Jesus disrupted the social and religious norms of his day. He first challenged them and then he applied his influence to lead his followers to do the same thing. Disrupting adverse conditions should be the aim of leaders and followers; but, leaders must model the way. Achieving this goal calls for a leader’s willingness to implement change. Jesus’ ability to influence his community was innovative and timely, especially for certain female disciples who benefited from a relationship with him. This report will study the discourse between Jesus, Martha, and Mary in the gospel of Luke to explore Jesus as a disruptive leader. The information is extracted using the ideological texture of the socio-rhetorical model which concerns itself with the alliances and conflicts that shape and cultivate the text. The report investigates the message that Luke disseminated to the Christian community by drawing out the social location of its leaders and followers during the growth of the early church. It used the disruptive leadership theory and ideological texture analysis in the socio-rhetorical tradition to apply an exegetical analysis of the biblical account to this theory. The analysis suggests the disruptive model and development will enhance an emerging leader’s effectiveness.

I. INTRODUCTION

The idea of delving into the biblical past to understand and extract meaning for the present is essential for emerging religious leaders because they must have a foundational understanding of the progression of leadership within the Christian community. The involvement of women in ministry is not the crux of this argument because Scripture reports their participant in the movement. In fact, the Gospel of Luke reveals the integral role women played in the Bible and the Mediterranean during the first century. What is important for emerging leaders, especially female leaders, to consider are the benefits of having a relationship with effective leaders and the valuable lessons one might learn by observing how they recognize issues and implement change for the common good of all. The female disciples seized the opportunity to be influenced
by an exemplary leader, to be benefactors of change, and to listen and learn with great attention and intention so that they might be prepared to carry out the vision of the kingdom of God. Whenever human beings are faced with less than desirable conditions, change is warranted. Jesus provides the blueprint for effective leadership and for implementing change initiatives. This is why Jesus’s leadership style and relationship with his disciples merits examination.

The discussion between Jesus and Martha in Luke 10:38-42 provides a framework from which to draw insight on how Jesus functioned as a disruptive force against the societal and spiritual norms of his time. Jesus sacrificed his time and gave his attention to what he valued most, honoring the will of his father. Taking on the function of a disruptive leader enabled him to be a change agent who taught his disciples how to harness the power of change and influence as they committed to work in the Kingdom of God. The defining moment between Jesus and Martha offers insight on his method of leading.

Robbins’ socio-rhetorical interpretation model concentrates on five textures: inner texture, inter-texture, social and cultural, ideological texture, and sacred texture. This paper will use the ideological texture, which concerns itself with the alliances and conflicts that the text draws out, interprets, and cultivates. The texture also focuses on the way the text and interpreters of the text position themselves with others based on their social and cultural location (Robbins, 1996, p. 95). In the ideological analysis, “the interpreter is analyzing both himself or herself as a writer and reader and one or more other writers and readers” (Robbins, 1996, p. 95). An analysis of Luke 10 using the ideological texture, will attempt to determine the significance and implications of Jesus’ interaction with Martha and Mary. The study will examine how Jesus challenged the social norms within his community and how he used conflict as an underlying mechanism for recruiting and developing disciples who were willing to adopt his radical social agenda. Lastly, the analysis will examine ways in which Jesus’ ministry provides new insights into disruptive leadership theory.

Exploring the Gospel of Luke

The New Testament Synoptic Gospels provide a reference point for understanding the ideologies and traditions of the early church. The task of history as Seymour (1987) purported is to discover as much about the present as it does the past. This task is accomplished through the integration of recorded events into a narrative that explains epic events in history. In addition, the reported events also provide insight into the social posture of a community, their kinship to one another, and participation in the Jesus movement. Thucydides’ style of writing influenced Luke. DeSilva (2004) indicated that the way in which the author penned the narratives on the precepts and life of Christ and the historicity of the early church elevated this Gospel. The Synoptic Gospel of Luke was written in the "little tradition" which is a tale of people below the heel of poverty and oppression (Hendricks, 2011, p. 52). The book of Luke is the only synoptic gospel that identifies the recipient of the letter; which was written to Theophilus (DeSilva, 2004). The narratives are written to report the traditions of Jesus and the community that he formed, and it was used to verify the legitimacy of Christianity during Roman authority and to encourage the mixed community of believers to remain firm in
their convictions (DeSilva, 2004). While the early church was not at odds with the Roman Empire, the writer discourages acceptance of “Roman ideology” (DeSilva, 2004, p. 310). The Gospel of Luke’s orderly account details the mission, faith, and development, but also proves how the plan of salvation was “scorned by the Jewish people and adopted by non-Jews” (Ehrman, 2012, p. 152). Luke was written around 80-85 C.E., and the author pulled narratives from other sources like Mark, Q, and L (Ehrman, 2012). There are two critical elements worth mentioning. First, the writings as espoused by DeSilva (2004) are a compilation of the “Jewish scriptures into the early church and mission work. Luke’s references to the old testament solidify Christianity as an important aspect within the historical and divinely guided development of Judaism” (p. 310). Second, Luke’s presentation of the Christ-followers as an orderly and noble group of people who were committed to virtuous living dispelled any notion of deviant behavior or plans toward a political uprising (DeSilva, 2004). Per Ehrman (2012) Luke described Jesus as the Savior of the world who provides salvation to the Gentile and the Jew. Jesus’ concern for the poor and needy and belief that they will be vindicated are a part of Luke’s social agenda (Ehrman, 2012).

Exploring the cultural setting during Greco-Roman times are relevant to the discussion on Luke because the Gospels were composed during the Hellenistic period. Ehrman (2012) purported, historians used the term “Greco-Roman” to identify the evidence surrounding the Mediterranean from the time of Alexander the Great (p. 31). Ehrman (2012) added Alexander the Great brought Hellenistic culture to the Greek cities in Asia Minor after conquering the land. Hence, the reason the New Testament was written in Greek. Also, the Hellenist concerned themselves “with establishing how an individual could attain well-being in this universe, the world that at best is meaningless and at worst wracked with pain and wretchedness” (p. 44). Finally, Ehrman (2012) stated Judeo-Christians were influenced by Hellenism; but many within the community desired to preserve the customs of the Jews. The following section will examine Luke 9 and 10 using the ideological texture.

II. IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE

Robbins’ (1996) indicated people are the primary subject and the text is the secondary subject during an ideological analysis and interpretation. The issue that writers and readers must grapple with are the perspectives of the societal, cultural, and individual location based on their own social and cultural location. From this premise, people can identify commonalities and differences regarding values, beliefs, and perceptions. The text revealed Luke’s understanding of women and their role as leaders based on their inclusion in the narratives. It also shows how Jesus engaged with women and had a desire to teach them. A contextual reading of Luke 9:46-62 and Luke 10:1-37 provides insight into the thematic episodes leading up to 10:38-42. The analysis will provide an overview of Luke 9:46-62 and 10:1-37 and a more detailed review of the discourse between Jesus and Martha in 38-42.

Luke narrates the movements of Jesus and concentrates on his teaching on the meaning of true discipleship and the result of an unsuccessful mission trip to Samaria in Luke 9:46-56. The pericope in verses 57-62 presents three episodes on the cost of following Jesus. In the first episode, verses 57-58, a person expressed a desire to follow Jesus. Jesus informs the individual that he has no place to lay his head. The same would be true for this new convert who will have to depend on the hospitality of others. In the second episode, verses 59-60, Jesus asks another person to follow him. The person agrees but has a condition; he wants to bury his father. Jesus’ response depicts the cost of discipleship because he asks the man to go against tradition. Keener (1993) asserts the elder son is responsible for burying his father. Yet Jesus is asking him to place discipleship and the proclamation of the kingdom of God above his Jewish tradition. The third episode, verses 61-62, is a combination of the first and second episodes. Like the first episode, someone desires to follow Jesus, and like the second episode, the person agrees but has a condition, he wants to go home before he joins the movement. Jesus says... no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God (v. 62). Jesus requires that the person “keep their eyes on the path of the plow to ensure it does not become crooked” (Keener, 1993, p. 215). According to Keener (1993) disciples usually searched for their teachers. Many teachers shunned possessions, so they tested prospective disciples by placing huge demands on them. The disciple’s response enabled them to select the worthiest pupils. Luke 9:57-62 provides insight into the social and traditional conflicts the biblical audience may have experienced as they sought to become members of the Jesus movement. Moreover, thematic continuity is projected in those verses because the author builds on the ministry’s mission and instructions and the themes provide context to verses 10:38-42. Instruction appears to be a function of the social culture of the Jewish community based on the numerous passages of Christ’s teaching his disciples and recitation of the Shema which will be explored shortly.

Chapter 10 further develops the Christ movement and mission narratives. Buttrick (1952) indicates that Luke 10 is a traveler’s narrative that presents travel rules for hospitality that are a principal component of ethnic tradition. Verses 1-7 provided an account of the preparations for the mission of the 70 disciples who went out in pairs and how they returned to share their mission work activity with Jesus in verses 8-24. Buttrick (1952) observed Luke extracted the text from the Mark and Q sources and various translations count the missionaries at 72, not 70. Verses 8-16 depict the authority given to heal based on a set criterion. Healing was a part of Jesus’ proclamation in Luke 4, and it was a duty that he handed along to them. The disciples were to enter a city, if the people were open and extended hospitality, they were to accept it, heal the sick and declare that the "kingdom of God comes nigh unto you" (Luke 10:11 NKJV). However, if the people were not receptive, they were to go to the streets and declare again, “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” and depart. In verse 16 Jesus talked about the outcomes of the commission and stated the consequences for those who listened to or rejected the message of redemption. “Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me” (Luke 10:16). Here again, the language of the text presents the alliance motif. Authority
is also elaborated upon when the 70 returned and spoke with Jesus in verses 17-20. Keener (1993) explained, "Status was a preeminent concern in ancient society. Representatives of a person with high authority exercised more influence than others who acted on their own" (p. 214). Jesus "rejoiced and prayed for them" in verses 21-24 and shared the parable of the Good Samaritan in verses 25-37.

The Good Samaritan story begins with a question from a certain lawyer. The word certain is common in Lukan vernacular, and it is used several times in an attributive manner. For example, a certain lawyer in verse 25, a certain man in verse 30, a certain priest in verse 31, a certain Samaritan in verse 33, a certain village, where a certain woman named Martha welcomed Jesus in verse 38, and a certain place in 11:1. Jesus asks the lawyer about the Law of Moses, and in verse 27 the lawyer says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." The lawyer recites part of the Shema, the morning and evening prayer for Israel (Freedman, 2000). Deuteronomy 6:5 "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." He also recites part of Leviticus 19:18b, "But you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord" from the priestly writings (Coogan et al., 2010). The neighbor is the equivalent of fellow Israelite (Lev. 19:18) or a non-Israelite (Lev. 19:34). When the certain lawyer asks, “And who is my neighbor” (Luke 10:29) Jesus tells the parable of the certain Samaritan who had compassion on a certain man who was wounded and took care of him. Radmacher, Allen, and House (1997) offer, Jesus presented the “scorned Samaritan as a neighbor because he demonstrated love and compassion” (p.1715). Coogan, Brettler, Perkins, and Newsom (2010) adds, “The priest (v. 31) represented the highest religious leadership among the Jews, and the Levite (v. 32) was the designated lay associate of the priest. But it was a Samaritan, a foreigner, the least likely to show compassion to Jews, that was moved to help the man (p. 118). In doing this, he exhibited behavioral traits of discipleship; namely, love and compassion. The culmination of this chapter is a narrative about Jesus, Martha, and Mary.


D’Angelo (1990) and DeSilva (2004) viewed Luke as a good source for women’s history because it featured women in Jesus’ ministry. D’Angelo’s (1990) work addressed Luke’s tendency to pair characters and stories to ensure stories about men are paired with stories about women. D’Angelo reported that there are two types of pairing that lead toward God’s purpose and plan, literary and architectural pairs. Two stories that have a similar point or account are known as a literary pair. Architectural pairs are similar stories that are “told within a different context to bind the narratives together” (D’Angelo, 1990, pp. 444-445). Examples of the literary pairs are the two annunciations to Zechariah in Luke 1:5-23 and then to Mary in 1:26-38 and the two questions about discipleship to the scribe in Luke 10:25-37 and Martha in 10:38-42. The key to this theory is the fact that men and women are working together in ministry.

Davies’ (1994) pointed out that Luke is remarkably favorable toward women and offered substantial narratives which depict their presence, voice, names, and activities in the Jesus movement. One of the most significant points Luke made regarding the
prominence of women is during the discourse between Jesus, Martha, and Mary in Luke 10:38-42 where Jesus dispels the notion that a woman’s work is of a domestic nature (DeSilva, 2004). Carter (1996) and DeSilva (2004) assert that the pericope provided evidence of the women’s leadership activity, but Martha and Mary’s inclusion speaks to the larger social agenda as well as instructs the gospel readers and listeners about the importance of leadership and ministry.

Luke positions the story of Jesus, Martha, and Mary as the final pericope in chapter ten and this story embodies various aspects of the preceding verses. For instance, the disciples are told "if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person… Remain in the same house" (v. 6-7). Martha welcomes Jesus, and he stays there; this signifies that she shares in his peace (v. 38) and she is in the presence of the kingdom of God (v. 9). Mary’s desire to listen to and be taught by Jesus in (v. 39) coincides with the instruction for acceptance and rejection in verse 16 and in verses 17-20 where Jesus is teaching his disciples. Verses 23-24 expound on the blessing of seeing and hearing. The crux of the pericope is in verses 40-42. From it, we learn of the conflict Martha has with Mary and the response Jesus gives her.

**Social and Cultural Traditions**

The pericope provides several insights about the culture during the early church. Martha is a homeowner, head of household, and introduced by name. These significant messages that Luke amplified should not be overlooked. The social, economic, and religious location of the people in the Mediterranean during the first century had a distinct perspective on how women were viewed (Ehrman, 2012). According to Kraemer (1983), most scholars agree that women held positions of leadership and authority in the early churches, but they disagree over the extent to which women could lead in the patriarchal system. The fact that Mary sat at Jesus’ feet eager to learn and Jesus commended her for understanding that a paradigm-shift in tradition was necessary spoke volumes to the biblical audience. Her gesture and his response opened the door for the restructuring of the role of women in society and for redefining leadership terms and conditions.

Additional perspectives on hospitality, teaching, conflict, and word usage may be extracted from Luke 10:38-42. Nonetheless, Jesus provided instruction on hospitality for his disciples to follow, but now he is receiving hospitality at Martha’s home. Freedman (2000) offered, the bodily process of experiencing and extending friendship to strangers is akin to “nomadic traditions” of yesteryear and the Christian community under the direction of Jesus did the same (p. 611). Carter (1996) stated the scholarly discussion was not more or less about the traditional hospitality a host provides to guests but rather service in ministry. Jesus’ disinterest with the hospitality is an interesting observation; particularly when the matron of the house was expected to serve her guest (Freedman, 2000) and Jesus provided instruction on hospitality to the 70 disciples (Luke 10:4-12).

The prescriptive element of Luke 10:42 is “the one thing that Mary possessed; namely the eagerness to absorb Jesus’ teaching” (Keener, 1993, p. 218). Wigoder, Skolnik, and Himelstein (1989) wrote the study of Torah is of paramount importance and it was a daily ritual that applied to men only (pp. 735-736). Keener (1993) wrote earnest disciples were preparing to be teachers during that time; women were not permitted to
be instructors. Thus, Mary’s posture as a pupil of Jesus was cutting edge within the church. Per Ehrman (2012) the Synoptic writers used conflicts to build the case for the death of Christ, but they also used conflict as a teaching mechanism. Thimmes (2000) offered the conflict between Martha and Mary stemmed from the new ideology about leadership. Perhaps this is why the Luke included this report; to attract attention to the inclusion of women and to remind the audience of what was important to the movement. Thimmes (2000) posits the texture of a narrative is discovered in how a community speaks internally and with others. Tension provides the basis for the language of a community over and against their values, beliefs, and perspectives. Thimmes (2000) added what a community cares about or is concerned with, will be expressed in their writings. The inclusion of the discourse between Jesus and Martha leads one to explore what Luke and the biblical audience was concerned about and what the implications of omitting this discourse might have been for the biblical audiences of the past and present. DeSilva (2004) stated Jesus’ response to Martha affirmed a woman’s right to participate in all areas of discipleship. As the text portrays through the mission of the 70 disciples, their return to home-base was a time of rejoicing, listening, and learning. Therefore, Jesus’ words to Martha were an invitation, not a rebuke; the invitation was extended to the readers of the text as well. The pericope portrayed a trusting relationship between Jesus and his disciples. While Martha may have been distracted or frustrated, she is comfortable expressing concerns to her leader. Jesus never lost sight of the mission or the people in his care, and he quickly found the problem and offered a resolution that moved Martha from benevolence to self-efficacy. Thus, the omission of this story would have undoubtedly suffered terrible effects for women in the first-century church as the writer uniquely positioned them to understand their role, to focus on what was important, and to learn how to grow as leaders.

Examples of specific words and phrases that are used in the text require additional examination. The writers’ use of words like entering, receive, and the kingdom of God is pervasive throughout chapters 9 and 10. First, the disciples are commissioned to enter villages, adhere to Jesus’ instruction based on the acceptance or rejection theme, but always announce the kingdom of God is near. Freedman (2000) concluded scholarly debate on the nature of the kingdom of God still exists. However, Freedman (2000) argued that the “kingdom came in its full power in the earthly ministry of Jesus” (p. 768). In this vein, one may resolve that the kingdom of God came to visit Martha and Mary.

The use of redoubling occurred in verse 41 when Jesus called Martha’s name twice; this signified the intensity of his message to her. Additional examples of redoubling happened in Luke 6:46 when Jesus asked, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I tell you” and Luke 22:31 “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat.” The writer’s use of redoubling in both scriptures calls attention to the urgent message that Jesus is about to convey.

Martha’s communication over and against Mary’s silence is an indicator that what is said is as important as what is not said. Martha and Mary are communicating but not with each other. The writer’s words changed the circumstances for women. Thimmes (2000) observed, the explicit nature of the speech metaphor and implicit nature of the silence and listening metaphor between Mary and Martha. Citing, Martha spoke to Jesus about her issue with Mary which brings the conflict to the forefront and Mary
remains silent. Therefore, the reader is left to struggle with the “opposing position” of Mary’s silence and the implications of the relationship between the two sisters who served in ministry (p. 58). Jesus’ response allowed Martha and the reader to know that distractions will cause one to lose focus or be swayed by the other factions within the Christian community (Ehrman, 2012).

While conflict over obligations may have been the catalyst for the interpretation of this tale, the thrust of Luke’s message offers insight into the involvement of women in the Jesus movement. Keener (1993) explained, “Martha’s labor represents the best display of devotion she knew how to give” (p. 218). Jesus wanted to redirect her focus and elevate her role; going against the social norms of his time. Keener (1993) asserted disciples sat at their teacher’s feet. The ability to listen and learn enabled women to redefine their individual and social location. Jesus started his ministry with people who by political, social, and religious standards were not present or emerging leaders (Hendricks, 2011). They may have struggled with their new roles, especially the women because it was uncommon for them to have prominent roles within religious settings. Luke presented Jesus, an influencer who led in very unorthodox ways and who opposed status quo adherences to religious authority and leadership. Also, the narratives created a design for the biblical audience to follow by teaching them how to be effective leaders and followers. Having an understanding of the nature of leadership and how it works is very important. Therefore, the following section will present a synopsis of leadership theory and the disruptive leadership model.

III. LEADERSHIP THEORY

The ongoing crisis of oppression from and within the first-century communities, governing bodies, and religious institutions sparked a clarion call for a unique kind of leader. Jesus’ reading of scripture in Luke 4:14-19 sparked the beginning of his ministry as the leader of the oppressed. From the onset, his leadership strategy and reach were not limited to a distinct culture or gender, but rather to all who would believe. Through words, actions, and teaching Jesus communicated a message that was congruent with his care and concern for the betterment of society. In a very natural and non-combative way, Jesus influenced and developed a strong team of disciples who embraced his vision and goals. When seeking to define leadership or identify specific characteristics of a leader, an examination of the research on leadership provides insight.

Leadership research points out that defining leadership can be a challenging undertaking. Stogdill (as cited by Northouse, 2016) argued that “there are nearly as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define it” (p. 2). The way a leader or follower conceptualizes leadership is unique to the person. Therefore, dissonance exists regarding a general definition. Leadership as Northouse (2016) espouses is the process of influencing individuals or groups toward the achievement of a common goal. Northouse furthers, it is not based on a characteristic or trait, but rather the leader and follower engage in a transactional event. As leaders and followers interact, the opportunity for anyone to lead is made possible. The common elements within the leadership process are an influence, group engagement, and common goals toward a common good (Northouse, 2016).
Jesus exhibited all three elements that Northouse (2016) presented and much more. His form of leading enabled him to target an overlooked and marginalized population and work with them to create a successful liberation movement. More importantly, his inter-relational approach equipped and empowered them to be representatives of the kingdom of God. The notion that a common person could develop a process for assembling groups to help build a religious community, challenge status quo, and do so with limited resources is noteworthy. Jesus saw to the needs of those who were persecuted and blatantly disregarded and became a catalyst for change. This is also interesting to note because neglect made this social and religious change necessary. The leaders of his day were focused on attending to the needs of their social, religious, and political power base and in maintaining their power and influence (Hendricks, 2006). What set Jesus apart and what this paper will explore shortly, was the capacity to present a form of leadership that identified and replaced unacceptable conditions with more desirable options. He did so under the banner of the sovereignty of God; this was groundbreaking.

How might contemporary Christian leaders introduce unconventional ways of thinking that fundamentally challenge and change status quo? Gaining an understanding of disruptive leadership, a nascent form of leading that "influences and implements change and empower others from positions of non-authority" is a start (Ryan, 2016, p. 2). Disruptive leadership is another form of leading that has yet to be fully defined or recognized, but literature and research on this theory are on the rise. The next portion of the paper will explore disruptive innovation and leadership and how the latter resembles Jesus’ style of leading.

Origins of Disruptive Leadership

In 1977, Clayton Christensen coined the term disruptive innovation, which describes "innovation that is simplistic and makes products more affordable" (Euchner, 2011, p. 2). The theory of disruptive innovation opens the door for a new population of consumers to purchase in a market that was historically focused on middle to high-end customers. According to Christensen (as cited by Euchner, 2011) automobiles and computers are two examples of disruptive innovation. Christensen furthers the mechanism for failure manifests when "the management team stands in the way of what might seem to be an obvious innovation. It does not happen because they are obstructionist, generally but rather because they do not share the same language or know how to frame the problem" (Euchner, 2011, p. 16). Disruptive innovation requires a deeper learning around "disruption" to ensure people are using the same language to define and understand its implications (p. 16). Leaders must teach their teams how to think differently about a problem and figure out new ways of accomplishing a common goal. Disruptive leaders must identify the people who are not being served and find a solution to their problems (Euchner, 2011). Exploring the limitations of Christensen's theory, Tellis (2006) argued, the term disruption is characteristic of innovation but it is also riddled with ambiguity; this presents a problem. Conversely, Tellis (2006) acknowledges that Christensen’s theory offers “two insightful contributions: the danger of focusing too tightly on current customers and the risk of ignoring technologies that currently appear inferior” (p. 38). Christensen, Raynor, & McDonald (2015) agreed, “the
term disruptive innovation” is misleading when it is employed to refer to a product or service at one fixed period rather than to the evolution of that product or service over time” (p. 7). Christensen et al. (2015) furthered initially disruptive innovation referred to the parallel between the appointees and contenders who either overachieve or underachieve within an environment. Over time, Christensen et al (2015) offered, the elements of the theory came together. According to Christensen et al. (2015) distinctions must be made between leaders and businesses that transform versus disrupt. The development of better, inexpensive solutions that increases demand, is accessible, and meets a widespread need is transformational. However, disruption occurs when leaders make deliberate efforts to appeal to the neglected consumer before migrating to the mainstream market. From their study of Christensen’s work, Leavy and Sterling (2010) maintain, “Disruptive innovations create new markets or transform existing ones by offering simplicity, accessibility, and affordability” (p. 7). For example, the adoption of mobile devices transformed the market by changing and enhancing business and communication practices and by providing a free range of options for consumers and businesses alike.

Calling attention to the decline of participation in institutionalized religion Zscheile (2015) used Christensen’s research on disruptive innovation to study the cultural shift in American religious engagement. Zscheile (2015) indicated that “learning from disruptive innovators draws attention to a new set of habits, behaviors, and imagination for religious organizations and their leaders” (p. 22). It also creates space for leaders and followers to orientate themselves as communal learners. The seed of innovation may be found in scripture; expressly through God who created humanity and Christ who created an innovative liberation movement on behalf of humanity (Zscheile, 2015). Interpretative leadership, as proposed by Zscheile (2015) serves as the companion of disruptive innovation. Putting up for consideration “the development of a shared interpretation of the community’s present reality in light of its past, its changing context, and its future as criteria for this construct” (p. 29). Zscheile (2015) concludes innovation will develop from interpretive leadership and communal dialogue about new constructions of life for present and future generations. While Christensen’s disruptive innovation theory provides a framework for the study of change in new and existing markets and organizations, it does not delve deeply into the behavioral patterns of leaders who orchestrate or act upon change.

As disruptive leadership is a comparatively new phenomenon, ongoing interest in the study has ignited discussion about the implications of disruption in education (Lockwood, 2002), mindfulness in leadership development (Yeganeh & Good, 2016), and the qualities of disruptive leaders (Jensen 2013 and Bina 2013). While a consensus on a general definition of the term disruptive leadership does not exist, Ryan (2016) identified common characteristics that stood out in literature and scholarly discussions and offered the next description. Disruptive leadership “recognizes and replaces an unsatisfactory status quo with an option that better serves stakeholders” (p. 18). Vision is a primary element of disruptive leadership. Per Bina (2013) having a vision and a solid team who will embrace and work alongside you to bring the vision to fruition is what disruptive leaders do. In addition, disruptive leaders are laser focused on questions that deal with “why can’t we” versus “why didn’t we” and readily align all resources toward what seems impossible (Bina, 2013, p. 1). Corporate executive Jean-
Pierre Clamadieu’s principles of disruptive leadership include having a clear and bold vision of the future, surrounding oneself with a solid team that embraces change, being approachable, visible, and willing to engage in ongoing dialogue about the vision, and they must be tenacious and extremely ambitious. In the end, they must be resilient in their attempts to achieve their transformational goals (Warren, 2013). Industry leaders are providing cogent descriptions for disruptive leadership that are congruent with common leadership practices. As Ryan (2016) points out, they are thinking about and aggressively responding to unsatisfactory conditions within their organizations and the world. More importantly, they are preparing future leaders to do the same.

Disruptive leadership offers parallels for religious leaders and their organizations. While the term disruptive is not mentioned in scripture; Jesus employed many of its attributes during his time as a leader. Frankly, many leadership styles are imputed to Jesus, but within the context of the Lukan pericope elements of disruptive leadership such as vision, accessibility, reflection, change, engagement, and influence are resident. As a leader, Jesus thought about and aggressively responded to the needs of the poor. Jesus also worked diligently to change the biblical audience’s current way of thinking about their lives and situations. He took them from marginalization and positions of non-authority to liberation and roles as disciples. As a change agent, he articulated and demonstrated the benefits of a transformed social and religious landscape and successfully influenced others to embrace his vision of discipleship in the kingdom of God.

A strong leader cannot effectively achieve his/her goals without the support of the people on the team. Everyone has a vocation and the ability to serve the organization in which they are affiliated. Leaders must tap into the hearts and minds of their followers and equip them with the tools to do the work. When an individual is led to follow or dares to be leaders of followers it extends an opportunity for both to change the world. Jesus presented a form of leadership that identified and replaced unacceptable conditions with more desirable options. In so doing, he shifted power, challenged status-quo, and gained disciples along the way. Through discipleship, he enabled people of non-authority to consider how they might harness the power of change and influence others. The ongoing purpose of Christians as active change agents in the world may be imputed to the manifestation of Jesus’ disruptive qualities. Disruptive vision, thinking, influence, and group participation, toward a common goal are leadership competencies that may be acquired and used in various organizational contexts today.

IV. APPLYING THE IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE

Using the lessons of Luke 10:38-42 within a contemporary context is not a complicated process given the right tools and guidance. Leaders need merely to assess the qualities of Christ against the tenets of disruptive leadership to see the virtues of practical application. Jesus had disruptive tendencies. His way of expressing the problems within the community set in motion, a chain of events that interrupted the power stature in Jerusalem. Jesus understood his purpose, his members, and was very much aware of their perception of him. Jesus focused his attention to those in need and offered solutions to their problems through the invitation to be members of the kingdom
of God. The call is still being used today, and contemporary Christian leaders and followers are the benefactors of this great gift of liberation.

There are great insights to gain from the exchange between Jesus, Martha, and Mary, particularly within the context of followers because preoccupation with leadership has hindered scholarly consideration of the follower. Kelley (1988) indicates, “Followership dominates our lives and organizations, but not our thinking” (p. 2). This was not the case with Jesus. He accepted women and men into his movement and empowered them to be influential leaders and followers. From the pericope on Jesus, Mary, and Martha we may read and reflect on Jesus as a disruptive thinker and influencer, Mary, who harnessed the power of disruptive thinking through her posture as a disciple in training, and Martha, who either did not realize the power and position she held or did not adopt the mindset of a disruptor and therefore was unable to relinquish her connection to social norms and obligations. Upon hearing Martha’s complaint Jesus seized the opportunity to redirect her thinking. DeSilva (2004) wrote, “God's patronage was directed toward the human elite and the human poor. Jesus is our patron who grants favor and access to God” (p. 335). Martha's distraction shifted her focus away from Jesus, her patron, but Mary seized the opportunity to be in his presence and openly reaped the benefits of a relationship with her leader. Jesus in a very simplistic way presents a universal message of liberation in the kingdom of God; one that would repeal and replace the oppressive systemic infrastructure. Jesus' message opened the door for marginalized to have access to and participate in this movement.

Some insight may also be gained from a comparison between Martha’s distractions and Christensen’s “causal mechanisms” (Christensen, 2006, p. 31). Martha was distracted by numerous tasks. Desiring help from her sister Mary, she asked Jesus to intercede but Jesus refused (Luke 10:40-42). Reiterating Christensen’s (as cited by Euchner, 2011) belief that people who stand in the way of advancement are individuals that do not share the same language. Jesus' used this occasion to create awareness about the disconnection. It behooves present and future leaders to ensure that there is unity in thought and action if the vision is to be achieved.

How might leaders ensure that other emerging leaders and followers are sharing the same language that draws people toward a common goal? Jesus was effective at providing a vision of something better and then working diligently to teach it to others so they would not second guess the mission or their roles in it. The critical factor to consider from the analysis of the pericope is the fact that Jesus’ ministry interrupted traditional and cultural norms. Jesus exemplified leadership, but what made his ministry unique and attractive to followers was the fact that he was one of them. Hendricks (2006) stated Jesus offered something that the people desperately needed, relief from marginalization and subjugation. As Luke depicted, Jesus offered salvation to those who were willing to accept it. Jesus connected with the "Am ha-Aretz, to the natives or people of the land, the non-elite in Israel because they were oppressed by political, religious, and economic factors" (Hendricks, 2006, p. 71). Jesus’ message resonated with the masses because it was purposeful and focused on the common good. It was useful and accessible to all, and he made certain that his disciples adhered to the new and inclusive culture. This new shared culture enabled him to build relationships with people that helped him carry out his mission. It also brought the connection and impact he had on female leaders and followers to the forefront.
Contemporary leaders must consider the degree to which disruptive leadership can fit in with the women in leadership. Quite often, distinctions are made between men and women in leadership. Can or should women lead, are they capable of leading like their counterparts, and what are the similarities and differences in leadership style. Workplace challenges for female leaders have improved in recent years but there is still work to be done. In various social, political, and business enterprises, women are occupying more professional positions than in times past but, they are still underrepresented in many executive level positions. In a briefing on closing the Women’s Leadership Gap, Trefault, Merrill-Sands, Kolb, and Carter (2011) made a distinction between first and second-generation discrimination. First generation gender discrimination deals with intentional acts of bias against women. It is regarded as the camouflaged foe of progression. Conversely, the second generation, gender discrimination seeks to hinder the progression of women, which adds tension to their personal and professional lives. Here, “practices seem unbiased in isolation and intention, but they reflect masculine values and the life situations of men who have dominated in the public domain of work” (Trefault, Merrill-Sands, Kolb, and Carter, 2011, p. 2). Lewis (2002) shared diversity among other things is an extremely complex 21st-century global issue that leaders must contend with. How organizations advance will depend on their attention to change. Disruptive leadership presents great opportunities for diverse forms of leading that abolishes all forms of biases because it seeks to identify and replace unsatisfactory conditions with a new inclusive culture.

Assumptions regarding knowledge, skills, and abilities are some of the challenges facing emerging leaders today. Jesus’ instruction and practical application helped to develop and enhance their capabilities. For instance, the people of the first-century church and present day ministries may encounter similar ambiguities as they both seek to understand how to lead their followers. This can be accomplished using Luke’s blueprint. Emerging leaders also face the challenge of trying to navigate through their understanding of the functional requirements versus expectations of leadership and how they might obtain core competencies to be productive in the work environment. Current leaders can also play a pivotal role in their development process. Leaders who identify and replace inadequate social and religious norms with alternatives to better serve domestic and global communities are taking on the characteristics of a disruptive leader.

Sometimes, emerging leaders do not realize the power they have and fail to seize the opportunity to drive change. How might a current leader help emerging leaders develop and harness the power of disruption? Contemporary Christian leaders may glean insight from the frequency in which Jesus successfully targeted the marginalized and prepared them for discipleship. Essentially, it begins with a desire to be a change agent and to develop disruptive characteristics. Like Jesus, emerging leaders must be willing to take risks, establish a new set of rules, and use various communication methods to explain why a modification has taken place. To achieve a common goal, a leader must be in constant communication with their team. In this manner, they will create a culture that embraces disruption and change and allows the next generation of leaders to learn and duplicate this model.

There are three components that will enhance this model: (a) instruction, (b) mentorship, and (c) disruptive followership. Instruction is an essential part of the biblical
audience’s tradition as the scriptures indicated in Deuteronomy 6:6-7. Ryan (2016) noted that it is critical to subscribe to "a new theory where leaders can effect change and empower others from positions of non-authority to lead" (p. 2). Ryan (2016) furthers, from it followers will “obtain skills and competencies that are crucial to leadership in contemporary and social contexts” (p. 2). Religious and secular educators can play a role in developing curriculum on this model. Another valuable practice that will help emerging leaders develop disruptive characteristics is mentorship from and collaboration with disruptive leaders and followers. Jesus taught his disciples and sent them out by two, which enabled them to learn with and from each other. The disciples learned how to do the work in unorthodox ways, but more importantly, they did not allow their station in life to prohibit them from participating in the movement. In fact, they felt empowered to do the work, which is why disruptive followership should be explored. The common traits of a disruptive leader are exhibited in followers as there is interdependency between the leader-follower. Influence and power are concepts in both disciplines, but a concentration on the follower’s influence and power is essential to leadership theory and requires further study (Chaleff et al, 1996). Jesus modeled exemplary leadership with his followers. They observed him in his role and were able to use those events as learning opportunities for themselves and others.

It is this researcher’s opinion that disruption is the foundation of leadership growth. Once a leader has a real sense of self and their place within the context of a wicked problem like oppression, they can develop a vision and influence others toward that common goal. Jesus’ willingness to openly challenge the leaders of his time is inspiring. He established new benchmarks and built a new valued-based culture that focused on demonstrating love for God and neighbor through words and deeds. Moreover, he was disturbed by the forces that suppressed the people and by their real-life experiences. Ryan (2016) indicated that “unprecedented and unanticipated connections among events, people, and places drive social processes and interconnected systems” (p. 4). It can become increasingly difficult to identify problems and solutions as the boundaries expand (Ryan, 2016). This was not the situation between Jesus and Martha. Martha’s concern was based on the workload and need for assistance. Jesus was concerned by Martha’s inability to break away from tradition. He wanted her to understand the urgency of learning as it would prepare her for future issues. There were many forces at play during Jesus’ time, and he readily worked to combat social, cultural, gender, and religious oppression. Jesus interrupted normal behaviors by inviting and preparing the marginalized to embrace and lead change.

V. CONCLUSION

Leadership is a lifelong formative process filled with a plethora of unknowns. Luke provided an excellent narrative of Jesus as a disruptor of status quo. Jesus was a leader who understood the developmental landscape of one of his disciples and intervened by shifting her attention from the tactical elements of household leadership to a more strategic form of ministry, and it began with listening and observing leadership. Attention must also be given to Mary, the disciple who developed a disruptive posture from her influential leader. Her actions are the end result of Jesus’ instruction and development.
Luke’s storylines portray the life, struggles, and ministry experiences of the Jewish and Gentile community and their encounters with Christ. This enabled the biblical audience to find meaning and practical application. The various narratives of women who like their male counterparts struggled through life but found hope and truth through salvation was strategic. As was the depiction of Jesus, the leader who understood human development. Each situation that Jesus and his disciples encountered created opportunities for him to teach them how to lead, disciple, and share ministry responsibilities. Jesus lived during a time of oppression and unrest in the land. Rather than succumb to the social, cultural, and religious forces, he challenged them and taught his disciples to do the same. To be a disruptor during Jesus’ time was radical and it galvanized a movement that exists today. The invitation to be a member of the kingdom of God is never ending.

How might current leaders apply disruptive leadership in a manner that is similar to Jesus or that reflects his leadership style? Leaders must think about and respond to unsatisfactory conditions within their organizations and the world. A disruptive leader cannot operate in a vacuum; they must influence others to actively participate in and support their mission. Together they will become change agents that work toward the common good for all. This is what Jesus did and it is what is needed today.

Leaders must be resilient in their effort to disrupt status quo. Keeping in mind the story of the Good Samaritan because there is great reward when love and compassion are shown. Leaders will gain a better understanding of how to harness the power of disruption through learning and application. Jesus interrupted regular activity so that they might become internally focused on learning and externally relevant as leaders and followers of change. Change requires the work of many for the common interest of all. Christian leaders and followers must work together, seek to gain a deeper learning of disruptive theory, and ensure they are using the same language to define and understand its implications. It is all important that leaders teach their teams how to think differently about a problem that the organization is facing and figure out new ways of altering the situation. This gesture will create opportunities for them to model Jesus’ form of disruptive leadership. Consequently, the church and surrounding community will benefit from it. The limited scholarly literature on the impact of disruptive leadership on emerging leaders presents a starting point for ongoing research; especially within the church enterprise. Simultaneously, developing a clear model of disruptive followership while beyond the scope of this paper represents a critical avenue for future research.

About the Author

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