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## EMPOWERMENT IN THE SENDING OF THE 72: AN INNER TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF LUKE 9:57-10:24

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Empowerment occurs when a leader enables a follower to complete a task which he/she was previously unable or unwilling to complete.<sup>1</sup> Throughout his public ministry, Jesus regularly used average people to accomplish extraordinary things. The purpose of this article was to perform an exegetical study of Luke 9:57-10:24 using Robbins' inner texture analysis method. Insights gleaned from that analysis were then be applied to contemporary leadership theories of empowerment. This pericope is related to empowerment because of the juxtaposition between the three would-be followers at the end of Luke 9 and the seventy-two disciples at the beginning of Luke 10. Jesus told each set of individuals that following him would be very difficult, yet they responded differently. The interactions which Jesus had with these two sets of individuals revealed three important points about empowerment. First, a leader must know which followers to empower. Second, empowering followers does not mean making it easy for them. Finally, two-way feedback is necessary for effective empowerment.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head . . . Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God . . . No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:58, 60, 62, ESV). These are the responses which Jesus gave to three individuals who said they would follow him. Upon learning what following him would entail, however, they reconsidered. Jesus then appointed seventy-two others to go minister to the people in the towns to which he planned to go (Luke 10:1). As Jesus prepared the seventy-two for their mission, he gave them seemingly odd instructions, similar to the conditions he described to the three would-be

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<sup>1</sup> Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo, "The Empowerment Process: Integrating Theory and Practice," *Academy of Management Review* 13, no. 3 (July 1988): 474, doi:10.5465/amr.1988.4306983.

followers. Jesus did not tell the seventy-two to gather the supplies which would allow them to succeed but instead told them to take no money, no extra clothes, and no supplies (Luke 10:4). On the surface, it seems that Jesus did not empower his disciples, but rather sent them out completely unprepared. In spite of this, the seventy-two agreed to engage in this mission. A few verses later, the seventy-two returned rejoicing in the success of their ministry (Luke 10:17). What does this demonstrate about the true nature of follower empowerment?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before analyzing the pericope, it is first necessary to perform a brief review of the pertinent literature. This literature review begins by examining how trust is an antecedent to empowerment, establishing that trust must exist before a leader attempts to empower followers. The pertinent literature regarding the construct of empowerment, including the stages and outcomes of empowerment, is also reviewed.

### *Trust as an Antecedent to Empowerment*

Wright noted that reciprocal trust between the leader and followers is a necessary precursor to empowerment.<sup>2</sup> A leader who does not trust his/her followers will not attempt to empower them.<sup>3</sup> Followers who do not trust their leader will resist the leader's efforts at empowerment, especially as it concerns extremely difficult tasks.<sup>4</sup> According to Emuwa, "Empowerment is generally accepted as an indicator that followers are trusted and capable."<sup>5</sup> In other words, leaders will not seek to empower followers whom they believe to be untrustworthy and incapable of successfully completing tasks. This will be an important facet of empowerment to keep in mind when reviewing the juxtaposition of Jesus' interactions with the would-be followers and his interactions with the seventy-two disciples. Whereas this study is specifically aimed at understanding empowerment, it is necessary to remember that trust is the foundation upon which empowerment is built.

This seems to be especially true in the case of Jesus and the seventy-two. As was mentioned previously, Jesus' instructions to the seventy-two seem to run counter to empowerment. He told these disciples not to take supplies or money even though he was sending them out on a dangerous mission. Yet these seventy-two followers trusted Jesus enough to allow themselves to be empowered to accomplish a difficult mission even if it was in seemingly unconventional ways. Without this pre-existing trust, the seemingly counter-intuitive instructions of Christ may very well have fallen on deaf ears. Because the followers trusted Jesus, however, they made themselves available to the empowerment necessary to complete the mission given to them by Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> Alex G. Wright, "Trust and Empowerment in Jesus' Sending of the Seventy-Two: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Luke 9:51-10:24," (PhD diss., Regent University, 2018), ProQuest.

<sup>3</sup> Carolina Gómez and Benson Rosen, "The Leader-Member Exchange as a Link between Managerial Trust and Employee Empowerment," *Group & Organization Management* 26, no. 1 (2001): xx, doi:10.1177/1059601101261004.

<sup>4</sup> David Cooper, *Leadership for Follower Commitment* (London: Routledge, 2012), 169.

<sup>5</sup> Amara Emuwa, "Authentic leadership: Commitment to supervisor, follower empowerment, and procedural justice climate," *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 6, no. 1 (2013): 46.

## Empowerment

Before seeking specific insights regarding empowerment from the narrative of Jesus' sending of the seventy-two, it is first necessary to review the pertinent literature regarding the construct of empowerment. At its most basic level, empowerment means enabling another individual to take some specified action.<sup>6</sup> Within organizational leadership research, empowerment has been defined as raising followers' perceptions of self-efficacy.<sup>7</sup> Self-efficacy, in turn, is the follower's belief that he/she can succeed at assigned tasks.<sup>8</sup> Empowerment, by its very nature, is not something which occurs naturally for the follower. One study found that, whereas individual characteristics such as length of tenure with an organization can have a small effect on feelings of empowerment, group and organizational factors play a much larger role.<sup>9</sup> Overall, however, the degree of empowerment experienced by a follower is most directly influenced by the actions of his/her leader.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to understand that *empowerment* is not the same as *delegation*. Whereas these two constructs have much in common, they are also distinct. Delegation occurs when a subordinate is assigned new tasks and responsibilities.<sup>11</sup> This assignment of new responsibilities may also include the delegation of necessary authority to accomplish the assignment, but it does not generally involve the active *enabling* which is characteristic of empowering leadership. Delegation becomes especially necessary as organizations grow because the organizational leaders cannot accomplish all the necessary tasks single-handedly.<sup>12</sup> Empowerment is an expansion of delegation.<sup>13</sup> Whereas delegation is giving subordinates tasks that they can already accomplish, empowerment involves enabling followers to accomplish tasks which they would not have been able or willing to accomplish previously.<sup>14</sup> The literature seems to suggest that as leaders seek to empower followers, there is both a relational and motivational component. These components can be seen in the empowerment process outlined below.

**Empowerment Process.** The empowerment process consists of five stages.<sup>15</sup> In the first stage, the leader becomes aware of the followers' feeling of powerlessness and seeks to identify the factors which have resulted in this powerlessness. This state of

<sup>6</sup> Gretchen M. Spreitzer, "Psychological Empowerment in the Workplace Measure," *Academy of Management Journal* 38, no. 5 (1995): 1443.

<sup>7</sup> Ronit Kark, Boas Shamir, and Gilad Chen, "The two faces of transformational leadership: Empowerment and dependency," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88, no. 2 (2003): 248, doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.2.246.

<sup>8</sup> Kark, Shamir, and Chen "The two faces," 248.

<sup>9</sup> Christine S. Koberg et al., "Antecedents and Outcomes of Empowerment," *Group & Organization Management* 24, no. 1 (1999): 71, doi:10.1177/1059601199241005.

<sup>10</sup> Robert P. Vecchio, Joseph E. Justin, and Craig L. Pearce, "Empowering leadership: An examination of mediating mechanisms within a hierarchical structure," *The Leadership Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2010): 530, doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.03.014.

<sup>11</sup> Gary A. Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (Leadership in Organizations. Boston: Pearson, 2013), 1183.

<sup>12</sup> J. Peter Venton, "A General Theory of Delegation, Accountability and Empowerment," *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 12, no. 2 (1997): 179.

<sup>13</sup> Venton, "Delegation, Accountability and Empowerment," 179.

<sup>14</sup> Spreitzer, "Psychological Empowerment," 1443.

<sup>15</sup> Conger and Kanungo, "The Empowerment Process," 474.

powerlessness may not even be something of which the followers are consciously aware, but it will be demonstrated in their behavior. In the second stage, the leader employs managerial strategies such as participative management and goal setting to begin to address the feelings of powerlessness. It is in this stage that the concept of *empowerment as a motivation technique* is seen most clearly. This leads to the third stage in which the leader aims not only to remove the external factors causing the powerlessness but also to instill a sense of self-efficacy in the followers. It is in this stage that it is necessary to employ the concept of *empowerment as a relational technique*. The leader will not succeed in moving followers towards self-efficacy if he/she does not have a positive relationship with them. In the fourth stage, the followers begin to feel empowered and believe in their personal efficacy. Finally, in the fifth stage, the behavioral effects and positive outcomes of empowerment begin to be realized. Throughout these five stages, it is important to add the practice of feedback; empowerment does not mean that the follower never hears from the leader again. A leader may have enabled a follower to perform a task, but if the leader offers no feedback, then the follower will not know if he/she has satisfactorily accomplished the task.<sup>16</sup>

*Outcomes of Empowerment.* The theory of empowerment is based on the concept that “employees who are given greater opportunities for self-direction will manifest superior outcomes, such as higher levels of job performance and job satisfaction.”<sup>17</sup> Follower empowerment has also been shown to lead to higher levels of teamwork and lower levels of interpersonal conflict and dysfunction.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, higher levels of follower empowerment have also been shown to decrease the likelihood that an individual will leave the organization.<sup>19</sup>

If there are so many positive outcomes of empowerment, why do some leaders choose not to try to empower their followers? The primary reason is that leaders believe that seeking to empower employees will lead to work not getting done on time or decreased quality of work.<sup>20</sup> In reality, however, if empowering followers is done correctly, these risks will be solved throughout the empowerment process. For example, if certain followers are not trusted or capable, then leaders will not seek to empower those individuals. In the pericope examined in this study, Jesus demonstrated the correct process of empowerment to maximize success and decrease risk. The purpose of this article is to perform an exegetical study of this pericope using Robbins’ inner texture analysis in order to investigate Jesus’ empowerment of these disciples.

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<sup>16</sup> Andrea R. Drake, Jeffrey Wong, and Stephen B. Salter, “Empowerment, Motivation, and Performance: Examining the Impact of Feedback and Incentives on Nonmanagement Employees,” *Behavioral Research in Accounting* 19, no. 1 (2007): 75.

<sup>17</sup> Vecchio, Justin, and Pearce, “Empowering Leadership,” 530.

<sup>18</sup> Vecchio, Justin, and Pearce, “Empowering Leadership,” 532.

<sup>19</sup> Koberg, “Empowerment,” 71.

<sup>20</sup> Venton, “Delegation, Accountability, and Empowerment,” 181.

### III. INNER TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF LUKE 9:57-10:24

Inner-texture “refers to the various ways the text employs language to communicate.”<sup>21</sup> According to Robbins, the inner texture of a text is comprised of six sub-textures: repetitive texture, progressive texture, narrational texture, opening-middle-closing texture, argumentative texture, and sensory-aesthetic texture. Depending upon the pericope, some of these sub-textures may be more prominent than others, but all of them are generally present in the text. Each of these sub-textures is described below and analyzed in relation to the narrative of Luke 9:57-10:24. The purpose of this analysis is to examine what the interactions between Jesus and his disciples demonstrate regarding the nature of empowerment.

#### *Repetitive Texture*

Repetitive texture refers to “the occurrence of words and phrases more than once in a unit.”<sup>22</sup> The concept behind this texture is that words and phrases which are repeated tend to be important. In the pericope of Luke 9:57-10:24, there are many examples of repeated words and phrases. However, for the purposes of this study concerning the construct of empowerment, the repeated words of greatest importance are: follow, sent/send and joy/rejoice.

*Follow.* The word *follow* occurs three times in Lk. 9:57-62, which is the precursor to the story of the seventy-two. However, this portion is important to include in the analysis because it demonstrates the truth of Jesus’ statement in Lk. 10:2: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” In this section, three different individuals come to Jesus and claim that they will follow him. It is interesting to note that Luke employs the concept of “following” as Jesus is traveling down the road toward Jerusalem and demonstrates how the individuals actually want to travel a different direction – away from Jerusalem – than Jesus.<sup>23</sup>

The first individual volunteers to follow Jesus, which at first seems like a laudable gesture. However, Jesus tells the first individual that those who follow him will find themselves completely dependent upon whatever hospitality is offered, and in the case when none is offered, they will be homeless. Green noted that this is in keeping with a recurring theme in the Third Gospel, namely that material needs and possessions should be considered secondary to the demands of the kingdom of God.<sup>24</sup>

The second individual does not volunteer but is called directly by Jesus. The man responds that he will indeed follow, but desires first to go and bury his father. There has been a great deal of speculation as to what this request entailed. Some scholars argue that the man’s father was not even dead yet.<sup>25</sup> Others point to the Jewish custom of a first and second burial.<sup>26</sup> According to McCane, secondary burial “refers to the practice

<sup>21</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, "Dictionary of Socio-Rhetorical Terms," Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation, accessed July 22, 2017, <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRI/defs>

<sup>22</sup> Vernon K Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press International, 1996), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1997), 406.

<sup>24</sup> Green, *Luke*, 406.

<sup>25</sup> Ryken, Philip G. *Luke*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Green, *Luke*, 408.

of reburying the bones of the dead after the flesh of the body has decomposed. This burial custom, which appears in many cultures, had a long history among Jews even before the first century CE.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of what precisely this individual was requesting, it is clear that it was not something which he would be able to accomplish quickly. Thus, Jesus tells this second individual to eschew this responsibility of burying his father and instead go and proclaim the Kingdom.

The last individual volunteers to follow Jesus but wants first to go and say goodbye to his relatives. However, Jesus tells him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62, ESV). There exists in this encounter an interesting juxtaposition with the story of Elijah and Elisha. When Elijah called Elisha to follow him, Elisha made the same request that this final individual made of Jesus: to go and bid farewell to his relatives (I Kings 19:19-21). Whereas Elijah permitted this, however, Jesus does not. This is another hallmark of the Third Gospel: the reordering of human relationships. Jesus' response indicates that anyone with divided loyalties, even if they are legitimate familial loyalties, will not be able to follow him effectively.<sup>28</sup>

Whereas Luke does not record the responses of these three individuals, by virtue of the fact that many scholars refer to them as the "would-be disciples," the implication is that they chose not to follow.<sup>29</sup> This interpretation is given further credence by the fact that Luke 10:1 refers to "seventy-two *others*." The Greek word glossed here as "others" is the word *heteros* which is used when "qualitatively expressing dissimilarity of one item relative to another item."<sup>30</sup> If these seventy-two *others* are those who agreed to follow, it makes sense that the first three individuals refused to do so.

*Send.* Some variation of the word *send* occurs three times in Luke 10:1-3. In the first occurrence, the narrator informs the reader that Jesus sent out the seventy-two. Jesus speaks the next two occurrences. First, the reader is told by the narrator that Jesus gathered the seventy-two in order to send them to all the places which Jesus himself was preparing to go. According to Green, "Jesus' 'sending' incorporates somehow the provision of the competence necessary to achieve the missionary end for which persons are sent."<sup>31</sup> This again differentiates those who are sent from those who were the would-be followers.

In the second instance of the word *send*, Jesus tells the seventy-two to ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the fields. If the seventy-two are themselves workers bringing in the harvest, why are they instructed to pray for more workers? When the harvest is ripe, there is very little time to bring in the crop before it goes bad;

<sup>27</sup> Byron R. McCane, "'Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead'; Secondary Burial and Matt 8:21-22," *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 01 (1990): 31-32, doi:10.1017/s0017816000005514.

<sup>28</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 983.

<sup>29</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 974; Ryken, *Luke*, 501; Green, *Luke*, 406; John M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London: MacMillan, 1965), 142; Craig A. Evans, *Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 162; Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 408.

<sup>30</sup> Frederick William Danker and Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 151.

<sup>31</sup> Green, *Luke*, p. 410.

Jesus is conveying to his disciples the incredible urgency of the mission which they are undertaken.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, Jesus informs the seventy-two that he is sending them out as “lambs among wolves.” This simile will be discussed in greater detail in the Sensory-Aesthetic Texture section below, but one brief note will be made here. A shepherd does not knowingly send his sheep out among wolves because it is his job to protect the flock. In this instance, however, Jesus *intentionally* sends his disciples into dangerous situations seemingly knowing that they will return unharmed.

*Rejoice.* There are three occurrences of *joy* or *rejoice* in Luke 10:17-21. These occurrences all take place after the seventy-two return from their mission. When the disciples return, they excitedly tell Jesus that even the demons are subject to them in his name. Jesus confirms what they say, telling them that he has given them the ability to walk on snakes and scorpions and to triumph over the powers of Satan without being harmed. Yet, he also tells them that this not the reason to rejoice; rather, the disciples *should* be rejoicing in the fact that their names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Jesus then turns and begins rejoicing and worshipping God the Father.

### *Progressive Texture*

Progressive texture occurs “in sequences (progressions) of words and phrases throughout the unit” such as “I . . . you,” “Now . . . then,” and “Because . . . therefore.”<sup>33</sup> In Luke 9:57-10:24, the progression that is described is in relation to the way the seventy-two are received in the various towns they visit. Since they are sent out with nothing, they will completely dependent upon the hospitality of the residents of those towns. The disciples are told to pronounce peace upon whatever house they enter and “*If* a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But *if not*, it will return to you” (Luke 10:6, ESV, emphasis added). In towns that received the disciples and their message, the sick would be healed, and the Kingdom of God proclaimed. Jesus pronounces woe on the towns which refuse to repent and say that the day of judgment will be more bearable for the historically evil cities of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon. The progression here reveals that each town’s reception of the disciples, or lack thereof, leads to either a pronouncement of peace or a pronouncement of woe.

### *Narrational Texture*

Narrational texture in texts refers to the “voices through which the words in texts speak.”<sup>34</sup> While a third-person narrator describes the action in this pericope, and the words of the seventy-two and the would-be followers are also quoted, the voice of Jesus dominates this pericope. In the English Standard Version this pericope consists of 673 words, 530 (approximately 79%) of which are spoken by Jesus. This indicates that this is not so much a narrative about Jesus as it is a narrative about Jesus’ teaching. Jesus’ instructions before sending the seventy-two on their mission coupled with his corrective comments to them after they return indicate that there is still a great deal of

<sup>32</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 995.

<sup>33</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 15.

misunderstanding and resistance when it comes to the true nature of Jesus' teachings regarding the Kingdom of God.<sup>35</sup>

Yet there are elements of this passage that make it clear that Jesus is not teaching as a prophet or a religious leader. Jesus' pronouncement of woe and impending judgment upon the individuals and towns which do not receive the disciples and their message makes it clear that Jesus is putting himself in the role of judge. The use of the word "woe" here hearkens back to its use in pairings of the blessings and woes in the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-26). Just as in the juxtaposition of the blessings and woes, here Jesus contrasts "peace" with "woe." Whereas woe is not a pronouncement of automatic damnation,<sup>36</sup> it is a warning that the behavior being denounced is contrary to God's commands and will indeed lead to damnation if there is no repentance.<sup>37</sup> That these words are a direct quote from Jesus indicates that he is claiming the authority to make such judgments.

### *Opening-Middle-Closing Texture*

A text displays opening-middle-closing texture through the "nature of the beginning, body, and conclusion of a section of discourse," which often coincides with the use of repetition, progression, and narration.<sup>38</sup> In the pericope under discussion, there is a clear beginning, middle, and end to the narrative, and they involve the words which were the focus of the repetitive texture. The beginning of the narrative focuses on "follow," the middle on "send," and the end on "rejoice."

The beginning deals with those who are not willing to endure the personal costs of following Christ. Three different individuals come to Jesus with the intention of following him, and yet all three apparently turn away after Jesus describes what it will be like to follow him. It is important to note that Jesus does not turn these individuals away because he does not want them to follow him. Rather, these individuals turn away of their own volition after learning what *following* truly entails.

The middle texture of the narrative is the portion of the text in which Jesus sends out the seventy-two individuals on their mission. These seventy-two, who are willing to be sent by Jesus despite the potentially harsh circumstances, are a stark contrast to the three individuals who were not willing to follow. Interestingly, in spite of the lead up with the detailed instructions and outcomes for those who either offer or refuse hospitality, Luke does not offer any description of the actual mission itself. The narrative simply goes from Jesus sending the disciples to their return.

The closing texture of the narrative occurs when the seventy-two return home rejoicing. As was mentioned above, Jesus must offer a slight corrective here and instruct the seventy-two regarding the proper things about which to rejoice. The narrative ends with Jesus himself rejoicing because of what the seventy-two had experienced. Whereas this description of Jesus worshipping the Father seems to be a non-sequitur, Luke makes it clear that it is connected with the narrative of the seventy-two through the use of the phrase "In that same hour."

<sup>35</sup> John T. Carroll and Jennifer K. Cox, *Luke A Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 232.

<sup>36</sup> Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 735.

<sup>37</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 582.

<sup>38</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 19.



### *Argumentative Texture*

The argumentative texture of a text pertains to the way reasoning is used within the discourse of the text. This includes logical reasoning, which involves the presentation of assertions and supporting reasons.<sup>39</sup> It also includes qualitative reasoning in which “the quality of the images and descriptions encourages the reader to accept the portrayal as true and real” such as occurs with analogies, examples, and ancient testimony.<sup>40</sup>

This passage may not seem particularly argumentative per se, but several arguments are being made. The first argument which Jesus makes in this passage is that following him involves great personal cost. This is demonstrated in Jesus’ responses to the would-be followers: followers may not have their basic physical needs met and may have to eschew allegiance to their families. Jesus also demonstrates the cost of following him in his warning to the seventy-two that they will be sheep among wolves.

A second argument which Jesus made, as was outlined in the Narrational Texture section above, is that he has the authority to pronounce judgment on those who refuse to repent. Inherent within this argument is the sub-argument that those who heed the message of the seventy-two will receive “peace” while those who do not will receive harsh judgment. Something that is particularly interesting here is that Jesus does not instruct his disciples to continue to preach to those who are not receptive. Rather, he tells the disciples to quickly move on from such towns and “wipe the dust from their feet” as a warning to those who refuse the message. This is an indication that the responsibility for rejecting the message lies not with the disciples or their Master, but with the individuals and towns who chose to reject them.

### *Sensory-Aesthetic Texture*

Sensory-aesthetic texture refers to “the range of senses the text evokes or embodies (thought, emotion, sight, sound, touch, smell) and the manner in which the text evokes or embodies them (reason, intuition, imagination, humor, etc.).”<sup>41</sup> In this pericope, there are some very poignant descriptions which evoke sensory responses. In the narrative of the would-be followers, each encounter invites such a response. Through the first individual, the reader is forced to reckon with the possibility of not even having the kind of home which the foxes and birds enjoy. Through the second individual, the reader experiences the tension between traditional familial responsibilities and the call of Jesus. Through the third individual, the reader experiences the emotion of leaving home without even saying goodbye to one’s family.

The narrative with the seventy-two also contains sensory-aesthetic features. Jesus tells the seventy-two that he is sending them out “as lambs in the midst of wolves.” The meaning of this simile is unmistakable: Jesus is sending these disciples on a mission during which they will be extremely vulnerable. This is not just because of the

<sup>39</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 21.

<sup>40</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 29-30.

danger of the mission itself, but also because Jesus instructs the disciples to take no provisions and instead depend completely upon hospitality.

As was discussed above, those who are hospitable will receive a pronouncement of peace from these disciples, and those who are not hospitable will receive a pronouncement of woe, which are also sensory-aesthetic elements. According to Green, "peace" in this context should be understood as referring to salvation, rather than the shallower peace of the *Pax Romana*.<sup>42</sup> Individuals and towns who prove to be inhospitable are warned that they will face the consequences on judgment day. Whereas this hospitality is necessary for the survival of the seventy-two, it also carries the added implication that those who receive the seventy-two are also heeding their message regarding the Kingdom of God and the necessity of repentance.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The inner-texture analysis has yielded many important insights. However, no exegetical study is complete until the insights are practically applied. In this study, the purpose is to apply these insights to the organizational leadership concept of *empowerment*. Based on the exegetical analysis, three main points will be discussed regarding empowerment. First, a leader must know which followers to empower. Second, empowering followers does not mean making it easy for them. Finally, two-way feedback is necessary for effective empowerment.

##### *Which Followers Should Be Empowered?*

As was noted above, "Empowerment is generally accepted as an indicator that followers are trusted and capable."<sup>43</sup> Though empowering leadership has been shown to have many positive outcomes, leaders must still be selective about in whom they attempt to invest empowerment efforts. In other words, not just any follower can be empowered. This phenomenon is referred to as employee (or follower) empowerment readiness, which is defined as "the extent to which employees possess an array of task-relevant knowledge and experience that will enable them to benefit from, and to be successful in, an empowered environment."<sup>44</sup> Perhaps the most important mark of follower empowerment readiness, however, is the willingness of the individual to face whatever conditions exist in the empowered environment.

This point, of course, is demonstrated in the juxtaposition between Jesus' interactions with the would-be followers at the end of Luke 9 and his instructions to the seventy-two at the beginning of Luke 10. Once the would-be followers made it clear that they were not capable or trustworthy of following Jesus, he did not continue to try to push empowerment on them. Rather, he made it clear that they did not possess the characteristics necessary to follow him, and he let them depart. With the seventy-two, on the other hand, Jesus determined that they were trustworthy and then laid out the

<sup>42</sup> Green, *Luke*, 413.

<sup>43</sup> Emuwa, "Authentic leadership," 46.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Ahearne, John Mathieu, and Adam Rapp, "To Empower or Not to Empower Your Sales Force? An Empirical Examination of the Influence of Leadership Empowerment Behavior on Customer Satisfaction and Performance," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90, no. 5 (2005): 948, doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.5.945.

difficult requirements of their upcoming mission. Rather than balking at the instructions, the seventy-two trusted that Jesus would correctly enable them to complete the mission.

Imagine if Jesus had kept trying to enable the would-be followers after it became clear that they were not capable. This is what some leaders do, assuming that an effective leader can empower even the most incapable follower. This is simply not the case. Even though Jesus often chose seemingly unqualified individuals – such as fishermen, tax collectors, and violent revolutionaries – to carry out his missions (Matt. 4:18-21, 10:1-4). Jesus also had many people turn away after he described the difficult nature of being his followers (John 6:66). After they turned away, he did not chase after them. Contemporary organizational leaders should approach empowerment the same way. If a follower proves that he/she is not capable of being empowered, it is not worth expending the time and effort attempting to do just that.

### *Empowerment Does Not Mean Tasks Will Be Easy*

Recall that empowerment, at its most basic, is when a leader enables a follower to accomplish a task.<sup>45</sup> As the goal of empowering leadership is to increase follower self-efficacy,<sup>46</sup> it would be a mistake to think that this means that the leader makes the task as easy as possible for the follower. The entire purpose of empowerment is that the leader believes that he/she can properly prepare a follower to handle challenging tasks. Some scholars have found that there is a positive relationship between perceived servant leadership and perceived empowerment.<sup>47</sup> This makes sense because one of the main characteristics of the servant leader is that he/she enriches the lives of his/her followers.<sup>48</sup> As part of this enriching process, however, the servant leader seeks to challenge and develop his/her followers; the servant leader does not simply do everything to make his/her followers' lives easier! This is how empowerment functions: leaders help prepare their followers and then challenge those followers to accomplish difficult tasks. To state it plainly, giving a follower a task that they can easily complete with their existing skillset is not empowerment, it is delegation.

When Jesus was instructing and preparing the seventy-two, he did not hand them everything that they needed to succeed in their mission. In fact, he did not even permit them to take necessities of survival. Rather than tell them to pack food, water, money, and clothing, he told them that they would be relying on the hospitality of those who received them and their message. Jesus did not give the seventy-two these necessities, but he told them the proper way to get them. In other ways, Jesus did provide the seventy-two with things they needed, like the authority over evil spirits. Yet even though Jesus gave them this authority, based on other Scriptural examples of

<sup>45</sup> Spreitzer, "Psychological Empowerment," 1443.

<sup>46</sup> Yajiong Xue, John Bradley, and Huigang Liang, "Team climate, empowering leadership, and knowledge sharing," *Journal of Knowledge Management* 15, no. 2 (2011): 302, doi:10.1108/13673271111119709.

<sup>47</sup> Holly H. Hall, "An exploration of the relationship between servant leadership characteristics of nurse leaders and the perception of empowerment among their followers," (PhD diss., Indiana Wesleyan University, n.d), ProQuest (2016), vii.

<sup>48</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf et al., *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), EBSCO Host Ebook Collection, I.

casting out demons, it is reasonable to conclude that the casting out of evil spirits was still not an easy task.

### *The Necessity of Two-Way Feedback in Empowerment*

Feedback has been shown to have a positive effect on perceived impact, which is an individual's belief that his/her actions are actually meaningful in accomplishing a stated goal or purpose.<sup>49</sup> This holds true for both leaders and followers. Whereas followers are sometimes hesitant to receive feedback, some studies have suggested that empowering followers makes them more likely to seek feedback of their own accord.<sup>50</sup> Leaders too may be hesitant to receive feedback, but it has been suggested that willingness to accept feedback is based on the same types of traits which make an individual a successful leader.<sup>51</sup>

It may seem odd to suggest that Jesus needed to receive feedback from the seventy-two. This is not intended to be a discussion of Jesus' omniscience. Regardless of whether Jesus knew what the seventy-two would report, when they return and give feedback, it allows Jesus to evaluate and correct with feedback of his own. Luke wrote that the seventy-two rejoiced because of the fact that evil spirits submitted to them in the name of Jesus (Luke 10:17). Jesus responds to this feedback by telling the disciples that he has indeed empowered them to have authority over evil beings. However, Jesus then corrected them by telling them that they should rejoice not in that authority, but in their own salvation. Jesus was not rebuking the seventy-two for casting out evil spirits; this was something which he gave them the ability to do, and thus he obviously expected them to utilize that ability. What Jesus was doing was putting their experience into perspective by reminding them to evaluate it in light of ultimate goals of the Kingdom of God (Luke 10:18-20).

Feedback functions the same way in contemporary organizational leadership – especially since most organizational leaders cannot claim to possess the wisdom of Jesus. Both followers and leaders can learn from “accurate feedback about their behavior and its consequences and use this feedback to analyze their experiences and learn from them.”<sup>52</sup> Followers who have been a part of the empowerment process must give feedback to leaders regarding whether they have truly been enabled to complete the responsibilities they have been given. For example, if a leader has neglected to give followers access to a tool which is necessary for completing the task, the followers must share this as part of the feedback. Remember that leaders do not have to hand followers everything they need, but leaders do need to ensure that the followers know *how* to get what they need. On the other side of the coin, followers must receive feedback that lets them know if they have successfully completed the task. Sometimes this may necessitate corrective action to ensure that things are done correctly. Other times, this feedback may involve reminding followers that, even though accomplishing a

<sup>49</sup> Drake, Wong, and Salter, “Empowerment, Motivation, and Performance,” p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Xiyang Zhang et al., “Leaders’ Behaviors Matter: The Role of Delegation in Promoting Employees’ Feedback-Seeking Behavior,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 1, doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00920.

<sup>51</sup> Yukl, *Leadership*, 385.

<sup>52</sup> Yukl, *Leadership*, 385.

task is a victory, they should always stay focused on the overarching goals of the organization.

## V. CONCLUSION

This article began with several quotes from Jesus, which, on the surface, do not seem very empowering. Yet Christian leadership scholars hold Jesus to be the epitome of perfect leadership. Thus, the purpose of this article was to perform an exegetical study of Lk. 9:57-10:24 in order to gain insights from Jesus' empowerment of the seventy-two disciples. This narrative yielded three main points which can be applied to contemporary organizational leadership. First, leaders must ensure that they are empowering the right followers and not attempting to empower followers who cannot be trusted to complete the necessary tasks. This also includes making followers aware of the added responsibilities of empowerment. Second, empowerment does not mean that the leader needs to hand the followers everything necessary to complete the task; sometimes followers can accomplish a task more effectively if they are forced to acquire the necessary tools themselves. Finally, effective empowerment involves two-way feedback. Followers must keep leaders informed of progress on the assigned tasks and be willing to share ideas, critiques, and suggestions. Leaders must be willing to listen to follower feedback and provide further clarification or resources if necessary. These findings are important because they offer exegetical support for the theory and practice of follower empowerment from a Christian perspective. Future research on this pericope can also focus on the constructs of trust and accountability and how, along with empowerment, these three constructs function together to bring about success.

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