MODERATING VARIABLES FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP MODELS: A SUB-MODEL BASED ON ANTECEDENTS TO JESUS' FOOTWASHING DEMONSTRATION

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Various models have been proposed that explain the nature of servant leadership, either as a function with organizations or a dynamic interaction between leaders and followers. This paper proposes to address reasons why servant leaders vary in their effectiveness by offering a sub-model consisting of four moderating variables that should fit any current or future model of servant leadership. The variables are drawn from four specific facts that Jesus Christ knew prior to the time he washed his disciples' feet (John 13:1-5). The resultant variables include (a) how leaders respond to opportunity, (b) how leaders react to the power inherent in the leadership role, (c) how leaders perceive their identity, and (d) how leaders go about the process of influencing followers. Exploring each of these variables more fully will show (a) the connection between what Jesus knew and how leaders can relate to and apply this, (b) the relationship between that variable and what we know of servant leadership today, and (c) how this functions as a moderating variable in servant leadership models. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for leaders today and the need, as always, for further research.

I. INTRODUCTION

Servant leadership continues to grow internationally as an object of research interest and explicit practice among scholars and practitioners in both for-profit and non-profit organizations. Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009) note that leadership studies have moved toward a stronger emphasis on shared, relational, and global perspectives–at the expense most notably of a strong focus on transformational leadership. Servant leadership would doubtless fit each of those categories. Van Dierendonck (2011) lauds the current trend of empirical descriptive research in Servant

Leadership, away from what he terms the idealistic, normative and prescriptive writings that make up the first 20 years of servant leadership literature. In recent years various research-based models have been proposed that described the characteristics of servant leaders (e.g, Spears, 2002; Russell & Stone, 2002) and the process of servant leadership from a leader's perspective (e.g., Patterson, 2003), a follower's perspective (e.g., Winston, 2003) and a systems or organizational perspective (e.g., Wong and Page, 2003; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

As respected as Greenleaf (1977) is in popularizing the notion for contemporary leaders, however, Jesus Christ first taught that great leaders are great servants in the first century. Sendjaya and Sorros (2002) rightly note that "Jesus used the term 'servant' as a synonym for greatness. Contrary to the popular opinion of the day, Jesus taught that a leader's greatness is measured by a total commitment to serve fellow human beings" (p. 59). Moreover, Jesus exemplified servant leadership throughout his ministry. Most scholars agree that the supreme demonstration of this took place just before his crucifixion when Jesus, alone in an intimate setting with his disciples, abruptly left the dinner table, wrapped a long towel around his waist, and proceeded to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:4-5). Given the role that foot-washing servants occupied in that day, Jesus-the-rabbi did the unthinkable and left an indelible impression on the lives of those he left to lead the early church.

Despite its instinctive attractiveness to followers, however, servant leadership is not without its problems, even in Christian organizations and institutions. To begin with, both anecdotal experience and intentional research reveal that while servant leadership is often preached, it is just as often not practiced – particularly at the strategic level of churches, schools, and other organizations (Wong & Page, 2003). Moreover, the paradoxical nature of servant leadership still leaves practitioners with a disconnection between service and leadership. The words of one typical leader express the hesitation of many: "I know what service is, and I know what leadership is, but I'm still not sure how to lead by serving." A third problem has to do with leader discernment. Specifically, how do leaders determine the needs of the followers in any given moment and offer service accordingly? It must be noted that the same Christ who washed the disciples' feet did this just once; on another occasion he publicly rebuked Peter and referred to him as "Satan" (Matthew 16:23). How do leaders discern what the serving, leading, and teachable moments call for? Finally, how do practitioners and researchers determine the effectiveness of a leader's servant actions on meeting the needs of the followers? Simply put, how do we know when we are getting it right, and what accounts for that?

This paper proposes to address those issues by offering a sub-model containing four moderating variables that should fit any current or future model of servant leadership. Based on John's vivid description of the inner knowledge of Christ as an antecedent to washing the disciples feet (John 13:1-3), we understand that Jesus' *act* was based on four things John said he *knew*: that his "hour" had come, that the Father had given all things (all authority) into his hands, that he had come from God and that to God he would return. Each of these facets of understanding has implications for leaders today. The resultant variables include (a) how leaders respond to opportunity, (b) how leaders react to the power inherent in the leadership role, (c) how leaders perceive their identity, and (d) how leaders go about the process of influencing followers. Exploring each of these variables more fully will show (a) the connection between what Jesus

knew and how leaders can relate to and apply this, (b) the relationship between that variable and what we know of servant leadership today, and (c) how this functions as a moderating variable in servant leadership models. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for leaders today and the need, as always, for further research.

II. SERVANT LEADERSHIP MODELS

Rennaker (2005) categorizes servant leadership research since Greenleaf (1977) as moving in three trajectories:

1. Non-model discussions that address the servant leader's value base, the personal attributes of the servant leader, or the outcomes of servant leadership. For example, Spears (1995) distilled Greenleaf's writing into ten attributes of servant leaders. Others have offered variations on these attributes; van Dierendonck (2011) has identified 44 different attributes of servant leaders from various authors.

2. Leader-organizational models that focus on the ways servant leaders function within an organization. These would include Russell and Stone's (2002) servant leadership model, Wong and Page's (2003) multidimensional expanding circles model, and van Dierendonck's (2011) conceptual model. These models also view the servant leader as one who internally possesses certain attributes (character) and demonstrates high-consideration behavior toward followers.

3. Leader-follower models that focus on the relationship and the process of attributes and behaviors between the leader and the led. Patterson's (2003) virtues-based theoretical model represented a breakthrough in this dimension; Winston (2003) notes that it shows the causal relationships between the various attributes of servant leadership. It is here – among models focusing on the leader-follower relationship – that the following sub-model demonstrates its greatest relevance, though I would propose it is worthy of further research in any model seeking to explain various degrees of servant leader effectiveness.

Patterson (2003) defines servant leaders as those "who lead an organization by focusing on their followers, such that the followers are the primary concern and the organization concerns are peripheral" (p. 5). Her model encompasses seven constructs working in a processional pattern. Beginning with *agapao* love and ending with service, the mediating variables include humility, altruism, vision, trust, and empowerment. The focus of the model is on the internal character of the leader, particularly the leader's demonstration of virtue and personal excellence.

Winston (2003) extended Patterson's (2003) model "full circle" by viewing it through the lens of the follower. Here the leader's service produces a change in the follower's sense of love. This leads to an increase both the follower's commitment and the follower's own self-efficacy. This in turn produces a higher level of intrinsic motivation that leads to a higher sense of altruism toward the leader and his/her desires for the organization's success. Hence the follower serves the leader in a greater way and the cycle is complete. Winston's model actually has a three-dimensional component to it as well. Using maturity as a moderating variable, the model should be thought of more as a spiral than a cycle; as the people in the organization increase or decrease in maturity, the expressions of the various virtues increase or decrease with it.

At issue for Rennaker (2005) is the degree to which the various models demonstrate Greenleaf's (1977) true test of servant leadership – reproducing the leader's desire to serve. He turns to chaos theory as a proposed solution. His chaotic servant leadership model extends from Winston's full-circle model and shows the love inherent in the servant leader as the "strange attractor" functioning first as an independent variable, then as a dependent variable as the servant leader reproduces servant leaders, then as an independent variable again as the servant leader (along with the newly-reproduced servant leader) repeat the process.

Cerff and Winston (2006) introduce a new construct to the Patterson (2003) and Winston (2003) models by including hope as a virtuous construct that is an outcome of both the leader's and the follower's *agapao* love. This seeks to resolve a weakness in the previous model by addressing the need for a future perspective. Drawing on conclusions from the literature that effective leadership requires the development of high levels of hope, Cerff's (2006) previous research indicated a positive link between hope and self-efficacy and between hope and motivation to lead. Cerff and Winston propose adding the hope construct to Patterson's model just prior to empowerment, and to Winston's extension of the model just prior to the follower's altruism toward the leader and the leader's interests.

Poon (2006), meanwhile, finds a connection between certain servant leadership characteristics, self-efficacy, and mentoring effectiveness. He proposes a model that blends Patterson's (2003) and Winston's (2003) models of servant leadership with Pittenger and Heimann's (2000) Mentorship and Self-Efficacy Model, which posits that increased self-efficacy on the part of the mentor and mentee has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the relationship. Poon's model inserts self-awareness and authenticity into the leader perspective of the model and replaces vision with integrity. On the follower side, he replaces commitment to the leader with leader's self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation with mentoring relationship effectiveness. The cycle then ends with personal and professional development.

III. JESUS CHRIST AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP BY PRECEPT

While many people have written about servant leadership and some have researched it, only two advocates of serving through leading are spoken of with reverence. The first is Robert Greenleaf, an American who popularized the concept in the latter quarter of the twentieth century; an entire body of research owes a tremendous debt of gratitude and ongoing work to his lifelong effort. Greenleaf's most-often-quoted precept states:

> The Servant-Leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed? (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 13-14).

Preceding Greenleaf by some 1,900 years, however, is Jesus Christ. Like Greenleaf, Jesus offered an alternative to the popular, power-based model of "the kings of the Gentiles" (Luke 22:25). Though Jesus addressed the subject of servanthood as a contrast to power ambition in his rebuke of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:11), the most cited passages come from Mark 9:33-37, Mark 10:41-45 and Luke 22:25-27, with parallels in other synoptic gospels. In each episode, Jesus taught the precepts of servant leadership in response to a dispute among his disciples. The first occasion took place in Capernaum, the hometown and former center of business operations for the fishermen-disciples.

> When He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me" (Mark 9:33-37, NASU).

Both Jewish and Graeco-Roman culture idealized the mature adult; a child represented the "last of all" in those cultures (Grassmick, 1983). It would be unthinkable to "let the child go first," or for a man to think of himself as a servant of his own children, much less anybody else's. Yet this was the paradigm of the one Jesus said would be the greatest of all. Robertson (1985) notes that Jesus used the child to rebuke the arrogant conceit of the twelve disciples who were contending for first place.

The second teaching episode took place when brothers James and John approached Jesus with the audacious request that they be seated, one on his right hand and the other on the left, when he came in his kingdom. This aroused the ire of the other ten, for understandable reasons.

> Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:41-45, NASU).

Here Jesus identifies the quest for power and the exercise of authority as characteristic of "Gentile," or worldly rulers. In contrast, as Russell (2003) points out, Jesus offered himself as an example of an alternative approach.

> Jesus saw Himself as a servant leader, one whose very incarnation had the purpose of serving humankind. Despite His inherent authority as the Messiah, Jesus did not seek an earthly kingship. Instead, Jesus advocated that those who want greatness in the kingdom of God should seek the role of servant (p. 4).

The third occasion takes place between the Last Supper and Jesus' crucifixion. The teaching of Jesus is essentially the same, but the background information makes it clear that these are not two versions of the same account. Instead, against the painful backdrop of the impending death of Christ, the apostles again are arguing among

themselves about which of them was the greatest in the kingdom. By this time, the dispute apparently had lost the whispered tones described earlier in Mark 9.

> And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves" (Luke 22:24-27, NASU).

The importance of this exchange is that here and only here, Jesus explicitly mentions those in leading or governing positions, and expressly makes serving a condition of greatness. Russell (2003) points out that this is not the involuntary servitude of a slave under the power of a ruling master (Greek, *doulos*), but the voluntary, selfless service to even the most menial needs by one who does so out love (Greek, *diakonos*).

This passage is also important because in it Jesus mentions those "reclining at the table" (a reference to first-century Middle Eastern table practices) in contrast to those serving. He rhetorically asks who is greater, then answers for himself: "Is it not the one who reclines at the table? *But I am among you as the one who serves*" (v. 27, emphasis mine). Many scholars (cf. Hendrickson, 1954; Barclay, 1956; Tenney, 1981) see this as an explicit reference to John's account of the footwashing experience (John 13:1-5), as Jesus not only taught servant leadership, but modeled it. It is that experience to which we now turn our attention.

IV. CHRIST'S DEMONSTRATION OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP THROUGH FOOTWASHING

Unlike the synoptic gospels, John's gospel presents Jesus more as a living parable of "love to the limit" that expressed itself in an act of abject service (Beasley-Murray, 1987, p. 240). Wilkes (1996) states that Jesus "modeled for all time what servant leadership looks like" (p. 17). John also emphasizes more the inward knowledge of Jesus and how he chose to demonstrate servant leadership as a result of what he perceived.

> Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, 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, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded (John 13:1-5, NASU).

The switch from extracting truth from scriptural precepts to finding models to follow is one best done with a little fear and trembling. Models should certainly be informed by sound biblical hermeneutics and thoughtfully applied. Yet scripture itself

makes it clear that finding examples in the experiences of biblical characters is a valid application of the narrative passages of scripture (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). It should also be noted that as Barclay (1956) points out, the gospel of John always has two layers of meaning – that which lies on the surface and the meaning just beneath. Many scholars rightly point out that the washing of the disciples' feet, Jesus' exchange with Peter (vv. 6-11) and his subsequent elaboration of the experience (vv. 12-17) speak on both a rich theological level of the depths of Christ's love as he was about to reveal in his sacrificial death, and on a moral level as an example to his followers and leaders in his enterprise (Lenski, 1943; Hendricksen, 1954; Haenchen, 1984; Whitacre, 1999). While interpreters may have a bias toward one approach or another – truth to understand vs. an example to follow, Beasley-Murray (1987) rightly points out that neither view is expressly required.

With respect noted for the rich meaning, sacramental considerations, and depth of theological understanding of this passage, the primary focus of this paper is on a model based on modeling. Simply put, in a similar vein to the old joke about why the man climbed the mountain, the first answer to the question of why Jesus washed the disciples' feet was because they were dirty. Moreover, his explanation of his actions explicitly used the word "example." Jesus was modeling something he clearly wanted the disciples to grasp – particularly since in at least three previous occasions they failed to get it. This stunning, unprecedented affront to both social custom and the ambitious pride inherent in human nature embodies in one gesture Patterson's (2003) model of servant leadership from the leader's perspective. As noted earlier, Patterson presented servant leadership as a viable theory and offered a model of seven virtues, with *agapao* love being the independent variable, service being the dependent variable, and the virtue constructs of humility, altruism, trust, vision and empowerment functioning as mediating variables. The sections below will demonstrate how the footwashing experience displayed each of those virtues in tangible form.

Agapao love – the independent variable of Patterson's model.

Patterson (2003) states that love is the cornerstone of the relationship between servant leaders and followers. Leaders must consider the needs of their followers above their own. Patterson observes,
> *Agapao* love is consistent with servant leadership to the extent that servant leaders must have such great love for the followers that they are willing to learn the giftings and talents of each one of the followers. The leader that leads with *agapao* love has a focus on the employee first, then on the talents of the employee, and lastly on how this benefits the organization (p. 12).

Ayers (2008) follows up on this concept, noting that the primary purpose of a servant leader is to "place authentic value upon people, to affirm their worth, with the goal of building them up. . . . It is moving past leadership for the benefit of self, toward leadership for the benefit of others" (p. 11).

The act of washing the disciples' feet begins with a categorical statement that Jesus, having loved (*agapao*) them, showed the full extent of his love (v. 1). John makes it clear that all that follows from this point to the end of the gospel is said and

done in the context of Christ's love. The word occurs 31 times in chapters 13-17, as compared to only six times in the first 12 chapters. Besterling (2006) notes that Jesus' love was a life-long commitment . The phrase "the full extent of his love" has been translated variously as "to the end" (the literal translation, KJV), "love in the highest intensity" and "love to the last breath" (Ridderboss, 1997), "to the uttermost" (Robertson, 1932), or love that "saw it through" (Morgan, n.d.). This was no sentimental affect (Haenchen, 1984). Before he laid down his life, Jesus cleaned the street from the feet of ten who still did not get it, one who was spluttering on about how this was inappropriate (v. 6) and would soon deny him, and one who had already been influenced by Satan to betray him.

> These men Jesus had loved with the mighty love of intelligence and
> purpose and in this love had showered upon them all his gifts and
> blessings, making them truly "his own." Yet all this is not enough for
> Jesus and his loving heart; like a mother who loses herself in her own, so
> Jesus even in these last moments so freighted with concerns of his own,
> "loved them to the end" (Lenski, 1943, p. 904).

This scene is highly charged with contrasts, as revealed in the grammar. In the tension between the knowledge of Jesus and the ignorance of the disciples, between the faithfulness of Christ and the treachery of Judas, between the complete authority of Christ and his complete humility, and between the bitter self-pity he could have displayed and the self-giving he actually demonstrated, Jesus reveals the character of a heart gripped by relentless, causeless, ceaseless love.

Service through footwashing – Patterson's dependent variable.

Service is at the heart of servant leadership theory – the primary function of a leader not focused on his or her own interests, but on the interests of others (Philippians 2:4; Patterson, 2003). Patterson illustrates such service as being expressed by leaders who actively seek out opportunities to serve others. This may involve supporting the frontline, discovering the uniqueness of each constituent, or unleashing rather than stifling creativity in people. It also places the leader before followers as the "first servant" – a role model that sets the climate with organizational relationships. Servant leaders accept responsibility for others, then give of themselves in service to fulfill that responsibility. This is no place for ambassadors; servant leaders get personally, authentically involved, generously giving of themselves in time, energy, care, compassion, and even their own material goods. Barclay (1956) notes the interpersonal connection between love and service: "When, for example, someone falls ill, the person who loves him will perform the most menial services and will delight to do them, because love as like that" (p. 159). The difference in servant leaders, however, is that they serve whomever is in need, regardless of position or rank.

The episode John describes ends with Jesus completing a task reserved for the lowest of household servants – the ultimate physical expression of servanthood in that culture. Set in context, John the Baptist had earlier said of Christ that he was not worthy to untie the thongs of Jesus' sandals (Luke 3:16) – a clear reference to footwashing and the place it held among servants in that culture. Not even Jewish slaves were required to do such a task; it was reserved for Gentile slaves and for wives and children

(Beasley-Murray, 1987). Because the roads in the Middle East were dusty and impossibly muddy after the rain, and because virtually everyone wore sandals, it was customary for a host to have a servant available with a basin of water to perform the comforting, but menial task of washing the guests' feet. But Jesus' band of followers had no servants, and this was a private gathering in the Upper Room. That did not change the fact, however, that a long towel and pot of water were readily available upon entry. As mentioned earlier, the disciples seemed too proud and preoccupied with reserving their standing in places of kingdom importance to lower themselves to serve their brethren. Yet another contrast in this passage: these men "with the *So Big* attitude of heart" (Hendricksen, 1954, p. 229) who were too great to serve are about to be cared for by a Master who was too great not to.

> It may well be that on that night of this last meal together they had got
> themselves into such a state of competitive pride that not one of them
> would accept the duty of being responsible for seeing that the water and
> the towels were there to wash the feet of the company as they came in.
> Jesus saw it; and Jesus mended that omission in the most vivid and
> dramatic way (Barclay, 1956, p. 161).

Jesus did appear to wait to give the disciples the opportunity to step up, as it were, but he did not wait until the meal was over, as rendered in the KJV. The language of the text makes it clear that the food had been served to men with soiled feet who were reclining around the table in the customary fashion with heads toward the eating surface. Jesus, the leader, took the form of a servant by leaving the "inner company" of the table and performing the task of the "outsider." There are no romantic notions of servanthood left to describe the boundary he crossed and the social depth to which he descended to meet the service needs of men he later called his friends.

Other constructs in Patterson's model. Between the love that drove him and the service he performed, Jesus demonstrated each of the mediating influences in Patterson's model. His humility is clear. In Paul's language, Jesus did not consider equality with God a thing to be selfishly held onto, but emptied himself, took on the form of a servant, and humbled himself (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus demonstrated altruism in his concern for the welfare of his disciples and the lengths to which he would go to care for and improve their welfare – even if it meant utter servitude (cf. Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003). Much is made of the many messages inherent in this episode, but it is important not to overlook the obvious. Jesus washed the disciples' feet because their feet were dirty, he wanted them to be clean, and no one else was willing. The opposite extreme to altruism, in Patterson's view, is narcissistic self-interest; around the table this is embodied in the character of Judas Iscariot.

Jesus demonstrated vision in his subsequent conversation with the twelve about what he had just done:

> Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord;
> and you are right, for *so* I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed
> your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an
> example that you also should do as I did to you (John 13:12b-15).

Patterson (2003) notes that servant leaders differ in their approach to vision in that theirs is aimed at the life-improvement of followers more than the success of the

organization or institution. (Winston's (2003) subsequent full circle model explains why organizations prosper nonetheless.) Jesus clearly demonstrated a vision for the day his disciples would be characterized by servanthood rather than endless debates about who was the greatest in the kingdom. His Upper Room Discourse that follows (ch. 14-17) clarifies that vision and the role the Holy Spirit would play in bringing it to pass.

Jesus demonstrated trust in washing the disciples' feet in the wake of a clear failure on the part of one or all of the disciples to model servanthood. In taking care of the issue himself rather than ordering, cajoling or berating his trusted friends, Jesus created an environment that allowed the disciples to learn from their mistakes and grow (cf. Patterson, 2003; Melrose, 1995).

Jesus modeled empowerment both by what he did and what he did not do. Using what Clinton (1988) calls *force of modeling*, Jesus took some of the precious little time he had left to train a group of followers how to lead by serving. He also expressly called them to follow his example (v. 15) – but contrary to those who interpret this passage sacramentally, he did not explicitly limit his call to the physical act of washing feet. In this, he clarified his expectation and goals, but left them free to follow their own future paths of influence through service as the Holy Spirit would lead them (cf. John 14:26; Patterson, 2003; Melrose, 1995).

It is clear from this comparison that Jesus graphically and dramatically demonstrated what at least one theoretician (Patterson, 2003) has defined servant leadership to be. Having already related to "his own" with *agape* love, Jesus put love in action (*agapao*) to meet a compelling need in an extraordinary way (service). In doing so, he let go of any desire for position or honor and considered their need as more important than his own (humility). He demonstrated concern for their overall and immediate welfare (altruism). He imagined a day when someone else would have a need and one of these men would stoop to serve it (vision). With confidence he expected them to learn from their mistakes and shortcomings (trust). And through the promise of another Comforter who was to come (John 14:26), he energized them to apply the principle as the opportunities would arise in the future (empowerment). Is there any wonder, then, when two millennia later the "rulers of the Gentiles" are still "lording over" their subjects that people desperate for more meaningful models return again and again to Jesus?

Variables that Prompted the Footwashing – What Jesus Knew

The footwashing experience, understood only as an expression of service, misses half the point. As much as this was an act of service, it was also an act of leadership. Wong and Davey (2007) would concur. "Servanthood by itself does not make one a leader," they note. "One needs to blend a servant's heart with leadership skills" (p. 6). What often goes unnoticed is how John sets up this scene. Something took place in the "inner-leader world" of Jesus – something between the *agapao* (v. 1) and the service (vv. 4-5) that prompted all this.

> Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had
> come that He would depart out of this world to the Father… 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, got up from supper, and laid aside
His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself (John 13:1-4).

Zorilla (1995) states that Jesus appears in this scene as the owner of the
situation; nothing took him by surprise. Morgan (n.d.) asserts that while the symbolic act
was that of washing the disciples' feet, the consciousness of Christ is the arresting thing
in the story as John tells it. He refers to it as the "causative consciousness of Jesus" (p.
229) – that is, the consciousness that led him to the action described. As all the verb
forms for "knowing" are participles, Westcott (2004) translates this, "since He knew,"
adding, "The knowledge that He was possessed of this divine authority was the ground
of His act of service, as in v. 1" (p. 146).

John mentions four things Jesus *knew:*

1. He knew His hour had come (v. 1). Jesus knew that He soon would be, in
John's words, "glorified." But that glorification involved death on a cross as the ultimate
expression of love for the world. Knowing that His hour had come, this was no time for
business as usual. The time was short. The lessons had to be memorable, and first
priorities had to be on the table.

2. He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands (v. 3). He knew the
victory was secured, and His authority was undisputed. He had full control of the destiny
of the world and the people in it. At issue would be how He would respond to that level
of power.

3. He knew that He had come from God (v. 3). He had nothing to prove to
anybody - neither the disciples, nor the Jews. He was secure in His identity and His
hope.

4. He knew He would be returning to God, having loved His own who were in the
world (v. 1, 3). Jesus knew He would be doing more than just saying good-bye. He
would leave these men, who were still arguing among themselves about their place at
the table, in charge. This was a critical moment for influencing them by leaving them
with both a precept and an example.

While no living human can claim knowledge on this level, everyone who aspires
to lead in the example of Jesus Christ does confront the same issues Jesus faced : (a)
How to respond to crisis or teachable moments (hereafter referred to as "opportunity");
(b) how to respond to positional power (authority) and the all-too-human desire to hold
on to it (hereafter referred to as "power"); and (c) where to find and how to demonstrate
a secure sense of personal identity that also communicates to followers a sense of
identity of their own (hereafter referred to as "identity"); and (d) how to influence others
from a position of love in a way that extends beyond our direct contact (hereafter
referred to as "influence").

The following sub-model proposes that each of these issues are universal
enough in the leadership experience to represent moderating variables to any servant
leadership model that inform (a) the effectiveness of the leader as a servant, (b) the
tangible expression of *agapao* love in any given circumstance, and (c) the
demonstration of service that may be called for in any given moment. Following a brief
exploration of the nature of "knowing" in this passage, the sub-model is developed in
consideration of each of these four issues. Each variable will be examined in light of (a)
the connection between what Jesus knew and what this has to do with leaders today,
(b) the relationship between that variable and what we know of servant leadership

today, and (c) how this functions as a moderating variable in servant leadership models. Table 1 shows a summary of the essential elements of each construct.

The Nature of Knowing. The Greek language of the Bible had eight different words that could be translated, "know" in English. The two most common are *ginosko* and *oida*, the term used in John 13:1-3 to describe Jesus' knowledge. While the two can be more or less synonymous, the distinctions are worthy of attention. Vine (1985) states that *ginosko* frequently suggests beginning or making progress in knowing, and can be translated, "came to know."

Table 1
The Four Moderating Variables (Constructs) in the Servant Leadership Sub-Model

Construct	Definition	Moment of Truth	Focus	High SL	Low SL
Opportunity	The convergence of (a) urgency - a situation requiring something to be done soon; (b) crisis - a time of intense difficulty, trouble or risk; and (c) potential – increased receptivity to, and possibility of, dramatic favorable change.	How will the leader respond when faced with a need to make a choice?	Choices the leader makes, particularly in urgent situations.	Servant-decisiveness	Self-protection
Power	The ability of the leader to influence others – whether or not the leader has the authority to do so.	How will the leader use the power inherent in their position or person?	Motives for the leader's use of power.	Servant-investment	Self-interest
Identity	The paradigm through which the leader understands his or her purpose, relationships, communication, and vision for the future.	Will the leader be comfortable enough in his/her identity to serve boldly?	Paradigm through which leaders relate to followers.	Servant-confidence	Self-insecurity
Influence	The use of example, precept and persuasion to motivate behavior and change in others.	How willing is the leader to target his or her influence away from self and toward a new generation of servants?	Desired end toward which leaders seek to influence change	Servant-reproduction	Self-attraction

Oida, on the other hand, suggests fullness of knowledge. When Jesus explained to Peter in v. 7 that he did not "know now," (*oida*) he was saying that Peter did not yet completely understand the significance of having his feet washed, but he would "come to know" (*ginosko*) hereafter. Vine adds that *ginosko* frequently implies an active relationship between the knower and the known. *Oida* is less personal, but more complete; it expresses the fact that the object has come within the scope of the knower's perception and often translated, "saw." Robertson (1932) explains that the form of the word emphasizes the full consciousness of Christ. "He was not stumbling into the dark as he faced 'his hour' (p. 235) . . . . Jesus is fully conscious of his deity and Messianic dignity when he performs this humble act" (p. 237). Tenney (1981), commenting on the significance of this language, adds:

> Jesus was not the innocent victim of a plot, unaware of what was
> transpiring around him. . . . Jesus was fully aware of his authority, his
> divine origin, and his destiny. . . .Furthermore, Jesus' inner awareness of
> his power and office did not deter his ministry to the men he had chosen
> and was trying to prepare for the final catastrophe (p. 136).

The leadership implications of this are compelling. While awareness appears in Spears' (1995) list of 10 characteristics of the servant leader, comparatively little has been written about it compared to other attributes and constructs. Moreover, what little has been touched on has more to do with self-awareness (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears; Sendjaya, 2003) – certainly important, but hardly the entire scope of the non-technical knowledge and understanding a leader should have. Knowledge or awareness is vital to the successful demonstration of many of the commonly-mentioned characteristics of servant leaders, including listening, interpersonal acceptance, conceptualization, foresight, empowerment, trust, vision, empathy, and many more. Just as loving and knowing were inseparable antecedents in Jesus' profound display of servanthood, could it not be true that loving and knowing are just as inseparable to servant leaders today? How can leaders serve constituents they do not understand, meet needs they are completely or partially unaware of, or help build teams when they are blind to the strengths and weaknesses of team members? One is tempted to use the phrase, "elephant in the room" to describe the role that the pursuit and use of knowledge plays in servant leadership research, but it appears to be more accurate to refer to the "ghost in the room." More consideration must be given in future research and models to the acquisition, holistic management (i.e., "left brain vs. right brain"), and ethical use of knowledge as facilitators of servant leadership – perhaps even at or near the same level as *agapao* love, trust, empowerment or vision. If to know them is to love them and to love them is to know them, and to love and know them is to serve them, should we not know more about knowing? And should leaders not have a clearly-defined plan to grow in their non-technical knowledge of those they presume to lead?

Opportunity (he knew that his hour had come). The concept of "the hour" – Jesus' appointed time to fulfill his ultimate mission of redeeming the world – has been laced throughout John's gospel to this point (Whitacre,1999). The time of departure was at hand. Time was short, the need was great, and opportunities for teachable moments were dwindling. In such a crucible, every leader's decision is magnified in importance. "Such is the context wherein he shows to his own his 'love to the limit'" (Beasley-Murray, 1987). Used in this vein, the construct of opportunity reaches beyond dictionary

definitions to represent the convergence of (a) urgency - a situation requiring something to be done soon; (b) crisis - a time of intense difficulty, trouble or risk; and (c) potential – increased receptivity to, and possibility of, dramatic favorable change. This was the situation in which Jesus knew himself to be, and where leaders face a moment of truth: will they focus on serving themselves, or serving their constituents? This construct – opportunity – is the first moderating variable in the servant leadership sub-model.

Opportunity and servant leadership research. Wong and Davey (2007) point out that many business leaders fear being perceived as weak and indecisive in the tough and tumble business world if they think and behave like a humble servant. Wong and Page (2003) add that critics of servant leadership argue that participatory democracy makes it difficult for leaders to make tough but unpopular decisions. On the contrary, Wong and Page argue that servant leaders are *better* suited to make tough decisions because they consult widely, present compelling reasons for the decision, and assume complete responsibility for any negative consequences. Servant leaders feel no need to ambush followers with arbitrary decrees or force compliance out of fear of dismissal. Instead, they cultivate respect, responsibility, accountability, and shared decision-making. As a result, rather than driving discontented, good people away, they build a team of decision-makers and a culture of mutual support and trust.

Writing about servant leadership, Laub (2004) defines a leader as "a person who sees a vision, takes action toward the vision, and mobilizes others to become partners in pursuing change" (p. 4). Inherent in this definition is action, for which all leaders have a bias. Leaders apply action to their vision, taking on the personal responsibility and risk of moving into the future with courage. They value initiative as the entry point into leading and offer themselves as an example of decisive action in order to motivate others to join the process. This is hardly the signature of how servant leaders have been caricatured by their critics. Nor is Laub's elaboration of vision, which he says often begins with the leader seeing what is around him or her in terms of needs. "We care about what we see and we begin to reflect on what we may need to do about it. It then moves beyond needs into the realm of possibilities" (p. 4).
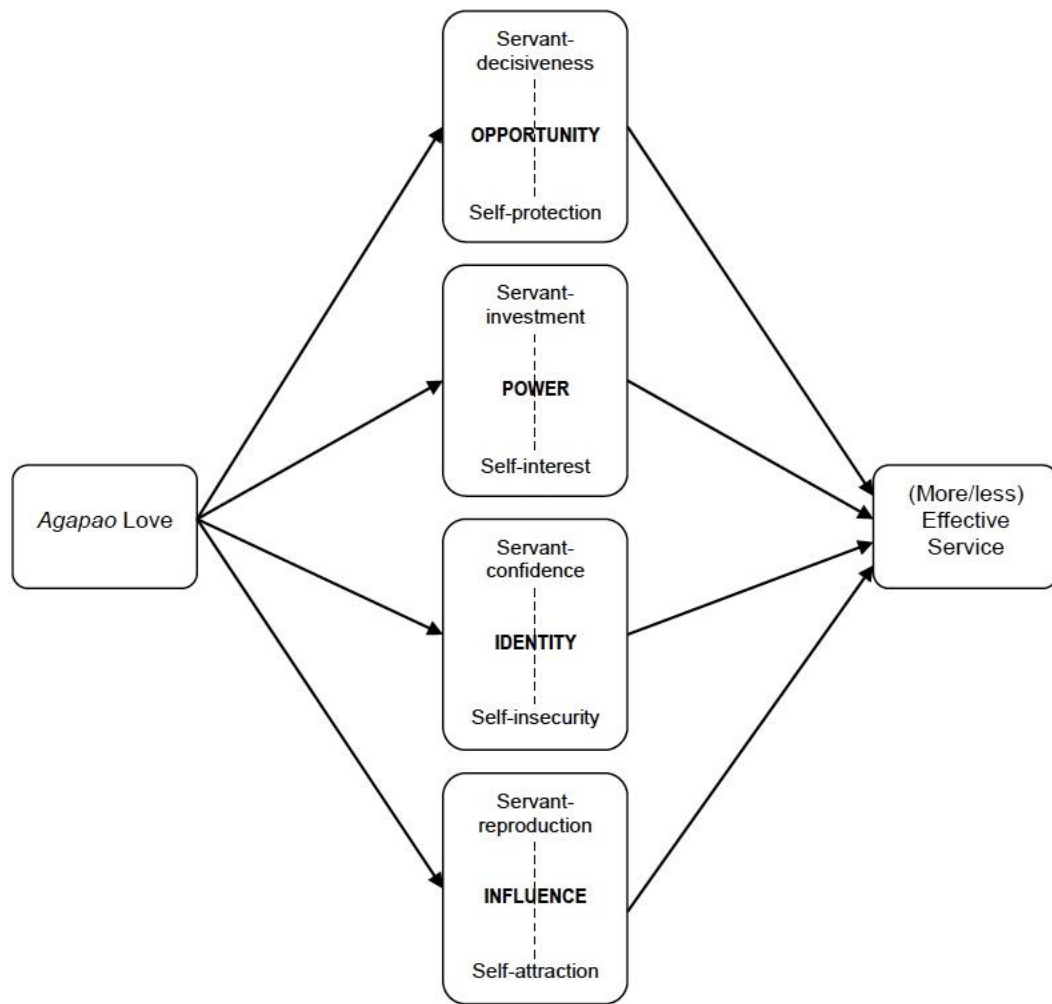
Figure 1:The Servant Leadership Sub-model, using Patterson's (2003) independent and

dependent variables for illustrative purposes only.

The moderating variable of opportunity. At issue in this context is the "road less traveled" by servant leaders. Leaders take decisive action toward a vision, but what action, in what direction? Opining about the needs of others works well in a laboratory or quiet ivory tower, but the crucible of crisis may well reveal more narrow interest in self-protection than service. This is sadly true in many Christian organizations, where leaders are motivated by a sense of insecurity and an inflated ego that demands total obedience and threatens dismissal for insubordination (Wong & Davey, 2007). Crisis, urgency, and remarkable potential can change people, leaders included. This makes Jesus' focus and decisiveness all the more extraordinary.

With that in mind, the variable of opportunity imagines the leader making choices in the presence of the opportunity construct along a spectrum, with servant-decisiveness at one extreme and self-protection at the other extreme. Jesus is the ultimate example of servant-decisiveness; borrowing Paul's language again, he "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:7-8, NASU). At the opposite extreme are leaders who, in the language of *The Message,* "cling to the advantages of that status, no matter what" (Philippians 2:6). At issue on this spectrum are the *choices* made (or avoided) during times of opportunity. The proposition is that at any given time, any leader is capable of making choices somewhere along that spectrum, thus moderating the perception and effectiveness of the leader as servant.

Power (he knew he had all authority). John's language that Jesus knew "the Father had put all things into his hands" idiomatically speaks of Christ's complete authority (Boice, 1985). Westcott (2004) calls attention to verb form, difficult to translate fully into English, which suggests that this commission had been given once, for all eternity. "All things" indicates absolute authority – all the more impressive here, Westcott says, in the prospect of apparent defeat. Milne (1993) adds, "*All things* means just that. His rule is complete; his lordship is absolute" (p. 198). "Into his hands" means that Jesus owned the authority to do as he wanted (Lenski, 1943). Set in stark relief against this knowledge, of course, is what Jesus actually did and did not do with this authority. Rather than acting in self-interest, Jesus not only refrained from "smiting the traitor" (Lenski), he willfully, humbly served his disciples in the most menial of ways. "All things were in Jesus' hands when those hands washed the disciples' feet. Yet we see that these hands are still in deepest humiliation – they *have* almighty power but *do not use* this power in majesty" (Lenski, p. 912). Just at the moment when Jesus might have displayed the supreme pride, he acted in the deepest humility (Barclay, 1956).

The construct of power in this sense is at once synonymous with and distinct from the ideas of authority and influence. Carter (2009) defines influence as a *generalized effect* of one person on another; this is more closely aligned to the definition of leadership. Carter defines power as the *ability* of a leader to influence others, and authority as the *right* of a leader to influence others. Authority and power thus can operate concurrently or independently. One can have the right to influence others, the power to influence others, both, or neither. The moment of truth, of course, as modeled by Jesus, is whether the leader uses his or her power as a servant-investment in followers or as a means of serving self-interests. This emerges as the second moderating variable in the servant leadership sub-model.

Power and servant leadership research. Carter (2009) points out the tension with which Christians view the subject of power because of the "dark side" inherent in the use of it in leadership (p. 186). Wong and Page (2003) address the opposite anxiety among people in leadership positions: how can one be a humble servant and at the same time wield a big stick? As a result, many Christian leaders retreat to a disconnection between their beliefs and behaviors; they believe in servant leadership, but not at the expense of their own abusive power and controlling pride. In Christian circles much of this is cloaked in the language of vision – one that comes from no less a source than God. The leader's task, then, is to lead others *by whatever means*

necessary to accomplish that vision from God, usually to build a great church or school or to accomplish some great missionary purpose. Carter objects:

> Unless both the *ends* for which a Christian organization exists, and the *means* by which a Christian organization operates are consistent with the teachings of Jesus, it is, in effect, just another business and the fact that it operates under a Christian label has little significance and may actually bring dishonor on the One we presume to follow. Unless we take seriously the words of Jesus to lead as *servants,* I do not believe we can call ourselves Christian leaders (p. 196).

Servant leadership does not abandon the use of power; it simply targets it. At the same time, servant leaders recognize that, as French and Raven have famously shown, there is more than one type of power (French & Russell, 1959). Coercive power, wherein the follower complies to avoid threats or punishment, is a last resort for servant leaders to use with workers "whose performance and attitude negatively affect other workers in spite of repeated intervention efforts" (Wong &Davey, 2007, p. 2). Servant leaders may also rely on (a) reward power, wherein followers comply in anticipation of the promise of rewards, (b) legitimate power that prompts compliance based on responsibility, (c) expert power that inspires trust in the leader's knowledge or abilities, (d) referent power that draws the follower into a relationship based on admiration or approval, and (e) informational power, in which followers are influenced by the leader's persuasive communication (French & Russell, 1959).

The moderating variable of power. Laub (2004) reminds us that leaders always possess power and wield it for various purposes. Servant leaders acknowledge this, and harness their power to serve the best interests of the led over their own interests. Such a choice may well be understood as an investment, complete with risk and an anticipated reward. "Servant leaders believe that by taking the risk of focusing on the led the other critical issues of productivity, teamwork, and customer service will increase by maximizing the full potential of each employee" (Laub, p. 8). This is in contrast to an autocratic leader, who also wields power and functions as a change agent, but in service of self. Laub notes that servant leadership stands alone as the only understanding of leadership that confronts the issue of self-interest among leaders head-on. Van Dierendonck (2011) concurs; in naming stewardship as one of six characteristics of servant leadership, he characterizes servant leaders as moving away from control and self-interest. The challenge is that self-interest, while in its extremes is certainly narcissistic (cf. Patterson, 2003), is also familiar, known, and comfortable. Servant-investment, on the other hand, is risky, unknown, and (delightfully!) uncomfortable. And motives of the heart are often extremely difficult to detect – "deceitful above all else," Jeremiah says (Jeremiah 17:9).

The variable of power imagines the leader using it along a spectrum, with servant-investment at one extreme and self-interest at the other. Jesus, again, is the ultimate example of investing in the well-being of his followers. This is certainly true from an eternal perspective, but even in the temporal milieu in which he found himself, Jesus used his unlimited power to invest (in no certain order) in clean feet, clean hearts, and clarified purpose and understanding. This is in contrast to Judas, who acted out of what Paul later would term "selfish ambition and vain conceit" (Philippians 2:3, NIV) in betraying Christ for 30 pieces of silver. At issue on this spectrum are the *motives* for the

use of the leader's power. The proposition is that at any given time, any leader is capable of using power along that spectrum, thus moderating the perception and effectiveness of the leader as servant.

*Identity (he knew he had come from God***).** Identity is a huge theme in John's gospel, as shown particularly Christ's seven "I am" statements in the first 15 chapters. Jesus revealed himself as the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the gate (10:9), the good shepherd (10:11), the resurrection and the life (11:25-26), the way, the truth and the life (14:6), and the vine (15:5). Prior to the footwashing, John also states that Jesus knew he came from God, clearly aware of his divine origin (Boice, 1985). Identity for Christ was a convergence of mission (he knew why he was sent), relation (he knew who sent him), communication (he revealed the heart of his father), and destiny (he was rightful heir to all things). Beasley-Murray (1987) interprets the phrase "come from God" as indicative of the Father's commission and authority; Jesus came to do a job. Westcott (2004) calls attention to the emphatic word order in the original: "and that it was from God He came forth, and unto God He is going." Emphasizing identity, John is saying that Jesus knew he was sent out of a relationship to ultimate power and glory. Besterling (2006) notes the communicative identity of Jesus. He loved his disciples and wanted the context of that love to be clear: "Jesus came as a servant leader to communicate to His disciples that both He and God the Father loved them" (p. 83). Finally, Hendricksen (1954) points out that Jesus washed the disciples' feet in the full consciousness that he was God's only begotten Son; hence the rightful heir of all things. Those four factors form the identity construct for leaders today: Identity is the paradigm through which the leader understands his or her purpose, relationships, communication, and vision for the future.

Throughout the demonstration of his identity, Jesus displayed a confident, peaceful awareness of who he was, who sent him, what his purpose was, and where he was going. Simply put, he had everything to reveal, but nothing to prove. He was gloriously free to be himself and not a copycat of the local religious scene. In great servant-confidence, he served his disciples in full consciousness of who he was. "It was not that he forgot he was God and so humbled himself. It was because he was God and wished to act as God that he did it" (Boice, 1985, p. 1019). This moment of truth was whether Jesus would demonstrate confidence enough in who he was to serve boldly, or whether he needed the disciples to somehow affirm his role and identity. Thus identity serves as the third moderating variable in the servant leadership sub-model.

Identity and servant leadership research. Servant leaders demonstrate authenticity – an important recurring theme in the literature (Russell & Stone; 2002; van Dierendonck, 2011). They operate with integrity out of a sense of their true selves. In that vein, Jesus did not *need* to wash the disciples' feet. He did not *need* to serve. He served because his followers had a need. Wong and Page (2003) assert that Jesus was equally at home with the exercise of power and the humility of servanthood. Leaders called to follow in his steps must theoretically and practically find out how to do the same. It seems the key to that is to mentally and emotionally detach both power and service from one's sense of identity. This speaks to the transcendental nature of servant leadership (Sanders, Hopkins & Geroy, 2003).

Contrary to this, insecure people in places of authority display a felt need to cling to authoritarian hierarchical structures as if it were their only lifeline. "Basically, their

distrust in servant leadership stems from their own insecurity and egotism. They do not have the confidence that others will follow them, if they cannot exercise coercive power indiscriminately" (Wong & Page, 2003, p. 6). Egotism runs rampant in such organizations, feeding what Wong and Page refer to as the celebrity syndrome, the pedestal syndrome and rankism. They find their security in being the center of attention and perpetuating their grip on power, using whatever means they find necessary to achieve numerical and material success.

The idea of divine revelation, ostensibly a *good* thing, is another factor that feeds leader insecurity and abuse of power. Carter (2009) notes that the idea of God giving a vision to the leader, who then communicates it to followers and motivates and organizes them to work toward its accomplishment is often short-circuited.

> Unfortunately, the pattern one sees in some Christian organizations is that the members of the organization, or the congregation in the case of churches, are reduced to the role of pawns whose purpose is to unquestioningly implement the vision communicated by the leader. And, unfortunately, sometimes leaders manipulate followers by using the coercive power of guilt to motivate participation, suggesting that if they don't cooperate they are unfaithful or disobedient to God (p. 199).

The moderating variable of identity. To higher an individual's place of authority, the more confident they must be in their personal sense of purpose, relationships, communication, and vision in order to serve utterly. Position seekers, image manipulators, and disciples jockeying for places at the head of the table need not apply. Barclay (1956) states that Jesus, knowing he had come from God and would soon return, may have carried a certain contempt for people and the matters of this world. Who cares about dirty feet when one is about to vacate the planet? Only the One who was secure enough in his identity to attend to the lowest needs of his team. In contrast, consider Jesus' description of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23: they are unwilling to lift a finger to meet a need; they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; they love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and insist on being called by respectful titles in public. It was in contrast to them that Jesus said, "The greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11).

The identity variable imagines the lens through which the leader views his or her role along a spectrum. At one extreme is servant-confidence – the complete security the leader may have to serve with abandon and without pretense, self-justification, or self-protection. At the other extreme is self-insecurity – the pride and fear of losing control that prompts people in authority to protect their position at all costs. At issue on this spectrum is the *paradigm* through which leaders relate to followers. The proposition is that any given time, any leader is capable of seeing him/herself with peaceful confidence that serves or self-centered insecurity that seeks to hoard power regardless of the cost, thus moderating the perception and effectiveness of the leader as servant.

Influence (he knew he was going back to God). Jesus knew he was on the verge of returning to God; this speaks of his future glory (Boice, 1985). As he later reveals in the Upper Room Discourse, he recognizes that, while he is proceeding with full awareness of certain victory (Morgan, n.d.), for the disciples this means he must and will leave them. Thus, as Westcott (2004) points out, "in his knowledge of the disciples' suffering the Lord forgot His own suffering" (p. 145). Given the limitations of time and

the heart of Christ as an endless teacher, Jesus took advantage of a teachable moment in the Upper Room to give the disciples an example and lesson beyond their ability to fully comprehend in the moment. This was a lesson for the long haul (Besterling, 2006). According to Eshbach (1969), this act of love expressed in footwashing will relate the will of God to these disciples, not just for the moment, but will influence the radical love that would be the nature of the coming church. Footwashing, Beasley-Murray (1987) says, serves as a concrete embodiment of the love that gave itself to his people throughout his ministry, and as such, should not be limited to an example of literally washing people's feet. This "love to the limit" elicits a love that expresses itself in a myriad of ways.

The point in all this is that Jesus, in seizing a teachable moment and taking action to model servanthood, as well as do some succession planning, does so for the express purpose of reproducing servants. Russell (2003) notes the importance of this account in that it illustrates the connection between Jesus' self-admission of his Lordship and his expressed call for the disciples to follow his example. Jesus, knowing he was returning to God and sending another Comforter (John 16:7ff), models for the disciples what they later were to model in leadership situations of their own. Then after using one of the most fundamental ways of teaching others (Carter, 2009), he expressly tells them, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (v. 14). The three factors Jesus used – example, precept and persuasion – form the construct of influence. His moment of truth came when he decided to give birth to a new generation of servants rather than call attention to his own authority or glory. As Jesus, notwithstanding his imminent suffering, intentionally reached past his time on earth to influence the future disposition of his soon-leaders, he demonstrated influence as the fourth moderating variable of the servant leadership sub-model.

Influence and servant leadership research. Influence is doubtless the most-repeated element of leadership (cf. Russell & Stone, 2002). The uniqueness of servant leadership is that it changes the focus by "emphasizing the ideal of service in the leader-follower relationship" (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1229). Rather than coercing or cajoling followers into accepting a vision (which may be evidence that the leader's "vision" is nothing more than the leader's self-serving idea), servant leaders *inspire others* to follow their vision by making it a vision of their own (Carter, 2009). Servant leaders mobilize others by influencing them to move into the leadership process themselves. Followers are motivated to move from non-leadership to leadership and from inaction to action. Laub (2004) asserts that "leadership does not begin until action is taken, normally initiated by the leader, but soon taken over by the mobilized followers in a dynamic process of pursuing change" (p. 5). The critical distinction of servant leaders is, as Greenleaf (1977) said from the beginning, whether the followers grow and become servant leaders themselves. Rennaker (2005) insists that no model of servant leadership is complete without this, and Poon (2006) shows how mentoring relationships are an effective means of producing future servant leaders. Wong and Davey (2007), in their ongoing development of their Servant Leadership Profile, have suggested five meaningful and stable factors:

Factor 1: A servant's heart (humility & selflessness) – Who we are (Self-identity)
Factor 2: Serving and developing others – Why we want to lead (Motive)

Factor 3: Consulting and involving others – How we lead (Method)
Factor 4: Inspiring and influencing others – What affects we have (Impact)
Factor 5: Modeling integrity and authenticity – How others see us (Character) (p. 6).

These factors not only show influence as one essential element of servant leadership, they also speak to how the leader goes about shaping influence relationships and processes.

The moderating variable of influence. In his short ministry, Jesus could heal and perform miracles in a matter of minutes and teach in a matter of hours, but spent over three years preparing a team of apostles to lead by service. That speaks loudly of the importance of the influence construct of modeling, precept and motivation. It also reveals a sober note – *long-term influence takes time and extraordinary patience*. Neither of those commodities are valued highly in the get-it-done-now environments of boards of directors, shareholders, or would-be charismatic leaders. As Collins (2001) points out, the short-cut for many leaders is to make themselves the center of the organization's focus and through force of personality become the de-facto reality driving it. This is a recipe for mediocrity. Wong and Page (2003) add that senior pastors in churches give lip service to servant leadership and recognize that God is the head of the church. The church, however, is made up of humans who need a strong human leader with complete control over every aspect of the church to make sure nothing goes awry. Their justification is that *they are responsible for everything and would be blamed if anything goes wrong*. Whether or not the latter assumption is true, when leaders make themselves the de-facto reality driving the church or any organization or institution, they have abandoned the servant leadership standard of servant-reproduction for the short-sighted approach of self-attraction.

The variable of influence imagines the focus toward which leaders harness their influence efforts along a spectrum. At one extreme is servant-reproduction – the leader's modeling, teaching and persuading efforts to reproduce servants who will then repeat the process. At the other extreme is self-attraction – the intentional use of personality and emotional motivation to hasten influence and change by making the leader the central focus of the leader-follower relationship. At issue on this spectrum is the *desired end* toward which leaders seek to influence change. The proposition is that at any given time, any leader is capable of influencing followers by modeling and teaching service and reproducing those skills in them, or by influencing people to follow for no other reason than the force of the leader's personality or the fear of the leader's power – thus moderating the perception and effectiveness of the leader as servant.

V. DISCUSSION

A previous caution bears repeating. Extracting truth from exegesis of clear precepts of scripture is one thing; identifying models and patterns by which to draw examples to follow or avoid is quite another – the beauty is nearly always in the eye of the beholder. This does not mean such patterns and models are not useful – only that they should be offered with humility based on faithfulness to sound hermeneutics. It is in that spirit that this sub-model of moderating variables is presented. And it is offered with full awareness that the variables discussed here have only skimmed the surface of

understanding and truth; plenty more is available in John 13 for theologians to explore and discuss. Moreover, as with all models, this sub-model is subject to the scrutiny of further examination, testing, discussion and (gasp!) modification.

Several recurring themes are featured in the examination of these variables, based on what Jesus knew before he washed the disciples' feet. The first is that leadership presents any leader with moments of truth, by which the choices that follow have more than typical lasting impact. Jesus certainly had his; leaders today are no exception. The second recurring theme is that at any given time leaders may or may not make the choice to serve their constituents. There has only been one perfect Servant Leader; the rest of us are a work in progress who, like the disciples of Jesus, sometimes repeatedly get it wrong before we get it right. Moreover, as the investment advisors remind us, past results are no guarantee future performance. Servant leadership is a daily choice, and no leader ever graduates from school in this regard. Another recurring theme among the four constructs is a re-characterization of vision. Whatever else vision means to the leader, these moments of truth call leaders to see past their own risks, fears and self-interest to serve the need of others who potentially will outlast or out-live them.

Moderating variables in the sub-model highlight several features of servant leadership. Some of these are common themes, while others actually fly in the face of servant leadership detractors. The idea of servant-decisiveness, for example, makes it clear that servant leaders are just as decisive, if not more so, than other approaches to leadership. The difference is that servant leaders boldly choose to serve, even when in crisis or fear-charged moments. Servant-investment follows the familiar theme of empowerment, recognizing that the power inherent in the leadership role can be a tool to invest in the future well-being of constituents. Servant-confidence confronts the insecurity lurking behind servant leadership critics by demonstrating that if the leader is authentically at peace with his or her own identity and acts accordingly, the leader is then free from the chains of having to constantly remind followers who the boss is. Finally, servant-reproduction returns to the roots of Greenleaf's (1977) original gold standard for proof that the leader indeed puts service first – reproducing the inclination to serve in others.

Suggestions for further research include a more intentional, broad-based study in the role of knowledge (epistemology) in servant leadership. Also, the moderating variables, like other servant leadership characteristics, demonstrate potential for scale development focusing on the leader's current behavior or most recent choices. Also, while Patterson's (2003) ground-breaking model was featured in this paper, the explicit but yet-to-be-demonstrated claim is that this sub-model can work in *any* model of servant leadership, whether the focus is on the leader-follower relationship or on the leader's relationship to the organization. That said, this paper has made no attempt to actually do that. This research and sub-model has been limited to the variables in the sub-model itself, not how they would actually fit into a larger model.

Servant leadership is an ongoing exercise in the pursuit of knowledge, wise decision-making, judicious use of power, confident self-awareness and authenticity, and long-term influence. At the heart of it all is a leader whose consummate aim is to serve the best interests of those who follow. But looming large before that leader is a shining

example of how far his or her influence can reach if only the leader ever becomes "big" enough to wash someone else's feet.

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