

The background of the cover is an abstract, swirling pattern of blue and white, resembling a vortex or a turbulent flow. The colors transition from light blue and white at the top to darker blue and black at the bottom, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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Moriah Olmstead, a student at Toccoa Falls College, created the cover artwork. She explains that a wave is like a Servant Leader. Both are constantly changing with new tides of influence and resurfacing from depths that life passionately brings forth. Always seeking new horizons and growing in strength, Servant Leaders empower others by setting the example of what it looks like to remember hope. In the same way, a wave is powerful and graceful by its gesture of drawing its onlooker into its beauty. Life can become overwhelming when focused on the ever-present waves of chaos, but the very essence of becoming a Servant Leader is to hold fast and stand firm while focusing on, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever is admirable” (Php 4:8). There is a horizon to every ocean and there is a God whose greatness calms the sea. It is in this center of chaos that the Servant Leader displays a calm in the midst of the storm.

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TURNING FROM TOXICITY TO HEALTHY LEADERSHIP ENVIRONMENTS: AN INNER-TEXTURAL ANALYSIS OF JOHN 10:1-21

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ABSTRACT: The research explored John 10:1-21 utilizing an inner textural analysis to explore the possibility of the dark side of leadership and toxic followership. In the passage, Jesus utilized a Hebrew form of teaching called a *masal* (short allegory or parable) to distinguish his leadership with that of the Judean religious leaders. The research provides a window into the toxic, Judean spiritual leadership of the first-century contrasted with the shepherd leadership metaphor utilized by Jesus. The Judean leaders lacked compassion and expelled the man healed of blindness, while Jesus, a new kind of leader, (noble, altruistic, self-sacrificing, and follower-oriented) provided a new community for those excommunicated from the Jewish synagogue and community for believing in Jesus' teaching. The analysis and conclusion found in the *masal* add to the current literature on the dark side of leadership and toxic followership, while providing an alternative form of follower-oriented leadership and pathway for followership.

KEYWORDS: *Masal, Good Shepherd, Followership, Dark Side*

Turning from Toxicity to Healthy Leadership Environments: An Inner-Textual Analysis of John 10:1-21

In John 10:1-21, Jesus taught a contrasting, allegorical parable, called a *masal* in Hebrew tradition, which was common among Jewish, spiritual teachers to aid in making complex, often contrasting spiritual truths simple (Curkpatrick, 2002). Even though Jesus as the good shepherd is of considerable theological importance in this text, within its unique context the *masal* also indirectly discussed spiritual abuse (the dark side of leadership), toxic followership, isolation, and a means to turn from toxicity to healthy leadership environments. In this context, Jesus contrasted himself as a good shepherd to some of the dysfunctional, spiritual leadership of his day. This study explored John 10:1-21, utilizing a socio-rhetorical, inner textual analysis, intersecting with the leadership literature for congruency and relevant application.

METHODOLOGY

The inner textual analysis is a sub texture of socio-rhetorical analysis, developed by Robbins (1996). The socio-rhetorical approach provides an approach that uncovers data in social scientific terms. Socio-rhetorical analysis of a text looks at the text itself, other literature of its time, social and cultural aspects of the texts, ideological frameworks at work in the text, and a sacred sense of the divine in the text. Robbins identified these approaches as textures. This study explores the text itself, which Robbins identified as the inner textual analysis of a text. The inner textual analysis comprises of five sub textures (a) repetitive texture, (b) progressive texture, (c) opening-middle-closing texture, (d) narrational texture, (e) argumentative texture, and (f) sensory-aesthetic texture. The study explored the sub textures, utilizing the English Standard Version (ESV). For purposes of this article, only those sub textures that provided relevant or fresh insight were discussed.

REPETITIVE-PROGRESSIVE ANALYSIS

The repetitive-progressive analysis of John 10:1-6 (Table 1) revealed two important observations. First, the *masal* initially emphasized the sheep (followers) through repetition. Second, the pronouns ‘they’ and ‘them’ in v. 6 do not refer to the sheep in the *masal* like the other occurrences. Instead the pronouns describe the audience, linking it to the previous passage or context. These two observations help to illuminate the nuances of Jesus’ *masal* in light of a toxic leader-follower environment of which Jesus provided a hope-filled alternative.

Repetitive-progressive texture in vv. 1-6, 8, 16 indicates an emphasis on sheep (Table 1). Alongside the sheep, the *masal* focused on the problem with false shepherds (thieves and robbers). From these verses, the sheep know the voice of the shepherd and live protected by the gatekeeper. The sheep know the voice and listen to their shepherd and reject the voice of the false shepherds.

CONTEXT UNVEILED. While inserting the third person plural pronouns, ‘they’ and ‘them’ in the table for v. 5, a problem occurred at v. 6. In this verse, the pronouns referred to an audience not discussed in the *masal*. This propelled the research to go deeper in context. From the larger context, the pronouns referred to the Pharisees from the previous verse in ch. 9, “Some of the

Table 1

Contrasting Thieves Robbers, and Strangers with True Shepherds

Repetitive-Progressive Texture of John 10:1-5, 8, 16

1:	Truly, truly I say to you	he	enters	sheepfold	door	thief and robber			
2:		he	enters	sheep	door	shepherd			
3:		him, his, he, his		sheep, own sheep,	by name	gatekeeper	voice, calls	leads them out	
4:		he, his he		all his own sheep	by name		know his voice	brought, goes before them	follow
5:		him, his		they, they, they		stranger, him, his	do not know voice		will not follow; will flee
8:				sheep			did not listen		
16:				other sheep, they		to my voice	they will listen		

Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him ‘Are we also blind?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains” (John 9:40-41). The *masal* took place as a part of ch. 9, and the Pharisees were referred to in John 10:6. John 9:40-41 took place in the larger context of ch. 9, which fits within the larger context of the Feast of Booths (7:1-10:21). In this case, the repetitive-progressive texture unveiled the context because those third person pronouns could not fit outside of this context.

The context of John 10:1-21 has been debated among scholars because of the same type of terminology in 10:25-30. Beutler (2017) noted that three months would have occurred between the feasts and the link to the parable is organized theologically instead of simultaneously. Observing the placement of ‘them’ and ‘they’ in v. 6 uncovers the previous context.

OPENING-MIDDLE-CLOSING ANALYSIS

The context found in v. 6 helped to determine the greater context of the Feast of Booths, which proved important in the opening-middle-closing textural analysis. The opening-middle-closing textural analysis of John 10:1-21 occurs within a broader discourse which begins at John 7:1 and ends with 10:21 (Table 2). Jesus healed the man born blind and displayed his own identity as a noble and compassionate spiritual leader, sending the man to the pool of Siloam during the Feast as part of the healing. DeSilva (2004) noted the Festival of Tabernacles included a seven-day ritual with priests at the pool of Siloam. According to deSilva, the priests would draw water from the pool, sing from Isaiah 12:2-6, and travel to the temple, pouring the water as an offering to God for his provision of life and rain for the harvest.

Table 2

The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths)

Opening-Middle-Closing: John 7:1-10:21

Opening	John 7:1-24	Jesus traveled to the Feast of Tabernacles and taught in the temple even though the Judean religious leaders threatened his life.
Middle	John 7:25-8:5	Jesus reveals his messiahship, his truthful teaching, and his divinity. The Judean religious leaders, mainly the Pharisees, sought to arrest and kill Jesus, accusing Jesus of demon possession instead of being the divine Christ. The Pharisees tried to stone Jesus, but he escaped and hid from leaders.
Closing	John 9:1-10:21	As Jesus is leaving the temple, he healed a man born blind and sent the man to the pool of Siloam. The man born blind was cast out by the Pharisees. Jesus sought him, received him upon the man's profession of faith. Jesus contrasts his compassionate, noble leadership with the accusations and evil he experienced at the Feast.

The healing became a very public, spiritual matter. In response, the neighbors and witnesses of the man's blindness brought the newly healed man to the Pharisees (Jn 9:8, 13). Instead of marveling at the man's healing, the Pharisees accused Jesus of sin because he healed the man on the Sabbath, causing a division among them (9:15-16). After interviewing the man and his parents, the Judean leaders in the text refused to believe the man was born blind and cast the healed man out (Jn 9:17-34).

In John 9:35-41, Jesus heard about the newly healed man's account with the Pharisees who cast him out. Jesus went and found the man healed of blindness, securing the man's faith in him (Jn 9:35-38). In response to the man's faith and the Pharisee's actions, Jesus declared that he will judge those false leaders who are blind but pretend to see (Jn 9:39-41). Table 3 below demonstrates the contrast between a healthy, compassionate leader and toxic, dangerous leaders.

Table 3

Jesus, the Blind Man, the Pharisees and the Pool of Siloam

Opening-Middle-Closing: John 9:1-10:21

Opening	John 9:1-7	Jesus showed compassion to a man born blind who the Judean leaders accused of an inherent scandalous sin committed either by him or his parents. Jesus stated that man was born blind so that God would display his works in him. Jesus heals him with mud and sent him to the pool of Siloam.
Middle	John 9:8-34	The neighbors and witnesses of the man's blindness bring the man before the Pharisees, who accuse him of sin and ignorance. The Pharisees cast the newly healed man out.
Closing	John 9:35-10:21	The Pharisees cast the newly healed man out. Jesus sought him and received him upon the man's profession of faith. Jesus contrasts his compassionate, noble leadership with the accusations and evil he experienced at the Feast.

Within the *masal* (Jn 10:1-21), an opening-middle-closing occurs. The closing sums up both the festival (Table 2) and the Pharisees' response to the formerly blind man in John 9:1-10:21 (Table 3). The closing of John 10:19-21 discussed the previous accusation of Jesus' demonic influence and the healing of the man born blind, linking 10:1-21 to the Feast of Tabernacles starting in ch. 7. Table 4 displays the opening-middle-closing of the passage at hand, John 10:1-21.

The opening-middle-closing data revealed followers who began to stand up for the truth. The Judean crowd no longer stood consolidated at the Feast toward Jesus. Instead, the crowd divided; some of the crowd defended Jesus' actions as a compassionate man instead of a man possessed by a demon. A distinction between the followers of Christ and the Judean officials occurred.

Table 4*The Crowd's Response*

Opening-Middle-Closing John 10:1-21

Opening	John 10:1-6	Jesus opened the discourse discussing the evil behavior of the religious leaders and their illegitimacy as spiritual shepherds of the people, calling them thieves, robbers, and strangers.
Middle	John 10:7-18	Jesus taught that he is the door by which all people and shepherds must enter. Jesus demonstrated that he is the noble, compassionate shepherd, authorized by God to lay down his life and to take it up again.
Closing	John 10:19-21	The crowd divides in response to faith in Jesus. Some call Jesus demon-possessed, and others reject the accusations, acknowledging that only God can heal a blind man.

ARGUMENTATIVE ANALYSIS

The argumentative textural analysis investigates various types of inner reasoning that occur in the text (Robbins, 1996). In the passage, Jesus' *masal* embedded argumentative metaphors act as a way of shaming some of the Judean leaders and validating Jesus as the true shepherd and gate for the sheep. Table 5 demonstrates the embedded images and rhetorical pattern.

The argumentative texture identified an embedded set of metaphors to contrast the Judean leaders and Jesus. He is more than a shepherd; Jesus is the divine door and true owner of the sheep. Since the Judean leaders do not enter through Jesus, those leaders are strangers, thieves, and robbers. The second layer of embedded metaphors refers to Jesus as a true, heroic, sacrificial shepherd, and the Judean leaders as wolves. Jesus dies for the sheep, but the wolves snatch and scatter the sheep. The heroic shepherd dies for the sheep under the authority of the Father.

John's account of Jesus's discourse contains three premises (see Table 5). First, thieves and robbers are unauthorized shepherds and are strangers to the sheep. The minor premise is that the Judean religious leaders are thieves, robbers, and strangers. Therefore, the testimony of the Judean religious leaders is false. The second major premise of the passage is that true sheep do not listen to the voice of strangers only their shepherd. Thus, the minor premise is the healed man is a true

Table 5*Argumentative Texture of John 10:1-21*

Syllogism Concerning the Judean Religious Leaders

Major Premise: Thieves/robbers are not authorized as shepherds and are strangers to the sheep.

Minor Premise: The Judean religious leaders are thieves, robbers, and strangers.

Conclusion: The testimony of the Judean religious leaders is false.

Syllogism Concerning the Healed Man

Major Premise: True sheep do not listen to strangers' voices. True sheep listen to their shepherd.

Minor Premise: The healed man is a true sheep.

Conclusion: The healed man born blind should reject the voice of the Judean religious leaders and follow Christ.

Syllogism Concerning Jesus

Major Premise(s): Jesus is true, noble, compassionate (good) shepherd: true followers follow him.

Jesus proved he is the good shepherd by dying and rising again.

Jesus is the divine shepherd and door by which people come to Father God.

Jesus is the one great shepherd who seeks other sheep.

Minor Premise: Those who heard his teaching and followed him are following the true shepherd, including the Gentile believers that read the discourse in John's Gospel.

Conclusion: The audience reading the discourse should listen to the voice of Jesus, the true, noble, divine shepherd over the voice of the Jewish unbelievers or any others who do not believe in Christ.

sheep. Therefore, the man healed of blindness should reject the voice of the Judean religious leaders and follow the true shepherd. The third major premise concerning Jesus comprises of four embedded premises (Table 5):

1. Jesus is the true, noble, compassionate (good) shepherd: true followers follow him.
2. Jesus proved he is the good shepherd by dying and rising again.
3. Jesus is the divine shepherd and door by which people come to Father God.
4. Jesus is the one great shepherd who seeks out new sheep.

The minor premise is those who heard his teaching and followed him are following the true shepherd (including the Gentile believers that read the discourse in John's Gospel). Therefore, the audience reading the discourse should listen to the voice of Jesus, the true, noble, divine shepherd over the voice of the Jewish unbelievers.

SENSORY-AESTHETIC TEXTURE

The final form of analysis conducted on the pericope was a sensory-aesthetic textual analysis, as suggested by Robbins (1996). The sensory-aesthetic texture draws out speech common in first-century Mediterranean cultures (Robbins). The sensory aesthetic analysis explored three zones: (a) emotion-fused thought, (b) self-expressive speech, and (c) purposeful action.

EMOTION FUSED THOUGHT (ISOLATION AND INCLUSION). The poignant embedded metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep would have infused the first century Judeans with emotion. DeSilva (2004; 2010) and Malina (2001) posited that the cultures of the first-century, Mediterranean world embraced more collectivist ideals of family, kinship, religion, and society along with living in a rich, honor-shame culture. In this regard, the story of the man born blind itself causes an emotional reaction among first-century Mediterranean readers. The man born blind was ostracized and alone because of a perception that he was sinful from birth or that his parents were so secretly wicked that God cursed him with blindness (Jn 9:1-2).

When the formerly blind man was healed and brought before the Judean, religious leaders, instead of acceptance from the spiritual leaders, he received accusations, curses, and excommunication from the synagogue. What started out as joy for the healed man ended in tragedy. His parents were so afraid of excommunication that they left him alone before the leadership. Only Jesus sought out the healed man, granted him hope, and provided a new community. The newly healed man experiences great joy at the provision of his sight and then isolation, followed by societal and spiritual rejection from the spiritual leaders he trusted. In John 9:22, the Judean religious leaders had warned the people that if they follow Jesus, then they will be cast out of the synagogue.

The *masal's* central theme is shepherding which has a long tradition of loving and tender speech among God's people, especially regarding leadership (2 Sam. 12; Ps 23; Is 40:11; Laniak, 2006). As uncovered in the previous textures, Jesus is the noble, caring shepherd, who died for the sheep unlike the Judean religious leaders who ran in fear from predators, scattered the sheep, and entered the sheep pen without going through God. In this imagery, Jesus was uplifting the ostracized man and shaming some in the Judean crowd, the leadership, and especially the Pharisees.

The first-century hearers and readers of John's gospel understood the sting of isolation, loneliness, and excommunication. To be cast out meant more than simply going to another place of worship but included socio-economic and relational problems as well. Setzer (1994) noted that the Jewish believing contemporaries experienced the casting out of sectarians, called the *Birkat-ha-Minim* (excommunication from the synagogue). This *masal* would have special emotional significance to them. Jesus provided security as the true, divine shepherd. His followers can now reject the voice of the illegitimate spiritual leaders (thieves, robbers, strangers, and wolves).

Jesus also emphasized the intimacy and belonging of being personally known by the shepherd (Jn 10:14-17). Jesus personally and somewhat intimately knows his sheep, who personally know his voice as well. Father God personally knows and approves of Jesus. Thus, knowing Jesus

brings one into a personal relationship with God, the Father. Instead of focusing on the rejection from the toxicity of some in the crowd and most of Judean religious leadership, Jesus taught that his followers heard the voice of safety, protection, and truth from the true, God-ordained shepherd who was willing to sacrifice for them.

SELF-EXPRESSIVE SPEECH (A CLOSE FOLLOWER-ORIENTED LEADER). Throughout the *masal*, Jesus described speaking, knowing the voice of the shepherd, rejecting the voice of the counterfeit leader, and self-revelatory speech concerning his leadership and divinity (I say to you, I am the door, I came, I am the good shepherd, I know my own, I lay down my life, I must bring them, I may take it up again, I have authority, and I have received (a charge) from my Father). These statements have a multi-faceted effect. Jesus is both defending against the accusation that Jesus is demon-led and reassuring followers that he is trustworthy. Jesus provided hope, trust, and confidence in the new sheep pen, along with all those who felt the sting and isolation from spiritual abuse. Jesus taught the kind of behavior and personal care that he offered as their good shepherd leader.

PURPOSEFUL ACTION (COMPASSIONATE BUT STRONG). Purposeful action relates to the physical movement or actions of the body, our external human behaviors (Malina, 2001). In this zone, three groups act. First, the thieves and robbers sneak into the pen as false leaders without going through the gatekeeper. The thieves and robbers progress into hired hands that flee in fear instead of protecting the sheep. The hired hands progress to wolves, who snatch and scatter the sheep. Second, the sheep follow the shepherd with the right voice. They do not follow a stranger. Third, Jesus leads the sheep out in front.

The *masal* implied that Jesus dies and rises again by his own hands. Jesus lays his life down (verb suggests hands). Jesus takes it up again (verbs suggest hands). The symbolic use of his hands suggests the strength, might, and supernatural authority of Jesus, ultimately to die on his own accord and raise to life again.

TOXIC VERSUS HEALTHY LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

The previous inner textural analysis of the *masal* revealed malevolent leaders and followers, who spiritually abused the man healed of blindness and the followers of Jesus. Even though the Judean religious leaders did not believe Jesus, they circumvented their own Sanhedrin laws to try and kill Jesus (Schnall & Greenberg, 2012). In contrast, Jesus provided caring, protective, self-sacrificing leadership behavior as the good shepherd. Therefore, Jesus' sheep know his name and do not follow the dark side of spiritual leadership. Does the leadership literature point to similar kinds of leadership and followership?

TOXIC LEADERS

Current leadership literature discusses the dark side of leadership and its toxic effect on followers and organizational culture. What is dark or toxic leadership? Recent research has explored the unethical treatment of followers or subordinates by leadership. Northouse (2016) defined leadership as an ethical influence and unethical behavior as an abuse of power. Since no one

universal definition of leadership exists (Yukl, 2013), Northouse's take on leadership may be too narrow. Mathieu, Neumann, Hare, and Babiak (2014) noted that dark leadership occurs when followers experience tyranny, abusive, toxic, destructive behavior from the leadership.

Abusive behavior from a leader often leads to conflict at work and in the home, along with dissatisfaction, distress, and poor affective relationships (Tepper, 2000). Tepper's work explored abusive supervisor behavior and provided a means to address it by instituting organization justice and changing positions or places in an organization. When abusive behavior is prevalent from supervisors, displaced aggression increased in followers (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007).

Toxic leadership has also been labeled as destructive leadership by Einarsen, Aasland, and Skogstad (2007). Einarsen, et al. noted three occurrences in destructive leadership: (a) tyranny, (b) derailment, and (c) both supportive and disloyal behavior. Destructive behavior by a leader sabotages and undermines motivations, goals, resources, satisfaction, and the well-being of followers.

The danger of toxic leadership exists in its ability to generate toxic culture and toxic followers (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). The leader's personal dysfunctions are often hidden by the leader's ability to generate a following, which can be maintained through unethical means like manipulative, Machiavellian tactics. Often the toxic leader generates a grand vision, a need for a special person to lead and followers to obey blindly (Lipman-Blumen, 2008). These leaders generate an insider-outsider mindset in the people, expelling any who question the leader who systematically takes what is evil and exchanges it for false morality.

TOXIC OR BRAVE FOLLOWERS?

Much of the research on organizational behavior has relegated itself primarily to leadership. However, without exploring followership, the research remains unbalanced, missing necessary components (Huizing, 2013). In much of the literature, the role of the follower exists as subordinate to the leader, rallying around a common purpose (Chaleff, 2009; Gini, 1998; Huizing, 2013). Kellerman (2008) discussed follower engagement instead of passivity.

Instead of conforming to the toxic culture, followership can activate from a place of power (Chaleff, 2009; Gobble, 2017). Instead of mindless groupthink, Chaleff described followership from a place of actions, bravery, and strength. Gobble posited that a follower's influence profoundly impacts an organization. A follower need not be a victim to the surroundings even when leadership is toxic.

Toxic followership occurs under the direction of toxic leaders (Thomas, Gentzler, & Salvatorelli, 2016). If the followers choose to stay instead of removing themselves from the harmful influence and culture, then followers become toxic (Thomas et al.). When this occurs, toxic followers expel good, healthy people and continue to endanger themselves (Thomas et al.). This state of toxicity can become perpetual even after the leader leaves with the followers unknowingly seeking another toxic leader (Thomas et al.).

THE ANCIENT *MASAL* SOLUTION

Jesus provided a means for the newly, healed blind man to escape the dark leadership and toxic followership in the Judean synagogue by re-identifying himself with a new, healthy shepherd and a new, healthy fold of people. Jesus described the Pharisees in Judea who excommunicated the

man God healed as thieves, robbers, strangers, and hired hands who care nothing for their followers. These leaders are self-preserving, manipulative, and fearful (dark leadership traits) and do not originate from God, because they did not enter through the gate. Not only are these leaders dark and toxic, but also the metaphor progresses to their predatory nature (wolves) in the *masal*.

In contrast, healthy leaders from the *masal* are strong and heroic. They protect the sheep from predators, safely hem them in a pen at night, secure a guard at the gate, and personally know them by name. The healthy leaders reject self-aggrandizement, but instead, sacrifice for the sheep. The leader does not operate out of a sense of weakness, but under the charge of God to care for the sheep. The strength of the leader causes that influencer to sacrifice for the sheep. The healthy leader accepts the role of a follower (commissioned by the Father) or under-shepherd, rejecting the voice of the strangers (toxic leaders).

In the same way, healthy followers operate from a position of strength, rejecting the voice of toxic leaders, cultures, and followers. Healthy followers leave the pull of toxicity and turn their attention toward a healthy leader and culture. Sometimes the followers can attempt to generate change from their position of influence like Nicodemus, who advocated for right judgment at the Festival (Jn 7:45-52). At other times, a need exists for followers to remove themselves from the toxic environment by moving to another place in the organization or removing themselves completely and starting fresh. The *masal* encourages people to reject toxic leadership and find a healthy environment with the right shepherd.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY FROM A SPIRITUAL, TOXIC ENVIRONMENT

The inner textural analysis of John 10:1-21 unveiled four principles for followers to recover from a spiritual, toxic environment. First, one recognizes that spiritual toxicity can occur in ecclesial settings from respected leaders and officially sanctioned organizations. The Pharisees and other Judean leaders were officially sanctioned spiritual leaders of the Jewish people. However, the leaders lacked compassion for followers. Instead, these leaders hurt followers who endangered their positions of influence among the people unethically. Second, identifying toxic, spiritual behavior is important in an organization. From the *masal*, these leadership behaviors are self-preserving, manipulative behaviors, that provide a counterfeit, spiritual voice (the strangers in the *masal*). Not only are these leaders strangers to the truth but can also become predators (wolves). Third, looking to healthy, spiritual behavior provides both an exodus to a better place and new hope for safety and abundance (Jesus, the true shepherd, granting abundant life). These leaders (shepherds) imbibe heroic qualities in the face of predators, protecting followers. In addition, shepherd-leaders know when to sacrifice for the benefit of followers as a head-follower or under-shepherd, rejecting the voice of strangers (toxic leaders). Finally, followers have the power to operate in a position of influence instead of victimization.

Healthy followers can reject the pull of toxicity and turn their attention toward a healthy leader and culture. Instead, followers can attempt to generate change from their place of influence like Nicodemus asking for right judgment at the festival. When people in power reject or receive with contempt the voice of reason or sincere wisdom, healthy followers leave and find a healthy environment with the right shepherd who behaves and treats followers with humility like the Great Shepherd, Jesus.

DISCUSSION

This research provided a window into the first-century world and the kinds of leadership present. The purpose of this study was to see if toxic followership and the dark side of leadership was present in the *masal*. The research also provided a way forward for other scriptural cases contrasting shepherd leadership and the dark side of leadership along with healthy and toxic followership.

Since the study focused primarily on toxic leadership and followership, other forms of leadership were not studied. For example, the Judean crowds and spiritual leaders seem to have suffered from groupthink in their dealings with Jesus. Also, the *masal* is from the viewpoint of Jesus, which contrasted his form of leadership with the Judean leader's, malevolent leadership.

In making these claims in the article, it is important to note that all those involved in the parable, including Jesus, are Jewish. The Jewish Scriptures are full of good Jewish, spiritual leadership contrasted with dysfunctional, and maleficent, Jewish, spiritual leadership. Those Jewish leaders who displayed the dark side of leadership were never utilized by the authors of the Jewish scriptures as exemplars. In following this pattern, the *masal* was analyzed using a socio-rhetorical, inner textural approach from John's perspective, a Jewish believer in Jesus.

As the research unfolded, the *masal* focused primarily on followership (sheep) and began by discussing the Pharisees as selfish, thieves, robbers, strangers to the sheep and hired men who care nothing for the sheep. Although the concept of the good shepherd was evident, understanding the *masal* in this new light of followership isolation and the neglect of the Pharisees was eye-opening.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could look to other passages of shepherd leadership that prophesy about the divine shepherd who would come in contrast to the false shepherds who led the people of God (Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34). What part did the false shepherd play in creating a toxic culture of followership? Are Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 fulfilled in John 10? Further research could also look to the role of followership in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Other research could explore John 10:1-21 in more detail. Is the Holy Spirit a mediating factor in followership with Jesus in John 10:1-21? Future research could also use other socio-rhetorical textures in the *masal*.

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