



## Jesus as an Exemplary Leader

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For denominations that consider foot-washing as an ordinance, the 13th Chapter of John is considered sacrosanct. In this chapter, Christ is shown as instituting the doctrine that supports the ordinance of the washing of the saints' feet. In addition to the doctrinal significance is the fact that, within this Chapter, Christ provides an example of conduct that disciples are to emulate. This is important because organizational behavior (leadership), according to Kuhn (2012), is akin to the scientific method in that paradigms—"accepted laws, theory, applications, and instrumentations"—are critical (pp. 11, 18). Paradigms in Kuhn's estimation were required for leadership. Perhaps as important, however, as the establishment of structure and a set of practices is Christ's paradoxical approach. Similar to Waldman and Balven's (2014) admonishment to researchers, Christ can be seen as warning leaders "against the temptation to immediately put forth normative approaches and then proclaim them as the way forward" (p. 232). Christ clearly understands that a standard is critical

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at this stage of the disciples' development. A thus the example given is worthy of explanation.

To appreciate the degree to which paradox is presented within the leadership of Jesus a standard set of principles must be established. As a method of juxtaposing the unique characteristics of leadership expressed in the 13th Chapter of John, Kouzes and Posner's (2012) *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Happen in Organizations* will be used as a framework. Within this seminal book, Kouzes and Posner present five practices of exemplary leaders. The acceptance of these practices and their applicability to ecclesial leadership is heralded by theologians and scholars, such as Thomas Woodruff and George Barna. While researching the specific nature of effective leadership within the local church, Woodruff (2004) utilized George Barna's *Turn-Around Churches* as the basis of his contention of the applicability of "secular" leadership theory to churches. He felt that the principles denoted in Kouzes and Posner's *Leadership Challenge* and Naus and Dobbs' *Leaders Who Make a Difference* were particularly salient. He agreed with the inference made by Barna that the models of leadership encapsulated within those books are "evident" in the lives of leaders within ecclesial organizations. Utilizing terms often associated with secular leadership principles, Watts (2014) asserted that they were required for effective ecclesial leadership. According to Watts (2014), relational principles of effective church leadership included: (a) mission, (b) conflict management, (c) power and influence, (d) collaboration, (e) emotions as facts, (f) forgiveness, (g) reconciliation, and (h) love. For these reasons, Kouzes and Posner's writing is considered required reading for budding Christian scholars in leadership.

The relevance of these principles as a framework for the exegesis of John is echoed in Mottram's (1989) assertion that the style of the writers "invites biblical comparison" (p. 90). He further comments that managers in search of an encouraging ethic read this book (Mottram, 1989, p. 91). In line with the paradoxical treatment of the principles in this chapter is Dirker's (2000) acknowledgment that while the principles are universal, their application is just as salient even when they contradict standard methods of a given organization.

## JOHN 13:1–17

While an in-depth discussion of the principles of Kouzes and Posner will be presented later, in an effort to develop the themes critical to the exegesis and leadership comparison later in the chapter, a baseline must be established. Thus, foundational information is provided on this chapter given its focus on the role of Christ as an example and the cultural norms as they relate to foot-washing.

### *Brief Overview of John 13*

As presented earlier, the Gospel of John was written specifically to present Christ as the Eternal Word that became flesh for our redemption (Ironside, 1942). Although Christ is shown to be God, He also came from the womb of a woman, which established him as fully human. This will become critical as we look for leadership examples. Ironside (1942) describes this as “God and Man in one blessed, glorious Person – the eternal Son manifest(ed?) in flesh” (p. 12). These two claims are the foundations for the rest of the book of John (O’Day, 2015). DeSilva (2004) contributed that the focus of this gospel, unlike the others, seems to offer an extended and sophisticated reflection on the relationship of the One from above to the Father. In particular, O’Day (2015) noted that the true concern of this book is the Revelation of God in Jesus (p. 425).

DeSilva (2004) points out that the 13th chapter of John is contained within the “Book of Grace”: John 13–20. In addition to opening this book, Culpepper and O’Day (2015) described the first verse of this chapter as presenting:

a transition in the orientation of the Fourth Gospel’s narrative. Prior to this verse, Jesus’s hour has been anticipated (2:4; 7:30; 8:20) or acknowledged as imminent (12:27, 27), but 13:1 signals its arrival. (p. 612)

He contends that the chapter can be read as interconnecting passages with recurring themes that lend itself to principles of leadership. The theme of discipleship and the notion of paradox are observed throughout the chapter. For example, Culpepper and O’Day highlighted that there is the “tension between Jesus’s gift of himself in love and the betrayal and rejection of that gift by those whom Jesus loves” (p. 613). It is this paradoxical

nature of Jesus's relationship with man that is at the core of the principles extracted from John 13 below.

### *Foot-Washing*

The act of foot-washing is one of the most distinctive portions of the 13th chapter of John. Before discussing its significance or the common social and cultural topic of honor depicted in Jesus's washing of the disciples' feet, it is critical to understand the cultural norms associated with foot-washing. Oyemomi (2012) noted that as an act of hospitality, the custom in ancient civilization was for the host to provide water for the guests' feet. He further asserts that the background of this custom was that travelers were wearing the common footwear of the time, sandals, and would end up with extremely dusty feet while walking the roads of Jerusalem. The custom as pointed out in his article dates back to Abraham in Genesis 18:4. Other Old Testament references to this custom include Genesis 19:2, 24:32; 43:24 and 1 Samuel 25:41. What is critical to the later analysis is, as Oyemomi (2012) points out, that in addition to providing water, the host would also provide a servant to wash the feet of their guest. He continues that foot-washing was indeed relegated as the duty of a servant or the lowliest of slaves. Oyemomi (2012) also noted that in homes without servants, a submissive wife (or child) would perform this duty. As noted within this culture, the social hierarchy was well-established and the boundaries were seldom crossed. Finally, he notes that it was unheard of for someone socially superior to wash feet or serve anyone that was regarded as socially inferior.

From a cultural perspective, Barclay (1975) reminds his readers of the inference to the first ordinance of the church "baptism." This reference can be found in Jesus's refusal of Peter's request to wash not only his feet, but also his hands and his head (John 13:9). Jesus retorted that those who have bathed need only to wash their feet, was a direct comment on the custom that before a person went to a feast, they bathed. Thus, only their feet would have gotten dirty in the journey to the host location. Barclay (1975) noted that this was a reference to "Christian baptism. A way of saying 'Unless you pass through the gate of baptism, you have no part in the Church'" (p. 141). In actuality, this chapter presents all three ordinances.

## MODELING THE WAY BY CHARTING A DIFFERENT PATH

As the first practice of exemplary leadership, Kouzes and Posner (2012) present the practice of modeling the way (pp. 41–76). Leaders are to set the standard by which all actions will be measured. They further break down this practice indicating it is done through clarifying values and setting an example. One component of clarifying values is the establishment of who you are as a leader. As shown earlier, Christ fulfills the first practice by clearly acknowledging His relationship to God. Christ’s actions and words in John 13 are a textbook example of this practice. Additionally, Christ indicated that though the disciples may not understand it, what He was doing was being done as an example/pattern of what they should do.

One departure from Kouzes and Posner (2012) is that Christ often demonstrated actions whose primary purpose was not imitation. Friedell (2008) states that the real meaning behind the washing of the feet was an act of faith and obedience. He points to the use of the word “hypodeigma,” which is interpreted as “paradigm” (p. 24). Thus, he concluded that this story and others like it were done as paradigms rather than acts to be explicitly followed (Friedell, 2008).

Wood and Hilton (2012) support the notion that oftentimes, decision-making within an organization is not simply one-dimensional. They extolled the virtue of paradigms because imitation of a previous leader is not always required or best. While discussing leadership within educational institutions, they cited Hellmich (2007) as having noted that “leaders confront complex, multidimensional, and dynamic moral issues in their everyday practice. They also cited Davis’s assertion that “responsible stewardship necessitates navigation around numerous potential pitfalls which are compounded by ongoing change (e.g., dwindling resources, accountability, demographic shifts)” (Davis, 2007a, 2007b).

Lauder and Marynissen (2018) posited that while numerous conversations and discussions begin with the phrase “in a perfect world” or “all else being constant” (p. 319), rarely is either of those the case. The reality is more akin to a state of chaos in which true cause and effect are difficult, if not impossible, to truly determine. In such situations, each of these authors prescribes the use of paradigms or practices that allow a manager to react and lead. The notion that Jesus does not seek imitation can be found throughout His ministry in which he points not to himself, but to The One that sent him. Though not in this chapter, in John 14:12, Jesus encourages them by indicating that they should do greater things than He

has done. In essence, do what you have seen me do; but use it as a floor, not a ceiling.

*Principle One: Christlike leaders provide a paradigm for leadership rather than an insistence on imitation.*

The clearest example of common and social topics of honor within this text can be found within Verses 4–5. As highlighted earlier, the act of foot-washing was a duty reserved for the lowest slave/servant, woman, or child. This noted act of humility and service is done within the backdrop of Christ’s proclamation of His placement in God. Thus, the Sovereign of the universe takes the place of a slave (Ironside, 1942, p. 551). He not only performed the duty of a slave, but took on the form of a slave by girding himself with a towel. Furthermore, Ironside notes that since it was customary and there was no one there to wash the disciples’ feet, Christ showed up as a leader. When there is a void, you must do whatever it takes to get the job done. The Interpreter’s Bible notes that as each of the disciples entered the room—knowing the customs and had undoubtedly performed them previously for one another, on this night they chose to stubbornly ignore the water and the basin that was placed there (Buttrick, 1952). He proposes that Jesus’s act was done as a reminder of the lesson concerning humility and their place in the kingdom. The lesson is that “there is only one kind of greatness, the greatness of service” (Barclay, p. 139).

Donaldson (2002) chronicles the rise of three new entries to the Black Enterprise (BE) 100—top 100 Black-owned businesses in the United States. As noted by the title of the article—*Going against the grain*—the path taken by all three was nontraditional. From starting a firm by partnering with other firms to purchasing an auto dealership during a gas crisis to opening a bakery given the high rate of closure of such businesses, these entrepreneurs did something other than what would have typically been done and succeeded. It was the very fact that they were willing to go against the conventional wisdom to which they credit their success (Donaldson, 2002). Similarly, Labarba (2000) chronicled the story of Cogent Communications’ nontraditional approach to the telecommunications market. Rather than offering services to a broad range of customers, they decided on a narrow approach of attempting to corner the market in one specific area—high-speed internet service to multitenant commercial buildings. Contrary to the prevailing plans at the time, Cogent would not give away their equipment. This meant that the cost efficiencies of the new technology would not immediately be realized by the client. Despite

this, a fiber optic network was born and has become the default high-speed medium that is currently in use. Two prominent truisms can be found within this divergent from the norm. Firstly that Jesus does not consider station (the discussion of who is first and last with the brothers in Mark 10:35–45, and secondly the insistence that he can to serve and not be served.

*Principle Two: Christlike leaders understand the value of purposefully diverting from the norm.*

## INSPIRE A SHARED VISION OF SOMETHING GREATER

The second of Kouzes and Posner's five principles, *inspiring a shared vision*, supports the notion that the successes of past leaders can serve as a mechanism to cast a vision of future possibilities. Like the first, this principle is also broken down into two parts: namely, envision the future and enlist others. The acts and focus of Jesus can be described as ultimately providing visionary insight. Having recognized that His time on the earth was ending, He sought to ensure the disciples were able to take hold of the vision—even if it was outside of what they could comprehend in their present state. It is noteworthy that Jesus does not insist on their understanding of the vision, just their acceptance of it (Belsterling, 2006). The role of leadership is about the ability to cast the vision and continuing to function until it is understood and accepted. This can be observed in verses 6–10 where Peter's protest and the ensuing dialogue places the reading within the challenge-response genre of common and social topics (Robbins, 2012). While Jesus continued to wash the feet of the disciples, they must have grown uneasy with Jesus's action, yet one no stopped Him or offered to take His place (Buttrick, 1952). No one that is, but the impulsive, outspoken Peter. As noted by Robbins, this conversation took place within the relatively public arena in the presence of the other disciples. Thus, fulfilling the first component required for this genre—the challenge. Peter, recognizing the complete departure from the norms, objected to Jesus washing his feet. The second component of response can be noted by Jesus's refusal to engage in the debate with Peter. Re-establishing His superiority, He simply retorts that not being washed will result in Peter not having a part in Him. Peter's reaction, the third component of the conversation—response, underscores that he had come to accept the lesson. According to Eshbach (1969), similar to the show of humility of Christ washing their feet, it was also a sign

of humility to receive such service (Eshbach, 1969). Peter's next statement goes directly to dyadic personality. He acknowledges that being linked with Jesus is essential. It is so critical that Carson (1991) notes that he responded with "unrestrained exuberance"—requesting to be washed completely (p. 464).

This passage also lends itself to the consideration of Reciprocal Intertexture in that Christ moved forward based on His complete understanding of the wider perspective of the plan of salvation (Henson et al., 2020). Michaels denotes at least three inconsistencies that would be present when viewed by Peter. In verse six, what is translated into English from the original Greek would be considered improper, "Lord, You? Of me? Wash the feet?" (Michaels, 1989, p. 167). Within the tenth verse, there are two references—baptism and uncleanness of Judas—that can only be understood later in the passage as the disciples come to understand the "wider application" of the sentiments of Jesus (p. 168). O'Day (2015) noted Jesus's response in the 7th verse eludes to a time when Peter will come to understand at a later date, specifically after His "hour" had come. It is this same sense of the Spirit revealing the completed understanding in the future that is found in Acts 2:22 and Acts 12:16 (p. 615). Finally, "only Jesus's sacrificial death on the cross can make sense of foot-washing" (Florer-Bixler, 2019, p. 20).

In philosophic circles, this notion of being action-oriented is detailed in a discussion on Arendt Principle. As a leading political theorist of her time, Muldoon popularized the notion that "instead of basing action on an immediate response to emerging problems, it should spring from and be guided by broader principles that would provide standards and orientation" (Muldoon, 2016, p. 133). She further concluded that "principles offer a degree of stability and continuity in their ability to put forth basic criteria that arise internally to the performance of an action, against which future endeavors can be judged and guided" (p. 133). Muldoon went on to assert that, with the correct principle, one does not have to obtain a detailed understanding of all facts before moving toward action.

As a component of a debate around the true knowledge, Hilton and Aramaki (2014) observed that "knowledge needs to go beyond the verbal, for to know facts is to have used them. As an ancient Chinese saying puts it, 'I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do, and I understand'" (p. 100). In this respect, they support the notion of a call to action as a means to garner the full impact and importance of experience.



*Principle Three: Christlike leaders are action-oriented and push for action even when the vision is not fully understood by the follower.*

The main teaching point of John 13 is the idea that because Christ so loved the disciples, they should likewise, love one another (Belsterling, 2006). Considering the act of foot-washing that is so central to the text, Christ uses words like “ought” and “blessed” to underscore His actions. In doing so, He demonstrated that by doing them, the disciples would receive a benefit beyond their immediate need. The extent of Jesus’s concern and desire for oneness with and between the disciples is on display via the symbolic nature of the act of foot-washing in the 8th verse. It is “symbolic of eschatological hospitality through which Jesus shares His home, that is, the Father’s house – with His disciples. The foot-washing is an eschatological act because through it Jesus manifests the unity and intimacy of God, Jesus, and the believer that marks full relationship with God” (O’ Day, 2015, p. 615).

In agreement with Kouzes and Posner’s proposition that leaders must appeal to a common idea (p. 131), Adams (2001) supports the existence of a common human ideal. Notably, Adam posited:

Human beings, in any civilization, are, at least to some extent, rational agents and thinkers, for civilization, requires rational action in cooperative endeavors, rational action requires some measure of success in decision-making and knowledge-seeking, and success in decision making and knowledge-seeking requires rational thinking. Rational thinking presupposes the basic principles of normative logic. So the basic principles of normative logic are neither subjective nor culturally relative, for they are embedded in the normative constitution of a thinking mind and presupposed in rational thinking, regardless of whether they are ever articulated or reflected on. (p. 37)

Furthermore, while not completely free of negative connotations, the economic model of Sharing Economies (SE) has been shown to contribute toward the sense of share ideals promoted by Kouzes and Posner. Some of the more benign examples of economic-sharing are firms like Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb. Despite the potential for cheating that is inherent in these economies, empirical research has confirmed that the introduction of SE reduces the desire to cheat the system (Guo et al., 2019). Participating in SE enhanced individuals’ interpersonal closeness, which in turn led to less self-interest cheating. Such results were in line with findings from previous research that the more people engaged in SE,

the more they would adopt altruistic values and care about others (Roos & Hahn, 2017). Ultimately, having a part with Jesus is presented as the existential goal, not just the notion of being clean.

*Principle Four: Christlike leaders create a sense of belonging to something greater than the self to create a sense of shared destiny.*

## CHALLENGE THE PROCESS BY PURPOSEFULLY BREAKING NORMS

The fourth principle of challenging the process, according to Kouzes and Posner, involves being vigilant for opportunities that are ripe for change. This step also involves a willingness to take a risk. If nothing else, Jesus's actions in John 13 showed that He fully expects leaders to challenge the process. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, believers were called upon to abandon the cultural norms of the day. They were instructed that to lead means to serve and to get means to give. In this chapter, He demonstrated a total reversal of accepted norms by having a superior washing the feet of inferior subjects (John 13:12–14). In performing this ritual, Jesus's actions conflicted with the social and textual component of honor (Robbins, 2012). The conflict in honor existed because The One who was the Incarnation of God was performing the duties of a servant. Further, within this narrative, there is the ultimate challenge of the process in that the Sovereign Being of the Universe takes the place of a slave (Ironsides, 1942, p. 551).

Empirical evidence from a study conducted around gender discrimination revealed both the inherent necessity and the benefit of challenging the norm. The resulting discovery concluded that with a challenge to these norms, the perspective of underrepresented populations goes unobserved. Additionally, persons in these populations, when “attempting to meet the expectations of “the iconic leader,” often questioned their competence and belonging or felt forced to overcompensate...and were subsequently perceived and evaluated negatively” (Rogers & Rose, 2019, p. 46). As a measure of challenging the process, Rogers and Rogers offered that, rather than attempting to assimilate, they would be better served to simply be “leaders on their own and equally valuable terms” (p. 46). Pettitt described the choice that dissenters must make is either exit or voice. One can choose to simply leave the environment/organization or to remain and express their discontent and work to change the organization (voice) (Pettitt, 2007). In this chapter,

Jesus chooses the former. He considers the cultural norm and makes a conscious decision to divert from it to show forth His Sovereignty over it.

*Principle Five: Christlike leaders recognize the need to challenge the status quo and are willing to go against the established norms.*

It should be noted that being a part of Christ's inner circle during this time was a risky proposition. This is noted in Leszai's writing in which he indicates that, similar to the prophets of the Old Testament, the way of the disciples involved the risk of exterior persecution (Leszai, 2011). More specific to this text, the chapter opens with "imminent betrayal, suffering, and death. Understandably, we tend to envision the scene with somber images. Sobriety is called for; the cross and the bitter irony of Jesus being "raised up" is at hand" (Keck, 2015, p. 22). Thus, in addition to the generic inherent dangers of the day, even the screen in which the discourse takes place is filled with foreboding. Yet, it is precisely this setting that Jesus chose to encourage the heart of His disciples by lifting the prospect of being part of His Divine Ministry—including a destiny that is calvary bound. This aspect of challenging the process is not included in Kouzes and Posner's writing; however, it is significant to Christ's approach.

In one of his last letters, noted leader and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer exclaimed that importance of examples is that they give words their power (Kelly & Nelson, 2003). While chronicling Bonhoeffer's life, Kelly and Nelson observed that Bonhoeffer exemplified the notion that when the authenticity of the scripture was at stake, responsible action was required. Action that, per his status as a martyr, could require the ultimate sacrifice. Jackson and Daly (2011) have a similar notion regarding the cost of leadership. They open their writing on leadership with the following statement:

To lead is to live dangerously because leadership counts when you lead people through difficult change, you challenge what people hold dear—their daily habits, tools, loyalties, and ways of thinking—with nothing more to offer perhaps than a possibility...And people resist in all kinds of creative and unexpected ways that can get you taken out of the game: pushed aside, undermined, or eliminated. (p. 26)

Within this chapter, Jesus is clear that, even within His inner circle, some would betray him. In that way, He establishes that leadership is a costly proposition.

*Principle Six: Christlike leaders must be willing to bear the personal cost of leadership.*

## ENABLE OTHERS TO ACT THROUGH HUMBLE SERVICE

The practice of enabling others to act underlies a leader's ability to foster a sense of collaboration with those that they lead. It includes the ability to create a trusting relationship between the leader and the followers. Additionally, inherent in this practice is the will and ability to strengthen others. All that Christ did in the three-year training process of His disciples was designed to ensure that they were able to function with power and authority. Leszai concludes that the commission of the disciples did not happen by chance; rather, that before sending them out, Jesus gave them the required authority (Leszai, 2011). The requirement to accept this act of humility in John 13 and its associated promise of having a part with Him was done as an act of empowerment—a component of authority to act. Christ knew that they could not have a part with Him if they were “defiled with unconfessed sin” (Ironsides, 1942, p. 555).

In verses 11–17, John turns the reader's attention back to the lesson of humility, and thus, the precepts of honor. Jesus's acts and subsequent words were indicative of Him giving them both an example and a pattern (Carson, 1991). Throughout scripture, Jesus was seen attempting to teach the disciples about humility, even to the point of telling them that He came to serve—not to be served. On this occasion, He was determined to demonstrate it to them (Oyemomi, 2012, p. 50). He has effectively removed any excuse for them not being humble; for not only had He instructed them, but He had also shown them. In this way, Jesus was indicating that He understood the disciples' need for more than an example of action but also one of attitude (Guzik, 2017). Jesus used their knowledge and acceptance of the cultural norms as a method of pointing to a greater lesson. He confirmed and affirmed His belief that the slave is not greater than the Master, but then pivoted to The One that was sent not being greater than The One that sent Him. In so He states, if the Master and Lord could be humble, then so could they. He punctuated this lesson with the promise of the blessing of obedience.

When promoting fairness and diversity, many corporations highlight the notion that the company is a meritocracy—promotions are based on merit. Murphy (1996) noted that this often has resulted in individuals overlooking the accomplishments of the organization and only

looking to their efforts. As a component of the seven guiding principles for successful leaders, Murphy included the concept of “strategic humility” (Murphy, 1996). In developing this concept, Murphy underscores that it is only through an awareness of a leader’s ignorance that they can sustain the desire for continuous learning. Likewise, Kerfoot (1998) noted that “Only when one openly admits to oneself how little one knows, how much there is to learn, and how we need others to be successful will growth as a leader occur” (p. 238). Kerfoot continued that high performing leaders were differentiated from others by the presence of humility and the absence of both pride and self-indulgence. In his speech before the National Prayer Breakfast, the Forty-Fourth President of The United States included a thought from President Lincoln regarding humility. President Obama reminded the audience that in the eyes of President Lincoln, the humbling factor in his life was his faith (Obama, 2013). This, comparable to other forms of humility, allowed him to embrace his limits. Therefore, to think of humility as the absence of confidence or lack of recognition of one’s self-worth is inaccurate perception. Jesus underscores that humility is the presence of an awareness that does not require self-aggrandizement.

*Principle Seven: Christlike leaders are God-empowered and encourage others through the power of authentic humility and self-awareness.*

## ENCOURAGE THE HEART: AUTHENTICITY NOW AND BRIGHTER FUTURE LATER

This final practice was the primary focus of the portion of Jesus’s discourse in which He referenced the disciples’ ability to have a part in Him. Understanding the service and sacrifice that He was calling the disciples into, Jesus sought to reassure them of the ultimate victory of their obedience. Ironside concluded that there was nothing more critical and reassuring to the disciples than knowing that Jesus understood and that they could take anything and everything to Him (Ironside, 1942, p. 555). It is precisely this sense of community and personal involvement that Kouzes and Posner recommend for all leaders. In a slight departure from the two scholars, Jesus doesn’t seek to encourage through soft words or immediate reward. He appears to be more concerned with future benefits. He simply stands on the truth of His proclamation and ensures that the disciples understand that they are not exempt from any task that their master has performed. He looks more at the cheerfulness of the master as an

indication of the spirit in which servants should serve (Friedell, 2008). Christ's understanding of the purpose and meaning behind His action reassures them. This encouragement is not done by way of currently tangible benefits. Rather, the disciples are to exercise their faith and find encouragement in the benefits of the future. While this chapter is focused on the 13th chapter of John, O'Day (2015) noted that Jesus's reference to future understanding and benefits is displayed throughout the book of John (John 2:22; 12:16; 13:19, 29; 16:4, 25). Moreover, Guzik (2017) teaches that the motivation to look toward future benefits is encapsulated in the fact that being a part of Jesus is focused on what you receive from Him—not what you gain for yourself.

Perhaps the closest one can currently come to the notion of the motivation displayed in Jesus's discourse is that of our altruism. Fehr and Fischbacher (2003) exalted altruism as the distinguishing factor between man and all other animals. The result of altruism in humans is unlike other animals, we have a “detailed division of labor and cooperation between genetically unrelated individuals in large groups” (p. 785). Among other animals, the concept of reciprocal altruism—the mutual benefits that ensure the survival of the genetic unit—is the basis of interaction. Similarly, transformational and servant leadership are perhaps the closest that one can get to this motivation in leadership. Sosik et al. (2018) stated that:

Transformational leadership entails four behaviors: inspirational motivation—inspiring collective action through the articulation of an evocative vision; idealized influence—modeling high levels of ethics and performance; intellectual stimulation—challenging thinking processes through the questioning of assumptions and consideration of different perspectives; and individualized consideration—coaching and mentoring subordinates while recognizing and appreciating their unique differences. (pp. 7–8)

Further, servant leadership is predicated on the notion that the motivation of the leader extends beyond their self-interests to the benefit of the follower (Greenleaf, 1977). In addition to the motivational component, servant leadership is the closest in alignment with the paradoxical approach that is noted throughout the chapter. The paradox is found in the notion that leadership can be demonstrated through both service and influence (Northouse, 2013). The ten characteristics associated with this type of leadership are focused outside of the leader and extend beyond the

here and now. Through principles that are unlike other leadership styles, these two styles seek to encourage the heart of followers, with what might be considered nontraditional or even paradoxical methods.

*Principle Eight: Christlike leaders motivate followers by presenting and then requiring fidelity to a vision beyond their immediate reach.*

## SUMMARY

As significant as John 13:1–17 is for many denominations that continue to perform the sacrament of foot-washing, so is its significance to leadership theory. This scripture allows the critical examination of the best practices outlined within Kouzes and Posner’s writing. Though Christ’s ministry fully supports these practices, it also shows that their implementation is varied and complex. By performing a task traditionally reserved for servants and slaves, Christ reaffirms and expands the practices outlined by Kouzes and Posner. In the true sense of the paradoxical nature of Christ’s approach, we find that He *models the way* by showing that leaders often must purposefully divert from the norm. Jesus’s paradoxical approach to *inspiring a shared vision* is to require action toward a vision that is not fully understood (Belsterling, 2006). He *challenges the process* by highlighting a devotion to becoming a part of Him when doing so would result in persecution (Leszai, 2011). Concerning Kouzes and Posner’s fourth principle of *enabling others to act*, in John 12, we find Him promoting the principle of humility as a form of empowerment (Leszai, 2011). Finally, Jesus *encourages the heart* not by the traditional lure of immediate gratification often associated with success; instead He does this by showing concern for future benefits. It is the cheerfulness of The Master that is highlighted as the spirit in which servants/leaders should serve (Friedell, 2008). Christ, however, as the ultimate leader, presents the extent to which leaders must be willing to implement these practices in paradoxical ways to ensure success. Finally, in true leadership form, Christ never attacks the norm nor does He disparage those that follow them. Rather, having respect for them, He presents a leadership style that is not constrained by them.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. With respect to leadership theory, is there a difference in having a paradoxical approach and simply being a nonconformist? Please explain.
2. What characteristics are required for a leader to successfully implement a paradoxical approach?
3. Do you think Jesus would have been as successful or perhaps more successful had His approach not broken as many culture norms? If so, please define your definition on success.
4. What can be made from how a paradoxical approach to leadership can be extracted from a chapter of the Bible dedicated to showing Christ as the Son of God?
5. For leaders with a Christ centered worldview, is it approach for consider Christ a Paradoxical Leader. It is more appropriate to consider His understanding as the norm and the approach promoted by Kouzes and Posner the departure.

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