



# Building the Kingdom by Tearing Down Cultural Walls: A Cross-Cultural Leadership Analysis of Jesus' Elevation of the Despised Samaritans

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Organizational success depends on effective leadership whose praxis are often inexorably intertwined within the predominant culture (Dorfman, 1996). Effective leadership entails direct interaction between leaders and their followers; however, the most pervasive and lasting form of leadership happens through the indirect process of influence as the leader is able to communicate the organization's needs and unify his followers in facilitating and fulfilling shared objectives through collective efforts (Yukl, 2013). Christ not only expected His disciples to carry out His mission, but He demonstrated leadership methods that focused their hearts and motives on loyalty to the kingdom of God rather than remaining loyal to their Judaic culture that traditionally excluded other races and cultures. Grindheim (2017) asserted that the kingdom exerts a liberating, community-shaping force as Christ's inclusivity was countercultural to the religious tradition that often excluded people from the church and God. The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate methods of cross-cultural leadership through Christ's personal praxis of cross-cultural leadership and more specifically, Jesus crossing cultural constraints and elevating the role of Samaritans in the New Testament thus promulgating the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) reinforcing Christ's mission of salvation, healing, restoration, empowerment, and eternal life for all mankind.

Keywords: cross-cultural leadership, inclusivity, religious tradition, Samaritans

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The success of any organization depends on effective leadership, and culture is inexorably intertwined in leadership processes (Dorfman, 1996). As leadership is the process of influencing others to understand a mission, agree on the needs for the mission, and how to accomplish the mission, leaders also have the responsibility of

facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish a shared vision for the sake of the organization and its overall mission (Yukl, 2013). Jesus not only expected His disciples to carry out His mission, but He personally demonstrated leadership methods that focused their hearts and motives on loyalty to the kingdom of God rather than remaining loyal to their Judaic culture that traditionally excluded other races and cultures. The kingdom of God exerts a liberating, community-shaping force as Christ was intentional in including people who were traditionally excluded from the people of God (Grindheim, 2017). The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate Christ's method of cross-cultural leadership through His personal praxis of cross-cultural leadership, and more specifically, Christ's crossing of cultural constraints and elevating the role of Samaritans in the New Testament thus promulgating the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) that reinforced His mission of salvation, healing, restoration, empowerment, and eternal life for all people.

## Literature Review

The premise and the vital importance of cross-cultural studies lies in man's ability to collaborate and work jointly with others who think and live differently from each other if they are to not just survive but thrive for generations to come (Hofstede, 1980). Culture is a powerful force that forms the identity of a person or group of people in the same way personality establishes the identity of a person (Hofstede, 1980). As a result of globalization and companies forming strategic alliances with other companies around the world, leaders must have an understanding of managing followers from diverse national origins as the collaboration and partnership with people from different cultures provides unique opportunities for leaders to understand the process of culture influencing leadership effectiveness (Dorfman, 1996).

### Cross-Cultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede (1980), a Dutch organizational psychologist and cross-cultural leadership studies forerunner, proposed six dimensions of cross-cultural leadership of (a) individualism; (b) uncertainty avoidance; (c) power distance; (d) masculinity; (e) long-term orientation; and (f) indulgence that helps to understand the cultural praxis of people embedded into their tradition and way of thinking and living that will assist leaders attempting to effectively conduct business cross-culturally.

### *Individualism/Collectivism*

Individualism and collectivism are based on the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. Individually, societal ties between individuals are loose. Every person is expected to look after himself and his immediate family. Collectively, societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups that often include extended families with uncles, aunts, and grandparents who continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2009).

### ***Uncertainty Avoidance***

Uncertainty avoidance addresses a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. It ultimately refers to man's search for truth and indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations (Hofstede, 2011).

### ***Power Distance***

Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions, such as the family, accept and expect power being unequally distributed suggesting that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as it is by the leaders (Hofstede, 2011).

### ***Masculinity/Femininity***

Masculinity and femininity refer to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found (Hofstede, 2011).

### ***Long-Term Orientation***

Long-term orientation deals with virtue regardless of truth and values associated with long-term orientation such as thrift and perseverance. Values associated with short-term orientation are respected for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's reputation (Hofstede, 2011).

### ***Indulgence/Self-Restraint***

Indulgence and self-restraint refer to the perception that one's life is in his own control while restraint refers to a perception of helplessness (Hofstede, 2011).

Culture is such a powerful force that it programs the minds of people embedded into it which are reflected in their everyday living and interactions (Hofstede, 1992).

Organizations are built around people's cultural values just as societies are composed of institutions and organizations that reflect the dominant culture (Hofstede, 1984).

Culture is a set of norms, values, behavior patterns, rituals, and traditions that people share and hold in common (Schein, 1985) which is why it is almost impossible to coordinate the actions of a group of people without first understanding the context of their values, beliefs, and expressions of those values (Hofstede, 1984)

Groundbreaking cross-cultural research includes The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness project, otherwise known as G.L.O.B.E., headed by Bob House and approximately 170 colleagues from more than 62 nations who engaged in a long-term cross-cultural leadership study by collecting data from more than 17,000 managers in 900 organizations across three industries in 62 countries (Scandura & Dorfman, 2004) that produced significant findings from their twenty-year,

cross-cultural research project affirming that the five most desired leadership traits that each country desires from its leadership are people who have (a) integrity; (b) are performance-oriented; (c) a visionary; (d) inspirational; and (e) a team-integrator (Dorfman et al., 2012). The overall conclusion explained that most countries that participated in the project prefer a charismatic and transformational leadership style which reflects a universal human desire for authority figures to provide meaning and direction to human activity (Liddell, 2005).

In years past, academic literature hardly acknowledged the influence of culture on leadership and its processes; however, managers working in multinational companies have been fully aware of the wide variety of management practices found around the globe as a result of conducting business cross-culturally (Scandura & Dorfman, 2004). Scandura and Dorfman (2004) asserted that the vast diversity of organizational practices worldwide are often acceptable and effective for one country but are ineffective in other countries thus reinforcing the need for further scholarship on the subject of leading cross-culturally for the development of effective and efficient leadership methods as well as positive relationships with subordinates that would not only benefit the company as a whole but would also benefit leaders and their followers within their own cultural context. Although significant differences characterize each culture, the need for leaders to provide purpose, identity, and significance to every subordinate in the workplace remains universal. Effective leaders are those who are able to understand their followers' needs and tap into and fulfill those needs while simultaneously accomplishing both followers' and leaders' goals because people need something to believe in, someone to believe in, and someone to believe in them (Fry, 2003).

Although culture is learned within a society and affects people's basic values (Kim & Kim, 2010), Jesus counteracted cultural norms and led His cross-cultural ministry by urging His disciples to do what He did and love how He loved - fully, wholly, completely without regard to a person's sin, sickness, brokenness, wealth, nationality, religion, gender, age, or skin color thus truly reflecting the Father's heart and kingdom. To truly break through racial, cultural, social, gender, and religious boundaries and effectively lead on a global scale, one must consider the Holy scriptures and examine how Jesus Christ, the quintessential cross-cultural leader, broke through those boundaries by strategically elevating a despised and rejected race, the Samaritans, in the New Testament thus radically shifting the paradigm of His culture whose impact is still seen and experienced over two thousand years later.

### **Inner Texture Analysis**

Inner textual analysis focuses on words as tools that are used for communication and helps the interpreter gain an in-depth knowledge of words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices, and modes found within the text that provide context for meanings and meaning-effects (Robbins, 1996). Providing a thorough exegetical analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 will emphasize the need for cross-

cultural leadership and Jesus' motive and method in crossing cultural boundaries to fulfill His mission of salvation and reconciliation for all people starting with the least of these, the Samaritans.

### **Repetitive Texture and Pattern**

Robbins (1996) explained that repetitive texture provides a glimpse into the overall rhetorical movements of the text providing an overarching view of the texture of the language inviting the interpreter to move closer to the details of the text.

### **Progressive Texture and Pattern**

Robbins (1996) asserted that progressive texture resides through the sequences and progressions of words and phrases throughout the text that adds dimension to the analysis and provides insight into the progress and texture of the text as well as exhibits phenomena that function as stepping stones to other phenomena throughout the text.

### **Narrational Texture and Pattern**

Narrational texture resides in characters' voices often revealing patterns that move the discourse programmatically forward while simultaneously offering the interpreter a closer look into the scenes in the text or discourse (Robbins, 1996). Luke 10:25-37 is a gospel narrative of Jesus telling the parable of the Good Samaritan to a Jewish lawyer. The scene opens with Luke narrating the attributed speech and introduces the dialogue between a lawyer and Jesus who then progress forward as their own narrators as Robbins (1996) explained that patterns often emerge when narration and attributed speech alternate with each other.

Of the twelve verses in the Lukan pericope (Luke 10:25-37), seven verses contain narrational texture (Lk. 10:25-30; 37); however, the narrational verses are intermingled with reported and direct speech. The discourse attributes speech to the lawyer four times (Lk. 10:25, 27, 29, 37), to Jesus ten times (Lk. 10:26, 28, 30-37), and to the Samaritan once (Lk. 10:35) who by no accident symbolically represents Jesus. The lawyer's sequence of speech is in the form of questions and answers in which he initially asks Jesus questions and as a result of Jesus' intentional responses, the lawyer concludes by answering his own questions:

- Q: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Luke 10:25).
- A: "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" (*ESV*, 2001, Lk. 10:27)
- Q: "And who is my neighbor?" (*ESV*, 2001, Lk. 10:29)
- A: "The one who showed him mercy" (*ESV*, 2001, Lk. 10:37).

- Jesus' strategic response of counteracting the lawyer's questions with a question provokes him to thought and allows for further dialogue calling for the lawyer to form his own conclusions:
- Q: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:25)
- A: "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:26)
- Q: "And who is my neighbor?" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:29)
- A: "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:36)

The gospel provides a pedagogical context of questions and answers to understand the parable as a teaching and learning episode (Rule, 2017). As the text opens up, the narrator notes that a lawyer who is an expert in the law asks Jesus a question and refers to Him as Teacher or Rabbi which is a recurring identity ascribed to Jesus in the gospels that were terms of address used most often by others to address Him but also as a self-designation occurring a total of 59 times in the gospels (Rule, 2017). Christ is referred to as Teacher or Rabbi by challenging the cultural consensus of conventional wisdom as a reflection of his experience and relationship with God (Borg, 2011) through His use of parables (Rule, 2017). The pedagogical purpose of parables is to arouse the mind of listeners into active thought which differs from straightforward instructional genres such as commandments, rules, and procedures because the use of parables involves provoking a playful but serious labor of interpretation allowing for multiple possibilities of meaning rather than indicating a single denotation (Rule, 2017). The changes that Jesus introduced as a Jewish Rabbi were joyfully received by some and hated or wrongfully misunderstood by others (Hurley, 2002).

Jesus responded to the lawyer's facetious question when he asked who his neighbor is (Lk. 10:29) with the parable of The Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37). There is a dialogue between the genres of the commandment (Love your neighbor) and the parable (the Good Samaritan). The lawyer questioning the commandment by asking who his neighbor is, instigated the parable while the parable exemplifies the commandment. Jesus interjected Himself as the narrator telling the parable and elevated the role of the Samaritan by giving him a reported voice as he tells the innkeeper "'take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back'" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:35). Jesus concluded the parable by asserting narrational dominance as He asked the lawyer, "'which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?'" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:36) creating a context to explore the deeper meaning and meaning-effects of the parable (Robbins, 1996) when the lawyer responded, "'The one who showed him mercy'" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:37). The pericope opened through a narrative voice; however, it concluded with Jesus, now serving as the narrator, challenging the lawyer to "go, and do likewise" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:37).

## Opening-Middle-Closing Texture and Pattern

Robbins (1996) noted the importance of analyzing the beginning, middle, and ending of a text as some endings serve as new beginnings leaving an ambiguous final conclusion. Some endings are simply new beginnings and do not bring anything to a final conclusion; rather, some endings simply introduce topics and events that provide resources for a new beginning when everything seems to come to a dramatic final end (Robbins, 1996).

The opening of the passage in Luke 10:25-37 presents its own opening and closing within itself as the lawyer asserted himself as if to test Jesus by asking Him a rhetorical question, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:25). Jesus, fully aware that the lawyer already knew the answer, said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:26), and the lawyer responded, “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” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:27) which is the climactic opening middle. The opening closes with Jesus’ response “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:28).

The middle of the passage in Luke 10:25-37 is unique in that it also has its own opening, middle, and closing; however, the middle of the pericope has its own opening, middle, and closing within itself. The middle opens up with the lawyer asking Jesus “who is my neighbor?” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:29), and the middle of the mid-section opens with Jesus telling the parable of the Great Samaritan. Jesus opened with a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who “fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:30). The middle of the parable leads to a dramatic action where a priest and Levite see but ignore the half-dead man, yet a Samaritan sees the man, is filled with compassion, binds up his wounds, pours healing oil and wine over him, set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him (Lk. 10:34). The parable which is the mid-section of the middle concludes with the Samaritan paying the innkeeper two denari and telling him to take care of the ill man promising to compensate the innkeeper for any extra expenses incurred while caring for him when he returns (Lk. 10:35). The end of the pericope as a whole closes with Jesus asking the lawyer which man from the parable demonstrated himself as a neighbor. When the lawyer responded, “The one who showed him mercy,” Jesus concluded the conversation by commanding the lawyer, “You go, and do likewise” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:37).

The closing of the passage in Luke 10:25-37 is in itself its own pattern unlike the opening and closing. There is no problem but only the solution and the after-effects of Jesus’ solution. The text opened by introducing the concept of salvation and eternal life (Lk. 10:25) that is followed by the Great Commandment of loving God and loving people (Lk. 10:27), and concludes with the Great Commission of go and do (Lk. 10:37).

## Argumentative Texture and Pattern

Robbins (1996) explained that argumentative texture investigates various types of inner reasoning in the text, presents assertions, supports those assertions with reasons, clarifies them through opposites and contraries, and often presents short or elaborate counterarguments. In Luke 10:25-37, the first syllogistical proposition occurs where the lawyer asks Jesus, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:25). The lawyer’s action of putting Christ to the test (Lk. 10:25) as noted by the narrator prior to his question suggests two chains of reasoning: (a) Jesus will speak against Jewish law thus proving He is not the Messiah; and (b) the lawyer already knowing the law is exempt from obeying the law. The second syllogistical proposition occurs when the lawyer asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:29). The lawyer’s statement suggests two chains of reasoning: (a) Jesus will advocate for Jews as a superior race; and (b) the lawyer is exempt from loving anyone outside of his own race.

The particular drama of the story occurs when Jesus counteracted the lawyer’s statements, broke his two chains of reasoning, and re-introduced a chain of thought. Jesus, well aware of the lawyer’s intentions, affirmed Mosaic law rather than speaking against Jewish law when He responded to the lawyer’s initial question of inheriting eternal life by asking, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:26). When the lawyer responded to Jesus by quoting Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 saying, “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” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:27), Jesus affirmed Mosaic Law by responding, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:28). Jesus, knowing the Pharisees often accused Him of violating ceremonial law, He pointed the lawyer to the law and then affirmed that the lawyer was correct essentially stating the law was correct. Jesus’ grace did not go above the law nor did it negate it; however, Jesus affirmed the law by declaring,

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished (ESV, 2001, Matt. 5:17,18).

Jesus proved to be worthy of being Messiah because, contrary to what many supposed, He revived full respect for the Law. In fact, Jesus, for His part, did everything possible to put the Law given to Moses by God on men’s lips and in men’s hearts forever (Del Tondo, 2007). Not only did Jesus affirm His identity as Messiah and affirmed Mosaic Law, but He also positioned the lawyer to answer his own question affirming Jesus as the Messiah, affirming Mosaic law, and affirming the way to obtain eternal life as he first posed which is loving “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” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:27).

Jesus introduced the second chain of reasoning to counteract the former chain of thought at the conclusion of His Good Samaritan parable. In the parable, Jesus reported of a man who was robbed and left for dead, and when approached by three potential saviors, it is the least likely of the three that came to the robbed man’s aid. Jesus’ counteraction occurred when he asked the lawyer, “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:36), and the lawyer had to state the obvious choice proclaiming the Samaritan as the good neighbor although he refused to name the Samaritan and referred to him as “the one who showed him mercy” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:37). Proctor (2019) asserted that what the parable demonstrated for the lawyer is that a reciprocal relationship now exists between himself as a Jew and all Samaritans as a consequence of the charitable actions of the story’s principal character on behalf of the man left dying alongside the Jericho road. Rather than elevate the priest and Levite who are both Jews, Jesus brought the Samaritan to the forefront as an equal in God’s kingdom and placed responsibility on the Jewish lawyer if he truly wished to inherit eternal life as he initially posed. Samaritans became for the lawyer a representation of those who displayed mercy, and this realization served as the premise for Jesus’ command that the lawyer should go and do likewise (Del Tondo, 2007).

### **Sensory-Aesthetic Texture and Pattern**

Sensory-Aesthetic texture of a text is found in the range of senses that the text evokes or embodies such as thought, emotion, sight, sound, touch, smell as well as in the manner in which the text evokes or embodies them through reason, intuition, imagination, humor (Robbins, 1996).

### ***Zone of Emotion-Fused Thought***

The scene opened up with a lawyer, a learned man and Mosaic law expert, questioning Jesus on how to inherit eternal life. Jesus referred the lawyer back to Mosaic law where the lawyer recited Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 saying, “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” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:27). Jesus tells the lawyer that he is correct, and the lawyer proceeds to ask Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:29) which the narrator asserted that the lawyer asked this “desiring to justify himself” (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:29) as if he had a point to prove and excuse himself from loving anyone outside of his race and religion. The ideological texture suggests that the lawyer was part of a historic tradition “to which a person exhibits special alliance when interpreting the Bible and the world” showing his “alliance to one of these traditions [that] places a person within a certain ideology or ideological group” (Robbins, 1996, p. 101).

Rather than Jesus adhering to the historical tradition, He elevated the kingdom's culture by referring back to Mosaic Law which He came to fulfill. After Jesus responded to the lawyer through the Good Samaritan parable, Jesus asked the lawyer "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:36) causing the lawyer to feel the same compassion the Samaritan felt for the robbed man who suffered injustice and crime which led him to admit it was the one who acted neighborly obeying Mosaic law further affirming it was not the Priest or Levite but was in fact the Samaritan who showed him mercy (Lk. 10:36).

### *Zone of Self-Expressive Speech*

The lawyer's conversation with Jesus is intended to incite a debate in which a challenge-response takes place socially that Robbins (1996) described as a constant tug-of-war as if a game of push and shove. The lawyer who was the challenger confronted Jesus who was the receiver potentially dishonored Jesus' reputation placing himself above the law by asking how to inherit eternal life and then by asking who his neighbor is assuming Jesus would have answered contrary to the law proving He is not the prophesied Messiah and further asserting Jews as God's chosen superior race. The challenge the lawyer posed was intended to serve as a threat to usurp the reputation of Christ and to deprive Him of His earthly and divine reputation; otherwise, Jesus would compromise His reputation in the eyes of the public and His followers (Ribbins, 1996) thus disqualifying Him as the Son of God. It is by no accident that Jesus intentionally responded in such a way that required the lawyer to challenge his own religious beliefs and culture making room for Jesus to confirm His own identity as Messiah. This speech pattern of challenge, response, and the parable show that Jesus was secure in His divine identity as a citizen of heaven while the lawyer ultimately abased himself.

### *Zone of Purposeful Action*

The sensory-aesthetic texture moves rhythmically from a conversational challenge to a cultural challenge and a call to action. The ideology of power in Luke 10 is between Jesus and the lawyer who seems to be involved in power struggle within himself. Mediterraneans viewed people as existing in various species requiring their allegiance to always follow ingroup and outgroup patterns because no one in the first century believed all human beings could be or should be endowed with equal rights (Malina, 2001). Jesus never involved Himself in power struggles but maintained His identity as Messiah while also maintaining His social hierarchical structure as the One who gives the orders by challenging the lawyer to "go and do likewise" (ESV, 2001, Lk. 10:37). The difference according to Robbins (1996) was between people who give orders and the people who carry out those orders. Jesus asserted that inheriting eternal life goes beyond a matter of mere faith, but eternal life also requires the lawyer and Jews alike to show mercy and love their neighbors as themselves (Lk. 10:27). Robbins (1996) proposed that every ending is another beginning as we are all tasked as believers in Christ to love God and love people despite our differences.

## Discussion

Considering the globalization of organizations, the interest in understanding leadership from within and across diverse cultures has increased (Ayman et al., 2012) as culture is a dynamic, complex, multi-dimensional, and multi-level phenomena consisting of both visible and invisible influences on leadership (Aymin & Korabik, 2010). Despite cultural and gender differences, Jesus asserted Himself as the quintessential cross-cultural leader defying cultural, gender, social, economic, and religious boundaries truly reflecting the kingdom of God. Without judgment or stipulation, Christ bid four calls to people throughout His ministry which were (a) come and see; (b) come and follow; (c) come and fellowship; and (d) come and remain excluding none from His call (Dunmire, 2012). In a prophecy to Hosea concerning the Gentiles, the Lord God declared that those who were not His people would now be called His people affirming that He would now love those He had not previously loved; furthermore, God declared that at the place they were told they were not God's people, would be the same place that God would deem the Gentiles now as children of the living God (Rom. 9:25, 26). Samaritans play a vital role in the New Testament, and Jesus intentionally recognizing the Samaritans' values challenged the disciples and ultimately all Christ-believing Jews to relinquish their cultural and religious traditions to truly reflect the Father's heart in loving the Lord their God with all that they were and loving their neighbors as themselves.

### Samaritan Identity

Jews were prejudiced against Samaritans and did not associate themselves with Samaritans as they regarded them as a half-breed race who were not truly Jew nor Gentile as a result of Jews intermarrying with Assyrians after the Assyrians took the Israeli northern kingdom captive in 721 B.C. (DeSilva, 2004). While Jews believed God's exclusive choice for worship was at Mount Zion in Jerusalem, Samaritans established a rival temple for their own worship on Mount Gerizim which was a major point of contention between Judeans and Samaritans which heightened the religious divide as the Samaritans named their sanctuary for Zeus, the friend of strangers (DeSilva, 2004).

Samaritans were also hostile toward Pharisaic tradition and rejected their oral tradition and boundaries around the law (Maccini, 1994) although their sacred Scripture, rituals, and customs all closely reflected Judaism (Victor, 2016). Jewish purity laws forbade Jews to associate with Samaritans as a result of the impurity related to the Gentiles, which the Jews considered as moral impurity and a source of defilement due to the Samaritans' idolatry (Victor, 2016). The gospel message broke cultural boundaries for the individual but also for the sake of the community (Becerra, 2017).

### *The Woman at the Well*

Upon engaging the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4:1-42), Jesus crossed the two boundaries of race and gender. When studying first-century cultural ideologies, people

held an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions, and values that reflected the needs and interests of a particular group or class of people in a particular time in history (Robbins, 1996) making Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman a monumental shift that challenged the current hostile climate towards people of another race and the female gender. The woman Jesus encountered at the well represented two marginalized groups: Samaritans and women. Not only did Jews not associate themselves with the half-breed Samaritans, but Jewish men did not associate themselves with women in public especially women who were not their wives (Moxnes, 1994). Women were given a strong position in their homes but not in the public sphere of the city (Moxnes, 1994) which explains why the Samaritan woman asked Jesus, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (ESV, 2001, John 4:9) because Jews had no dealings with Samaritans nor did men have any association with women. Jews considered themselves a chosen people, but Jesus transgressed the Jewish racial and cultural custom when He interacted with the Samaritan woman (Maccini, 1994); nevertheless, the importance of her interaction with Christ was that she heard and received what Christ spoke and what He revealed to her (Burgonito-Watson, 2005). Although women were regarded as second-class citizens, Jesus regularly addressed women directly in public which was countercultural for a man to do (Borland, 1991). Jesus was willing to defy tradition and overstep gender boundaries because His attitude toward women was informed by His vision of them as persons to whom and for whom He had come (Borland, 1991). He did not perceive them primarily in terms of their sex, age, or marital status; however, He considered women in terms of their relation or lack of relation to God (Hurley, 2002). When the Samaritan woman quickly responded with a question as if to distract Jesus, "she throws up a religious question that might throw the prophet off track...Jesus again cuts through the re-erected barriers" (DeSilva, 2004, p. 445) when He explained true worship does not require a particular location but is a matter of the Spirit. Jesus seized the moment to inform her that God seeks true worshippers because "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth" (ESV, 2001, Jn. 4:24).

Jesus not only crossed cultural and ethnic boundaries, but He also crossed supernatural boundaries from the flesh into the Spirit. Because barriers did not need to exist between a believer and Christ, women often responded warmly to Jesus and His ministry (Borland, 1991) including women from questionable backgrounds which empowered the Samaritan woman to "become a missionary/preacher of the good news to a whole community of Samaritans who otherwise would not have received this good word" (Burgonito-Watson, 2005, p. 93). Although Christ was steeped in the Hebrew tradition with its history and ethnocentrism as a Jew (Wingeier-Rayo, 2015), His full intrinsic value of women was demonstrated in how He spoke to the women he addressed as thoughtful and caring (Borland, 1991) which by default brought healing, restoration, and empowerment. As a result of Jesus choosing life and choosing to cross cultural boundaries while traveling the route into Samaria and encountering the Samaritan woman, she herself was transformed into a vessel of Living Water that she received at

the well and in return gave of the Living Water to her neighbors and her community (Burgonito-Watson, 2005). As the Samaritan woman realized she was speaking with the promised Messiah at the well, she ran back into her community where the villagers responded to her without question or hesitation (Maccini, 1994) where the gift of Living Water she gave from Christ ultimately restored her to her community (Burgonito-Watson, 2005) and brought a spiritual awakening to her entire Samaritan village.

### *The Good Samaritan*

In Luke 10:25-37, a lawyer challenged Jesus by asking Him how he can obtain eternal life. Jesus knowing the man was an expert in Jewish law had him quote the Torah calling for men to love God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind as well as their neighbor as themselves (Lk. 10:27). Upon the lawyer asserting his racial prejudice against Samaritans, he facetiously asked Jesus who his neighbor is (Lk. 10:29). Jesus began telling the parable of the Good Samaritan explaining how a man was attacked, beaten, stripped of his clothing, and left for dead by robbers. Three different men saw the injured man lying helpless on the side of the road, one of those men was a priest, another a Levite, and lastly, a Samaritan. The priest and the Levite passed by the man without assisting him because they were not allowed to defile themselves by touching a corpse according to Jewish law (Vermes, 2003). In contrast, the Samaritan showed compassion, meticulous attention, and responsibility to the injured stranger. Considering that Samaritans were considered heretical outcasts in Jewish society and not to be associated with, the idea of a Samaritan being a neighbor to a Jew would have been profoundly shocking to the Jewish audience particularly in the light of the inaction of the exemplary figures of the priest and the Levite (Rule, 2017).

Jesus shattered the lawyer's cultural, racist tradition by forcing him to re-evaluate traditional Jewish relationships and loyalties as Christ demonstrated that anyone who would enjoy eternal life must love their enemies and do good to those who hate them (Proctor, 2017). Jesus always directed men's hearts toward glorifying the Father, and the parable of the good Samaritan affirms the importance of fulfilling one's duties to all neighbors including the neighbors one might find it impossible to like or get along with; however, for such unlovely neighbors are equally impossible to ignore if one hopes, such as the lawyer, to have eternal life (Proctor, 2017). The Jews found it easy to love God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength; however, loving the Samaritans as themselves went completely against their prejudicial, religious culture. Jesus made neighbors out of Samaritan enemies (Proctor, 2017) proving that the kingdom from which Jesus came and the kingdom from which we belong as heirs holds a higher cross-cultural, kingdom-cultural standard.

### *Revival in Acts*

Cultural customs required Jews to attend the synagogue for worship; however, the early Church presented an intimate sense of unity and community-forming power (Becerra, 2017) as they gathered in homes as house-churches with families as opposed

to the cultural norm of synagogues. Luke outlined what the modern-day church should reflect in spreading the gospel, making disciples, baptizing people in the name of Jesus, and empowering them with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. Luke asserted the promise of God to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:17) purposely not designating a particular race, gender, culture, or economic status. The Holy Spirit knows no boundaries and does as He wills to draw men's hearts to the Father. Luke recounted how Philip went to the city of Samaria proclaiming Christ to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5) and the great joy that was in city (Acts 4:8) because they saw the miracles he performed including people being freed from unclean spirits and the paralyzed and lame being healed (Acts 8:7). When Peter and John joined Philip to pray for the Samaritans that they might be filled with the Spirit (Acts 8:14-16), Peter was intentional in reminding the Samaritans how unlawful it was for a Jew to associate with people of another nation; however, Peter also admitted that God showed him that he should not call any person or anything unclean (Acts 10:28). By no coincidence, while Peter was still saying these things to the Samaritans, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word and astonished Peter as well as his circumcised followers as the Samaritans spoke in tongues and extolled God by the Spirit despite being uncircumcised Gentiles (Acts 10:44-46). It was only by the Spirit's revelation that Peter knew his obligation to preach the gospel to the Samaritans rather than adhere to Jewish custom. Despite Peter's explanation of admitted ignorance, the Holy Spirit decided to have His way and baptized the Samaritans displaying His power among those Peter culturally despised. It was through this spiritual outpouring and revival that Peter admitted that he now knew that God shows no partiality and accepts any person from any nation who fears Him and does what is right (Acts 10:34, 35).

### *Calling Down Fire*

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him to a Samaritan village to make preparations for him; however, the Samaritans were not welcoming to Christ because his cultural and religious place of worship as a Jew was in Jerusalem as opposed to their place of worship at Mount Gerazim (Lk. 9:51-53; Gill, 1746-48) exhibiting the feud between Jews and Samaritans. The Samaritans had their own version of the Pentateuch in contrast to the Jews and went so far as to alter their sacred writings to reflect that true worship happens at Mount Gerizim (DeSilva, 2004). The Samaritans had their own temple, their own copy of the Torah - the first five books of the Old Testament - and their own religious system. There was an issue among the Jews and Samaritans as to where the proper place of worship was (Stewart, 2007).

When the disciples James and John heard that Jesus was not welcome into the Samaritan village, they asked Jesus for permission to call down fire from heaven to consume them but were rebuked and denied their vengeance before moving on to another village (Lk. 9:54-56). James and John, the sons of thunder (Mk. 3:17), were enraged at the Samaritans' rejection and ill-treatment of Christ and wanted to honor Christ out of zeal and love for Him (Gill, 1746-48) so much that they wanted to punish

the Samaritans by calling down fire as if compared to the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah; however, Jesus, in turn, rebuked them for their intemperate zeal, passion of wrath, anger, and desire of revenge by reminding them they were merely acting out of anger and revenge rather than a true spirit of zeal that contradicts the meek and humble spirit of Christ's followers ultimately contradicting the Spirit of God, the gospel, and the giftings that God has bestowed upon his children (Gill, 1746-48). Jesus was committed to treating people as ends not mere means (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999) and pointing their hearts to the Father. Christ came not to destroy people's lives but to save them, keeping His mission of reconciliation for all mankind including those who reject and despise Him.

### *Witnesses in Samaria*

Jesus called his disciples to join Him in living a distinctive life before a watching world (Flemming, 2013) inviting them to take part in the fellowship and assignment He had in perpetuating his kingdom mission. Following Jesus' resurrection, He remained on the earth for forty days speaking of the kingdom of God and preparing the disciples for His departure. Jesus gave final instruction to His disciples telling them to wait in Jerusalem for they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). At this point, the disciples asked if Jesus would restore the kingdom of Israel (Acts 1:6), but Jesus corrected them saying it is not for them to know the times or seasons that God has predestined and further declared "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (ESV, 2001, Acts 1:8). The disciples assumed the kingdom of God would be restored; however, Jesus redirected their attention to their mission at hand to spread the gospel and make disciples beginning in their hometown of Jerusalem extending to Judea, Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth. Jesus extending His ministry into Samaria and the ends of the earth nullified racial distinctions and divisions and became instead the bridge between them (Mason, 2015). Jesus intentionally reminded the disciples from whose inclusive kingdom they come and represent.

Becerra (2017) noted that Jesus promised shared, sincere, and authentic authority by promising to pour out His spirit on all flesh including those of a lower reputation such as women, poor, widowed, children, diseased, rich, poor, and over all nations including the despised Samaritans. Christ offered salvation to all who believe despite their status. Jews did not associate with Gentiles much less the socially outcast; however, Jesus' cross-cultural ministry extended beyond cultural and geographical boundaries, ministering to followers who were more than likely among the socially-lower groups of people with despised occupations such as innkeepers, prostitutes, beggars, and outcasts (Moxnes, 1994). Through Jesus' unconventional acts, He demonstrated that salvation was and is for all people. The gospel went forth and believers grew in number daily (Acts 16:5) as those empowered by the Spirit dared to cross social, cultural, and geographic boundaries just as Christ commanded for the greater purpose of his kingdom.

## Conclusion

The power of Jesus' message, His authentic life of love and service, and His refusal to force or manipulate followers into following Him and bound themselves with legalistic tradition drew disciples to Himself and set a pattern for them to follow Christ's example in their own future leadership roles (Fryar, 2007). People are made for fellowship with God by being made for fellowship with each other (Tanner, 2010). All other world religions depict humanity attempting to reach an unapproachable god; however, Christianity introduced a God that Himself not only reached down to humanity but actually took on human form defying cultural norms and traditions refusing to be set apart from His creation. Throughout scripture, Jesus extended His salvation to "a world where lepers and women, the broken and disfigured, the unholy and impure all belong together as God's people" (Blount, 2016, p. 187) for this is why He sent His son that all men would be reconciled unto Him (2 Cor. 5:18). When Christians walk in the Spirit as Jesus did, all else becomes secondary to accomplishing the will of the Father which is to embrace our calling as fellow laborers for his kingdom crossing all cultural boundaries becoming all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22) and going to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) that we might win some for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:22). People are the only thing going to heaven.

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### About the Author

Michelle Gonzalez Segundo is a third-year Ph.D. student at Regent University, School of Business and Leadership, majoring in Organizational Leadership with a concentration in Ecclesial Leadership. Michelle's passion is people. Whether she's discipling others to realize their calling, leadership potential, identity in Christ, or serving the marginalized, she takes a hands-on, "boots-on-the-ground" approach to leading teams in engaging their community and connecting resources for sharing the gospel, particularly with the poor and homeless, disaster relief victims, families in crisis, at-risk youth, and foster children. Michelle currently serves as an intern with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) providing research for the Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) division for the Eastern Southern Caribbean (ESC) region to safeguard children, empower women, engage stakeholders, governmental, and NGOs and develop sustainable policies that will help to eliminate human trafficking in the ESC.

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