advocating” for eliminating those unnecessary tasks. My experiences have taught me that servant leadership is not determined by the prestige of the company nor its closeness to the centers of power; rather, it is defined by a laser-like focus on a higher purpose: to serve.

Servant leadership encourages followers to lead from a place of self-giving to others. Employees who are heard, seen, and valued can thrive and reach their full potential as more creativity, retention, and mission alignment are achieved (Hunter et al., 2013). Servant leaders lead by example as they model Christ’s call to love people relationally.

Servant leadership can be inculcated through strategic leadership development. Leadership development can be less about developing new skills such as decision making, innovation, or negotiation—though these are all critically important—and more about how to develop the character, spiritual posture, and relational habits that enable leaders to maintain influence for the long haul. Servant leadership offers a biblically grounded model for this type of development that prioritizes humility, empathy, and sacrificial commitment to the welfare of others (Wong & Page, 2003).

Religious and business leadership development can draw upon the theology of John 13, Philippians 2, and Matthew 20, in addition to practicum experiences that model downward mobility and others-centeredness. Spending time as a shadow or volunteer in a place of poverty or vulnerability (where "titles" do not "matter") may have more impact on the making of a leader than a lecture or a case study, formed through surrender (Mulholland, 2016).

Performance reviews with upward and 360-degree feedback, mentoring that models vulnerability, and theological literacy to appropriately apply Scripture for ethical, business, and relational leadership can all help fortify leadership pipelines for both corporate and faith-based environments. As Banks and Ledbetter (2004) put it, theological literacy is not the ceiling but rather the floor of creativity, while the

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 40–48.

ISSN 1941-4692

Philippians 2 model of authority also reminds servant leaders to "descend into greatness" by means of moral power rather than positional power.

Servant leadership development should also include community accountability. Jesus did not form leaders in isolation but in a community of teachers, learners, and practitioners. Churches, nonprofit boards, and executive teams should practice patterns of shared leadership, such as confession, service, and celebration, to shape values and habits.

Servant leadership development requires training not only to change what we do but to change who we are. It is not a one-time workshop but a lifelong posture of learning. Organizations that put the formation of such leaders at the center will not only see increased performance. They will become places where human flourishing can occur in profound and life-giving ways. This is the core of both good leadership and true flourishing in the kingdom of God.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is our hope, and the example he set as a servant leader is one we desperately need to follow in an age marked by disruption, disillusionment, and burnout. Jesus redefines leadership and greatness throughout John 13, Philippians 2, and Matthew 20 by modeling humility, self-emptying, and sacrificial love. Servant leadership is a Christ-centered approach that is not just for management; it is a way of life that builds trust, meaning, and collaboration. Whether leading in boardrooms or classrooms, local communities or global communities of faith, our leaders need a renewed call to take up the towel rather than the throne and live a posture of service that transforms both people and institutions. Greatness is not determined by status or prestige but by the depths of one’s service. Scripture charts a trajectory from the upper room to the Cross. There are no flash-in-the-pan displays of servanthood, but a persevering in the humility, self-emptying, and servanthood of the life of the man who “took up the towel.” We should hold fast to these theological anchors as we translate the principles of servant leadership for today so that our practice of leadership flows from the heart of One who took up the towel. In equipping the servant leaders of today and tomorrow, may we form leaders not driven by control or prestige but by an unrelenting desire to protect the dignity of others and to facilitate flourishing.

About the Author

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Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 40–48.

ISSN 1941-4692

committed to forming leaders who embody humility and servant-hearted excellence. More information is available at www.droscarrodriguez.com

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Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 40–48.

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THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF ECCLESIAL LEADERS: A CALL TO BUILD THE KINGDOM FROM WITHIN

Michelle Gonzalez Segundo

The purpose of this article is to examine the flourishing of ecclesial leaders through six spiritual and formative disciplines: (a) prayer, (b) Bible study, (c) solitude, (d) fasting, (e) meditation and self-reflection, and (f) communal fellowship. Although spiritual disciplines are not the ultimate end of ecclesial leadership, their intentional practice orients leaders toward maturity in Christ (Nouwen, 2010) and cultivates flourishing not only in their leadership but also in their identity as followers and worshipers of Christ. Amid increasing reports of pastoral burnout, moral failure, leadership fatigue, and spiritual fragmentation, the urgency of leader flourishing has become a critical concern within ecclesial contexts. While existing scholarship addresses spiritual disciplines and leadership formation independently, less attention has been given to synthesizing these disciplines as an integrated framework for sustained ecclesial flourishing. This article addresses that gap by examining theological, spiritual formation, and leadership literature to identify how these six disciplines collectively contribute to personal transformation and communal renewal. Spiritual transformation is not pursued for personal gain, even though its fruit (Gal. 5:22–23) results in an abundant life in Christ. Rather, transformation and flourishing form believers into Christ's likeness for the sake of community and the glory of God (2 Cor. 3:18; Scorgie et al., 2016; Tang, 2014). Renewal, therefore, should be a normative experience within congregational life, beginning with ecclesial leaders who model and prioritize spiritual disciplines as a reflection of Christ's character and nature (Maglio, 2017). By synthesizing the literature across these six formative disciplines, I argue that ecclesial leader flourishing is both a spiritual imperative and a communal necessity.

Keywords: spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, ecclesial leadership, pastoral burnout, soul care, spiritual leadership, discipleship, human flourishing, sanctification

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 49–61.

ISSN 1941-4692

INTRODUCTION

The call to ecclesial leadership is not one of fame, fortune, or notoriety but requires a certain type of death to all notions of self-identity, self-indulgence, and self-ambition. Bonhoeffer (1959) asserted that “when Christ calls a man, He bids him ‘come and die’” (p. 89). If Christ Himself endured suffering and death on the Cross to fulfill the Father’s redemptive purpose, how much more will ecclesial leaders be required to endure the formative and sanctifying process of dying to self (Rom. 6:1–11) so that God’s purposes might be fulfilled in and through them and that He alone would be glorified? Christ chose complete surrender as He agonized in the garden of Gethsemane, praying, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Luke 22:42). This surrender is not abstract theology; it is embodied formation. The literature on spiritual formation suggests that such dying to self is cultivated through the intentional practices of (a) prayer, (b) Scripture engagement, (c) solitude, (d) fasting, (e) meditation and self-reflection, and (f) communal fellowship, training the leader’s will toward obedience and Christlikeness. These disciplines function not as ends in themselves but as formative means through which sanctification is lived rather than merely professed.

The sanctifying process is often painful; yet it is through this cruciform formation that the ecclesial leader dies yet lives. He withers, yet flourishes. Emerging scholarship increasingly links sustained engagement in spiritual disciplines with spiritual vitality, moral resilience, and vocational endurance, suggesting that leader flourishing is not accidental but intentionally formed. Thus, the paradox stands: the path of surrender becomes the pathway to flourishing. The spiritual formation process cannot be reduced to personal performance or external measurements of achievement apart from the Spirit, lest it become a list of spiritual chores (Serrano, 2015), externalistic laws (Foster, 1989), or pragmatic methods of ecclesial leadership development that neglect the inner work of the Spirit. Rather, spiritual formation is a disciplined, humbled, and obedient way of living—an intentional participation in the life of Christ, motivated by agape love that challenges and transforms the heart to imitate Him (Scorgie et al., 2016). Ecclesial leaders are called to embody the gospel as God conforms them to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). Such conformity requires intentional engagement in spiritual disciplines practiced of, in, and by the Spirit.

This article examines scholarship at the intersection of spiritual formation, ecclesial or pastoral leadership, and human flourishing. Sources were identified through theological and leadership databases, including peer-reviewed journals and foundational texts in spiritual formation and discipleship. Inclusion criteria centered on works addressing spiritual disciplines within ministry contexts, leader formation, and the relationship between interior spiritual practices and outward leadership outcomes. The literature is organized around three interrelated dimensions: internal flourishing (the leader’s inner life and sanctification), external flourishing (vocational endurance and influence), and corporate flourishing (congregational renewal and communal impact). Building the kingdom of God, therefore, begins internally before it manifests externally. Internal flourishing precedes and sustains external ministry effectiveness (Foster, 1989;

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 49–61.

ISSN 1941-4692

Teo, 2017; Willard, 1998). This review contends that the intentional practice of six spiritual disciplines forms the crucible through which ecclesial leaders are spiritually renewed, personally sustained, and communally fruitful.

REVIEW OF PERTINENT LITERATURE

The Nature of Spiritual Formation

Christ exemplified the Father's glory in all He did, and as joint heirs (Rom. 8:17), believers—namely, ecclesial leaders—are likewise called to reflect His glory (Bock, 2008; Martin, 2002) as they come into alignment with the character and pattern of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18; Scorgie et al., 2016). It is important to distinguish the process of spiritual formation, otherwise known as sanctification, from justification. In justification, sin is pardoned (1 John 1:9); in sanctification, sin is progressively subdued (2 Cor. 5:17; Vos, 2002). Justification is a one-time event accomplished through Christ's redemptive work (Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:21–22). Sanctification, however, is an ongoing process whereby the Holy Spirit empowers believers to yield to God's purposes, subdue sin, and live renewed lives that witness to others (Matt. 5:16) and ultimately please God (Hoekema, 1989; Tang, 2014; Vos, 2002).

The sinner's justification does not instantaneously translate into maturity; rather, sanctification unfolds as believers continually submit to the Spirit's shaping work. Through daily yielding and inward sharpening, the fruit of the Spirit emerges (Gal. 5:22–23), forming believers into the likeness of Christ (Phil. 2:5). Within this review, flourishing refers to the multidimensional transformation of the ecclesial leader's interior life through ongoing sanctification by the Spirit. This transformation manifests in spiritual maturity, interior wholeness, moral and emotional resilience, and sustainable ministry influence. It is both formational and missional, shaping the leader's interior life while sustaining faithful and enduring outward ministry. Flourishing encompasses spiritual maturity, interior wholeness, moral and emotional resilience, vocational faithfulness, and sustainable ministry influence. It is not merely personal well-being nor ministerial success; rather, it is the holistic vitality that results when a leader's inner life is rightly ordered before God and continually formed by the Spirit. This internal sharpening and yielding produces internal flourishing, from which the ecclesial leader serves the Lord and congregation from a spiritually healthy place. Such vitality naturally extends outward, influencing and inspiring congregations toward holiness, fulfillment, and mission in and through Christ.

The nature of spiritual formation lies within the context of Christian spirituality (Scorgie et al., 2016) and is a complex, multilayered, lifelong process in which believers, including ecclesial leaders, respond to the grace of God as He shapes them into the likeness of Christ through the active work of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the community of faith and those yet to believe (Greenman & Kalantzis, 2015; Scorgie et al., 2016). Rather than compartmentalized into a Sunday morning time frame, the ecclesial leader's formation encompasses both private and public dimensions of life,

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 49–61.

ISSN 1941-4692

calling for ongoing surrender to the transforming presence of God that fosters spiritual maturity and Christlikeness (Barton et al., 2014; Scorgie et al., 2016; Serrano, 2017).

Transformation is ultimately the work of God, who completes what He begins (Phil. 1:6), yet it invites intentional participation from the believer. Such participation does not initiate transformation but cooperates with the Spirit's sanctifying work. As leaders yield themselves to God's refining grace, they become vessels through whom spiritual formation can be cultivated in others (Barton, 2009; Scorgie et al., 2016). The psalmist David, though imperfect many times over, was described as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) because of his posture of repentance and dependence, pleading, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps. 51:10). As Sweet (2010) noted, leaders cannot effectively call others to transformation if they have not first allowed God to transform them. Spiritual formation, therefore, reflects a dynamic interplay: the Spirit causes growth (1 Cor. 3:6), while believers position themselves in receptivity to that growth through obedience and surrender. Even seasons of crisis may serve as instruments through which the Spirit deepens maturity, merging natural development and spiritual refinement toward Christlikeness (Scorgie et al., 2016).

Disciplines of Spiritual Formation. There is no particular model program or one-time approach to spiritual growth (Pagitt, 2004); however, spiritual formation is a lifelong process of learning, discovery, obedience, surrender, and sharpening that is an accumulation of convictions (Willimon, 2016) that are not immediately acquired in complete form upon receiving salvation but is merely the start of a refining journey that takes place while in relationship with the Holy Spirit as well as alongside a community of like-minded believers (McNicol, 2010; Pagitt, 2004; Teo, 2017; Thrall &amp).

The spiritual formative process cannot merely be deduced by the leader being informed but rather transformed by Christ and conformed into His image by intentionally seeking not to find salvation as justification is through Christ alone and not by the ecclesial leader's works but seeks and strives to become more like Christ and deepen his relationship with God (Crisp, 2020). Once justified, the believer must now actively participate of his own free will and his effort in conjunction with the working of the Holy Spirit in his progressive sanctification (Barrick, 2010) that will complete the believer's holiness as he intentionally cleanses himself for the work and glory of God (1 Cor. 7:1) by implementing certain spiritual disciplines (Foster, 1989; Willard, 1998) that will not only produce personal growth in the ecclesial leader and, by default, his followers, but will also keep the ecclesial leader from burnout, financial and relational strain, and moral failure producing the outcome of longevity of ministry and finishing his God-given task well (2 Tim. 4:7, 8; Teo, 2018).

Foster (1989) categorized three forms of spiritual discipline for the ecclesial leader as (a) inward disciplines that include meditation, prayer, fasting, and study; (b) outward disciplines that include simplicity, solitude, submission, and service; and (c) corporate disciplines that include confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. Maglio (2017) defined spiritual formation in the context of (a) historical church disciplines that include teaching, fellowship, worship, and prayer; (b) contemporary

ISSN 1941-4692

church disciplines that include solitude, contemplation, service, and confession; and (c) personal self-spiritual care disciplines that include awareness of God, spiritual hunger, community, recognition of the supernatural, community, and mentoring relationships. Hands and Fehr (1993) proposed three formative practices of (a) spiritual renewal practices of bible study, prayer, fasting, meditation, solitude, and reflection; (b) rest-taking practices of non-ministry activities, or just the absence of non-ministry activities that will renew the leader's depleted inner-life and emotional vitality, and (c) support system practices of social support groups with fellow peers, apart from church-related small groups that will help to prevent isolation, loneliness, and emotional burnout (Hands & Fehr, 1993; Spaite, 1999) that will simultaneously allow the ecclesial leader to be vulnerable, mutually edified, and have a sense of belonging (Gilbert, 1987).

Taken together, these models reveal significant overlap despite their differing categorizations. Across frameworks, recurring themes include prayer, Scripture engagement, solitude, communal practices, and intentional rhythms of reflection and renewal. While Foster (1989) emphasizes structural categories of inward, outward, and corporate disciplines, Maglio (2017) highlights historical and personal spiritual care practices, and Hands and Fehr (1993) foreground renewal, rest, and relational support as safeguards against depletion. Though articulated differently, each model affirms that sustained spiritual vitality requires both interior attentiveness to God and relational engagement within community.

This article narrows its focus to six disciplines—Bible study, prayer, solitude, fasting, meditation and self-reflection, and communal fellowship—because these practices consistently appear across the literature as foundational means through which sanctification is cultivated and leader vitality sustained. These disciplines collectively address both interior formation and communal accountability, aligning with the multidimensional understanding of flourishing advanced in this study. By concentrating on these six recurring practices, the review of literature seeks to synthesize rather than duplicate existing models, highlighting those disciplines most directly connected in the literature to spiritual maturity, resilience, and sustainable ministry faithfulness.

The Praxis of Spiritual Formation

Internal spiritual formation is comprised of suffering and endurance as part of the formative process of being made into the likeness of Christ. The author of Hebrews 12 explained that Christ Himself suffered the Cross, endured hostility, and despised shame (Heb. 12: 2) but now sits at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 12: 2). The inward forming process involves a relationship between the ecclesial leader and God, Himself, as it is only He who can truly transform the heart of a person. The Holy Spirit works in and through all things (Col. 1:17), including believers' hearts to continuously mature them into the likeness of Christ (Scorgie et al., 2016), causing them to flourish in and through Christ. Ecclesial leaders must guard their hearts against doubt and fear lest they become hopeless and helpless under the power of sin from which they have been redeemed and allow the Holy Spirit to reassure them, comfort them, and challenge them to produce His fruit (Gal. 5:22, 23), which is the measure of believers being reformed

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 49–61.

ISSN 1941-4692

into the image and likeness of Christ. Although following inward spiritual disciplines seems basic, they are foundational to the core of the ecclesial leader's intimate relationship with God, growth, development, and personal transformation into spiritual maturity and Christ's likeness.

Spiritual formation is not merely conceptual but practiced. The literature demonstrates that sustained transformation occurs through intentional disciplines that shape the leader's inner life and support enduring faithfulness. Accordingly, I now examine six formative disciplines, considering their biblical foundations, their role in sanctification, and their contribution to multidimensional leader flourishing.

Flourishing Discipline 1: *Bible Study.* An ecclesial leader's theology shapes his values and convictions, serving as a powerful influence in his conduct and decision-making process (Ps. 119:105), the way he does ministry, serves his congregation, and equips them (Geiger & Peck, 2016; Willimon, 2016). Therefore, theological depth and understanding are paramount for effectively navigating the complexities of leading a contemporary ecclesial organization (Teo, 2018), a depth cultivated through disciplined engagement with Scripture, which remains the authority for faith and practice (2 Tim. 2:15; Maglio, 2017; Serrano, 2017). The ecclesial leader committed to daily Scripture reading and memorization guards his heart against temptation (Ps. 119:11) as the Holy Spirit illuminates truth for his life and for those he shepherds.

While devotional Bible reading nurtures spiritual intimacy and consistency, disciplined Bible study involves careful interpretation, theological reflection, and engagement with the broader witness of Scripture. The distinction is significant for ecclesial leaders, whose responsibility to teach and shepherd requires more than familiarity—it requires faithful understanding. As the Ethiopian eunuch acknowledged, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:31), underscoring the necessity of interpretive depth and theological clarity. Accordingly, the literature affirms that flourishing leaders engage Scripture both devotionally and exegetically, utilizing sound hermeneutical practices and trusted theological resources to ensure faithful proclamation and wise leadership.

Across the literature, scholars consistently affirm that sustained engagement with Scripture strengthens theological clarity, moral discernment, and leadership stability. Scripture-informed leaders demonstrate greater ethical consistency, wiser decision-making under pressure, and increased resilience in seasons of ministry strain (Geiger & Peck, 2016; Teo, 2018; Willimon, 2016). While approaches to biblical study may differ in emphasis—devotional, exegetical, or pastoral—the consensus remains that Scripture functions not merely as informational content but as formative authority, shaping the interior life of the leader in ways that support long-term vocational endurance and spiritual integrity.

Flourishing Discipline 2: Prayer. As the ecclesial leader continually converses with God through prayer, he cultivates a deep and meaningful relationship with God while receiving guidance, direction, and clarity for the future—not only for his own life

ISSN 1941-4692

but also for his congregation (Maglio, 2017). One commonly utilized pastoral framework for structuring prayer is the A.C.T.S. model—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (Hybels, 1998). While not presented in the literature as a comprehensive spiritual formation theory, this acrostic serves as an accessible and formative rhythm that integrates worship, repentance, gratitude, and petition into the leader's daily communion with God. Such structured patterns of prayer reinforce humility, self-examination, and dependence upon divine guidance.

Christ Himself modeled intentional solitude and communion with the Father (Luke 5:16). His prayer life consoled Him (Matt. 14:1–13; Luke 22:39–44), prepared Him (Luke 4:1–2), guided His decisions (Luke 6:12–13), and restored Him after ministry exertion (Mark 6:30–32). The literature consistently affirms that sustained prayer practices cultivate discernment, relational sensitivity, and moral attentiveness in spiritual leaders. Leaders who prioritize prayer demonstrate greater humility, improved decision quality, and increased resilience in seasons of ministry strain (Maglio, 2017; Ortberg, 2014; Teo, 2018). Though Christ was without sin, fallen humanity contends daily with sin's presence, necessitating continual renewal. Ortberg (2014) describes this inner life as a spiritual battle, underscoring the necessity of intentional soul care. Just as God breathed life into humanity (Gen. 2:7), ecclesial leaders require the renewing breath of God through the Spirit's ongoing work (Rom. 8:11). Prayer, therefore, functions not merely as a devotional expression but as a formative practice that sustains interior vitality and safeguards long-term ministry faithfulness.

Flourishing Discipline 3: Fasting. The ecclesial leader's dying to self often involves intentional denial of personal desires, most commonly through abstaining from food or drink, and at times refraining from habitual comforts or distractions that compete for attention and affection (Matt. 4:4). In certain biblical contexts, temporary abstinence within marriage for focused prayer is also acknowledged (1 Cor. 7:5), underscoring that fasting is not merely dietary but dispositional—reordering desires toward God. Such practices are never ends in themselves nor acts of merit but voluntary expressions of dependence upon the Spirit.

Fasting has deep roots in both Old and New Testament practice. The Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27–32) required communal self-denial as an expression of repentance and reverence before God, highlighting fasting's corporate and covenantal dimensions. Likewise, Christ's forty days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11) demonstrated that fasting does not remove temptation but strengthens spiritual resolve in the face of it. By directing attention away from bodily appetite and toward spiritual reliance, fasting reinforces the primacy of the kingdom of God in the leader's life (Willard, 1998; Col. 3:2). Contemporary research has also observed physiological and psychosocial benefits associated with structured fasting practices, including improved metabolic markers and enhanced self-regulation (Trabelsi et al., 2022). While such findings are not the theological foundation of fasting, they suggest that embodied disciplines may support holistic well-being alongside spiritual attentiveness.

ISSN 1941-4692

Through disciplined self-denial, ecclesial leaders cultivate self-mastery, humility, and spiritual attentiveness, diminishing the dominance of impulsive desires and strengthening interior resilience. The literature suggests that such embodied disciplines contribute to moral stability, clarity of purpose, and sustained ministry faithfulness, thereby supporting multidimensional flourishing.

Flourishing Discipline 4: Solitude. Prioritizing spiritual attentiveness often requires the ecclesial leader to establish intentional rhythms of solitude (Willard, 1988). Solitude is not a rejection of community but a temporary withdrawal from noise, responsibility, and relational demands to cultivate deeper communion with God. When practiced as a rhythm rather than an escape, solitude protects the leader's interior life from fragmentation and distraction. Many biblical leaders, including Abraham (Heb. 11:8), Elijah (1 Kings 19:3), Moses (Ex. 2:11), and Jonah (Jonah 1:3), experienced seasons of withdrawal that became formative moments of rest, renewal, discipline, direction, and preparation. Christ Himself frequently withdrew from both disciples and crowds to pray and rest, later inviting His disciples into similar rhythms (Mark 6:31; Luke 5:16).

Though solitude may appear counterintuitive for leaders called to shepherd their flocks (1 Pet. 5:2), the literature consistently frames it as a necessary boundary that sustains relational ministry rather than undermines it. Solitude fosters interior renewal, freedom of the soul (Matt. 6:6; McGinn, 2006), and attentiveness to the voice of God (John 10:27), ultimately strengthening faith and resilience (Isa. 30:15; Maglio, 2017). When practiced appropriately, solitude equips ecclesial leaders to re-enter community with greater clarity, patience, and spiritual vitality, contributing to long-term flourishing.

Flourishing Discipline 5: Meditation and Self-Reflection. Engaging matters of the Spirit from a place of depth requires the ecclesial leader to resist "frothy experiences and shallow teaching" (Foster, 1989, p. 3) and instead respond to the deep call of God (Ps. 42:7), recognizing that God is present (Josh. 1:9; Jer. 29:13; James 4:8), actively speaking (Jer. 33:3; John 10:27; Heb. 4:12), and intent on transforming His people into Christ's likeness (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:24). Meditation, in this sense, is not emptying the mind but attentively filling it with truth, allowing Scripture and the Spirit to shape the leader's interior life for God's glory and the good of those he serves (Matt. 5:16).

Scholars of spiritual formation emphasize that meditation facilitates the movement of truth from intellect to heart, where lasting sanctifying transformation occurs (Merton, 1960; Rom. 12:2). While the theological grounding of meditation remains primary in this article, research has also observed physiological benefits associated with contemplative practices, including decreased stress markers and increased bodily calm (Benson et al., 1974). Such findings do not serve as the foundation for meditation's value but provide supportive evidence that embodied attentiveness to God may contribute to reduced stress and enhanced endurance. Through sustained meditation and intentional self-reflection, ecclesial leaders cultivate mental clarity, spiritual attentiveness, and emotional steadiness. These outcomes reinforce the multidimensional flourishing described in this review of the literature,

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 49–61.

ISSN 1941-4692

strengthening the leader's capacity for discernment, resilience, and faithful longevity in ministry.

External Spiritual Formation. Spiritual formation is not for personal gain or self-improvement, though the believer is daily being transformed into Christ's likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). Rather, spiritual formation reveals the glory of God, shining as light in the world's darkness so that others might come to know the Father (Matt. 5:16; Scorgie et al., 2016). Sanctification begins immediately following justification and requires the believer's ongoing cooperation, faithfulness, and obedience, in contrast to justification, which rests solely upon Christ's redemptive work (Eph. 1:7; Lightner, 1994; Packer, 1985). Scorgie et al. (2016) describe spiritual formation as a disciplined, yet grace-empowered process motivated by love (1 Cor. 13:13) and gratitude (Ps. 69:30) that ultimately becomes missional as believers love their neighbors as themselves (Mark 12:31).

The believer's transformation is neither isolated nor compartmentalized (Scorgie et al., 2016). Rather, the light of Christ permeates every sphere of life (John 1:5), including workplace leadership, family relationships, and daily interactions. For ecclesial leaders, external flourishing manifests in ethical decision-making, wise conflict navigation, relational health, discipleship effectiveness, and the cultivation of a spiritually vibrant congregational culture. Leaders whose interior lives are ordered by the Spirit lead with humility, integrity, and resilience, fostering communities marked by unity, mission, and spiritual vitality. In this way, internal formation becomes visible in outward leadership practice, inviting others into the life of the kingdom.

Corporate Spiritual Formation. Humanity is created for community, and Scorgie et al. (2016) assert that no one journeys through spiritual formation in isolation from others, who together provide support, accountability, and connection with the long tradition of the communion of saints" (p. 453). The communal dimension of spiritual transformation is vital to the ecclesial leader's growth, for he or she is but one member of a larger body formed by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:27). Spiritual formation flourishes most fully within communities of faith, namely local congregations, which deepen individual commitment to a shared spiritual identity and connect believers to the broader global church (Reed, 2011).

As ecclesial leaders themselves undergo transformation, they gather others into a shared journey of Christlikeness that moves from (a) person to (b) community to (c) mission, ultimately extending beyond the local congregation to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8; Reed, 2011). Within this corporate context, communal practices foster accountability, mutual encouragement, shared discernment, and moral safeguarding, which are elements essential to sustained leadership health. Leaders embedded in authentic spiritual community are less susceptible to isolation, ethical compromise, and burnout, as communal bonds reinforce resilience and spiritual vigilance. Thus, corporate formation strengthens multidimensional flourishing by anchoring the leader within a network of grace, correction, and collective mission.

ISSN 1941-4692

Flourishing Discipline 6: Communal Fellowship. The benefit of belonging to a community of believers lies in the supportive relationships that guard against an unhealthy and self-critical preoccupation with personal spiritual growth that may inadvertently neglect God's active involvement in the sanctification process (Scorgie et al., 2016). The communal dimension of spiritual formation also extends outward, as believers are called to shine the light of Christ into a dark world (Matt. 5:16). Spiritual formation is not only the process of the individual being conformed to Christ's likeness but also the calling "to become with others a communal people of God, and to become an agent for God's redemptive purposes" (John 13:34; Tang, 2014, para. 12).

Vondey (2008) describes global ecclesiology as an ecumenical expression of divine hospitality, wherein believers participate in God's welcoming presence and extend that hospitality to others. Just as God invites humanity into His household of faith where forgiveness, reconciliation, and transformation occur, ecclesial leaders are called to reflect that invitation by cultivating communities marked by grace, unity, and shared mission. While inward disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and meditation cultivate the leader's interior life, and external formation shapes visible leadership practice, communal fellowship ensures that spiritual growth is neither isolated nor self-referential. Fellowship anchors the leader within accountability, shared discernment, and collective mission, making it essential rather than optional for multidimensional flourishing. In this way, communal fellowship completes the movement from personal transformation to corporate witness, reinforcing the internal, external, and corporate dimensions of ecclesial leader formation.

DISCUSSION

The literature presents a variety of internal, external, and corporate spiritual disciplines for ecclesial leaders, ranging from prayer, worship, confession, meditation, and solitude to Bible reading, Scripture memorization, fasting, and communal fellowship. These practices overlap and intertwine rather than exist as isolated processes, and all are animated by the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit (Reed, 2011; Tang, 2014). However, Peterson (1989) cautions ecclesial leaders not to confuse their flourishing or visible ministry productivity with the inner workings of the Spirit. Such confusion often arises when leaders become consumed with ministry busyness, inadvertently abandoning their primary calling to glorify God and worship Him as children in a relationship with the Father. Although ecclesial leaders are vessels used by God in fulfilling His mission (1 Cor. 4:7), they are called to lead others to Christ rather than to themselves. Salvation is found in Christ alone (John 14:6), and the more ecclesial leaders reflect His likeness, the more His light pierces the darkness of the world and the hearts of men (John 1:5).

While some scholarship addresses burnout or moral failure as the result of doing too little, Peterson (1989) exposes the equally dangerous temptation of doing too much in the name of God's work. This overextension is often rooted in vanity—the desire to appear indispensable or significant—manifested in unchecked busyness and the surrender of healthy boundaries. In contrast, spiritual disciplines are not burdens to be

ISSN 1941-4692

managed but gifts of grace that cultivate rest, renewal, and multidimensional flourishing. When embraced as freedom rather than obligation, these practices enable ecclesial leaders to serve from a place of health, clarity, discernment, love, joy, and Spirit-empowered strength.

CONCLUSION

The missional vision of spiritual formation ultimately aligns with Christ's command to make disciples (Matt. 28:18–20), integrating love for God and love for neighbor (Mark 12:30–31; Scorgie et al., 2016). Ecclesial leaders are called not merely to proclaim Christ but to embody His character in their leadership, so that their words, decisions, and relational engagement reflect His likeness (Bowers, 2017). As Tang (2014) notes, God's redemptive purpose unfolds through His people, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit prepares leaders to participate faithfully in that mission.

The literature reviewed consistently demonstrates that sustained engagement in spiritual disciplines cultivates multidimensional flourishing—strengthening spiritual maturity, moral resilience, relational health, and ministry sustainability. When ecclesial leaders prioritize Scripture, prayer, fasting, solitude, meditation, and communal fellowship as responsive participation in the Spirit's work, they are better equipped to navigate leadership pressures, guard against burnout and ethical compromise, and foster spiritually vibrant congregational cultures.

Thus, spiritual formation is neither self-focused improvement nor mere ministerial productivity. It is the Spirit-shaped transformation of the leader's interior life that overflows into faithful discipleship, sustainable ministry practice, and enduring kingdom witness. In this way, ecclesial leaders flourish not for personal prominence but for the glory of God and the strengthening of His church.

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Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 49–61.

ISSN 1941-4692

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INTER-RELATIONS BETWEEN FLOURISHING, FAITH, RELATIONSHIPS, BELONGING, AND SELF-CONCEPT, AMONG GENERATION Z AND THE ROLE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Kimberly A. Nollan and Nancy Scammacca Lewis

Using the Global Human Flourishing data set, the research presented seeks to understand the connections between the relationships of Generation Z (with self, others, and God) and flourishing. Much like society at large, the landscape of youth culture experienced significant change over the last few decades, with personal power and authority being celebrated in mainstream culture. However, Generation Z indicates a desire for values more aligned with servant leadership. Survey respondents (N = 24,703) ranged in age from 18 to 24. They were selected from the larger sample of respondents participating in the Global Flourishing Study (GFS), a five-year international longitudinal study involving more than 240,000 participants in 22 countries (Johnson et al., 2024). Survey data were analyzed, and important relations between the constructs of close relationships, belonging, self-concept, faith, and flourishing were uncovered. Using a structural equation model, it was found that flourishing (using Harvard's Human Flourishing Scale, Modified) is most strongly predicted by close relationships. Further, close relationships strongly covary with belonging and self-concept. Servant leadership dimensions such as listening, empathy, and building community are key to the development of close relationships. Examination of these dimensions as facilitating flourishing, as well as implications for future research and practice are identified.

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INTRODUCTION

Social connection and relationships are fundamental human needs and are strongly connected to human flourishing. The U.S. Surgeon General's report on the epidemic of loneliness cites recent research that approximately half of U.S. adults report experiencing loneliness (and correlated negative outcomes), with some of the highest rates among young adults. This trend began before COVID-19, and it accelerated during the pandemic (U.S. Surgeon General, 2023). The Surgeon General recommends social connection as an antidote to loneliness, which aligns with the Social Development Model (Hawkins & Weiss, 1985) as well as with the Search Institute's 40 developmental assets (Search Institute, 2020). An individual's level of social connection is not simply determined by the number of close relationships, but also the quality of those relationships. Listening, empathy, and trust contribute to the level of closeness in relationships, all of which are key aspects of servant leadership.

In addition to rising reports of loneliness, research shows that more than half of Generation Z (Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012) aged adolescents feel stressed and anxious—contributors include climate change, finances, health and welfare of self and family, mental health, relationships, and loneliness (Bethune, 2019; Brownlee, 2022; Deloitte Global Talent, 2021; Deloitte, 2022; McKinsey, 2022; Springtide, 2024; U.S. Surgeon General, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to a trend towards increasing depression and anxiety among adolescents (WHO, 2022).

Some theorize that the rise in time spent engaged with technology (e.g., smartphone use and social media) and less time in unstructured play among teens has made them less happy, and more depressed, anxious, and lonely (Haidt, 2024; Springtide, 2024; Twenge, 2017; Twenge, 2023; U.S. Surgeon General, 2023; WHO, 2022). The impact of technology on Gen Z is the topic of much research and discussion. They are the first generation to grow up only knowing the world with the possibility of endless information and infinite connectivity of the digital age, which they are constantly processing (Annie E. Casey Foundation - AECF, 2021; Francis & Hoeffel, 2018; Katz et al., 2021; Parker & Igielnick, 2020; Youth of the Nations, 2019). Being hyper-connected, they quickly become experts in the use of innovative technologies (such as Artificial Intelligence–AI). Generation Alpha is already using AI to spark creativity, and many (44%) use AI for their schoolwork (Springtide, 2024). These challenges are unlike any faced by older generations.

In the background of loneliness, anxiety, and mental health concerns, Gen Z are also self-drivers who care about others (AECF, 2021; Francis & Hoeffel, 2018; Katz et al., 2021). They are invested in their communities of identity and strive for a diverse community (AECF, 2021; Deloitte, 2022; Francis & Hoeffel, 2018; Katz et al., 2021; The Youth of the Nations, 2019). They value authenticity and prefer collaborative, social, and consensual models of leadership (Francis & Hoeffel, 2018; Katz et al., 2021; Parker & Igielnick, 2020). These values align with hallmarks of servant leadership, including authenticity, empathy, and building community (Patterson, 2003; Van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011). Gen Z are disillusioned by the past and have a no-nonsense attitude

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 62–86.

ISSN 1941-4692

about the present (AECF, 2021; Deloitte, 2021; Francis & Hoeffel, 2018; Katz et al., 2021; Klein, 2022; Parker & Igielnick, 2020; The Youth of the Nations, 2019).

There is clearly concern about the well-being and flourishing of Gen Z as seen by the many important research studies around mental health, worry and anxiety, loneliness, and the impacts of technology on Gen Z. Researchers also have explored the importance of close relationships and, increasingly, spirituality in this age group (Barna, 2021; Farie et al., 2024). However, there is less research on the contributors, such as servant leadership constructs of authenticity, empathy, and building community, and relations between strong positive relationships, self-concept, flourishing, and the role of faith amongst Gen Z.

Relationships and Flourishing

The 40 developmental assets and other research on protective factors support that positive, close relationships with an adult can increase an adolescent's ability to make healthy choices, increase their self-esteem, and promote social and emotional competencies and may be seen as positive, countering events to risk factors like low income level, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and employment status (Search Institute, 2020; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020; Werner & Smith, 1992). When youth are bonded to a healthy community, they make healthy decisions and grow into healthy adults as well, with decreased rates of juvenile delinquency (Hawkins & Weiss, 1985). In addition, strong, positive relationships with parents and other caring adults protect adolescents from a range of poor health-related outcomes and promote positive development (Sieving et al., 2017). Other positive outcomes of healthy relationships with adults include higher GPA (Scales et al., 2019; Sethi & Scales, 2020), higher social-emotional competencies and stronger experiences of diversity, equity, and inclusion, a more culturally responsive environment in those settings, and better economic outcomes (Search Institute, 2020; Search Institute, 2024).

The Search Institute (2024) defines developmental relationships as close connections through which young people discover who they are (identity), cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them (agency). The Search Institute also identified that close relationships that involve expressing care (dependability, listening, warmth, encouragement), and expanding possibilities (connections) positively impact the outcomes of adolescents. These aspects also align with servant leadership principles. Using servant leadership as a facilitating framework for the development of close relationships is explored in relation to adolescent flourishing.

Flourishing

The Human Flourishing Program at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science considers flourishing to be a state of life satisfaction, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close relationships (https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/measuring-flourishing). A short definition is "living in a state in which all aspects of a person's life are good" (VanderWeele, 2017, p. 8149).

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 62–86.

ISSN 1941-4692

VanderWeele discusses four pathways to flourishing: family, work, education, and religious community. In addition, integrating spiritual considerations in person/community-centered practices has been identified as a promising approach for strengthening U.S. public health (Long et al., 2024). A critical component of all four pathways includes relationships present in each pathway. This current research project focused specifically on understanding contributors to flourishing, and focused on faith, belonging, identity, agency, and close relationships. Furthermore, given the value and concern Gen Z expresses about community and the well-being of others, we explored the expression of servant leadership in those contributors. Considering the many protective factors associated with positive close relationships (facilitated by servant leadership/followership), it is likely that adolescents with positive, close relationships are more likely to flourish. This includes both the number of relationships and the quality, or closeness, of those relationships.

Self-Concept: Identity and Agency

Self-concept is made up of two related constructs: identity (what I think about myself/humility) and agency (my belief I can make a difference in the world/empowerment and service). Agency is developed by providing authentic opportunities for youth to lead and express their voice in decisions and actions and is related to the servant leadership constructs of altruism, service, and empowerment. Compared to an adult-only solution to a youth-oriented problem, including adolescents often creates better solutions. The Social Development model states that when there are opportunities for involvement along with the ability to learn and use skills (expressing agency) and recognition for their actions, bonding to their community will occur, and likewise, a decrease in negative outcomes (Hawkins & Weiss, 1985). Often identity and agency are formed in the context of close, positive relationships, especially those where the adult lives out servant leadership constructs like love, trust, and forgiveness (Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Houltberg, 2022). Identity can be made up of how one thinks about oneself: do I like myself, and do I think I am worthy of being loved? Agency is both believing one can make a difference and living that out in numerous ways.

The 40 developmental assets reinforce the importance of self-concept as related to promoting flourishing (Search Institute, 2024). Specifically, the areas of “challenge growth” (push me to get better, hold me accountable), “provide support” (empower and advocate), and “share power” (treat with respect, inclusion, and collaboration) are related to the constructs of agency and identity. Challenging growth and sharing power (empowerment) both occur in the context of close positive relationships with adults, so it is likely that self-concept and close relationships are related to one another and predictive of flourishing.

Belonging

As part of a mixed-method research project involving interviews and surveys of young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, Carter and colleagues (Carter, 2016; Carter, Biggs, & Boehm, 2016) identified ten dimensions

ISSN 1941-4692

of belonging within the context of a religious community. Together, these dimensions address the extent to which people with disabilities, and their families are (a) invited, (b) present, (c) welcomed, (d) known, (e) accepted, (f) supported, (g) cared for, (h) befriended, (i) needed, and (j) loved with their community of faith. These dimensions of belonging transcend faith communities. Creating spaces of belonging where someone can be fully themselves is closely connected to positive relationships (Carter, 2016). Being able to be fully oneself, a critical aspect of belonging, is also part of the servant leadership construct of authenticity. In focus groups, Gen Z expressed that they do not expect older generations to be like them. They want other adults to show up as themselves, to be authentic. They want them to be seen as humans. Again, listening is important to this construct (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Faith and Flourishing

Religiosity and spirituality are essential components of lifestyle medicine. Both offer social connection and strategies for coping with stress. Religiosity is often defined around organized beliefs, practices, and the culture of a given religious tradition. Spirituality, while historically rooted in and based on religion, is often vaguer, defined by individuals, and not connected with any one religion; it has more to do with personal meaning in life (Faries et al., 2024). Faith is differentiated here from religiosity and spirituality to indicate belief in a higher power (often called God). Expressing faith is associated with more favorable health outcomes, which is related to flourishing as well (Faries et al., 2024; U.S. Surgeon General, 2023). From this, it is expected that embodying servant leadership constructs, which are patterned after the life of Jesus Christ, would also increase faith (Greenleaf, 1977; Patterson, 2003).

Servant Leadership

For adults, especially those in the ministry context looking to build relationships with adolescents, embodying servant leadership will go far in building close relationships, as well as helping Gen Z learn and practice agency and build positive identity. This paper draws from the work of Kathleen Patterson (2003), who includes the following constructs as defining servant leadership: love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. It also draws from the work of Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), who validated eight dimensions of servant leadership, including: standing back, forgiveness, courage, empowerment, accountability, authenticity, humility, and stewardship.

In the Relate model (Young Life, 2024), love, specifically being worthy of love, is a key component of identity. Agency (believing one can make a difference) is connected to altruism, empowerment, standing back, and also service/stewardship. Close relationships are also connected to and facilitated by trust, love, and living out forgiveness (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011; Patterson, 2003). Listening is a critical skill that enhances all the servant leadership constructs. Servant leadership is examined as a relational facilitator, not measured as a construct, in this study.

The Relate Project

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 62–86.

ISSN 1941-4692

A recent study, the Relate Project (Young Life, 2024), examined the relationships, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of 7,261 adolescents, teens, and young adults ages 13 through 24 in the United States (N = 1994), the United Kingdom (1,004), Mexico (1,768), India (997), and Eastern Africa (Kenya-627, Uganda-447, Ethiopia-413 and Tanzania-11) (Young Life, 2024). Quotas were set by age, gender, ethnicity, and geographic region, and respondents were then weighted by gender to achieve statistical representation of the population in each country. Additionally, racial minority groups in the U.S. were oversampled and then weighted back to their population proportions to allow for deeper analysis of these subgroups. The margin of error on this sample ranges from 2.2% to 3.1% per country. Replication studies are important for establishing the scientific research base around leadership development. Additionally, showing that a structural equation model replicates across datasets increases the strength of the evidence for the validity and reliability of the model and its implications for leadership development and ministry methods and practices.

The project hypothesized that having close relationships and social connections would function as protective factors against adverse childhood experiences. Topics and questions in the survey examined adolescents' relationships (with adults they trust and talk to as well as friends), their sense of belonging, their identity, sense of agency, what is important to them, their motivation to have influence in the world, and their faith backgrounds and beliefs. The survey included Harvard's Human Flourishing Scale for Adolescents, Modified (https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/measuring-flourishing). In the modified version of the Adolescent Flourishing Scale, the variables "I am content with my friendships and relationships," and "I have people in my life I can talk to about things that really matter," were removed and combined with two other relationship-oriented questions to form the construct "Close Relationships." Additionally, the questions "My family has enough money to live a truly decent life," and "How often do you worry about safety, food, or housing?" were used in a separate statistical exploration of stress factors.

Confirmatory factor analysis of the survey data defined five constructs: flourishing, self-concept (identity and agency), belonging, close relationships, and faith. Self-concept is defined as identity (what I think about myself) and agency (my belief that I can make a positive difference). In the model, faith as a latent construct defined by adolescents' view of and connection to God, directly covaried with belonging, close relationships, and self-concept. Faith did not have a direct effect on flourishing, but indirectly predicted flourishing through self-concept, sense of belonging, and close relationships. The latent constructs identified through confirmatory factor analysis were then used in further statistical analysis examining structural equation models of the relations between them. These latent constructs can be understood as specific questions in the survey that, together, reliably describe a characteristic of the respondents, Gen Z adolescents.

Several versions of a structural equation model (SEM) were tested to determine how best to represent the relations between belonging, close relationships, faith, positive self-concept, and flourishing. These models sought to predict flourishing as an

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 62–86.

ISSN 1941-4692

outcome of the inter-relations between the other latent constructs, as well as direct relations with flourishing. The final model determined to best represent the data from the Relate project survey is shown in Figure 1. In this figure, covarying relations are represented by two-way arrows and predictive relations are represented by one-way arrows. The construct of flourishing was defined in this model without the relationship items (using the modified HFS, as described above). This model predicted 82% of the variance in flourishing. Model fit was good (CFI = .95, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .036).

This model depicts the inter-relations between faith, belonging, close relationships, and positive self-concept. As mentioned, the strongest inter-relations are between belonging, close relationships, and positive self-concept. Increases in any of these constructs lead to increases in the others. For example, as youth experience an increased sense of belonging, their positive self-concept and the quality and number of close relationships also increase.

In a structural equation modeling analysis of the Relate survey data, self-concept strongly and directly predicted flourishing. Positive self-concept was the strongest predictor of flourishing, with belonging (being able to be yourself with friends and family) and close relationships (having people you can talk about things that really matter and depend on) having a weaker predictive relation with flourishing. However, it is important to keep in mind that there is considerable shared variance between positive self-concept, belonging, and close relationships. This shared variance contributes to the strong relation between positive self-concept and flourishing.

Faith, as defined by adolescents' self-report of their view of God, has weaker relations to these constructs, but positively covaried with all three. Faith did not predict flourishing directly (the coefficient was not found to be different from zero). However, it did influence flourishing indirectly through its relations with belonging, close relationships, and positive self-concept.

The Present Study

The goal of this project was to replicate the Relate model with a larger and more diverse data set and explore the role of servant leadership on the latent constructs in this model. Although some items that formed the constructs in the Relate project are different from those in the Global Flourishing Study (GFS), we hypothesized that similar items could be grouped into similar constructs. We repeated the analyses conducted in the Relate project, using confirmatory factor analysis to determine if the latent constructs of close relationships, belonging, positive self-concept, and faith could be validated with the GFS data. We hypothesized that the relations between the constructs in the Relate model (belonging, self-concept, and close relationships) would strongly covary with the faith construct. We also hypothesized that these constructs would predict flourishing, and the Relate model would replicate when the constructs were defined using the GFS items.

ISSN 1941-4692

METHOD

Participants

Survey respondents (N = 24,703) ranged in age from 18 to 24. They were selected based on age from the larger sample of respondents participating in the Global Flourishing Study (GFS), a five-year international longitudinal study involving more than 240,000 participants in 22 countries (Johnson et al., 2024). The respondents were distributed across ages within this span evenly, with the percentage at each age ranging from 13.1-16.5% of the overall sample. The sample included more women (56.3%) than men (43.0%); less than 1% of the sample indicated their gender was “other” or did not provide a response. Most respondents (68.2%) were unmarried; 19.7% were married, while 9.0% reported having a domestic partner. Less than 3% of the sample were separated, divorced, or widowed. More than half of the respondents (55.4%) lived in a household with one or more children under the age of 18.

Respondents resided in one of twenty-two countries. The five countries with the largest proportion of respondents were Kenya (14.8%), Brazil (10.5%), India (9.5%), Sweden (7.4%), and Tanzania (7.2%). Most respondents lived in a small town or village (36.7%), while 26.2% lived in a large city, 23.8% in a rural area, and 12.6% in a suburb of a large city. The most common religious identity of respondents was Christian (49.0%); 19% of respondents had no religious affiliation, while 17.7% practiced Islam, 8.3% Hinduism, 2.0% Judaism, and 1.3% Buddhism.

Nearly three-fourths (73.8%) of the sample had completed secondary school, while 16.8% had completed eight years of elementary education and 9.4% had completed four years of college. About one-third of the sample were enrolled in school (34.0%). Of those who were not students, 32.0% were employed working for an employer, 19.3% were self-employed, 15.7% were homemakers, and 27.8% were unemployed and looking for a job.

Measure

All respondents were surveyed using a questionnaire developed for the GFS (Baylor University et al., 2024). The study panel was a nationally representative probability sample of each country’s population. The questionnaire was developed using a lengthy process that reflected best practices for survey construction (described in Johnson et al., 2024). Items on the questionnaire that assessed flourishing were drawn from VanderWeele’s (2017) flourishing index. Items from the Brief Multi-Dimensional Measure of Religion/Spirituality (BMMRS) (Fetzer Institute, 1999; Idler et al., 2003) were adapted to measure aspects of faith. GFS researchers consulted experts in other areas of social science research to solicit recommendations for items that had shown evidence of validity in prior research. After several rounds of feedback from stakeholders and experts to refine the survey items for the study’s cross-cultural context, GFS researchers opened the survey for public feedback. After further revisions, the survey was evaluated and refined by a group of experts in cross-cultural research

ISSN 1941-4692

from the Gallup Organization before being translated for testing in cognitive interviews in all 22 countries. Interviews focused on whether respondents' understanding of the items reflected the researchers' intended meaning. Additional revisions were made to the survey following these interviews and after pilot testing to determine the survey's length in both phone and online administrations. Given that survey data represent self-reports, the extent to which a respondent's data accurately reflects their level of faith and flourishing is limited by self-awareness and self-perception. However, more objective data assessing these constructs is difficult or impossible to collect.

Procedure

As described in Ritter et al. (2024), interviewers were trained in each country where data were collected using a training manual produced by Gallup, Inc. Interviewers delivered the questionnaire in person or by telephone. Online administration was conducted in locations where sufficient internet access was available.

Data Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis. We conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Mplus version 8 (Muthen & Muthen, 2017) using the items specified in our pre-registration document as measuring the constructs of faith, self-concept, belonging, close relationships, flourishing, and negative life events. Each construct was modeled separately. Model modifications were made to improve fit, including dropping items and co-varying residuals. Model fit was evaluated using the confirmatory fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) fit indices. As stated in our pre-registration, criteria for model fit were set as follows: CFI values of .85 to .89 indicate acceptable fit, values of .90 or greater indicate good fit, and values of .95 or higher indicate excellent fit. For SRMR and RMSEA, values of .05 and lower indicate excellent fit, values of .06 to .08 indicate good fit, and values of .09 to .10 indicate acceptable fit. These thresholds have been applied in research across cultures and are generally accepted as appropriate indications of model fit.

Structural Equation Modeling

We fit structural equation models (SEM) to determine if we could replicate the Relate model using the GFS data from Gen Z adults (Young Life, 2024). As with the CFAs, models were fit in Mplus, with measurement models for the latent constructs and a structural regression model for the relationships between the constructs. Full-information maximum likelihood estimation was used to fit the model to accommodate missing data. The same criteria for model fit that were applied in the CFAs were applied to evaluate model fit for the SEM. Modifications were made to improve fit.

ISSN 1941-4692

RESULTS

To address if the Relate model can be replicated with Gen Z adults in the GFS study sample, we first conducted CFA to determine if the items on the GFS questionnaire loaded on each latent construct as we had hypothesized and if the measurement models were a good fit to the GFS data. Next, we used the latent constructs from the CFAs in an SEM to determine if the Relate model replicated in the GFS data.

Religious Faith CFA

We hypothesized that nine GFS items measured the latent construct of religious faith. These items asked about topics such as the importance of the teachings of the respondents' faith to their lives, their practice of prayer or meditation, their sense of connection to their religion, and their belief that the god they worship loves and cares for them. Six of the nine items were retained in the final CFA model. The three items that were dropped had low loadings (< .30) on the construct or were too highly correlated with other items to allow the model to converge (multicollinearity). Additionally, to improve model fit, the residuals were allowed to covary for the item on the practice of prayer/meditation and the items on the importance of religious teachings to one's life and one's sense of connection to their religion. The resulting model met the criteria for good fit (CFI = .991; RMSEA = .059; SRMR = .015). See Table 1 for model parameters.

Close Relationships CFA

We hypothesized that six GFS items measured close relationships as a latent construct. These items asked about topics such as close relationships with parents in childhood, having people you can count on for help, satisfaction and contentment with one's current relationships, and how often one demonstrates care for others. Four of the six items were retained in the final model for the close relationships latent construct. Items were dropped due to low loadings or multicollinearity. To make it possible for the model to converge, the residuals were allowed to covary for the two items asking about closeness to one's mother and one's father in childhood. The final model showed excellent fit, CFI = 1.0; RMSEA = .000; SRMR = .000. See Table 2 for model parameters.

Self-Concept CFA

We hypothesized that 17 GFS items measured self-concept. These included seven items on topics including feeling capable, altruism, and personal agency, as well as ten items that asked about the extent to which particular personality traits described the respondent. Some of these items asked about positive traits (e.g., calm, dependable), some asked about negative traits (e.g., critical, disorganized), and some asked about neutral traits (e.g., quiet, extroverted). The three items that asked about altruistic behaviors were binary (yes/no) items. We summed the responses, giving one point for each "yes" response, to create a variable with a greater range. The final model

ISSN 1941-4692

retained this composite altruism item, the item about feeling capable, and five items describing positive or neutral personality traits. The remaining items were dropped due to very low loadings. The final model had good fit: CFI = 0.972; RMSEA = .042; SRMR = .021. See Table 3 for model parameters.

Flourishing CFA

The items included in the CFA for the flourishing construct were previously validated by GFS researchers (citation) as measuring six domains of flourishing. In our analysis, we removed the items measuring the domain of close social relationships (because we included these in our close relationships CFA). We also removed the two items measuring financial and material stability due to low loadings in our CFA. The remaining eight items measuring four domains of flourishing formed our final model. To improve model fit, the residuals for the pairs of items measuring each domain of flourishing were covaried. This model had good fit, CFI = 0.981; RMSEA = .054; SRMR = .022. See Table 4 for model parameters.

Belonging CFA

We hypothesized that four GFS items measured the latent construct of belonging. However, we were unable to achieve an acceptable fit for a latent construct using these items or a subset of these items. Unlike in the Relate project, three of the four GFS items that we hypothesized as measuring belonging had a negative orientation, asking respondents if they felt like an outsider and if they felt discriminated against or criticized. As a result, we decided to model belonging as an observed construct in the SEM phase of the analysis using one positively worded item, “How would you describe your sense of belonging in your country?” Although this decision departs from the approach used in the Relate model, we determined that the single item was the best match for the way in which we conceptualized belonging in the Relate model. However, we acknowledge that the interpretation of the model may change based on the difference in the way belonging was operationalized in this study.

SEM Replication of the Relate Model

We modeled the four latent constructs and one observed construct using the structural regression model from the Relate project to see if the GFS data would fit the Relate model. See Figure 2 for the model structure and coefficients from the GFS model and the original Relate model. Results indicated that the model was a good fit for the GFS data, CFI = 0.945; RMSEA =. 055; SRMR = .036. The model explained 83.6% of the variance in flourishing, compared to 82.0% in the original Relate model. All path coefficients were statistically significant at $p < .05$. The strength of the path coefficients for this model varied somewhat compared to the original Relate model. Self-concept was a weaker predictor of flourishing in the GFS model (.830 vs. .167), while close relationships were a stronger predictor of flourishing (.227 vs. .788). Additionally, belonging and self-concept covaried to a lesser degree in the GFS model than the original model (.779 vs. .360). However, given that the overall model had a good fit to

ISSN 1941-4692

the GFS data, we determined that the Relate model was successfully replicated. Having accounted for a large percentage of the variance in flourishing with the same constructs in both the Relate model and the GFS data model, we have demonstrated that these constructs are critical to flourishing across datasets.

DISCUSSION

Using the Global Human Flourishing data set and building on previous research (Young Life, 2024), the research presented sought to understand the relationships Generation Z has with others, themselves (identity and agency), and with faith, contributions to flourishing and in particular to determine if the Relate model could be replicated with Gen Z adults in the Global Flourishing Study sample. In addition, the connections between servant leadership constructs being lived out in relationship with Gen Z and the development of servant leadership constructs were considered.

Although some survey items that formed the constructs in the Relate project are different from those in the Global Flourishing Study, we hypothesized that similar items from the GFS study could be grouped into similar constructs. We repeated the analyses conducted in the Relate project, using confirmatory factor analysis to determine if the GFS items formed valid scales measuring the latent constructs of close relationships, belonging, positive self-concept (identity and agency), and faith. Similar to the Relate project, confirmatory factor analysis of the survey data validated four latent constructs: flourishing, self-concept (identity and agency), close relationships, and faith. Self-concept is defined as identity (what I think about myself) and agency (my belief that I can make a positive difference).

We used these four latent constructs (close relationships, positive self-concept, faith, and flourishing) and one observed construct (belonging) in the structural regression model from the Relate project to see if the GFS data would fit the Relate model. Results indicated that the model was a good fit for the GFS data, explaining 83.6% of the variance in flourishing, compared to 82.0% in the original Relate model. On this basis, we determined that the Relate model was successfully replicated.

In the model, “faith,” defined by adolescents’ view of and connection to God, directly covaried with belonging, close relationships, and self-concept. Faith in both exploratory research projects did not have a direct effect on flourishing, but indirectly predicted flourishing through self-concept, sense of belonging, and close relationships. Gen Zers who believe in God feel a greater sense of belonging in general, hold a more positive view of themselves, and experience less stress. This finding is consistent with other research indicating the positive associations of faith (Faries et al., 2024; U.S. Surgeon General, 2023)

Consistent findings from both research projects showed that belonging, identity, agency, and closeness in relationships impact flourishing in Gen Z young adults. Given the many protective factors associated with positive close relationships (Faries et al., 2024; Search Institute, 2020; Search Institute, 2024; U.S. Surgeon General, 2023;

ISSN 1941-4692

Werner & Smith, 1992), it is not surprising that young adults with positive, close relationships are more likely to flourish.

Both research projects found that the strongest inter-relations are between belonging, close relationships, and positive self-concept. Increases in any of these constructs lead to increases in the others. For example, as young adults experience a sense of belonging, their positive self-concept and the quality and number of close relationships increase.

A difference between the projects is that in the Relate project, positive self-concept had the strongest effect on flourishing, while in the GFS sample, quality close relationships (having people you can talk about things that really matter and people you can depend on) most strongly affected flourishing. The differences may be attributed to the items making up these constructs being slightly different in the two surveys.

Given that the model was validated by both samples, adults working with and those employing Gen Zers should consider these factors when designing and implementing programs and creating environments where flourishing is desired, and especially as they build relationships with Gen Z. It is also clear that from this research and other research that Gen Z values align with many servant leadership constructs. Gen Z values opportunities to express agency (empowerment, service, and altruism) (Patterson, 2003; Search Institute, 2024). They prefer collaborative work environments compared with authoritarian ones (standing back, interpersonal acceptance, humility) (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011; Patterson, 2003). Expressing agency and having a strong identity are related to flourishing. In addition, having people they are close to whom they can talk to about what really matters also predicts flourishing. These aspects of servant leadership are inferred theoretically rather than directly measured in the Structural Equation Model. These relationships can be found at work, school, and social connections.

When servant leadership is lived out through active listening, empowerment, building community, and agapao love, close relationships will likely be formed. Furthermore, listening builds trust and communicates love. In one study, 40% of Gen Z expressed that they are not sure they are worthy of being loved (Young Life, 2024). When a servant leader expresses agapao love, considering the needs of others, paying attention to “learn the giftings and talents of each person” (Patterson, 2003, p. 3) and demonstrate love by empathy, active listening, and clear communication (Patterson, 2003), it builds up the recipients sense of being worthy of being loved, which likewise contributes to a higher sense of flourishing.

Like every generation before them, Gen Z young adults are experiencing the natural transitions of going from childhood to adulthood and moving from what is usually an emotionally and physically secure environment (home, school, community) to independence in new and less familiar places and social networks, but in a world in which they can be overwhelmed with more digital access than their minds can process. This transition period is, at best, a time of uncertainty and, at worst, one in which

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adolescents can develop anxiety, self-doubt, loneliness, or unhealthy coping behaviors. To flourish, adolescents and young adults need adults in their lives who will lean in during this period and help them navigate unfamiliar territory and build their social fabric and resilience.

This research affirms that relationships matter. One of the most important protective factors is healthy relationships–with family, peers, and non-family adults or mentors (Search Institute, 2020; Search Institute, 2024; Scales et al., 2019; Sethi & Scales, 2020; Sieving et al., 2017; Werner & Smith, 1992). The most important building block for relationships with Gen Z is really listening to them, a key component of the servant leadership constructs of trust and agapao love and enhances all other aspects of servant leadership (Patterson, 2003). Before offering advice, adults seeking to build relationships with Gen Z would be wise to be curious and ask questions. Sometimes it takes a few rounds of questions to uncover matters of the heart and what is weighing on someone. Asking Gen Z what they are thinking about, listening to, their thoughts about the future, and what they worry about communicates love and interpersonal acceptance.

As adolescents reach their 20s, they tend to open up more about topics of faith, finances, and relationships, and begin to seek guidance and want to talk about these areas (Young Life, 2024). Gen Z wants to learn from older adults, but in a collaborative, non-lecture format. Listening, again, is part of being collaborators, rather than advice givers (Francis & Hoeffel, 2018; Katz et al., 2021; Parker & Igielnick, 2020). In focus groups, Gen Z expressed that they do not expect older generations to be like them. They want other adults to show up as themselves, to be authentic. Exhibiting this servant leadership trait communicates that Gen Z is seen as human (Young Life, 2024). Expressing the constructs of servant leadership (like trust, agapao love, and authenticity) will build close relationships that Gen Z desires. When Gen Zers have close relationships, they are more likely to flourish.

Part of the work of becoming an adult is taking on more responsibility and expressing agency. Greenleaf (1977) lists commitment to serve others rather than seeking power or control as key characteristics of a servant leader. These are also values Gen Z holds, and are important to building a strong self-concept, which is predictive of flourishing.

If there is one thing Gen Zers have in common, it is a desire for purpose. Half of Gen Z (Young Life, 2024) agreed that they are looking for something to help them lead a better life. Gen Z wants and believes they can make a difference. When asked about what they are concerned about when thinking about their community or the larger world context, the top items concern the well-being of their neighbor–housing, food insecurity, access to medical care, and human trafficking. Adults in a relationship with Gen Zers who also express the servant leadership construct of altruism will model and help Gen Z express altruism and service. Expressing agency is also predictive of flourishing (Young Life, 2024).

ISSN 1941-4692

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Outside of items on the flourishing scale, the survey items measuring close relationships, faith, self-concept, and belonging were different between the Relate project and the Global Flourishing Project. This constitutes a limitation to this research and the application of the Relate model broadly. It is recommended that future studies continue to refine the measurement of faith, identity, agency, belonging, and close relationships. It would also be important to see if this model holds as Gen Z ages by testing it with future data sets of the GFS. Furthermore, it would be important to use servant leadership scales with known psychometric properties in research about flourishing to confirm that servant leadership constructs were measured correctly. In addition, there are theological limitations of survey-based measures when studying faith and flourishing. At the time of this article, longitudinal causal inference is a limitation. With subsequent years of the Global Flourishing Study, longitudinal data will become available, allowing us to study changes in these constructs and their relation to flourishing over time and determine how changes in the predictors affect changes in flourishing.

Future research is also needed to better understand the covariance of belonging, close relationships, and self-concept, along with the connection between these and servant leadership/followership expression. These constructs are unique, and understanding their unique relationships with faith and flourishing is important. In addition, consideration of the role of social media/time spent online, and emerging AI is needed to understand the impact on all the Relate model constructs.

CONCLUSION

In summary, flourishing in Gen Z seems to be a combination of the development of a strong identity, opportunities to express agency, and close relationships. Belonging is also correlated with self-concept and close relationships. Although faith does not directly impact flourishing, it is related, although not strongly, to self-concept, belonging, and close relationships. Stronger faith is correlated with higher scores on these three constructs. These findings support the importance of the protective factor of a positive close relationship with an adult in order for young adults and adolescents to flourish. Using these findings, practical strategies for working with Gen Z and adolescents around forming close relationships (encountering one another), bolstering adolescents' self-concept, creating spaces of belonging, and facilitating faith formation are identified. Essential to these strategies are the servant leadership constructs like agapao love listening, trust, service/altruism, authenticity, empowerment, and collaborating with Gen Z. When adults live out servant leadership in relationship with adolescents, close relationships are likely to be formed, adolescents will have the opportunity to learn and express agency, a strong identity will be grounded in believing they are worthy of being loved, they will be loved by someone who considers their needs, will demonstrate communication, exhibit empathy, and develop active listening skills (Patterson, 2003), all of which lead to flourishing.

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ISSN 1941-4692

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ISSN 1941-4692

Table 1

Model Parameters for the Religious Faith CFA

Item	Standardized Loading
The teachings of your religious faith are very important in your life	.677
You find strength or comfort in your religion or spirituality	.881
You feel connected to a religion or form of spirituality	.308
How often do you pray or meditate?	.656
Your religious beliefs and practices are what lie behind your whole approach to life	.806
You feel loved by god, the main god you worship, or the spiritual force that guides your life	.855
Covariance for the residuals for how often you pray and the teachings of your religious faith are very important in your life	.173
Covariance for the residuals for how often you pray and how you feel connected to a religion or form of spirituality	.164

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 62–86.

ISSN 1941-4692

Table 2

Model Parameters for the Close Relationships CFA

Item	Standardized Loading
Relationship with your father when growing up	.257
Relationship with your mother when growing up	.290
You could count on people in your life to help you if you were in trouble	.510
I'm content with my friendships and relationships	.633
Covariance for the residuals for relationship with mother and father when growing up	.360

ISSN 1941-4692

Table 3

Model Parameters for the Self-Concept CFA

Item	Standardized Loading
You feel very capable in most things you do in life	.317
Pair of traits applies to you: extroverted, enthusiastic	.519
Pair of traits applies to you: dependable, self-disciplined	.654
Pair of traits applies to you: open to new experiences, complex	.492
Pair of traits applies to you: sympathetic, warm	.629
Pair of traits applies to you: calm, emotionally stable	.582
Altruism composite (sum of donated money, helped a stranger, volunteered in the past month)	.165

ISSN 1941-4692

Table 4

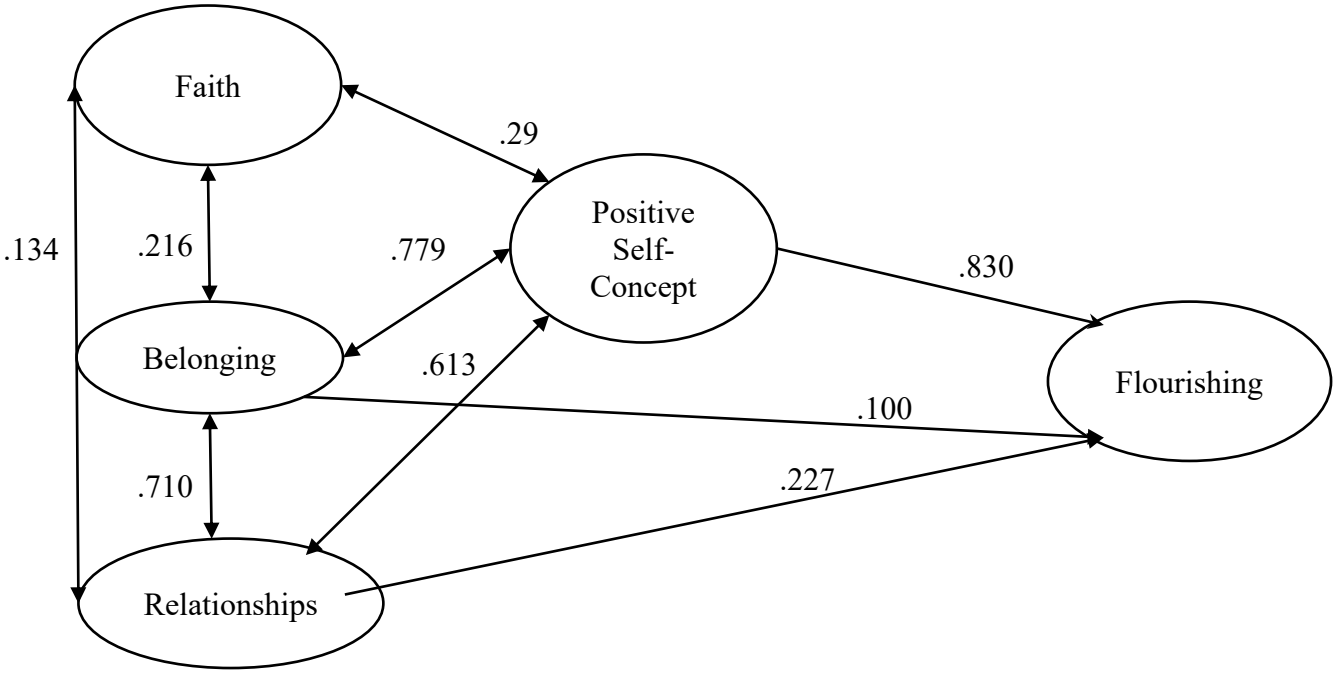
Model Parameters for the Flourishing CFA

Item	Standardized Loading
How satisfied are you with life as a whole these days?	.522
How happy do you usually feel?	.639
How would you rate your physical health?	.616
How would you rate your mental health?	.702
The things you do in your life are worthwhile	.671
You understand your purpose in life	.682
You are always able to give up some happiness now for greater happiness later	.455
You always act to promote good in all circumstances	.565
Covariance for the residuals for life satisfaction and thing you do are worthwhile	.208
Covariance for the residuals for life satisfaction and how happy you feel	.303
Covariance for the residuals for physical and mental health	.248
Covariance for the residuals give up some happiness now and act to promote good	.224

ISSN 1941-4692

Figure 1

The Relate Model

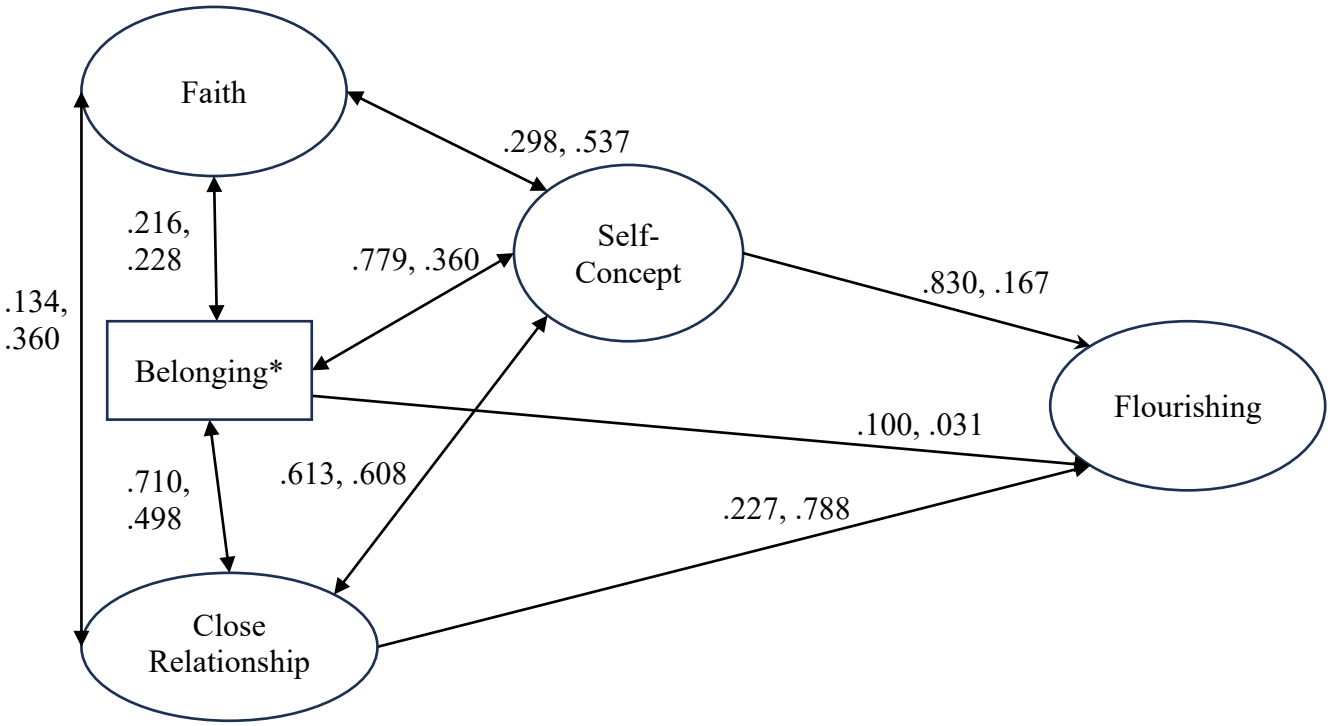


Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 62–86.

ISSN 1941-4692

Figure 2

The Relate Model with Coefficients for the Original and GFS Data Models



Note: The first coefficient listed in each pair is from the original Relate model and the second is from the GFS data model. Belonging was modeled as a latent construct in the original Relate model and as an observed construct in the replication.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCRIPTURE'S AUTHORITY FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP TODAY

Jason L. Rankin

The authority of Scripture has been the subject of numerous challenges and criticisms. Maintaining the Scripture's authority is crucial because all Christian ideas are based on its inspiration, inerrancy, reliability, sufficiency, and other qualities. Most Pentecostal and Evangelical denominations adhere to its authority, in part, because of the efforts of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. The ultimate source of power and authority, Jesus Christ, is the source of leadership authority in churches, Christian organizations, and for ministry leaders. This article's purpose is to demonstrate that Scripture's authority provides normative guidelines for the purpose, roles, methodology, and setting for leadership. Scripture contains leadership concepts, examples, and principles that Christian leaders can use to establish authority. Scripture can give information on the goals of leadership, the roles of the leader and follower, the approach, and the context of leadership when it is the main source of authority. Since Scripture is the primary source of our knowledge about God, upholding scriptural authority is essential to leadership authority.

INTRODUCTION

There has been much discussion and debate regarding the contemporary challenges to the authority of Scripture. Martin Luther's pivotal act of declaring sola Scriptura with his 95 Theses ignited the Protestant Reformation, asserting that Scripture alone was the final authority for faith and practice: "Movements like the Enlightenment, liberalism, and more recently postmodernism have elevated other voices to the level of

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 87–96.

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Scripture or even above Scripture, and the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture have been abandoned, something Rome would never have done in the sixteenth century" (Barrett, 2015, p. 10). Challenging the authority of God and His Word can be found in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2-3) and throughout the Scriptures. The Word was challenged when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. These instances demonstrate that Adam failed to uphold the authority of God's word, and Jesus successfully reinforced the authority of written Scripture. Given the successful example of Jesus, it is foundational for Christianity to uphold the authority of Scripture. All doctrines within Christian theology hinge upon the authority, reliability, credibility, and sufficiency of Scripture. For this reason, it is necessary to hold to the infallible authority of Scripture, which provides a firm foundation for all Christian doctrines to be built upon. Leadership authority, especially Christian leadership, is based upon Scripture's authority. This article will demonstrate that the authority of Scripture provides adequate and normative guidelines for the purpose, roles, methodology, and setting for leadership.

After a brief synopsis and overview of the theological and biblical foundation for the authority of Scripture, the discussion will proceed to show how leadership authority hinges on it. The next major objective is to apply the authority of Scripture doctrine in the life of a leader; this section will present the fundamental arguments of this thesis, including the purpose, the roles of the leader and follower, the methodology, and the leadership setting. The conclusion will provide a recapitulation and recommendation on the stance the contemporary church should take forward.

EXPLANATION OF THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

As briefly touched on in the introduction, the authority of Scripture is vital to Christianity and a prerequisite for all Christian doctrine, practice, and claims grounded in Scripture. When discussing Scripture's authority, several related terms are often used in conjunction with or interchangeably with authority. These terms include inspiration, infallibility, reliability, trustworthiness, truth, sufficiency, and inerrancy, amongst others. Essentially, an underlying argument behind the use of these terms is the truth that the Bible not only contains the Word of God, but it is, in fact, in its entirety the Word of God. For this reason, all the aforementioned terms are equivocally associated with the Holy Scriptures.

Theological Terminology of Authority of Scripture

First, an explanation will be provided as to why it is theologically important and vital to uphold the authority of Scripture and its equivocal terms as they relate to Scripture. First, Scriptures self-attest to their own authoritative nature. Second, Patriarchs, leaders, and heroes of Scripture, in the likes of Jesus as mentioned, and the Apostle Paul, gave credence to Scripture's authority. Despite these examples, some still doubt the Bible's authority. A notable contention regarding biblical authority is that God used human writers to pen Scripture. One way to summarize the issue of biblical authority that many scholars today face is as follows: Does it not follow that the Bible

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 87–96.

ISSN 1941-4692

must bear the scars of human error and fallibility since the Scriptures were written by humans rather than being sent directly from heaven? Therefore, it is asserted that an infallible God gave His Word to imperfect humans, who then created a faulty record (Schulze, 1960).

There are various responses to such problematic argumentation. One response considers the nature of God in relation to Scripture. Given that Scripture is the Word of God, some arguments follow about the nature of Scripture in relation to the nature of God. One theological argument claims that, based on God's nature, that the aforementioned terms (such as inerrancy and reliability) can be associated with Scripture. God must be all-knowing if he is omniscient. He cannot be ignorant of or mistaken about anything. Furthermore, if he is omnipotent, he can influence the biblical author's writing so much that no errors appear in the finished work. And since he is a veracious or true creature, he will undoubtedly want to use these powers in a way that prevents the Scriptures from deceiving people (Erickson, 2013). This line of reasoning, based on God's nature of omniscience and omnipotence, not only applies to inerrancy but to any of the equivocal terms as they apply to Scripture. Other theologians have used similar lines of reasoning to connect these uses of terminology. Barrett (2015) writes: "If Scripture is not inerrant, then sola scriptura is without foundation. For Luther, what made the Bible alone the supreme authority was that it was not only inspired by God but, as a result of being God-breathed, the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone, could not and do not err" (p. 14).

Some scholars and theologians do not appeal to reasoning or logical argumentation but suggest that the authority of Scripture resides in one's faith and is beyond human comprehension. Henderson (2017) supports, "Holy Scripture is perfect, authoritative, sufficient, and essentially clear. It is the inerrant Word of God. Human eyes cannot see this, and human reason cannot prove it. It is an article of faith "that is hidden and not obvious" (p. 146). Mayhue (2004) summarizes a theological argument on Scripture's authority:

> 1) It is not a derived authority bestowed by humans; rather, it is the original authority of God. 2) It does not change with the times, the culture, the nation, or the ethnic background; rather it is the unalterable authority of God. 3) It is not one authority among many possible spiritual authorities; rather it is the exclusive spiritual authority of God. 4) It is not an authority that can be successfully challenged or rightfully overthrown; rather, it is the permanent authority of God. 5) It is not a relativistic or subordinate authority; rather it is the ultimate authority of God. 6) It is not merely a suggestive authority; rather it is the obligatory authority of God. 7) It is not a benign authority in its outcomes; rather it is the consequential authority of God (p. 234).

A point needs to be made about the timelessness of Scripture's authority. Since the Scriptures are divinely inspired, containing teachings and principles about and relating to God, they are just as binding on the contemporary church as they were on the first-century church. The concepts and assertions found in Scripture are

ISSN 1941-4692

authoritative due to their divine inspiration and ought to be always applied universally to the church. Which leads to providing information on some denominations and the stance of churches on Scripture's authority.

Many evangelical and protestant denominations promote a strong view of the authority of Scripture, while certain new movements have even taken some opposing viewpoints. Folarin claims that the Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations share a commitment to upholding Scripture's authority. In his writing about the Christ Apostolic Church, he asserts, "the belief in inspiration and authority of the Scriptures is common to both Evangelical and Pentecostal churches" (Folarin, 2018, p. 2). Despite some views that suggest Pentecostalism inherited these views from Evangelicalism, others say the authority of Scripture is not a main tenet of Pentecostalism. Ellington (1996) observes that Pentecostalism does not necessarily oppose the doctrine but views it from a different vantage point. Ellington (1996) points out, "this suggests to me that Pentecostals do not found their understanding of the authority of Scripture on a bedrock of doctrine, but that, in fact, their doctrine is itself resting on something more fundamental, dynamic and resilient; their experiences of encountering a living God, directly and personally" (p. 17).

Biblical Foundation of Authority of Scripture on Leadership

It must be established that all authority, Scriptural, leadership, and otherwise, comes from God, which is self-attested in Scripture and confirmed by the Holy Spirit. Here, authority refers to God's indisputable, absolute, and unconditional power in the world. It is inferred that the Bible, which is the Word of God in its entirety, is the voice of God speaking to humans because this power belongs to God alone. The Bible is the only standard that requires unconditional obedience; there is no recourse to any other authority (Schulze, 1960).

The primary source of authority and power resides with God and is evidenced in Scripture. Romans 13:1 says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Jesus also alluded to God's primary authority in John 19:11, which says, "Jesus answered, thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." Also, Jesus identifies Himself as the source of all authority when He says in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." There is not adequate space allotted to exegete Scripture to demonstrate how, from Genesis to Revelation, that Jesus is the source of all power and authority.

Given God as primary authority, it can be asserted that His scriptures carry equal authority because they are His Word. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (emphasis mine)." Therefore, it would not be invalid to say that Scripture carries high, if not primary, authority. Jesus, being the Word of God (John 1:14), repeatedly emphasized the authority of Scripture. Evans (2015) writes, "Jesus quotes or alludes to all of the books of the Law, most of the Prophets, and some of the Writings. Superficially, then, the 'canon' of Jesus is pretty

ISSN 1941-4692

much what it was for most religiously observant Jews of his time" (p. 37). Jesus upheld the authority of Scripture (the law specifically) in Matthew 5:18, which says, "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." One of the foremost foundational scriptures on biblical authority is 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." This Scripture is a prime example and evidence of Scripture being self-attesting. Many people gloss over this phenomenal truth and just label it as a presupposition in their writings. Scripture is a "consistent self-witness to itself" and based on extensive exegesis, Mayhue (2004) syllogistically articulates that: "(1) Scripture is the Word of God, (2) The words of God are authoritative. Conclusion: Scripture is authoritative" (p. 232). This conclusion is supported throughout Scripture, alluding again to its self-attesting attribute. Mayhue (2004) expounds:

> Since the origin of Scripture can ultimately be explained by divine inspiration (Zech. 7:12; 2 Tim. 3:14–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21) as defined above, then the authority of Scripture is directly derived from the authority of God.11 Those who do not take God's authority in Scripture seriously are condemned (Jer. 8:8–9; Mark 7:1–13). On the other hand, those who rightfully honor and submit to God's authority in Scripture are commended (Neh. 8:5–6; Rev. 3:8) (p. 234).

APPLICATION OF THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE TO THE LIFE OF THE LEADER

Having established and explained the doctrine of the authority of Scripture, this discussion will show how leadership authority hinges on Scriptural authority and how this authority defines the practices of Christian leadership. Barrett (2015) provides Martin Luther's claim, "Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth. If that is not granted, what is Scripture good for? The more we reject it, the more we become satisfied with men's books and human teachers" (p. 9). Christians should not turn to secular constructs for authority, purpose, roles, or leadership methodology, but should rely on Scripture's authority. Howell (2003) says, "Holy Scripture, comprised of the Old and New Testaments, is the authoritative guide for the Christian believer in every realm of life, including how one grows into and conducts oneself as a leader of others" (p. 1).

Scripture's Authority Forms/Informs the Purpose of Leadership

Since Jesus is the source of all authority and Scripture is the primary authority in the life of Christians, it obviously follows that leaders, especially Christian leaders, find their purpose in Jesus and Scripture. Pastors, overseers, elders, deacons, and other ministry leaders have explicit qualifications outlined in Scripture, as well as anecdotal leadership principles derived from biblical accounts. Anyone desiring to be a Christian leader must acknowledge their purpose and disposition in relation to Jesus and

ISSN 1941-4692

Scripture. One of the foremost purposes of a leader is to glorify and please God. As evidenced by a desire to glorify and please God, a leader's life will portray complete devotion and obedience to God and His Word. The Scriptures explicitly instruct Christian leadership as to its purpose. Ephesians 4:11-13 says, "And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Therefore, it is clear that these ministry leaders' purpose is to equip and edify God's people.

Scripture's Authority Forms/Informs the Role of the Leader

Since Jesus is the primary and source of all authority, leaders must acknowledge their primary role as first followers of the highest leader, Jesus Christ: "The chief characteristic of a Christian leader must be submission to Christ, and only those who have learned that submission is the key to power can be effective Christian leaders" (Lawrence, 1987, p. 318). As part of submitting to God and following Him, leaders must know what God wants, know His Word, and desire to please Him. Murray (2011) says, "the Christian leader sees himself primarily as a servant, not a ruler. He is a servant of God first, then of His people" (p. 318). After establishing one's relationship and disposition with God, leaders must exhibit a Christian lifestyle that influences others to want to follow them. This means that a leader will possess character and practices that others will follow: "Truth, love, and righteousness must be evident in the Christian leader's character, behavior, and relationships if he is to expect other believers to respond to him as their leader" (Lawrence, 1987, p. 318). The leader ultimately seeks to fulfill one of the primary purposes of leadership: edifying and equipping the body of Christ. The leader brings God's people together in contemplative, disciplined, respectful, and Word-centered worship. However, he also guides and leads worship so that it touches and uplifts the emotions and the heart. He wants worship to be full of spirit and truth, just like the Father. In addition to teaching, training, organizing, and empowering God's people to serve Him, His church, and His world as their abilities and opportunities allow, he prioritizes worship (Murray, 2011).

He equips and inspires God's people for works of service. While prioritizing worship, he also teaches, trains, organizes, and enables God's people to serve Him, His church, and His world as their talents and opportunities permit. Smith specifically identifies the responsibility of "planning" for a Christian leader. Just as planning is a role of God, it is also part of the role of leaders: "Biblical planning is carried out in submission to the authority of the Word of God and in dependence upon the provision of wisdom from God" (Smith, 1991, p. 73).

It must be noted that desiring leadership roles is commended in Scripture; understanding one's motives for desiring leadership and the disposition of leadership must be carefully examined. The Scriptures discourage the desire to rule or lord over people for the sake of feeling higher or better than people. A leader's motive should be

ISSN 1941-4692

to guide, serve, and help others rather than rule over them. Patterson (2018) explains: “guarding and caring for the believer’s contrasts with forbidden authoritarian behavior that Jesus refers to as ‘lord it over’ (Matt. 20:25)” (p. 81).

Scripture’s Authority Forms/Informs the Role of the Follower

Since leaders are first and foremost followers of Jesus, the follower’s role likewise begins with a disposition of submission to Christ. After submission to Christ is submission to Christian leaders and to each other in humble servitude. Followers' role should also be rooted in a desire to glorify and please God. They will exemplify good character, practices, and biblical qualities such as love. Ephesians 5:1-2 admonishes to be imitators of God and “be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” Patterson (2017) expounds: “The followers of Jesus are called to serve as God’s stewards from a platform that is free of positional tension or self-ascendant attitude” (p. 78). As He emptied Himself of all desire for honor and glory (Phil. 2:7), so His followers are called to a leadership model marked by humility and powered by love. How these roles play out in a church setting varies tremendously. Many followers view their role as more involved, while others take a more passive approach. Bilezikian (2007) explains, “passive believers are discovering the thrill of participating together in the ministries of the local church. Laypeople demand to be involved in the decision-making process relative to matters that concern their church life” (p. 5).

Scripture’s Authority Forms/Informs Leadership Methodology

There are numerous leadership constructs, both biblical and secular. Some scholars extract other leadership philosophies from Scripture (Dobbs, 2001; Wagner, 2012). Dobbs (2001) used the biblical archetype of Moses to construct what he called the situational model of leadership. However, Dobbs (2001) acknowledges “the current model of choice seems to be Servant leadership, but I believe there are other models that are equally valid” (p. 33). Some theologians stress that church leadership should be biblically derived but emphasize leadership methodologies specifically derived from the New Testament. Wagner (2012) argues, “a proper biblical philosophy of leadership appropriate for today must have a dispensational perspective. All scripture is profitable.” He does not discard Old Testament leadership principles and examples but suggests that only the New Testament has, “along with its own principles and examples, the many divine commands of leadership that should be heeded today” (p. 37). The methodology for Christian leadership that will be promoted by this author, and is highly regarded in Scripture, is servant leadership. In Luke, Jesus instructs His disciples on what is commonly referred to as servant leadership. Luke 22:26-27 says, “he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is* it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.” Servanthood is a deeply embedded leadership paradigm in Scripture. Moses is repeatedly called the servant of God. Isaiah predicted that the coming Messiah would be the servant. As Jesus develops his ministry, he comes as the quintessential servant and makes service integral to his

ISSN 1941-4692

mission (Mark 10:45). Moreover, Jesus exhibits his ministry of service in the Lord's Supper in a highly tangible way (MacIlvaine III, 2016).

Application of Scripture's Authority to a Specific Setting

The obvious setting for the application of Scripture's authority is a Church or Christian organizational context. However, it must be noted that borrowing principles are practiced between both secular and Christian organizations. Garner (2015) argues, "one of the more obvious differences between churches and other types of organizations is the mix of sacred and secular practices influencing decision-making. While organizational facets of churches such as hierarchies, budgets, and facilities management have secular overtones, churches exist for sacred purposes" (p. 416). However, it can be argued that, historically, there has been just as much use of biblical principles in secular organizations, though not as overtly. There are arguments that the problems with church leadership stem from borrowing leadership philosophies from secular constructs (Benware, 1999). Benware (1999) identifies that the problem in leadership comes from churches replacing "biblical principles with psychological ideas" and "when marketing strategies take the place of passionate praying that is scripturally induced" (p. 6). Ideally, Christian leaders have been given authority by God to equip and edify the church, which determines what happens in a church setting. Since leaders derive this authority from God and Scripture, they should obviously rely on Scripture as their source for leadership philosophy.

CONCLUSION

There have been various challenges and developments regarding the authority of Scripture doctrine. Given the fact that all Christian doctrines hinge on the inspiration, inerrancy, trustworthiness, reliability, sufficiency, and so forth, it is vitally important to uphold the authority of Scripture. Various denominations and churches hold different views on the doctrine. Partly due to the actions of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, most Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations hold to Scripture's authority. The leadership authority of Churches, Christian organizations, and ministry leaders comes from the supreme source of authority and power, Jesus Christ. Understanding that Jesus is the Word of God, and that God has the attributes of omniscience and omnipotence enables one to have faith in Scripture's authority. Leadership principles, examples, and philosophies can be drawn from Scripture to provide authority and guidance for Christian leaders. With Scripture as a primary authority, it can provide information on the purpose of leadership, the role of the leader and follower, the methodology, and the setting of leadership. The purpose of church leadership is to glorify and please God through a life devoted to him and serving others. Everyone is a follower submitted to the supreme authority of Jesus Christ. The Christian leaders' role is to equip and edify the body of Christ through a servant-leadership methodology. It is crucial to leadership authority and to all Christian doctrine to uphold scriptural authority because most of what we know about God comes from Scripture. Scripture should be the primary source for leadership authority and leadership philosophies, especially in the Church and Christian organizations.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 87–96.

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Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 87–96.

ISSN 1941-4692

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Christian Leadership Philosophy Based on Royal Priesthood Identity in Jesus Christ

Jahdiel Cruz

This study investigates how the biblical doctrine of the royal priesthood (Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9) provides a theological foundation for Christian leadership beyond prevailing servant and transformational leadership paradigms. While contemporary Christian leadership models emphasize humility, influence, and organizational transformation, they frequently operate at the functional or behavioral level without grounding leadership in covenantal identity. Using a biblical-theological and constructive theological methodology, this paper examines key Old and New Testament texts to develop a priestly-kingly framework structured around holiness, intercession, sacrificial mediation, and reconciliation. The central research question asks: How does royal priesthood identity reframe the ontology and vocation of Christian leadership? The study argues that Christian leadership is not primarily defined by technique or role performance but by participation in Christ's high-priestly ministry. By situating leadership within covenantal and redemptive identity, this framework extends existing Christian leadership theory and offers a theologically integrated model of authority, stewardship, and communal formation.

INTRODUCTION

The theological concept of the royal priesthood offers a distinctive framework through which Christian leadership may be examined. Rooted in the Old Testament declaration that Israel was called to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6) and extended in the New Testament to believers in Christ (1 Pet. 2:9), this identity carries significant implications for authority, vocation, and communal stewardship. Although these texts are frequently cited within ecclesial contexts, their implications for leadership theory remain insufficiently developed within contemporary scholarship.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

Existing Christian leadership paradigms—particularly servant leadership and Christian transformational leadership—have contributed meaningfully to discussions of humility, moral influence, and organizational transformation. However, these models often emphasize leadership behaviors or outcomes without adequately grounding leadership in covenantal and ontological identity. As a result, Christian leadership is frequently articulated in functional or methodological terms rather than in theological-anthropological categories.

This paper advances leadership scholarship by arguing that the doctrine of the royal priesthood provides a foundational theological anthropology for Christian leadership. Rather than treating leadership primarily as a servant posture or transformational influence, a royal priesthood framework situates leadership within participation in Christ's priestly and kingly ministry. The central thesis of this study is that Christian leadership is most coherently understood not as technique, style, or role performance, but as covenantal vocation rooted in priestly identity. This identity reframes authority, stewardship, intercession, and reconciliation as theological expressions of participation in Christ's redemptive work.

To develop this argument, this study employs a biblical-theological and constructive theological methodology. Key Old and New Testament texts are examined to articulate the priestly dimensions of holiness, sacrificial mediation, intercession, and reconciliation, and these are brought into dialogue with contemporary leadership theory. In doing so, the paper proposes a conceptually integrated model of Christian leadership grounded in royal priesthood identity.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

A biblical and theological understanding of leadership within a royal priesthood framework must begin Christologically. In the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, Jesus Christ establishes a definitive priesthood and kingship in Himself (Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 6:20; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18). Whereas Israel's covenantal structure maintained a functional distinction between king and priest, Christ unites these offices in His person. Yet the distinctiveness of His reign lies in its paradoxical expression: He exercises authority through servanthood and accomplishes priestly mediation through sacrificial self-giving (Phil. 2:7–8; Eph. 5:2).

This integration of authority, mediation, and sacrifice constitutes the theological foundation of royal priesthood identity. Christ's kingship is not coercive but redemptive; His priesthood is not merely ritual but participatory. Because believers are united to Christ, they are incorporated into His priestly and kingly vocation (Rev. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:9). The royal priesthood identity of the Church therefore derives not from institutional office but from participation in Christ's mediating work.

Within this framework, Christian leadership emerges as derivative participation in Christ's integrated kingship, priesthood, servanthood, and sacrificial obedience. Authority is reframed as covenantal stewardship rather than positional dominance.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

Leadership becomes an embodied reflection of Christ's redemptive ministry rather than a technique of influence or managerial control.

AUTHORITY, POWER, AND THE PARADOX OF PRIESTLY LEADERSHIP

Leadership theory frequently wrestles with the relationship between authority and humility. Secular paradigms often treat power as a resource to be acquired and regulated, while Christian servant leadership models emphasize humility as a corrective to domination. A royal priesthood framework reframes this tension not as a balance between competing virtues but as a theological paradox resolved in Christ.

The New Testament affirms that Christ possesses all authority (Matt. 28:18) and is exalted as head over all things (Eph. 1:22). Yet this authority is expressed through self-emptying obedience and sacrificial service (Phil. 2:7–8). Power and humility are not opposing forces; they are united in the person of Christ. His kingship is expressed through servanthood, and His priesthood is fulfilled through sacrifice. Authority is thus redefined as redemptive stewardship.

Participation in Christ's royal priesthood mirrors this paradox. Authority is neither abandoned nor absolutized; it is exercised covenantally—bounded by holiness, shaped by intercession, and directed toward reconciliation. Power becomes derivative rather than autonomous. Humility becomes the proper posture of those who recognize that leadership authority is received, not possessed. Service becomes the visible expression of priestly mediation on behalf of others.

KINGSHIP AND PRIESTHOOD IN COVENANT HISTORY

The integration of kingship and priesthood in Christ emerges against the backdrop of their institutional distinction within Israel's covenantal history. Under the Old Covenant, these offices were distinct yet complementary forms of covenantal authority. The figures of David and Samuel provide illustrative case studies of these differentiated roles.

David embodies the anointed office of kingship (1 Sam. 16:13). His authority was political and military, yet covenantally accountable to divine command. Biblical narratives portray legitimate kingship not as autonomous power but as stewardship under God's authority (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 78:70–72). At its theological best, kingship in Israel was service-oriented and directed toward the flourishing of the covenant community.

Samuel, by contrast, represents priestly-prophetic leadership. His authority derived not from political power but from mediation between God and the people (1 Sam. 3:19–21). As priest and prophet, Samuel exercised leadership through intercession, discernment, and covenant fidelity. His role illustrates that the priesthood was likewise service-oriented and accountable to divine revelation.

In Christ, these historically differentiated offices are united without confusion or competition. The royal priesthood identity of believers reflects not an erasure of

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

authority but its theological reconfiguration. Leadership participates in Christ's integrated kingship and priesthood—exercising authority covenantally, mediating redemptively, and serving sacrificially.

ROYAL PRIESTHOOD IN RELATION TO SERVANT AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Contemporary Christian leadership scholarship has emphasized servant leadership as central to Christian practice (Green, 2018; Stoltzfus, 2014). Servant leadership's strength lies in its corrective to authoritarian models by centering humility and relational care. However, these frameworks often operate primarily at the level of leadership behavior and relational disposition. The theological grounding of service is frequently assumed rather than systematically articulated. A royal priesthood framework extends servant leadership by situating service within covenantal participation in Christ's mediating work. Service is not merely an ethical posture but a priestly vocation derived from union with Christ.

Similarly, Christian transformational leadership highlights moral formation, vision casting, and communal change (Scarborough, 2010). This paradigm contributes insight into influence and development. Yet transformational models often emphasize outcomes—growth or organizational renewal—without fully grounding transformation in theological anthropology. The royal priesthood framework reframes transformation as participation in redemptive identity rather than primarily as strategic influence.

Thus, the royal priesthood model complements servant leadership by affirming humility and service as essential expressions of Christian authority. It extends transformational leadership by rooting transformation in covenantal identity rather than leadership technique. At the same time, it challenges leadership approaches—whether secular or Christian—that treat authority as autonomous or leadership as primarily managerial. By grounding leadership in priestly ontology, this framework offers a theologically integrated account of authority, vocation, and communal formation.

Holiness, intercession, and reconciliation emerge not as isolated leadership traits but as theological expressions of participation in Christ's high-priestly ministry (1 Thess. 5:23–24; James 1:5; Col. 1:21–22; Eph. 2:14–22). Reconciliation, in particular, reflects the priestly work of restoring broken relationships between God and humanity and within the covenant community (Lovett & Vaughan, 2020). Leaders who embody reconciliation participate in Christ's mediating work by prioritizing restoration, covenant fidelity, and communal wholeness over domination or exclusion.

When leaders embody reconciliation, they contribute to shaping organizational norms and relational climate. Leadership research indicates that leader behavior significantly influences group culture, trust formation, and member engagement (Van der Berg & Wilderom, 2004). Within a royal priesthood framework, reconciliation is not merely an interpersonal strategy but priestly participation in Christ's mediating work, which in turn shapes communal patterns of trust, humility, and service.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

Beyond its theological significance, reconciliation carries measurable leadership implications. Organizational research consistently demonstrates that trust, relational cohesion, and constructive conflict management are central to sustainable leadership and team performance. When leaders engage conflict redemptively—prioritizing restoration over domination—they cultivate psychological safety and strengthen communal bonds. In this way, priestly participation in Christ's reconciling work extends beyond ecclesial contexts into broader organizational settings, shaping cultures marked by trust, cohesion, and resilient conflict engagement.

In light of these theological and organizational implications, holiness, intercession, and reconciliation emerge as integrated dimensions of covenantal leadership. Grounded in participation in Christ's unified kingship and priesthood, Christian leadership is shaped first by identity before it is expressed in function. Authority, service, mediation, and reconciliation are thus understood as theological realities embodied within organizational life.

GROWING IN CHRISTLIKENESS AND DEVELOPING OTHERS

Within a royal priesthood framework, leadership formation is inseparable from participation in Christ's identity. Because authority is understood as covenantal stewardship rather than positional control, the moral and spiritual formation of the leader becomes central to the exercise of leadership. Growth in Christlikeness is not an auxiliary devotional concern but a structural necessity within priestly leadership.

Practices such as prayer, engagement with Scripture, communal fellowship, service, and responsible stewardship function not merely as private spiritual disciplines but as formative mechanisms that shape leadership posture. Prayer, for example, reorients leaders away from self-sufficiency toward dependence upon God. Intercessory prayer, in particular, cultivates empathy, humility, and relational attentiveness—qualities essential to covenantal authority. By situating decision-making within theological discernment rather than reactive impulse, prayer contributes to reflective and ethically grounded leadership (Hiebert, 2012).

Similarly, sustained engagement with Scripture forms theological imagination. Scripture shapes not only doctrinal belief but moral perception and evaluative judgment. Within a royal priesthood paradigm, biblical formation aligns leadership vision with divine character—justice, mercy, holiness, and faithfulness—thereby grounding organizational practice in covenantal values rather than cultural trends. Leadership informed by Scripture becomes anchored in theological anthropology rather than managerial pragmatism.

Communal fellowship further reinforces priestly identity. Because royal priesthood is corporate as well as individual (1 Pet. 2:9), leadership development occurs within relational accountability rather than isolation. Community provides corrective feedback, shared discernment, and mutual encouragement. Such environments foster trust and resilience, strengthening both personal formation and collective mission.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

Service, likewise, functions as formative participation in Christ's mediating work. Rather than representing a reduction of authority, service reframes authority as sacrificial stewardship. Through acts of service, leaders internalize the paradox of kingship expressed through humility. This lived embodiment prevents the abstraction of priestly identity into mere theological affirmation.

Leadership development within this framework extends beyond the individual to the formation of others. Developing others is not the replication of hierarchy but the cultivation of shared vocation. Leaders participate in forming co-laborers who exercise covenantal stewardship responsibly and relationally. In this way, leadership becomes generative rather than centralized, fostering communities capable of sustaining mission beyond individual influence.

Growth in Christlikeness, therefore, functions as the formative matrix of royal priesthood leadership. Authority gains credibility through character; reconciliation gains durability through humility; service gains authenticity through identity. Leadership effectiveness, within this model, emerges not primarily from technique but from the maturation of covenantal character expressed within communal life.

AN INFORMED FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING OTHERS

Within a royal priesthood paradigm, the development of others must be grounded in Christologically informed humility. Christlike humility is not self-deprecation but the recognition that authority is derivative and entrusted rather than possessed (Schirrmacher, 2018). Because leadership authority flows from participation in Christ's priestly and kingly vocation, it is exercised in ways that affirm the dignity, giftedness, and calling of others.

Humility, in this framework, functions as a structural safeguard against the consolidation of power. It enables leaders to recognize the distributed nature of gifts within the covenant community. Rather than centralizing control, leaders cultivate environments in which others are empowered to exercise their abilities responsibly. This empowerment is not merely a delegation of tasks but the affirmation of shared vocation. By fostering collaborative participation and shared discernment, leaders reinforce communal accountability and collective ownership of mission.

Such humility also reconfigures organizational culture. Open communication and shared decision-making are not simply managerial strategies but expressions of covenantal relationality. When authority is exercised with transparency and attentiveness, trust deepens, and responsibility is distributed rather than concentrated. This orientation strengthens both cohesion and sustainability within teams.

Furthermore, development within a royal priesthood framework integrates spiritual and professional formation. Because identity precedes function, leaders support the holistic growth of others—not only in competency but in character. Opportunities for theological reflection, communal worship, and disciplined practice

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

reinforce the formation of leaders who understand authority as stewardship and service as vocation.

Christlike humility thus operates generatively. When leaders embody derivative authority and sacrificial service, they model a pattern of leadership that others can internalize and replicate. The result is not personality-driven influence but a multiplying culture of covenantal leadership, marked by shared responsibility, relational maturity, and communal unity.

STRATEGIC MODEL FOR STEWARDING COMMUNITY RESOURCES: A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD PERSPECTIVE

A royal priesthood framework offers a theologically grounded approach to stewardship within Christian leadership contexts. Stewardship, in this model, encompasses not only financial resources but also people, spiritual gifts, communal mission, and organizational structures. Because leadership authority is understood as derivative participation in Christ's mediating kingship, stewardship becomes an expression of covenantal responsibility rather than administrative control.

This model is particularly applicable to ecclesial leadership and faith-based organizations, yet its principles extend to broader Christian leadership settings in which authority is exercised under theological conviction. Wherever leaders operate within explicitly Christian identity—whether in congregations, nonprofit institutions, educational settings, or mission-driven organizations—the royal priesthood framework provides a coherent theological rationale for how resources are entrusted and governed.

Stewardship of people involves recognizing distributed giftedness within the covenant community. Rather than concentrating authority, leaders cultivate environments in which diverse capacities are identified, affirmed, and deployed responsibly. This orientation fosters collaboration and shared accountability, reinforcing communal participation in mission.

Spiritual stewardship includes the cultivation of moral integrity, discernment, and theological reflection within organizational life. Practices such as prayer, corporate worship, and engagement with Scripture serve not merely devotional functions but formative ones. They shape ethical decision-making, sustain mission clarity, and anchor leadership actions within covenantal identity (Hiebert, 2012; Padilla, 2011).

Reconciliation further informs strategic stewardship by shaping how conflict and relational fracture are addressed. Rather than viewing conflict solely as organizational disruption, a royal priesthood framework approaches it as an opportunity for mediated restoration. This posture strengthens long-term cohesion and preserves communal trust, contributing to sustainable organizational health.

Financial and material stewardship likewise reflect theological conviction. Recognizing God as the ultimate owner reframes budgeting, allocation, and resource management as acts of accountable trusteeship. Transparent governance structures

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

and shared decision-making processes reinforce trust and align operational strategy with theological mission.

Taken together, these dimensions form an integrated stewardship model rooted in royal priesthood identity. Authority is exercised covenantally; resources are managed responsibly; relationships are mediated redemptively; and mission is pursued collaboratively. This approach moves beyond managerial pragmatism by grounding strategic leadership in theological anthropology.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A THEOLOGICALLY INTEGRATED LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

This study has argued that the doctrine of the royal priesthood provides a foundational theological anthropology for Christian leadership. By grounding leadership in participation in Christ's unified kingship and priesthood, the framework advances leadership scholarship beyond functional or behavioral models. Rather than defining leadership primarily in terms of influence, charisma, or technique, the royal priesthood paradigm situates authority within covenantal identity and redemptive vocation.

The model complements servant leadership by affirming humility and service as essential expressions of Christian authority. It extends transformational leadership by rooting organizational change in theological ontology rather than strategy alone. At the same time, it challenges leadership approaches that treat authority as autonomous or primarily managerial.

The implications of this framework are both ecclesial and organizational. Within church leadership, it provides a coherent theological rationale for stewardship, formation, and reconciliation. Within faith-based and broader Christian leadership contexts, it offers a structured account of authority, responsibility, and community formation grounded in covenantal identity.

Future research may further explore empirical applications of this framework within organizational settings, examining how royal priesthood identity shapes leadership behavior, conflict engagement, and cultural formation. Such inquiry would deepen the interdisciplinary dialogue between theological anthropology and leadership studies.

By recovering royal priesthood as the central category for Christian leadership, this study proposes a model in which identity precedes function, authority is reframed as stewardship, and leadership becomes participatory engagement in Christ's ongoing mediating work.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

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Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 97–105.

ISSN 1941-4692

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EMPLOYEE AND STUDENT INSPIRATION, MOTIVATION, AND MENTORSHIP IN CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Rev. Dr. John S.T. Abbosey

This article examines some avenues through which employees and students may be inspired, motivated, and mentored by leaders in Christian higher education institutions. Leaders who exhibit behaviors that align with transformational leadership and servant leadership characteristics are generally found to have a positive relationship with their employees. In the context of faith-based or Christian higher education institutions, the leader-employee relationship may be characterized by faith practices that are not often featured in the traditional research literature. Prayer and integrating biblical principles in teaching and learning are examples of activities that have been found inspiring and motivating in the leader-employee and leader-student relationships. The outcome could be a rewarding experience for the parties involved. Students may also develop and become more effective leaders in the marketplace.

Keywords: leaders, higher education institution, servant leadership, transformational leadership, inspire, motivate, mentor, relationship

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions play a vital role in nurturing continuous human development in modern civilization, as leaders prepare the younger generation for future leadership roles. When employees or students are encouraged to act like leaders, it can foster a positive organizational culture and stimulate employees to perform effectively on the job (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). In the education institution

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 106–119.

ISSN 1941-4692

context, leaders may occupy positions such as lecturer, facilitator, advisor, or administrator, while those who are led may be students and employees.

It has been noted that contemporary leadership research tends to prioritize vision and purpose over power and position (Gardner et al., 2021; Rammidi, 2024). However, since higher education institutions play a unique role in shaping the future of society, the leaders of such institutions must be seen to leverage their power towards the achievement of the institution's mission and purpose. Moreover, an institution that qualifies itself as "Christian" would be expected to maintain high standards of quality and ethical conduct.

The major themes discussed in this paper include the value of the relationship between institutional leaders, such as lecturers, on one hand, and followers, such as employees and students, on the other hand. This discussion also extends to some avenues through which leaders may inspire, motivate, and mentor employees and students in Christian higher education institutions. The virtues of adopting positive leadership behaviors aligned with servant and transformational leadership, and applying biblical practices, are also examined in this discussion.

LEADER AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

Leadership is considered essential in nearly all aspects of modern life (Antonakis & Day, 2018). Prior research indicated leadership is essential in politics, healthcare, education, industry, commerce, governmental, non-governmental, and faith-based organizations (Gardner et al., 2020). The nature of the job-related relationship between leaders and employees is significant for the institution. Thus, leadership appears to be a complex aspect of human endeavor and often creates curiosity, driving empirical research efforts exploring the leader-employee relationship (Browaeys & Price, 2019; Gardner et al., 2020).

However, some empirical research studies have helped increase the understanding of leadership development and leader-employee relations in the workplace (Day et al., 2021; Gardner et al., 2020). When leaders accept their role with enthusiasm while working with appropriate knowledge and skills, they are often able to move their employees and the entire organization beyond the ordinary to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Kouzes & Posner, 2018).

Such research outcomes align with biblical instruction. For example, employers and supervisors (leaders) and employees are encouraged to show mutual respect to each other. Furthermore, the job relationship is expected to be characterized by honesty, enthusiasm, and diligence (Eph. 6:5-9). This form of work ethic is significant in interpersonal relations on the job and is repeated in Colossians 3:22 – 4:1.

Current global crises pose multi-dimensional leadership challenges in all spheres of life, including educational institutions. Hence, multi-faceted and effective interventions are required to manage these issues in critical sectors of public life such as education, healthcare, financial services, and community development (Koehrsen & Heuser, 2019). Education leaders need to continuously explore innovative and creative approaches, including e-learning, to deliver for the benefit of students and other stakeholders without sacrificing quality in teaching and learning (Matete et al., 2023; McCowan et al., 2022). Such innovative approaches may also be adopted in mentoring employees to improve

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 106–119.

ISSN 1941-4692

their teaching delivery. In Christian higher education institutions, leaders must be able to inspire and motivate employees and students to become worthy leaders in their spheres of influence.

In transformational leadership theory, the four main dimensions are (a) idealized influence, which is sometimes labeled as charismatic leadership; (b) inspirational motivation or leadership; (c) intellectual stimulation; and (d) individualized consideration (Bass & Bass, 2008; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders can inspire, motivate, and move their constituents to achieve extraordinary outcomes. In the process, the leaders themselves become more effective (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Transformational leaders positively affect the development and transformation of their employees (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This impact often results in improved employee performance or effectiveness, which may lead to improved organizational performance beyond expectations (Buil et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2020; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020). Leaders can positively develop and transform their employees through workplace relationships that facilitate an inspiring, motivating, and mentorship environment.

In transformational leadership, interactions between leaders and employees involve social and ethical choices and actions (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). In servant leadership, the leader-employee relationship serves as a cornerstone for desired change and growth (Spears, 2018). Thus, leaders in Christian education institutions are expected to demonstrate more meaningful relationships in the job environment, irrespective of the leader's preferred style of leadership (Coley, 2024).

It is noteworthy that long before the modern leadership theories began to see the light of day, the blueprint for servant leadership had already been established by our Lord Jesus. He declared, "Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26–28, NLT). Furthermore, Jesus demonstrated effective transformational leadership when he selected, trained, and empowered ordinary fishermen to become fearless, articulate, and visionary leaders whose legacy has endured till today.

THE VALUE OF LEADERSHIP

Bennis compared leadership metaphorically to beauty because it is easily recognizable but cannot be easily defined (Bennis, 2009). The leadership field has attracted a large volume of research data (Day et al., 2021). Moreover, knowledge about leadership is continuously evolving, with new dimensions, concepts, and study methods being introduced regularly (Day et al., 2021). While leadership practice has changed over time, digital technology tools have also changed the avenues and research methods for studying it (Banks et al., 2019). Thus, leading researchers and analysts acknowledge that a clear, widely accepted definition of leadership is not available. A definition of leadership must consider such attributes as the influence process, the leader's personality and disposition, and the context within which it operates (Day et al., 2021). However, leadership has been described as a formal or informal process in which a leader influences employees in a group or institution, toward the achievement of goals within a specific context (Day et al., 2021).

ISSN 1941-4692

In addition to transformational, servant, and situational leadership, some other practical leadership concepts have been found effective in organizations. A few of the notable leadership concepts that Christian education institution leaders may practice are summarized here.

The Effective Executive

Leadership effectiveness is essential in any organization. Drucker (2018) outlined ways in which an organizational executive or leader can perform effectively. From empirical research and experience, he demonstrated how people from diverse backgrounds and cultures have worked as effective leaders. All of them excelled in their organizational roles by adopting and implementing a set of eight practices summarized as: acquiring relevant knowledge of the right decisions and actions to be taken; identifying the best way forward for the organization or the group; developing an action plan by preparing a clear road-map of actions to be taken; taking responsibility for decisions; taking responsibility for communicating; focusing on opportunities, not problems; making optimum use of time; and using inclusive language to foster a team spirit (Drucker, 2018).

These action steps outlined by Drucker (2018) are all compatible with a Christian leadership lifestyle. Consequently, Drucker's (2018) guidelines may be adopted by leaders in the education sector to help improve their leadership effectiveness with students and employees.

Authentic Leadership Complement in Education

The concept of authentic leadership can also be adopted by leaders in educational institutions for enhanced job performance. Authentic leaders are described as people who are true to themselves and their convictions and express themselves freely and sincerely (George & Clayton, 2022). They carefully consider the best options in any situation and implement them without allowing other people's expectations to stop them (George & Clayton, 2022). Students, trainee teachers, and education sector employees may enjoy a more fulfilling mentorship experience when they know their lecturers are authentic and trustworthy (Shteigman et al., 2022). The five dimensions of authentic leadership may be summarized as: pursue your purpose with passion; practice solid values; lead with heart as you demonstrate commitment to your job and working cheerfully; establish connected relationships; and demonstrate self-discipline (George & Clayton, 2022).

The Five Fundamental Practices

The *Five Fundamental Practices* is another empirically proven concept that education leaders may adopt. Kouzes and Posner (2018) established this concept, which enables leaders to achieve extraordinary results. These five practices, all stated in the form of compelling action steps, can empower education institution leaders to inspire, motivate, and mentor their employees and students. In summary, the five practices are: (a) set a credible example, (b) create an exciting vision, (c) challenge the

ISSN 1941-4692

existing process, (d) empower team members, and (e) encourage team members to work well. When team members are encouraged, they feel motivated to persist and not give up easily (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). These recommendations are compatible with the attributes of both servant and transformational leadership styles. Educational institution leaders may actively follow the recommendations of Kouzes and Posner (2018) to inspire, motivate, and mentor their staff and students to engage in innovative research.

This discussion demonstrates a fraction of the wide spectrum of leadership theories, concepts, and practices that higher education leaders may successfully adopt to complement their leadership style. This discussion also highlights the multi-dimensional nature of leadership in the context of organizations. However, none of them explicitly incorporates a spiritual or biblical dimension. Hence, Bell (2010) and Coley's (2024) proposal of a Christian leadership paradigm may be timely.

Leadership Models Applicable in Education

A new model of transformational leadership development that emphasizes the relational theology of leadership was proposed by Bell (2010). Drawing from the example of Jesus, who referred to His disciples and mentees as friends, Bell (2010) challenged education and non-profit leaders to prioritize horizontal relationships with constituents. Thus, a healthy friendship may be another desirable ingredient that can characterize the leader-employee and leader-student relationships.

This proposal for a transformational leadership development with a biblical orientation resonates with Coley's (2024) concept of the *Christlike leadership competency model.* Coley (2024) argued that most of the current breed of popular leadership theories in academic literature "capture only one feature of Christlike leadership" (p. 5), without specifying what that feature is. Furthermore, many biblical leaders exhibited leadership styles, traits, and behaviors that are not captured by contemporary leadership models. Notable examples are obedience to God and faith in the promises of God. However, since Christians have a moral duty to follow the example of positive biblical role models, it may be worthwhile to adopt the Christlike leadership competency model (Coley, 2024).

The proposal for adoption of the Christlike leadership competency model is backed by an analysis of the unique leadership language in the communication of notable Christian authors and leaders. Examples of such expressions are evangelism, faith, forgiveness, grace, obedience, and prayer, among many others (Coley, 2024). One illustration is the need for faith to overcome difficult challenges. Jesus taught that certain seemingly physical challenges or bottlenecks may have spiritual roots, and such situations require faith and prayer to overcome them (Matt. 17:20). In addition, the virtue of forgiveness is essential for realizing emotional healing in many broken interpersonal relationships (James 5:16).

In the current dispensation of globalization, rapid technological advances, global climate change, and healthcare concerns, education sector leaders face an increasingly complex challenge of how to keep pace with innovative communication channels for teaching and learning. Skills and competencies that can empower leaders and make them more effective must be continuously acquired to meet the expectations of the

ISSN 1941-4692

current generation of employees and students (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). This is essential because the preferences and choices of a previous generation of workers may not necessarily be the same for the present generation. Therefore, how leaders managed the teaching and learning environment in the past must be reviewed, considering the lifestyle of the present generation of employees and students (Banks et al., 2019; Kouzes & Posner, 2018). In addition, a Christian or biblically based response to these complex challenges is necessary.

A Christian Perspective of Transformational Leadership

As noted previously, considerable research effort has been devoted to exploring the impact of transformational leadership theory in organizations. Part of this effort has been directed at investigating how leaders practice transformational leadership in higher education institutions. It has been argued that the original concept of the transforming leader is closely associated with a biblical orientation (Scarborough, 2010). In his attempt to highlight the Christian dimension of this theme, Scarborough (2010) proposed and defined Christian transformational leadership as follows:

> Christian transformational leadership is leadership that declares a biblical or Christian foundation or is specifically directed to the Church. It holds that a leader's vision, character, persuasiveness, and ability to strategize guarantee that he or she will be influential (or transformational) to achieve shared goals. (Scarborough, 2010, p. 77)

This definition implies that Christian transformational leadership has two dimensions: a biblical or Christian foundation and service to the Church (which may be demonstrated through a faith-based institution). This concept adds some value to the leadership discourse. However, this author views Scarborough's (2010) definition as being restrictive. A Christian dimension to transformational leadership should be applicable in all organizations where leaders are at liberty to practice their Christian faith. In an increasingly secularized culture, there might be some challenges in situations where the organization explicitly forbids faith-based practices. In such instances, it may be prudent for leaders to exercise discernment and discretion.

CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES AND LEADERSHIP DISCOURSE

A cursory review of current leadership theories in comparison with biblical texts is bound to reveal significant similarities. A classic illustration is Jesus as a servant leader who washed the feet of His disciples, followed by His admonishing that His disciples should do likewise (John 13:5–17). A second example relates to ethical leadership and honest stewardship, which are emphasized in Luke 16:10–12. Here, our Lord Jesus taught that honesty and responsible stewardship are required of His followers.

Transformational, servant, and ethical leadership, all being change-oriented leadership theories, have been described as effective approaches to problem-solving in contemporary times (Day et al., 2021; Gardner et al., 2020). In addition,

ISSN 1941-4692

transformational leadership has been proposed to be very effective in organizations when given appropriate religious contexts (Rammidi, 2024).

Admittedly, most Christian institutions, including those in the higher education sector, are facing critical challenges in recent times. These threats appear from multiple sources and philosophies, such as a secular and hostile culture, rising cost of education delivery, dilemmas with balancing faith and academic integrity, the gay movement, and several others (Norheim, 2023). In response to these challenges, servant leadership has been encouraged as an ideal style of leadership for the Christian community (Coggins & Bocarnea, 2015). Servant leadership was demonstrated by our Lord Jesus, and he made it an imperative for all His followers (Groeschel, 2018). The call for leaders in educational institutions to inculcate biblical virtues in their line of duty is very appropriate. Christian principles are taught and practiced in the hope of bringing attitudinal transformation to individuals and the wider society (Coggins & Bocarnea, 2015). There is no better context to demonstrate this than in Christian higher education institutions.

Biblical virtues have a universal appeal and may be essential in both interpersonal and business relationships. It has been observed that *agape* love is the foundation virtue from which all other virtues emanate and is the primary source of virtuous leadership (Bocarnea et al., 2018). *Agape* is the Greek expression for God's unconditional love for mankind. Indeed, agape love, a multi-dimensional virtue, contributes positively to inspiring and motivating employees towards attaining increased productivity (Angeles, 2024). There is significant biblical support for this virtue.

Our Lord Jesus emphasized the value of agape love when He taught that the most important commandment is to love the Lord God wholeheartedly. The second commandment, equally important, is to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:29–31). Furthermore, the practical nature of agape love has been beautifully expressed by the apostle Paul in the famous chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13. Agape love is a vital foundation for ethical and uplifting interpersonal relationships in various contexts, including business, family, and education (Winston, 2024). When individuals practice behaviors associated with agape love, their constituents feel inspired, motivated, and energized to offer their utmost. They also realize emotional healing, feel a sense of belonging, and appreciate their self-worth (Winston, 2024).

Inspiring and Motivating Students

It would be helpful for leaders involved mostly in human-centered sectors, including education, to adopt a personal philosophy that can make them deliver the desired impact. Spears (2024) suggests leaders may adopt servant leadership as a personal guiding philosophy to inspire and motivate other people. In that sense, it would not just be another style of behavior that the leader may decide to wear or put off, as if it were a piece of garment worn to match prevailing weather conditions (Spears, 2024). This tallies with the biblical injunction for believers to put on the spiritually renewed nature that produces virtuous fruit (Colossians 3:10).

Leaders can also inspire their students and staff by exhibiting the virtue of humility, a characteristic of servant leadership (Bryant, 2024; Lencioni, 2018). Individuals who find themselves in an advantaged position over other people in their

ISSN 1941-4692

institutions, such as pastoral leaders, may be prone to narcissistic tendencies (Bryant, 2024). This propensity may equally apply to higher education leaders who interact with students or junior employees. A much better and more productive relationship between leaders and learners may be realized when leaders consciously demonstrate humility. This was one of the several desirable role-model qualities identified in the distinguished career of personalities such as Frances Hesselbein, a former CEO of the Girl Scouts of the USA, and Dr. Dallas Willard, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary (Baron, 2018; Dittmar, 2018).

The practice of inspiring people is common to both transformational and servant leadership theories. Illustrating with some truly inspiring examples from the military, Foley (2018) notes that servant leaders inspire their people to grow, and at the same time develop their unique skills and competencies. This may be true in the higher education sector as well. As teachers and professors develop mutually dependent relationships with students, the latter may be drawing inspiration from their leaders, consciously or unconsciously.

Academic Advising

In many higher education institutions, the function of academic advising is a critical aspect of student enrollment and academic choices. This is another significant area where the institution's leaders can help prospective students in their quest to select the most satisfying institution and program (McClellan, 2024). Academic advisors appear to hold the key to the future of prospective students as they navigate the process of new admissions. In many cases, they may also serve as trusted guides throughout the academic journey of higher education students. Advisors can, therefore, explore avenues by which their relationship with students may be mutually beneficial. A servant leadership model has been suggested by McClellan (2024) for this purpose.

Academic advising has been described as a teaching function characterized by unique outcomes, processes, and pedagogical approaches based on the context in which it takes place (McClellan, 2024). Academic advisors thus have a unique opportunity to contribute towards a potentially bright future for the students they manage. This opportunity might pose its own equivalent challenges. However, the advisor can maximize positive outcomes from the advisor-student relationship by practicing servant leadership (McClellan, 2024) or the appropriate dimensions of transformational leadership. A servant leader approach, in such instances, may be characterized by a relationship in which the student is inspired and motivated by the advisor. One productive servant leadership behavior with universal appeal in this direction is showing compassion to other people, as advocated by Groeschel (2018). The New Testament narrative demonstrates how Jesus frequently responded to human need immediately as He was moved by compassion (e.g., Mark 1:41, 6:34; Luke 7:13).

MENTORING THROUGH PROACTIVE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Leaders practicing either transformational or servant leadership at the workplace can mentor employees to improve their interpersonal relations. Epitropaki et al. (2020) pointed out certain human factors that characterized the leader-employee relationship at

ISSN 1941-4692

the workplace, such as interpersonal discord and transgressions or infractions. Such incidents often have implications on organizational outcomes transcending ordinary personal relationships (Epitropaki et al., 2020). In the event of such issues arising in the organizational context, appropriate steps must be taken to address and resolve them, including apology and forgiveness (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). Transgressions or infractions cannot be ignored easily because an elevated level of interdependence prevails in the relationship between a leader and an employee (Kim et al., 2020). An employee frequently depends on a leader for resources such as information, finances, organizational affiliation, and status. The leader also depends on the employee for such resources as service and performance (Bellamy, 2021).

These relationship factors can have far-reaching implications on how apology and forgiveness issues are managed in institutions. When supervisors or employees offend one another, the supervisor-employee relationship may be adversely affected, which may further generate implications for organizational outcomes, such as poor or reduced output (Epitropaki et al., 2020). In such situations, it may be necessary for appropriate strategies to be adopted to repair the damage and restore the relationship to levels that assure the same or enhanced performance (Dean, 2020; Epitropaki et al., 2020). In addition, employees look up to their leaders to engage them in an ethical and uplifting manner (Henson, 2020). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) emphasized the importance of leaders serving as worthy role models. When employees or team members testify about the benefits they obtained from their leaders, it can encourage and inspire leaders to continue developing the potential of each member of their team (Huizinga & Dean, 2020). The mentorship activities often come with challenges, a few of which are discussed below.

Challenges with Mentoring

The mentoring role comes with both success stories and challenges. Some challenges identified with mentorship in a study of preservice teachers were inadequate professional preparation of the mentor to assume this role; inability to set aside sufficient time for mentoring; poor attention to developing a high-quality mentor-mentee relationship (Jita & Munje, 2022). In addition, Nuis et al. (2023) identified another challenge as a lack of psycho-social support for the mentee by the mentor. In this context, the main components of psycho-social support were trust, empathy, similarity, and availability (Nuis et al., 2023).

Leaders as Role Models

Role modeling is another virtue of leadership that facilitates mentorship. Leaders must serve as role models (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999) and, in the workplace relationship, employees or team members can best testify about the benefits obtained from their leaders. Similarly, leaders in managerial positions must serve as role models and relate to all people, especially their employees, in an ethical and uplifting manner (Peltz & Wilson, 2020).

Leaders in higher education institutions bear a huge responsibility to serve as role models who take advantage of their positions to inspire, motivate, and mentor the

ISSN 1941-4692

next generation of leaders. Leaders can do so by literally and metaphorically serving their employees and students (Miller, 2018). The conduct of education institution leaders must also inspire creative and innovative thinking (Hughes et al., 2018). This could have implications for how leaders inspire, motivate, and mentor their employees as they groom them to take up leadership positions.

Lecturers and staff in higher education institutions can take advantage of their positions and responsibilities to inspire, motivate, and mentor their students as well as employees. In this context, higher education institutions play a vital role in shaping the appropriate socio-cultural responses (Biney et al., 2021). Considering cultural factors implies that these institutions need to maintain the best international practices to promote the practice of teaching and learning.

Middle-level management staff may be inspired and motivated through transformative learning. Applying this approach, the lecturer in a tertiary institution must be willing to foster organizational commitment (Donkor et al., 2018). Another strategy would be to adopt improved methods of teaching and learning (McCowan et al., 2022). Lecturers and administrative staff in higher education institutions must submit themselves to more experienced staff, even if they have retired from active service, to enable them to tap into the vast experience of their predecessors (McCowan et al., 2022). Such initiatives will inspire, motivate, and mentor current institutional leaders and avoid a tendency to adopt poor methods of teaching and learning. A potential vicious cycle of passing on poor mentorship behaviors must be broken so that a younger generation of lecturers will adopt more innovative and effective pedagogical approaches.

Coaching is another practical avenue by which education leaders may inspire, motivate, and mentor their students and employees. The common imagery evoked by the concept of coaching is the sports arena where a coach interacts with players. However, as noted by Roark and Abelsky (2024), coaching in the business arena is a highly effective process for developing the latent potential of the younger generation. It is believed that Jesus must have been coached in the carpentry profession by his father, Joseph. The doubting citizens of Nazareth described him as a carpenter, as they expressed amazement at the profound teachings of Jesus (Mark 6:3). The twelve disciples and other followers of Jesus were similarly coached in many ways, including evangelistic outreach (Luke 10:1). In a similar vein, it would not be out of place for leaders in Christian higher education institutions to employ coaching principles to achieve desired positive outcomes from their relationship with students and junior employees. Some professional coaching that may be utilized includes executive coaching, leadership development coaching, team effectiveness, personal coaching, and life coaching (Roark & Abelsky, 2024). The ultimate trophy would be leaders watching with profound contentment and joy the maturity of their students who would have become effective leaders in their life endeavors.

SUMMARY

In this paper, the value of effective leadership in Christian higher education was explored. Leaders can inspire, motivate, and mentor students and employees by adopting proven leadership competencies. Christian higher education institutions can

ISSN 1941-4692

apply biblically based practices such as prayer, faith, and, most importantly, agape love in obedience to God's Word to complement their leadership. In this way, it is expected that these institutions will produce a more lasting impact on their constituents and the entire world.

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ISSN 1941-4692

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AN INNER-TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSFER OF LEADERSHIP IN DEUTERONOMY 31:1-23

Chad M. Minor

This inner-texture analysis highlights the transfer of leadership in Deuteronomy 31:1-23 and the effect transitional leadership has on followers within an organization. The author argues for the understanding that these passages provide an organization with the necessary framework to serve followers by successfully transitioning leadership. Through Deuteronomy 31:1-23, the author builds the case that organizations can successfully transition leaders by following the biblical framework outlined in the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua. Through the passage, one understands that it is God who releases the old leader while also calling the new leader. Deuteronomy 31:1-23 provides an organization with the ability to outline how to serve followers through a successful succession plan for leadership transition. Through Deuteronomy 31:1-23, one can ascertain that the necessary steps to a healthy transition are: identifying the incoming leader, privately indicating to leadership whom the new leader is, a public declaration of the new leader to followers, and waiting on the Lord for the final call into leadership.

SERVING THROUGH LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Agard (2010) defined transitional leadership as the ability to effectively assemble an organization or an individual, to identify, encounter, and focus on a situation in such a way that productively enacts a positive transitional course forward. Laver (2017) described the four necessary components of a transitional leader as: forward-thinking and inspirational; an innovator, self-assurance; and a creator of an environment for future organizational change. The transitional leader understands their duty to followers

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 120–130.

ISSN 1941-4692

in organizing and preparing the organization toward a healthy transition, while knowing challenges will come within the change that they are enacting. Geiger (2016) stated that an essential component of a transitional leader is developing leaders and preparing an organization for the impending transition. Without identifying a succession plan, can an organization successfully transfer leadership without hindering the health of the organization and its people?

Agard (2010) explained that transitional leadership has a foundation on the idea that leadership is about assembling an organization toward change. Ngomane (2013) stated that organizations that utilize ongoing transitional procedures are less likely to descend into an organizational emergency when the current organizational leader is called to move on. Poon (2006) detailed that transitional leadership is the pursuit of future objectives for organizational health.

The incoming leaders require qualified teachers to provide them with numerous developmental training opportunities (Ngomane, 2013). A portion of every leader's energy should be focused on the development of an organization's future leaders and increasing their capacity. Miller (1990) explained that the commissioning of leaders within the Old Testament is seen as an obligation to continue the work the Lord has commissioned the Israelites to complete. The Old Testament commissioning and authority of a called leader are contingent upon the weight of the assignment. When an organization goes through a transition in leadership with an equally knowledgeable leader assuming the role of leader, the organization and its people are not disrupted through the transition, nor does it lead to immediate advances within the organization.

Gebhart (1999) explained that Scripture lays the groundwork for organizations going through a transition by providing them with narratives to assist with foundational standards of truth that guide them through the struggles of transitional leadership. From Genesis to Revelation, the Lord's design was to assign leaders into positions of authority who are faithful and glorify His name for the accomplishments of the organization (Geiger, 2016). Agard (2010) stated that transitional leaders focus on their objectives. When an organization that is going through change loses focus on the Lord’s purpose, they begin to experience conflict and struggle. Within Deuteronomy 31:1-23, we witness the Lord warning the Israelites of their wandering, they lost their purpose, and the consequences of doing so were devastating. The biblical narrative of the Lord's called servants is a description of God continuously building and transforming followers into people who live out their purpose here on earth.

McCabe (2008) stated that transformational leadership embodies four identifiable traits: influence, inspiration, intellect, and individual attention, which he explains as the Gestalt cycle of experience. Gebhart (1999) explained that transitional leaders are used throughout Scripture to guide followers through challenges and struggles that are vital for the necessary faithfulness to complete the calling that the Lord calls people to. Agard (2010) described that transitional leaders support and challenge followers to develop their leadership skills to engage issues within the organization positively. Moses understood the challenges that the Israelites (followers) would face as they crossed into

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 120–130.

ISSN 1941-4692

the Promised Land, and he went to great lengths to ensure his followers' and Joshua's success. Understanding the challenge of the Israelites' unfaithfulness, the Lord reveals to Moses a song that he is to teach the people. Geiger (2016) explained that people who are not continually made aware of their identity become laden with obligations and face their challenges without the strength and understanding of a good and gracious God. Through this research, the question remains: how can the leadership of an organization successfully prepare its followers for a transition of leadership and organizational change?

McCabe (2008) described that the heart of a transition is moving an organization and its followers through change while simultaneously reducing the conflicting compelling forces that are resisting the change. Agard (2010) explained transition as the movement of an organization from one organizational position to another. Miller (1990) detailed that through Deuteronomy 31:1-23, we understand the foundation of a transitioning leader is exemplifying strength and courage in the Lord to deal with the challenges and struggles that lie ahead. Within Deuteronomy 31:1-23, Moses is leading his followers, the Israelites, through both the transition of leadership to Joshua and their transition into the Promised Land. Poon (2006) stated that transitional leadership increases follower readiness and efficiency when dealing with upcoming struggles. Ngomane (2013) explained that within every successful transition, a competent leader is waiting to take the organization into a place where the Lord is calling them. Grumet (2014) stated that Moses understands the necessity of a new leader for the Israelites and does not want them to jeopardize their foundational truth in the Lord. Deuteronomy 31:1-23 highlights that Joshua must continue his faithfulness to the Lord as the new leader of the Israelites.

INNER-TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF DEUTERONOMY 31:1-23

Deuteronomy 31:1-23 serves as the transfer of leadership between Moses and Joshua. Tigay (1996) described that within the passage, one witnesses two independent accounts of Moses' transitioning leadership to Joshua. One is the account of the Lord installing Joshua as the leader at the Tent of Meeting, while the other is Moses, adhering to the Lord's command, and appointing Joshua (Tigay, 1996). Through a repetitive texture analysis of Deuteronomy 31:1-23, one understands that though Moses is obedient to the Lord's command, it is the Lord who installs Joshua as leader of the Israelites. Throughout the passage, we witness Moses's follower, Joshua, patiently waiting on the Lord to install him as the leader and respecting Moses as the current leader by allowing him to address his followers, the Israelites. Throughout Deuteronomy, from the first mention of Joshua transitioning into the leadership role, he waits patiently for the Lord to call him. Thompson (1974) stated that Deuteronomy 31 is the Lord's ceremonial installation of Joshua as the leader of the Israelites. Through a pattern analysis on Deuteronomy 31:1-23, one concludes that Moses is publicly announcing to his followers that through the transition of leadership to Joshua, the Lord will remain with them. The transition of leadership within Deuteronomy 31:1-23 serves as both an encouragement to the Israelites and as an installation of Joshua as their leader.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 120–130.

ISSN 1941-4692

Progressive Texture and Pattern

An inner textural pattern of Deuteronomy 31:1-23 highlights the progression of a transition of leadership within an organization. Edersheim (1975) stated that throughout the wilderness wanderings, Moses never proclaimed the strength and faithfulness that the Lord has for his followers, the Israelites, as he does within Deuteronomy 31. Norman (2007) explained that Moses's encouragement comes from his understanding of the Israelites' fear of their opposition from the history of the spies returning in Numbers 13.

Through a progressive texture analysis, one witnesses the compassion that both the Lord and Moses have for the Israelites. Moses encourages his followers to remain strong and courageous, preparing an incoming leader for them, giving them the written Law. Within Deuteronomy 31, one gains insight into Moses's progression through the transition by the encouragement he gives to the Israelites following the news of his impending death (Norman, 2007). Moher (2012) stated that the people within an organization are aware if an incoming leader is prepared, courageous, and faithful to the vision of the organization. The progression of Deuteronomy 31:1-23 identifies the importance of the followers within an organization, understanding that the Lord is with them during a transition.

Narrative Texture and Pattern

Deuteronomy 31:1-23 is a historical narrative of God informing Moses that he will not enter the Promised Land and God calling Joshua to lead the people of Israel. The narrative focuses on Moses encouraging both his followers and Joshua that God is with them and giving them the Song of Moses to inform the Israelites of a righteous way of life. The historical context of Deuteronomy 31:1-23 is that Moses has led his followers out of Egypt and through 40 years of wilderness wanderings. Thompson (1974) explained that through these passages, Moses is giving instructions to his followers, Joshua, and the priests, with a focus on how they shall live within the covenant they made with God during this time. Knowles (2001) stated that Deuteronomy 31 is Moses' understanding that he would not lead his people into the Promised Land, and then planning his exit. Moses will not lead the Israelites into the Promised land so he encourages and instructs both his followers and Joshua that they will enter the land that the Lord had promised them through His strength, not their own. Miller (1990) outlined that the Lord is the only thing with which the Israelites find the strength and confidence to complete the upcoming battles upon entering the Promised Land.

Miller (1990) stated that the narrative of Deuteronomy flows between the wilderness wanderings, Israel's entering the Promised Land, and God transitioning Israel's leadership, which is an essential theme throughout Deuteronomy. The repetitive nature of the narrative within Deuteronomy 31:1-23 details the importance of the circumstances surrounding the transfer of leadership (Miller, 1990). Before the transfer of leadership, God instructs Moses to encourage his followers and Joshua to be strong

ISSN 1941-4692

and courageous. The Lord gives Moses a song to teach the Israelites about their disobedience, breaking the covenant between them and the Lord.

Opening-Middle-Closing Texture and Pattern

This public reading of the Law becomes the foundation of biblical religion, which focuses on the discipline and followership of the Israelites; it is an invitation for comprehensive instruction for all people. God's motivation for the written Law and having it recited was so that God's veracity would be passed on through generations. Gilchrist (1995) stated that after approximately 120 years on earth, the beginning of Deuteronomy details Moses conceding to his followers that he is not able to lead them into the Promised Land.

Tigay (1996) explained that the Lord had informed Moses that he was to climb the mountain where he would perish, and he was commanded to install Joshua as Israel's leader. Moses's formal addresses to his followers are coming to an end within Deuteronomy 31, and the Lord's promise that the Israelites will cross the Jordan into the Promised Land is soon realized (McConville, 1994).

Tigay (1996) stated that Moses utilizes Israel's past conquests and doctrinal ideologies to reassure them that the Lord is their leader, Joshua is His voice for the people, and God's power is evident by Israel's defeat of Sihon and Og. McConville (1994) explained that Moses details that the Lord had promised the Israelites victory; their part was to exemplify faith that embodied strength and courage, which they failed at when attempting to take the land in Deuteronomy 1:26-36. Geiger (2012) explained that a removal from the Lord eventually leads all people to destruction, and this failure becomes identified through the Israelite's unfaithfulness. Knowing this, the Lord encourages the Israelites and Joshua to remain strong in the faith and courageous when facing their enemies, because He is with them.

Tigay (1996) detailed that once Moses delineates the Law to how followers verbally, he writes it and establishes a regular public reading, so Israel understands the covenant, and subsequent generations would learn it. This mechanism of writing would ultimately lead to the Bible, which is at the center of Judaism. Previously, the Israelites' religion maintained a foundation on the epiphanies and rituals of their forefathers (Calvin, 2010).

Merrill (1996) described that the backdrop for Joshua's appointment is private, in the Tent of Meeting, giving this interaction a different setting from the public declaration of Joshua's succession as the leader in Deuteronomy 31:1-8. Brown et al. (1997) detailed that the Lord's revelation to commission Joshua as the leader is the only mention of the tent or pillar within Deuteronomy. Merrill (1996) asserts that the pillar of cloud guarded Moses and Joshua against the extreme radiance of God's transcendence and revealed to them His presence. The importance of Joshua's public appointment is evident due to the public declaration of Moses's impending death and the Lord's prophecy concerning Israel abandoning Him after Moses's death.

ISSN 1941-4692

Miller (1990) explained that the Song of Moses would serve as a testimony against Israel when they ignore the Lord and begin worshiping foreign gods. Brown et al. (1997) state that the Israelites held a high regard for national songs due to the remembrance of the past and the ability to rekindle feelings and emotions. The song reiterates the disobedience of the Israelites and details two of the dominant representations for judgment within the Old Testament: God's anger and God hiding His face (Miller, 1990). McConville (1994) stated that through the Song of Moses, the Lord warns the Israelites about their inability to maintain the covenant.

Norman (2007) explained that Deuteronomy 31:23 is the first time the Lord speaks to Joshua, thus approving him as the new leader of Israel. McConville (1994) described that Joshua was qualified to receive the authority to lead from the Lord because he had gained God's blessing when he was not intimidated by the enemy as a spy. Deuteronomy 31:23 reiterates that it is God who both releases the current leader and calls the new one. Miller (1990) states that the reciting of Joshua's commissioning within Deuteronomy 31 (vv. 7-8,14-15, 23) mirrors the ceremonial commissioning of leadership transition.

Argumentative Texture and Pattern

Deuteronomy 31:1-23 is God and Moses encouraging the people to be strong and courageous. Engelbrecht (2009) explained that the Lord’s encouragement to be strong and courageous is the foundational encouragement to Joshua's succession as a leader, which is an understanding that Israel would face opposition crossing into the Promised Land. The phraseology of Deuteronomy, moving between Moses and the Lord, expresses the importance of the Israelites’ command to be strong and courageous. Miller (2009) explained that this type of commissioning encapsulates essential components useful to all circumstances of transitional leadership. Tigay (1996) articulated that the appointment of Joshua flows through the entire book of Deuteronomy, with both the Lord and Moses speaking about his appointment as the leader and the command for the Israelites to remain strong and courageous.

Miller (1990) stated that the encouragement Joshua receives to be strong and courageous is both affirmation and a command, knowing the challenging conquests that lie ahead. Engelbrecht (2009) detailed that Joshua, unlike Moses, did not hesitate to receive the appointment to leadership from the Lord. Miller (1990) details that this command synchronously charges Joshua to take the land the Lord had promised and assures him that the Lord will do the work He had done before. Thompson (1974) stated that the commissioning of Joshua within Deuteronomy 31:23 informs the reader that the Lord appointed Joshua. Since his admonishment in Deuteronomy 3:21-23 (English Standard Version), “And I commanded Joshua at that time, ‘Your eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings. So will the Lord do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing. You shall not fear them, for it is the Lord your God who fights for you.’” Joshua does not speak again until his appointment from the Lord in Deuteronomy 31:23. Since we understand Deuteronomy 31 from the vantage

ISSN 1941-4692

point of the Lord and Moses, one can assume Joshua is both waiting on the Lord and honoring Moses, the current leader of Israel.

Miller (1990) stated that the process by which the Lord encourages Joshua contains within it that this strength is both transmitted and mandatory; it is both a call for and an installation for courage. By allowing Moses and the Lord to commission him, Joshua allows Moses to exit his leadership position with honor and gives himself the authority of the Lord. Whereas if Joshua had taken control of the leadership position of Israel by force, Israel would have suffered devastating defeats, and the Lord would not have been with them.

Sensory-Aesthetic Texture and Pattern

Miller (1990) explained that though Deuteronomy does not describe how the people of Israel experienced the transition of leadership, we gain insight into their feelings through Deuteronomy 31:1-23, and that opening is a pledge to the Israelites that the Lord who delivered them will continue to lead them. McConville (1994) explained that Deuteronomy 31:1-23 bookends the encouragement of the Lord leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, and they can have strength and courage because the Lord is with them, and He will not neglect them. The only way the Israelites overcome their fear is by continuing to hold steadfast to the understanding that the Lord's strength is with them. Tigay (1996) articulated that the Israelites' strength is in the Lord, not themselves, and this is what will enable them to conquer their enemies and enter the Promised Land. Miller (1990) stated that those who hold steadfast to the strength of the Lord, the fear or dismay of the future becomes set aside. Moses, understanding the fear of the Israelite spies in Numbers 13, encourages the people and reminds them of the Lord's conquest over Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites. Miller (1990) declared that nothing is more continual or unrelenting throughout all of Scripture than the understanding of the Lord's faithfulness to His people.

DISCUSSION

Geiger et al. (2016) state that the foundation of Deuteronomy 31 is the encouragement Moses receives in Exodus 18 from his father-in-law Jethro, who admonishes him not to lead alone but instead choose leaders to serve with him. Within Exodus 18, Jethro encourages Moses to teach his followers, the Israelites, righteous living (before the Law), provide them with a vision, and select leaders to distribute the weight of leadership. An integral component of transitional leadership is the leader's ability to communicate to followers the direction of the organization effectively. The Israelites' success has a foundation in Moses's ability to successfully detail to his followers what would lie ahead when he dies.

Poon (2006) detailed the importance of leaders developing both emergent leaders and their followers to create a healthy culture where individuals and the organization reach their potential. Ngomane (2013) stated that people transitioning into leadership, trained through counterproductive leadership structures, transmit the

ISSN 1941-4692

negative learned behaviors to the organizations they lead. Throughout Deuteronomy 31, Moses encourages the Israelites to remain strong and courageous, facing the difficulties that lie ahead. Moses continues this encouragement to Joshua, whom he had mentored for years. Organizations that successfully transition leadership understand the effect that negativity has on followers and the success of the organization moving forward. The negative behaviors that unhealthy leaders pass on within the organization influence their followers for generations.

Poon (2006) explained that leaders should strengthen the organization and encourage them to attain what the Lord is calling them to. Geiger (2016) stated the importance within today's church, much like the Israelites within Deuteronomy 31, to both equip both emerging leaders and our followers to conduct the calling that God has laid out for His people. Poon (2006) stressed that leaders during the transitional process must grant people a space to discern their vision to allow their followers to formulate their thoughts on the direction of the organization. God’s people find themselves in leadership roles through God placing them there, not by something that they did (Crosson,2014). Bass (2008) described that a leader must successfully communicate the direction of the organization to their followers so that they understand and are committed to the direction.

Geiger (2016) explained that Moses comprehended that developing leaders must happen within an organizational structure that develops their followers. Understanding this, Moses successfully transitions leadership to Joshua and encourages the Israelites not to fear or be dismayed at the changes that will take place. Poon (2006) articulated that healthy leaders construct a vision for the organization, whereas followers understand their direction and how they fit within the direction of the organization. Dotlich et al. (2004) state that though Moses's reality of failure was demoralizing as a leader, he successfully led the Israelites through the struggle of transition. Moses details to the Israelites not only the direction that they will go without him. He states that the Lord has provided them with a capable and called leader to take them. We understand the direction of Moses's leadership when we comprehend his knowledge of the Lord's love for the Israelites and His persistence for them (Poon, 2006). Geiger (2016) stated that leaders must focus on both serving the people and providing them with a replacement for themselves as the leader.

Geiger et al. (2012) explain that Moses's faithfulness gave him the opportunity for transformation, and through his faithfulness, he identified the spaces where the Lord moved, and he placed himself and the Israelite's within those spaces. Poon (2006) described that the motivation that drives a leader is his love for the people with whom he is called to serve. Geiger et al. (2012) state that the Lord transformed Moses, and Moses played a significant role in the process by being faithful. Future research on the personality and leadership traits of successful leaders during leadership transition is necessary for a better understanding of the leadership styles within the study of transitional leadership.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 120–130.

ISSN 1941-4692

Geiger (2016) explained that leaders form the foundation of their organization more than any other outside force. Bass (2008) stated that a leader's vision is the foundation for encouraging followers; it allows them to understand the social constructs of the organization and the vision for moving forward. Geiger (2016) detailed that when leaders identify themselves as temporary, it moves within them an urgency to provide their people with a leader for where God is calling the organization in the future. Through the research of the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua within Deuteronomy 31:1-23, we gain insight into the followers' need to handle change successfully. Moses, in his love for the people, faithfully builds the Israelites a new leader, while reminding them of the Lord's favor during their previous conquest. An important motivational tool for any leader is past success, and Moses uses this tool when encouraging the Israelites. Dotlich et al. (2004) describes successful leaders as those who continue to lead an organization toward its goals through personal adversity. Bass (2008) described a successful leader as one who shares their vision with the organization and equips their people to accept responsibility for their part of the vision moving forward.

CONCLUSION

Norman (2007) stated that the leadership of Moses confronts all leaders to encourage the people they are blessed to lead through challenges. Ngomane (2013) detailed that healthy transitional leadership requires equipping the incoming leader and followers with the necessary tools to reduce simple mistakes within the organization. Grumet (2014) explained that leaders are measured by the transformation of their people, and one of the more significant examples of a transformation is Moses transforming Israel into the people who would move to where God had called them to, the Promised Land.

Grumet (2014) described that Moses understood the role of leaders within the kingdom of God, to proclaim the message of the Lord, and understood that He takes care of the struggles. Crosson (2014) stated that Moses did not nominate himself to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses's encouragement to the Israelites throughout Deuteronomy 31, do not fear or be dismayed, remain strong and courageous, is a testament to the encouragement all leaders should exemplify to the people they are called to serve. Moses's greatest talent lies in the fact that he was open to being used as a vessel for God's Word to the Israelites (Grumet, 2014). Mohler (2012) explained that no leader can fill every position within an organization. Moses cultivated himself as a leader who could overcome obstacles and translate his failures into opportunities to grow his followers. He understood that continuous acts of courage enact change.

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ISSN 1941-4692

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Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 120–130.

ISSN 1941-4692

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THE GOOD SAMARITAN THROUGH A SERVANT LEADERSHIP LENS

Sarah Rolle

This study explores the servant leader in Luke 10:25-37 using socio-rhetorical inner texture. Although other studies have examined the Good Samaritan passage, this is the first to explore the parable through inner textural analysis using a servant leadership lens. Through the use of repetitive, progressive, narrative, argumentative, and sensory-aesthetic textures and patterns, existing findings were corroborated, and new findings were identified for future exploration. This study demonstrated that servant leaders empower and heal followers, communicate a vision, illuminate the path for followers, exhibit emotional intelligence, demonstrate foresight and stewardship, and display awareness. This study also examined the internal processes of servant leaders and found that they are intrinsically motivated, reorient out-groups to in-groups, and emphasize people, emotion, and action. This study contributed to the body of knowledge by presenting conceptual frameworks for follower empowerment, communicating a vision, and compassion within acts-based emotional intelligence.

Keywords: servant leadership, follower, Good Samaritan, inner texture, socio-rhetorical analysis

THE GOOD SAMARITAN THROUGH A SERVANT LEADERSHIP LENS

Servant leadership presents a framework for leaders to demonstrate empathy, empowerment, stewardship, and other key qualities. It has been reviewed and studied in recent research, demonstrating the significance of servant leadership to modern leadership discourse. There has also been an increasing interest in ethics-based or

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 131–151.

ISSN 1941-4692

values-based leadership. The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 presents an ethical narrative that can help connect servant leadership to ethics. This connection also serves an interdisciplinary purpose in social science, highlighting the connection between leadership theories and a religious text. This study examines Luke 10:25-37 through the lens of servant leadership, contributing to both theoretical development and practical implementation.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this section, I review the literature on servant leadership and the biblical passage.

Servant Leadership

The theory of servant leadership was first articulated by Greenleaf (1977), with the principle that a leader is servant first. Since Greenleaf's work, servant leadership has expanded to encompass a range of definitions, traits, behaviors, scales, potential outcomes, models, and more (van Dierendonck, 2011). Reilly and Spears (2018) articulated 10 key characteristics of servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and building community. These 10 characteristics remain widely used (see Kane, 2024; Noling-Auth, 2024). Russel and Stone (2002) identified several of these traits among servant leaders, concluding that research has documented nine functional attributes and 11 accompanying attributes. Qui and Dooley (2019) recognized six dimensions of servant leadership: integrity, self-sacrifice, building community, empowering people, emotional healing, and visioning.

Different motivational factors for servant leaders have been proffered, including potential motivation like agape love (Patterson, 2003), altruism (Mulinge, 2018), personality dimensions (Washington et al., 2006), individual characteristics (van Dierendonck, 2011), emotional intelligence (Barbuto et al., 2014), and culture (Sokoll, 2011). Generally, research has found that servant leadership yields beneficial outcomes for the follower, teams, and the organization (Langhof & Güldenberg, 2020; van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders appear to have positive impacts on human flourishing within organizations.

Luke 10:25-37: The Good Samaritan

The story of the "Good Samaritan," found in Luke 10:25-37, begins with a lawyer standing up to question Jesus about the law and the definition of neighbor. Jesus then tells the parable of the wounded man, the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan, and their responses and interactions. The story concludes with Jesus reengaging with the lawyer to clarify the true vision of a neighbor. Jesus presented this story to the audience in Capernaum (Sales, 2023).

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 131–151.

ISSN 1941-4692

The Lukan passage has been explored in scholarly, practical, and theological contexts through various theoretical lenses. Pillay (2008) conducted an inner textual analysis, specifically related to open-middle-closing texture and pattern, bridging the Lukan church with the present church in its response to HIV and AIDS. Han et al. (2023) conducted a historical and grammatical analysis of the text to explore the concept of solidarity. Similarly, Marshall (2013) examined the passage and found a call to a common good through neighborly love. Funk (1964) provided a discourse on the concept of love within the passage, as it is defined and applied through the views of the lawyer, the reader, and the church. Lu (2022) examined the motivations of the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan, informed by the regulatory focus theory. Sales (2023) used culture and learning theories to explore Jesus' pedagogy in challenging his audience in Luke 10:25-37. Likewise, Efruan and Dami (2019) used diacognitive analysis to discover Jesus' multicultural pedagogy principles, finding that a teacher's compassion is essential as it fosters a desire to help others. Eidsvåg and Falcetta (2024) examined modern Norwegian nursing ethics through the lens of the Samaritan passage's compassionate care ethics. Cornelius (2013) applied modern psychology to Luke 10:25-37 to explore the motivation for compassion. Researchers have explored, examined, and applied Luke 10:25-37 through modern theory and methodologies. However, no scholarship has explored Luke 10:25-37 through servant leadership using inner textural analysis.

A parable is particularly apt for the use of modern leadership theory. Osborne (2006) argued that a key hermeneutical principle of a parable is the application of the central truth to modern life. Bonilla and Mora (2022) presented the parable's audience as a "universal audience," extending beyond the lawyer mentioned in the passage to all Christians across time (p. 103). In this way, the ancient text maintains a modern relevance in both theoretical development and practical application. The principles found within Luke 10:25-37 demonstrate supraordinate themes for modern use.

Jesus as Servant Leader. Previous scholars have treated Jesus as a servant leader. Etukumana (2024) used rhetorical analysis to examine Luke 22:23–27, finding that Jesus articulated the servant leadership model via His care for humanity. Song (2023) found that Jesus acted as a servant leader by growing people, articulating a compelling vision, and serving others. Du Plessis and Nkambule (2020) argued that "Jesus is the embodiment of servant leadership" through His empowerment of followers, service, healing, and watchfulness (p. 5). Molano (2019) concluded that it was well established in Christian and secular literature that Jesus is an exemplar of a servant leader. This research will therefore treat Jesus as a servant leader.

Samaritan as Servant Leader. Previous scholars have concluded that the Samaritan presented in Luke 10:25-37 is a servant leader. Foster (2024) conducted a genre analysis and found that the Samaritan exhibited all the characteristics of a servant leader, including listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to personal growth, and building community. Although Baker (2023) did not directly state that the Samaritan was a servant leader, Baker presented the Samaritan through the lens of servanthood,

ISSN 1941-4692

implying the Samaritan was a servant leader. Therefore, this research will treat the Samaritan as a servant leader.

METHOD

This study will employ socio-rhetorical criticism through the layer of inner texture (Robbins, 1996). Inner texture addresses the language used in the passage and how it communicates. There are several textures and patterns of inner texture, including repetitive, progressive, narrational, argumentative, opening-middle-closing, and sensory-aesthetic, which are revealed in the boundary of a rhetorical textual unit of Luke 10:25-37.

The repetitive pattern examines “the occurrence of words and phrases more than once in a unit” (Robbins, 1996, p. 8). This recurrence of words offers insights into the discourse of the text. Progressive texture (and pattern) “resides in the sequences (progressions) of words and phrases throughout the unit” (Robbins, 1996, p. 9). Repetition of the progression illuminates the phenomenon being explored.

Narrational texture and pattern address the actors within the text, being the characters, narrator, and reader. The narrational texture examines the speakers and listeners in stories, questions, and commands. The opening-middle-closing texture addresses the pericope through the structure of a story with a start, middle, and end. This analysis was not conducted, as Pillay (2008) conducted an opening-middle-closing texture related to Luke 10:25-37.

The argumentative texture and pattern address the development of arguments or reasoning within the text (Robbins, 1996). This texture presents thesis, rationale, counterarguments, premises, and conclusions. Finally, sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern examine zones of emotion, self-expression, and purposeful action. These zones focus on the human senses and extend those senses to ideas. The zone of emotion-focused thought examines the senses of the eyes and heart, expanding these physical aspects to seeing, knowing, understanding, and thinking. The zone of self-expressive speech focuses on the mouth and ears, flowing into hearing, speaking, telling, and listening. The zone of purposeful action focuses on organs that can touch, such as the hands, feet, and legs, and extends this sense to the movement of coming, going, activity, and behavior. This study will analyze Luke 10:25-37 through the inner-texture layers of repetition, progression, narration, argumentation, and sensory-aesthetic elements to identify supraordinate themes relevant to modern servant leaders.

ANALYSIS

The repetitive texture examines the repetition of words within the pericope (Robbins, 1996). This is observed in Table 1.

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 131–151.

ISSN 1941-4692

Table 1

Repetitive Texture and Pattern

Role					
v.25	Law				
v.26	Law	You			
v.27		You	Neighbor		
v.28		You, You			
v.29			Neighbor		
v.30				Robbers	
v.35		You, You			
v.36		You	Neighbor	Robbers	
Actions					
v.25			Do		
v.28			Do		
v.31	Saw (priest)			Passed by (priest)	
v.32	Saw (Levite)			Passed by (Levite)	Came (Levite)
v.33	Saw (Samaritan)				Came (Samaritan)
v.34		Care (Samaritan)			Came (Samaritan)
v.35		Care (Samaritan)			
v.37			Do		
Motivations					
v.33	Compassion				
v.37	Mercy				

The progressive texture and pattern explore the sequences within the passage (Robbins, 1996). This analysis divides the passage's structure into subunits by genre (Foster, 2024). Foster demonstrated that the parable is situated within a historical setting. Therefore, Luke 10:25-37 contains two thematic units. This passage contains both a historical narrative and a parable. The historical narrative begins and ends this passage (vv. 25-29; 36-37), creating an outer frame for the parable, and the parable serves as the inner frame (vv. 30-35). The progressive texture is divided and conducted within these two thematic subunits.

Pillay (2008) found a similar separation of the passage into smaller yet distinct units when conducting the opening-middle-closing texture and pattern. Pillay separated

ISSN 1941-4692

the passage into scenes. Pillay concluded that the opening comprised verses 25-28, the middle was verses 29-35, and the closing was verses 36-37. Pillay's work also showed the distinction between the units separating the parable from the surrounding verses.

The progressive texture of the parable (inner frame) is observed in Table 2, and Table 3 depicts the progressive texture of the historical narrative (outer frame).

Table 2

Inner Frame Progressive Texture

Character	Verse	Emotion	Action[1]	Action[2]	Outcome
Priest	v. 31			Saw him	Passed by
Levite	v. 32		Came	Saw him	Passed by
Samaritan	v. 33		Came	Saw him	
Samaritan	v. 34	Felt Compassion	Came	Bandaged his wounds	Care

Table 3

Outer Frame Progressive Texture

Character	Verse	Emotion	Action	Outcome
Lawyer	vv. 25-29	Justifying	Law	Reorient to mercy
Neighbor	vv. 36-37		Mercy	"Go and do the same"

The narrational texture examines the voices within the passage (Robbins, 1996). The narrational texture's characters within the passage addressed by the narrator are the lawyer, Jesus, the wounded man, the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan, the innkeeper, and the reader. Table 4 depicts the pattern that emerged when narrational speech alternated between voices within the passage. Table 4 typifies the question-answer structure of a narrational passage. Again, this passage was analyzed within the subunit of the outer frame, as narrational texture often reveals the units within the passage.

Table 4

Narrational Question and Response Structure

Verse	Question Response Structure	Type
v. 25	"What shall I do?"	Interrogative Discourse
v. 26	"What is written?"	Interrogative Discourse
v. 27	"You shall love..."	Propositional Discourse
v. 28	"Do this and you will live."	Imperative Discourse

ISSN 1941-4692

v. 29	"And who is my neighbor?"	Interrogative Discourse
vv. 30-35	Answered indirectly with a parable	Propositional Discourse
v. 36	“Which of these three?”	Interrogative Discourse
v. 37	“The one who showed mercy toward him”	Propositional Discourse
v. 37	“Go and do the same”	Imperative Discourse

The argumentative texture explores the reasoning within the passage (Robbins, 1996). This pattern examines the arguments for and against. The argumentative texture follows a logical structure. The argumentative texture is revealed in Table 5.

Table 5

Argumentative Texture and Pattern

Theme	Verse	Statement
Thesis	v. 27, 25	“You shall love […] your neighbor as yourself…” “to inherit eternal life”
Rationale	v. 28	“You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.”
Contrary	v. 29	“And who is my neighbor?”
Parable	vv. 30-35	The Good Samaritan parable
Restatement of Thesis	vv. 36-37a	“Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?” And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.”
Conclusion	v. 37b	“Go and do the same.”

The sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern evoke the different senses (Robbins, 1996). This layer shows how the text conjures emotions, self-expressive speech, and action. The deeper layers of emotion, self-expressive speech, and action are often associated with specific human body parts, as noted previously. In this way, the physical informs the non-physical deeper layers. These zones of emotion, self-expressive speech, and purposeful action are revealed in Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8, respectively.

Table 6

Zone of Emotion-Focused Thought

Verse	Text	Zone Activity
v. 27	“You shall love the Lord your God… with all your heart… soul… strength… mind”	Heart: love

ISSN 1941-4692

v. 31	“saw him” (priest)	Eyes: awareness
v. 32	“saw him” (Levite)	Eyes: awareness
v. 33	“when he saw him, he felt compassion” (Samaritan)	Eyes: compassion
v. 36	“Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor…”	Mind: empathy
v. 37	“The one who showed mercy…”	Heart: mercy

Table 7

Zone of Self-Expressive Speech

Verse	Text	Zone Activity
v. 25	“A lawyer… saying…?”	Mouth: questioning
v. 26	“And He said…?”	Mouth: questioning
v. 27	“And he answered…”	Mouth: answering
v. 28	“And He said…”	Mouth: command
v. 29	“But wishing to justify himself, he said…?”	Mouth: questioning
v. 30	“Jesus replied and said…”	Mouth: speaking
v. 35	“…he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said…”	Mouth: speaking
v. 37	“And he said…”	Mouth: speaking
v. 37	“Then Jesus said…”	Mouth: command

Table 8

Zone of Purposeful Action

Verse	Text	Zone Activity
v. 30a	“A man was going down… fell among robbers”	Feet: going
v. 30b	“they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead”	Hands: violence
v. 31-32	“passed by on the other side”	Feet: walking avoidance
v. 33	“came upon him”	Feet: walking toward
v. 34a	“Bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine”	Hands: care
v. 34b	“put him on his own beast”	Hands and legs: shared burden
v. 34b	“brought him to an inn and took care of him”	Hands and legs: movement to safety
v. 35	“Took out two denarii… I will repay you”	Hands: giving
v. 36	“the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?”	Hands: control
v. 37	“Go and do the same.”	Full Body Movement

ISSN 1941-4692

FINDINGS

The analysis of the inner layer of the text reveals several repetitions, progressions, and movements within the passage. This analysis informs the findings by exploring the relationship between the ancient text and the modern world. The analysis identifies the supraordinate themes as revelations. The supraordinate themes (ST) developed from the analysis connect servant leadership to human flourishing. These themes are synthesized into related domains applicable to modern practice. The STs relate to the individual, follower-leader dyad, and organizational constructs.

Individual Domain

ST1: Servant leaders' intrinsic motivations spur action. The progressive and sensory-aesthetic texture and patterns in Table 2, Table 3, Table 6, and Table 8 outline the progressive emotion, action, and outcome of each actor within the parable subunit of the text. The priest saw and passed by (v. 31). The Levite saw and passed by (v. 32). The Samaritan saw, felt, and bandaged wounds, poured oil and wine, put on a beast, and took care of the robbery victim (vv. 33-34). The Samaritan first saw and then felt compassion. From this compassion, the Samaritan cared for the robbery victim. This indicates that compassion is an internal motivator. Through this sequence, the emotion prompted the action. This demonstrates that servant leadership begins not with acts but with internal motivation. In this pericope, the internal motivator was compassion. This is apt as compassion compels action. Servant leaders are motivated by their internal compassion, mercy, and care for their followers. A leader cannot merely act as a servant leader, as servant leaders are more than a series of acts. Servant leaders are defined not only by their behaviors or expected outcomes, but also by the internal motivations that compel them to act.

This suggests that servant leadership is multifaceted and is driven by intrinsic motivations. This aligns with Mulinge's (2018) argument that servant leaders are motivated by compassionate love: "In servant-leadership, compassionate love is the underlying motivation, given that servant-leadership emphasizes concern for the welfare of others" (Mulinge, 2018, p. 352). Although compassion is a factor in this passage, the emphasis is on the action, as the same action is repeated (came, saw; Table 3). However, the emotion or intrinsic motivator is what leads to a different outcome in each case of the priest (passed by), Levite (passed by), and Samaritan (care; Table 3).

In the historical unit presented in Luke 10:25-37, the progressive texture and pattern are presented in Tables 2 and 3. In Table 3, the passage begins with the law articulated by a lawyer under which "you," neighbors, and robbers exist (Table 1). However, the passage does not end with the law but with compassion and mercy. This progressive pattern appears as a theme in the Bible as the salvation message, with antiquity connecting modernity through "you," an active participant in the story. This aligns with Patterson's (2003) argument that servant leadership is motivated by agape love. Modern servant leaders should accept and practice compassionate love as a motivating factor to benefit followers.

ISSN 1941-4692

ST2: Servant leaders emphasize people, emotion, and action. Table 1 depicts the repetitive texture and pattern of the passage's roles, actions, and motivations. In this inner texture, Jesus is introduced by the lawyer as "teacher," immediately placing Jesus in the role of a religious leader within the text (v. 25). That places the lawyer and the implicit reader as the student or religious follower as depicted within the narrational texture analysis. The conversation begins with the lawyer challenging Jesus with a "test" (v. 25).

The repetitive patterns presented in this text focus on roles or people, actions, and internal motivations. The roles occupied by characters or people within the text presented are lawyer, "you," neighbor, and robbers (Table 1), in that chronological order. Between the roles presented at the beginning and the internal motivators at the end are a series of actions. The repetition of "care" shows continuing action (vv. 34-35). Modern servant leaders can use the repetitive texture and pattern as a guide for leadership. The emphasis on and ongoing practice of "care" indicate that modern servant leaders should demonstrate care for their followers. This repetitive texture and pattern indicate that the focus should be on people, emotion, and continuing action. Similarly, servant leaders should also focus on people, emotions, and actions.

ST3: Servant leaders demonstrate awareness, which is the beginning of moral responsibility. Table 6 demonstrates the act of seeing and knowing. The sensory-aesthetic texture's emotion-focused zone, which brings action into the less tangible environment of knowledge, demonstrates the connection between the various characters' "seeing" and awareness. For each character, this "seeing" created awareness, marking the beginning of a series of decisions. The priest and Levite saw and were aware; however, they failed in their moral responsibility. The Samaritan saw and acted. The Samaritan was aware and acted on that awareness, beginning a journey of moral responsibility. In this way, modern servant leaders should cultivate the practice of "seeing." By this, servant leaders need to observe their followers and see their needs. This is awareness and the beginning of moral responsibility. Once a servant leader "sees," they become aware, and this awareness creates a moral responsibility to act. Modern servant leaders should demonstrate this awareness through "seeing" their followers and meeting their needs.

ST4: Servant leaders exhibit acts-based emotional intelligence. The progressive and sensory-aesthetic texture and patterns informed Tables 6 and 2. Table 6 creates a sense of emotion within the reader. Through this texture and pattern, the reader can sense the emotions in the passage, and the passage creates emotions within the reader. The reader observes that the priest and Levite see the wounded man but do not act, as shown in Table 2. This lack of emotional response and action for the wounded man presents a jarring sensory void. This elicits empathy in the reader toward the wounded man. Empathy is a core goal of the zone of emotion-focused thought within this passage (Table 6).

Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 16, no. 1 (Winter 2026), 131–151.

ISSN 1941-4692

Empathy is also observed within the Samaritan. The priest and Levite pass by the wounded man at a distance. Only the Samaritan is described with a sensation of *feeling* compassion. The Samaritan felt in a dual manner: his own feelings, and the feelings of the wounded man. This act of empathy involves a process of "understanding, feeling, and sharing another person's world with self-other differentiation" (Eklund & Meranius, 2021, p. 300). This is a dichotomous process between observer and observed. The Samaritan in this passage displayed empathy when he saw (understood) and felt (feeling) compassion (sharing another person's world with self-other differentiation). This creates a potential conceptual framework for emotional intelligence.

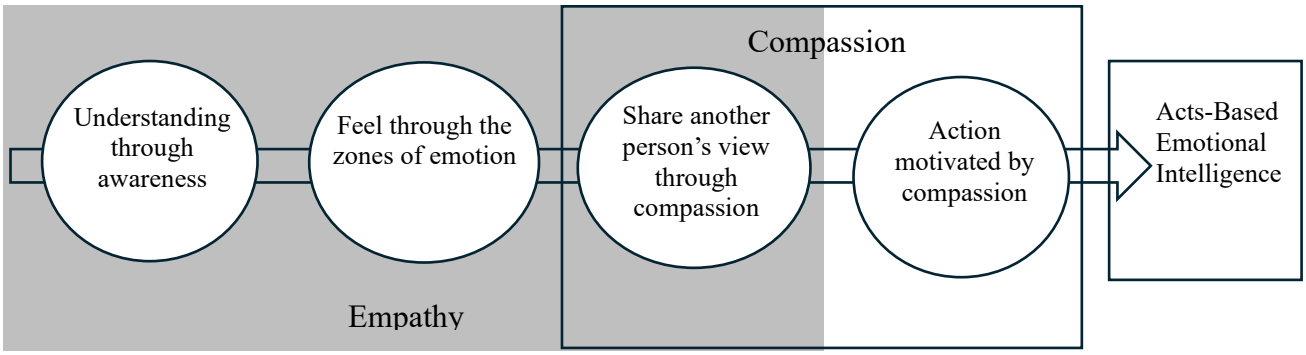
Individual Domain Application. Combining ST1, ST2, ST3, and ST4 presents a potential model for acts-based emotional intelligence in the context of the servant leader. The Samaritan saw, felt, and acted. The first part of emotional intelligence is established in ST3, where servant leaders demonstrate awareness, which is the beginning of moral responsibility. This is the "saw" action described by each character as awareness (Table 1, Table 2, & Table 6). The second stage in emotional intelligence is the "feel" dimension, as shown in ST1 and ST4. The Samaritan is the only character within the parable described as feeling (Table 2 & Table 6). ST1 reveals that feeling was the motivation for action. ST4 shows that the Samaritan displayed empathy through the process of understanding, feeling, and sharing a worldview. However, the text states explicitly that the Samaritan felt compassion. Compassion is beyond empathy and includes action (Addiss et al., 2022). This suggests that servant leaders are called to more than just emotional intelligence, which culminates in awareness and emotional regulation (Esaam & Radhwan, 2025), but an action-based emotional intelligence that incorporates action in response to human suffering and need.

The Samaritan responded to awareness (ST3) and feeling (ST1 & ST4) through action (ST2), based on care (ST2). This is the robustness of the composition of compassion. "Compassion is a response to suffering that involves cognitive awareness, empathy, and action to alleviate suffering" (Addiss et al., 2022, p. 2). The Samaritan demonstrated this process within the text. In this way, the Samaritan went beyond mere emotional intelligence and instead demonstrated an acts-based emotional intelligence.

Modern servant leaders could utilize acts-based emotional intelligence as a leadership tool. Furthermore, they can utilize this process, as demonstrated by the Samaritan, to exhibit awareness, empathy, and action. Modern servant leaders display empathy by understanding through awareness, feeling through the zones of emotion, and sharing another person's view through compassion for the follower (Eklund & Meranius, 2021). However, this model advances the understand, feel, and other worldview definition of empathy to include an acts-based component that fully informs acts-based emotional intelligence. Figure 1 illustrates the Compassion Process Model, which demonstrates how servant leaders can utilize the passage to cultivate emotional intelligence through awareness, emotion, compassion, and action.

ISSN 1941-4692

Figure 1
Compassion Process Model



Leader-Follower Domain

ST5: Servant leaders use persuasion to illuminate the path to followers. The narrational, argumentative, and sensory-aesthetic texture and patterns inform Table 4, Table 5, and Table 7, which show the progression of the question and response typified within the question and response structure found within the gospels. The passage begins with the lawyer asking the question, "What shall I do..." (v. 25), and it ends with a command as Jesus responds, "Go and do the same" (v. 37).

Reilly and Spears (2018) found that listening and commitment to people's growth were essential traits of servant leaders. Luke 10:25-37 demonstrates this as the servant leader listened to the follower and focused on the follower's growth. Jesus listened to the lawyer's initial reasoning and question. Jesus then connected the lawyer's question to the exploration of understanding. This is demonstrated through progressive texture and pattern: "It is the repetition of the word 'do' that…reveals progression" (Pillay, 2008, p. 129). The focus of the question and response is based on acts (do). The follower asked an acts-based question, and the leader replied with an acts-based response. Through this parable, Jesus, as the leader, listened to the follower's question and responded. The leader described the path to success in a way that met the needs of the follower. Through this process of question and response, the follower underwent a transformation in his thinking. The follower initially began the pericope with a limited understanding of what constitutes a neighbor; however, by the end of the passage, the follower was able to answer. Jesus, as a servant leader, met the follower where the follower needed, and the servant leader illuminated the issue.

This aligns with Russel and Stone's (2002) review of the literature on servant leadership, which found that servant leaders use persuasive communication to share wisdom and develop understanding. Luke 10:25-37 is unique in that it shows one method of a persuasive communication strategy that servant leaders can use. Rather than responding to a question with a traditional answer or command, the response needed may be more complex to ensure wisdom and understanding. Servant leaders modulate their communicative responses based on follower needs. Therefore, servant

ISSN 1941-4692

leaders do not merely answer; servant leaders illuminate understanding. Jesus listened, responded based on the follower's need, and helped the follower grow in understanding. This provides a unique perspective in that servant leaders may modulate their communication processes based on the individual follower.

ST6: Servant leaders heal others. Table 8 shows the actions taken in the passage. Although the passage began with acts of violence and then avoidance, the actions taken by the Samaritan were healing actions that restored the injured man. The Samaritan bandaged and poured wine, showing the care of sacrificial leadership. He also put the wounded man on his animal and brought him to the inn. This purposeful action showed the sharing of the wounded man's burden. This passage does not merely relate to the physical restoration, but also the non-physical state, as Table 8 shows control of the robbers' hands to safety. Modern servant leaders should also act in a healing manner with their followers through self-sacrifice, the sharing of burdens, and restoring psychological safety. This confirms previous research by Qiu and Dooley (2019) in regard to self-sacrifice and emotional healing. ST6 demonstrates that self-sacrifice and healing are indeed actions of servant leaders within the Good Samaritan passage.

ST7: Servant leaders empower followers. Table 4 demonstrates a conversation between the characters of Jesus (leader) and a lawyer, and the reader participating as the followers, as depicted within the narrational texture analysis. Through a series of questions, answers, and responses revealed in the narrational texture, Jesus shapes perception, controls the moral arc, and ends the conversation by empowering the lawyer and the reader. The empowerment Jesus developed was through meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). Jesus addressed meaning by connecting personal values with Christian role responsibility, as seen in verse 25, through the question of role, "what shall I do?" and the response in verse 27, "You shall love..." Jesus connected competence in that He provided the knowledge and command to accomplish the Christian role responsibility as seen with knowledge development in verse 36, "Which of these three," and the lawyer's response, "The one who showed mercy toward him" (v. 37). Jesus developed competence through knowledge sharing for the lawyer and the reader using the parable. Jesus connected self-determination through the autonomy of moving forward, as demonstrated in verse 37, "Go and do the same." Once Jesus connected the meaning and competence, He presented instructions for future action. This allowed the lawyer to engage in autonomous decision-making informed by meaning and competence. Finally, Jesus addressed the impact through the action and consequence. The action presented is "You shall love..." (v. 27) and the consequence "Do this and live." (v. 28). By the end, the lawyer is empowered to speak with accuracy (v. 37, "The one who showed mercy to him"). Jesus empowered the lawyer through building meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact.

The reader or third-party observer is also empowered as the lawyer in the passage. The meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact provided to the lawyer by Jesus in the passage are also provided to the reader. The ultimate

ISSN 1941-4692

empowerment to the reader is the command, “Go and do the same” (v. 37). In this way, Jesus empowered the reader as He did with the lawyer.

Leader-Follower Domain Application. ST5, ST6, and ST7 present a potential Follower Empowerment Framework for modern servant leaders to empower their followers through meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Spreitzer (1995) described meaning in terms of values and fit. In ST7, Jesus connected personal values to the Christian responsibility. This increased the fit between personal views and responsibility. ST7 demonstrated that servant leaders can develop meaning by connecting values.

Competence is described as the ability to do the work (Spreitzer, 1995). This begins with knowledge building. ST5 demonstrates that Jesus employed persuasive communication to illuminate understanding. ST7 also showed that Jesus used knowledge development through questions and responses. In both ST5 and ST7, the servant leader built competence through knowledge sharing and understanding.

Spreitzer described self-determination as self-directed or self-governed in actions. ST6 depicts the Samaritans' self-initiated, autonomous actions in healing. ST7 addresses future actions. ST6 and ST7 reveal action-based initiation and future-oriented action as forms of self-determination through autonomous decision-making.

Finally, Spreitzer described impact as the expected outcome of the action. ST5 demonstrates the outcomes through persuasive communication; ST6 shows the outcomes of self-sacrifice and shared burdens in healing; and ST7 reveals the action and consequences of loving a neighbor. ST5, ST6, and ST7 outline impact through action and consequence. The Follower Empowerment Framework outlines actions that servant leaders can take to empower followers by fostering meaning through connecting values, competence through knowledge sharing, self-determination through act-based, autonomous decision-making, and impact through action and consequence.

Organizational Domain

ST8: Servant leaders demonstrate stewardship and foresight. The zone of purposeful action in the sensory-aesthetic texture also demonstrates the act of stewardship and foresight, as seen in Table 8. The Samaritan is described as using his own time and money to care for the wounded man, as a steward for the wounded man’s care. Noling-Auth (2024) presented a difference between ‘caring about’ and ‘caring for’ as an act of servant leader stewardship. This pericope confirms that the servant leader not only cares about followers but also cares *for* followers, just as the Samaritan cared for the wounded man. The passage even goes further to show a continual care of the wounded man until he is healed though the continued payment, “On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you’” (v. 35). This demonstrates the Samaritan’s foresight in planning for the future. It also demonstrates sustained commitment, rather than a one-time action. The promise to return shows ongoing

ISSN 1941-4692

accountability for following through with the articulated plan. Stewardship, in this context, is an action-based concept, not merely a leadership trait. Foresight shows the continuous action of future planning and commitment to that plan. Stewardship and foresight are continuous, action-based presentations for a servant leader. Modern servant leaders should replicate these actions of stewardship and foresight.

ST9: Servant leaders reorient in-groups and out-groups. The argumentative texture and pattern presented in Table 5 exhibit a logical progression from thesis to rationale, to counterargument, to analogy (parable), to restatement of the thesis, and ultimately to conclusion in Luke 10:25-37. Each element of this argument supports a specific conclusion. Jesus reframes the question of "who is my neighbor" into a guide for being a good neighbor (v. 29). The law up to this point used 'neighbor' as the definition; however, Jesus redefined 'neighbor' not by proximity or national identity, but by action (Cranfield, 1954; Proctor, 2019). This passage demonstrates that servant leaders move out-group members into the in-group.

In the leader-member exchange theory, followers are generally divided into two groups based on the quality of the relationship with the leader, whereas the in-group has higher quality, and the out-group has lower quality (O'Connor & Srinivasan, 2010). Servant leaders redefine the members of the out-group as members of the in-group. Luke 10:25-37 challenges the boundaries of in-group identity, instead defining members by their actions rather than their titles or labels. This is similar to Reilly and Spear's (2018) idea of rebuilding community. However, Luke 10:25-37 shows that all people are members of this community, thus expanding the in-group. Modern servant leaders can employ this strategy to decrease differentiation between group members and increase high-quality relationships with all followers.

ST10: Servant leaders develop and communicate a transformational vision. The narrative, argumentative, and sensory-aesthetic inform Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7. The argumentative texture and pattern in Table 5 reveal a deeper communication pattern. From the thesis to the conclusion, Jesus transformed the lawyer's perception through storytelling and questions. Table 5 shows this progression from the thesis, stated by the lawyer, being "You shall love […] your neighbor as yourself" (v. 27) to the restatement of the thesis, also stated by the lawyer, "The one who showed mercy toward him" (v. 37). Jesus transforms the lawyer's perception and thinking. Between the thesis and the conclusion is a parable followed by a question and a command from Jesus. Jesus used this parable, question, and command to engage the lawyer. In this pericope, Jesus reframed the *law* for the *lawyer*. Modern servant leaders could also use this strategy to develop and communicate a transformational vision. Storytelling as a leadership practice to communicate a vision is not a new concept (Parry & Hansen, 2007). However, this pericope not only focuses on the argumentative texture and pattern of storytelling and questioning, but it also shows the transformation that occurred within the follower or lawyer.

O'Gorman and Gillespie (2010) argued that research often explored storytelling from the leader's perspective, but future research should examine the effect of

ISSN 1941-4692

storytelling on staff or followers. Here, the pericope shows the transformational outcome of the follower. This outcome could specifically relate to servant leaders. O'Gorman and Gillespie (2010) also warned about the potential dark side of storytelling; however, servant leaders can use storytelling and questions in a way that creates positive transformational change and a future vision for their followers.

This passage provides a structure or format in which modern servant leaders can respond to or engage with followers. Three constructs comprise this theoretical framework for communicating a transformational vision. First, Jesus posed questions, offered a parable, and concluded with a command. The questions Jesus asked were to clarify information and encourage reflection (Table 4). Second, the parable established an emotional connection for the lawyer (Table 6). Through the story, Jesus created awareness, compassion, and empathy that engaged, informed, and persuaded the lawyer by providing a human context for the complex principle (Table 6). Finally, Jesus commanded, which demonstrated his authority while directing and initiating action (Table 7). Servant leaders can employ these strategies to enhance effective communication with their followers. Modern servant leaders could ask questions, tell stories, command, or engage in this sequential structure as a process. Jesus used this structure as a sequential process to meet the followers' communication needs to increase understanding among the followers. So too can modern servant leaders apply this sequential structure as a process for effective communication.

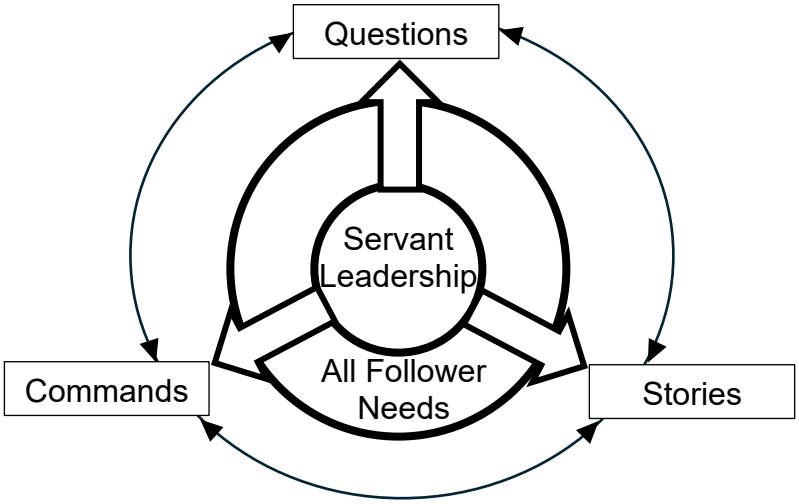
Organizational Domain Application

The combination of ST5, ST9, and ST10 creates a unique conceptual framework for communication. ST5 highlighted the importance of communicating through the followers' needs. ST9 demonstrated that effective communication was for all followers, rather than just the in-group. ST10 provided the task behavior or application for communicating a vision, including asking questions, telling stories, and issuing commands. These three constructs can be applied sequentially or individually, depending on the needs of all followers. Joining these three supraordinate themes presents a potential conceptual framework for leaders to communicate a vision to their followers. Figure 2 depicts a conceptual framework for this communication model. Notably, this conceptual framework is designed to communicate at both the individual and organizational levels. Luke 10:25-37 depicts communication at the individual level between Jesus and the lawyer; however, Bonilla and Mora (2022) demonstrated that the audience within the passage is a "universal audience" for all Christians, showing an organizational level communication structure (p. 103).

ISSN 1941-4692

Figure 2

Communicate Vision Model



IMPLICATIONS

This study builds upon previous calls for research by Qiu and Dooley (2019), who stated that more qualitative research was needed within the servant leadership domain. Likewise, Idris and Zairoh (2022) found that emotional intelligence within the field of servant leadership was underdeveloped, and future research was necessary. This study advanced the field by providing a conceptual framework of compassion that informs an acts-based emotional intelligence.

Theoretical

This study is the first to explore Luke 10:25-37 through the lens of servant leadership theory, employing inner textural analysis. This paper confirmed previous findings in that servant leaders heal and empower followers (ST6 & ST7), develop intrinsic motivation that spurs action (ST1), communicate a vision (ST10), illuminate the path for followers (ST5), exhibit act-based emotional intelligence (ST4), demonstrate foresight and stewardship (ST8), and display awareness (ST3). This study also contributed to the advancement of the field of servant leadership. This study examined the internal processes of servant leaders and found that they reorient out-groups to in-groups as community-building for followers (ST9) and emphasize people, emotion, and action (ST2).

Practical

This study also offered practical implications by building on theories and prior scholarship to develop a conceptual framework for empowering followers, a conceptual

ISSN 1941-4692

framework for communicating a vision, and a conceptual framework for fostering compassion as a gateway to acts-based emotional intelligence. The conceptual frameworks presented could inform modern servant leader behavior. The Follower Empowerment Framework, the Communicate Vision Model (Figure 2), and the Compassion Process Model (Figure 1) depict potential tasked behavior for servant leaders. This shows the synthesis and practical application of this research.

Limitations

This study began with the theory of servant leadership and employed a deductive approach; therefore, areas of exploration could have been excluded. This a priori strategy could exclude principles and tenets naturally garnered from empirical observation. Additionally, this study addressed several supraordinate themes at a cursory level with respect to meaning. Further development in several areas could deepen the meaning and findings of servant leadership. Finally, this study was not intended to alter or modify established exegetical research on the passage, but rather to expand it into modernity within the realm of servant leadership.

Future Research

Future research should explore several supraordinate themes found within this study. First, the study found that servant leaders reorient out-groups to in-groups as a community-building for followers. This process warrants further exploration to examine how it occurs and the outcomes of that process. Another supraordinate theme found within this study is that servant followers emphasize people, emotion, and action. Although appearing fundamental in terms of servant leadership scholarship, this likely has a more profound implication and consequences. Therefore, future scholarship should examine how the emphasis on people, emotion, and action influences modern servant leaders and assess the impact of these influences. Future research could explore Luke 10:25-37 through other methodological means. For example, using other tools in the socio-rhetorical sphere may yield similar or different results, depending on the analysis. Finally, exploring different biblical passages using the suite of analytical tools available could inform the theory of servant leadership, relatable to a modern context.

CONCLUSION

This study reviewed Luke 10:25-37 through a servant leadership lens, utilizing inner texture analysis. The story of the Good Samaritan reveals relevance for modern servant leaders. This study bridges the connection between the parable of the Good Samaritan and modern leadership theory, demonstrating the congruence between the biblical text and modern scholarship. This study confirmed previous findings on servant leadership and contributed to the theoretical and practical development of servant leaders' empowerment tasks, communicating vision dimensions, and compassion process for acts-based emotional intelligence.

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ISSN 1941-4692

journal of biblical perspectives in leadership

Review of Palma, P. J., & Gomez, D. (2026). *Bridge-Building Leadership: A Biblical Approach to Human Flourishing Across Ethnoracial, Socioeconomic, and Gender Divides*. Palgrave Macmillan. (ISBN 978-3-032-09310-3), xxiv + 177 pp., USD 169.99.

Palma and Gomez (2026) pose an intriguingly simple question: What kind of leadership adheres to the Gospel truth that, in Christ, God has acted to reconcile people to Himself and, by extension, to one another (2 Cor. 5:18-20)? Their answer challenges the modern tendency to treat leadership merely as instrumental, as though it exists chiefly to produce outcomes. Instead, they frame leadership as bridge-building that aims at human flourishing, and they insist that the church (or any organization) cannot outsource this vocation to slogans or programs, because Scripture treats reconciliation as a central expression of the reality of new creation (Eph. 2:14-16; 2 Cor. 5:17-20). The argument moves with Pauline logic from the Gospel's reconciling act to the church's reconciling vocation, then presses that vocation into the fault lines where leaders too often retreat into rhetoric rather than obedience.

The book's theological center emerges from its biblical foundations, where bridge-building leadership rests on the reconciling love of *agapaō*. John's Gospel clarifies the author's move, as Jesus defines the credibility of discipleship through enacted love rather than spiritual behavior (John 13:34-35). Paul likewise frames love as cruciform imitation rather than a matter of personality preference (Eph. 5:1-2). Palma and Gomez (2026) press leaders toward truth-telling, endurance, and formation as prerequisites for reconciliation, and that emphasis aligns with the New Testament's refusal to sentimentalize love. In Scripture, love does not float above conflict; it walks into it and bears the cost of peace. This framing also guards the concept of flourishing from drifting into a vague therapeutic ideal. The authors locate flourishing within a reconciled life that receives God's gift and then practices God's mission.

Palma and Gomez (2026) develop their bridge-building claims across three domains, illuminated by the canonical witness. The ethnoracial argument holds that Gospel-faithful leadership must pursue reconciliation as part of becoming one

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multinational people of God. Pentecost sanctifies cultural witness rather than erasing cultures (Acts 2:5-11). Revelation ends with worshiping diversity around the Lamb (Rev. 7:9–10). In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, unity is Christ's demolition of hostility and the creation of a new humanity (Eph. 2:14-16). The authors urge leaders to steward the unity already achieved, shifting away from image management to faithful witness.

The socioeconomic argument centers on *koinōnia* as stewardship through fellowship, reshaping community life and responsibility. Acts describes *koinōnia* as shared devotion (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). James emphasizes that partiality is a theological contradiction, not just a social mistake (James 2:1-9). Leaders steward God's reconciling mission by fostering communities that resist exclusion and promote tangible solidarity. The biblical pattern moves from episodic charity to a sustained reordering of communal habits. Palma and Gomez (2026) highlight long-term commitment and legacy thinking, aligning with Scripture's rhythm of forming a people through repeated practices that embody the kingdom, not quick fixes.

The gender argument is based on the *imago Dei*, urging leaders to recover humanity's shared image-bearing identity. Genesis states God created humanity in His image (Gen. 1:27), and Paul shows that redeemed community life reflects a new-creation identity that reorders how believers honor one another (Rom. 12:10-13; 2 Cor. 5:17). Palma and Gomez (2026) see reconciliation as a theological commitment, not abstract anthropology or policy debate. It should visibly guide leaders in recognizing dignity, fostering participation, and practicing mutual honor in God's community. Their focus on formation serves as a guardrail, preventing leaders from promoting honor without practicing the disciplines that build it, thereby creating the very fractures they oppose.

The concluding synthesis presses the model toward leadership studies and practice, but its most provocative theological move remains this: bridge-building does not begin with technique; it begins with leaders who submit to formation so they can embody reconciliation rather than merely advocate it. Paul's revelation in Corinthians supports this ordering because reconciliation is first a gift received and only then a ministry entrusted (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Leaders who ignore that sequence tend to build bridges as performance. Leaders who honor that sequence build bridges as witness.

Palma and Gomez (2026) provide a biblically grounded framework interpreting leadership through the church's reconciling mission, questioning what flourishing looks like when Christ has made peace. Its strength lies in emphasizing that Scripture does not see division as normal or flourishing as optional. Pastors, leaders, and students seeking a biblically rooted framework beyond technique for formation will find a clear theological grammar for reconciliation-as-witness.

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Review of Markow, F. A. (2024). *Organization Behavior in Christian Perspective: Theory and Practice for Church and Ministry Leaders*. Baker. (ISBN 9781540968029), 243 pp., pb $27.99.

Markow maintains that organizations struggle with leadership issues simply because they do not understand where the study originated, the answer is organizational behavior. The author explores the dynamics of organizational behavior from a Christian perspective, identifying theories and practices for ministry and its leaders. Markow argues that the church is not a business in the traditional sense, an entity created by a human founder who sells products and services for profit. The scripture declares, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” Hebrews 11:3. The church’s founder and maker is God, who is not materialistic as human beings define it. Jesus asked Peter, “For what is man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Matthew 16:26. Profit in the natural typically involves financial gain; however, in the spiritual context, God seeks the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance) to be displayed in the lives of believers. Organizational behavior in the church should foster spiritual development rather than profit from obtaining a leadership position. The most valuable asset for a Christian leader is spiritual development, not a desire for an earthly position or title. However, in Christ, believers can have them both, an earthly position and spiritual development, the best of both worlds. Organizational behavior in ministry must bridge biblical principles and practices with leadership theories and their practices. A critical example of spiritual profitability includes being open to biblical teaching, counseling, and guidance.

Markow’s book defines organizational behavior as “The study of people in organizations, how they relate to one another in an organizational context, how they relate to the organization itself, and how the organization relates to its people” (pp.14-16). The book is a particularly good read with biblical applications and managerial principles. This book would be a valuable tool in the library of any faith-based leader because it offers a clear understanding of its subject matter through the lens of ministry

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leaders. Markow offers sound biblical analysis and very useful applications, which are strengths. Although the book is about viewing the material from a Christian Perspective, it would have been useful to compare and contrast the research from a secular perspective. The final chapter speaks to organizational culture, which could have been an optimal space to make the distinction but lacked practical application. This lack of comparison has resulted in a weakness.

The target audiences for Markow's book, identified in this book review, should be pastors at every level, secular and biblical organizational leaders, college students, particularly Christian students, from universities or seminaries. The author provides a great platform for addressing leadership in the Christian community. The book is well structured and offers a biblical approach for ministry leadership. The author offers insights for ministry leaders navigating complex challenges. For example, he says in a ministry context, "Becoming aware of others' perspectives can help leaders reduce miscommunication, enhance decision quality and develop more creative ideas and solutions" (pp.29-30). Markow concludes that, just as people should fit properly in their clothes, they should fit properly within their organization at every level for the organization to be healthy and operate at an optimal level. Just as an outfit should not be too loose or too tight, people in an organization should not be too rigid or too detached.

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