

An examination of Jesus' situational leadership approach

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This study examines the situational leadership theory of Jesus through the lens of Hersey and Blanchard across various passages in the Gospels, employing two analytical perspectives: theological effectiveness and organisational management standards. While demonstrating extraordinary spiritual success through divine power, Jesus' methods consistently reveal operational limitations when evaluated against modern leadership criteria such as structural ambiguity (unclear role definitions), reliance on external resources (dependency on hospitality) and the absence of contingency planning. This analysis highlights a fundamental paradigm shift: Jesus deliberately prioritised radical faith demonstrations and spiritual transformation over systematic approaches, aiming to assert divine supremacy and challenge conventional organisational principles.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: In this article, I argue that greater attention should be given to integrating faith paradigms from the Scriptures with contemporary leadership theories, using a combined theological and leadership framework. This approach aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of leadership that is not only organisationally effective but also spiritually transformative. Additionally, it opens a broader dialogue between practical theology and organisational studies, particularly in accommodating the supernatural dimensions and divine principles in evaluating leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: Jesus' leadership; situational leadership; divine empowerment; organisational management; spiritual authority.

Introduction

Leadership is one of the important aspects in various contexts, both in organisations, communities and daily life. In a constantly changing world, leaders are required to be able to adapt to different situations and conditions. One of the approaches that is widely discussed in leadership studies is situational leadership theory (SLT). This model emphasises the importance of flexibility and the ability of leaders to adapt their leadership style based on the needs and readiness of followers. This article aims to explore the situational leadership model through examples drawn from the life and teachings of Jesus. This is especially done by examining how situational leadership is applied by Jesus in interaction with his followers.

A dynamic world demands leaders who are adaptive and able to adapt their leadership style according to the situation and the readiness level of followers. Situational leadership theory, which emphasises flexibility and adjustment of leadership styles based on the needs and development of followers, has been the focus of significant research in recent decades. The research of Hersey and Blanchard (2013) that introduced the well-known situational leadership model, as well as subsequent studies examining its validity and application in various contexts, have provided a strong framework for understanding the effectiveness of adaptive leadership.

Jesus Christ can be considered a prime example of an adaptive leader. Through his teachings and actions, Jesus showed how a leader can tailor their approach to meet the needs of different individuals and groups. By understanding Jesus' leadership through the lens of situational leadership, we can dig deeper into the principles of leadership that are relevant and applicable in modern life.

In the biblical context, Jesus Christ is often considered an example of ideal leadership, demonstrating an extraordinary ability to adapt to diverse situations and individuals. His teachings and actions reflect leadership principles that are relevant to situational leadership theory, albeit without the use of modern terminology. Previous research, such as works that analyse Jesus' leadership through the lens of transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio 2006) or

charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo 1988), has provided valuable insights. However, research that explicitly links Jesus' leadership model to situational leadership theory is still relatively limited. Therefore, this article aims to fill in the gap by exploring how Jesus' leadership model can be interpreted through a situational leadership framework.

Literature review

Situational leadership theory, developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, proposes that no one leadership style is most effective for all situations. Instead, the leadership style should be adapted to the specific situation, especially based on the maturity and readiness level of the followers.

This theory emphasises the importance of leaders adapting their style to the maturity and needs of subordinates (Hairiah, Labib & Asy'ari 2024). This theory suggests four leadership styles, namely, telling, selling, participating and delegating, which leaders should apply flexibly based on situational demands. While situational leadership contributes significantly to achieving organisational goals and improving the quality of human resources, challenges such as team resistance and difficulties in assessing follower maturity exist (Hairiah et al. 2024).

Telling

The 'telling' leadership style is one of the approaches in management that focuses on giving clear instructions and direction to team members. This style is highly directive, where the leader gives specific instructions and closely supervises the execution of the task. It is suitable for followers with low maturity levels who require clear direction (Koswara, Arlena & Ahmad 2023). In this style, leaders take a dominant role in directing activities and decisions, especially when team members are less experienced or when the assigned task requires clarity and assertiveness.

One of the effective leadership styles in certain situations is the instructive style, which has several characteristics. Firstly, the leader provides clear and specific directions regarding the tasks that must be done, so that team members are not confused in carrying out their responsibilities. Secondly, the leader conducts strict supervision to ensure that instructions are followed correctly and that progress is going according to plan. Thirdly, decision-making is entirely in the hands of the leader, while team members are in charge of executing those decisions without much intervention. Fourthly, this style is often used in the training or mentoring process, especially when team members are new or unfamiliar with the task at hand. Finally, communication tends to be one-way, where the leader gives more instructions than opens up discussions or input from subordinates. With this approach, the leader is in complete control, making it suitable for situations that require high structure and clarity (Ali 2017).

This leadership style is most effective when applied in special situations. Firstly, this style is very useful when facing

inexperienced or newly formed teams. Novice team members need detailed guidance and close supervision to ensure they understand their responsibilities correctly. Secondly, in emergencies that require quick decisions, the directive style allows the leader to take complete control without spending time on discussions. Thirdly, this style is suitable for tasks that are clearly defined in parameters and do not require high creativity, such as standard operational procedures or structured administrative work (Ali 2017).

On the plus side, this leadership style offers some important benefits. Firstly, it provides clarity and structure that help team members understand expectations and steps to take. Secondly, with detailed instructions, this style minimises the confusion and errors that may occur because of miscommunication. Thirdly, a directive approach accelerates the execution of tasks that require precision and consistency, because all decisions have been determined by the leader (Waller, Smith & Warnock 1989).

However, this style also has its drawbacks that need to be considered. Firstly, because all decisions are in the hands of the leader, the initiative and creativity of team members can be hampered because they are not allowed to contribute ideas. Secondly, team members may feel unengaged, potentially leading to dissatisfaction or decreased motivation in the long run. Thirdly, the directive style is not suitable for situations that require collaboration or innovation, as one-way communication and a lack of flexibility can hinder the brainstorming process and the development of creative solutions (Waller et al. 1989).

Telling leadership styles can be very effective in certain contexts, but it is important for leaders to recognise when to switch to other, more participatory, or collaborative styles, depending on the situation and the team's needs.

Selling

The 'selling' leadership style is an approach where the leader not only provides direction but also explains the rationale behind decisions to build commitment through persuasive communication and open dialogue. This style is employed when followers possess a moderate level of maturity but still require support and encouragement (Koswara et al. 2023).

Selling leadership style has several characteristics that set it apart from others. Firstly, leaders use persuasive communication by explaining the reasons behind each decision and task, so that team members understand the context in its entirety. Secondly, the leader provides emotional support in the form of encouragement and motivation to help the team achieve goals. Thirdly, this style emphasises active collaboration between leaders and team members, where there is room for feedback and input from both parties. Fourthly, there is a focus on developing the skills and competencies of team members through various forms of coaching (Ali 2017).

This leadership style is very appropriate to be applied in some special situations. Firstly, when dealing with team members who already have basic experience but still need further guidance. Secondly, in situations that require change or innovation, the team needs explanations and affirmations from the leader. Thirdly, when leaders want to improve the morale and involvement of team members in their work. With this approach, leaders can create a collaborative work environment while encouraging the professional development of team members (Waller et al. 1989).

Participating

The 'participating' leadership style is an approach in which the leader involves team members in decision-making. This style focuses on collaboration and two-way communication, where leaders listen to ideas and input from team members, as well as provide support and encouragement. Leaders and followers share in decision-making. This style is more supportive and less directive, suitable for followers who have higher maturity and competence but may lack confidence or motivation (Koswara et al. 2023).

The participating leadership style emphasises the active involvement of all team members in various aspects of the work. Key features of this style include: (1) the involvement of team members in decision-making, where their ideas and input are truly considered; (2) intense two-way communication between leaders and team members, creating productive dialogue; (3) empowerment where leaders encourage team members to take initiative and develop confidence and (4) focus on relationships built on trust and mutual respect between all team members (Ali 2017).

This leadership style is most effective when applied in certain situations. Firstly, when facing an experienced and competent team, the capacity of team members allows them to contribute more than just task implementers. Secondly, in a situation that requires fresh ideas and innovation, where the understanding and creativity of team members are a significant added value. Thirdly, when leaders want to increase the motivation and job satisfaction of team members because involvement in decision-making will foster a sense of belonging to the work (Waller et al. 1989).

The excellence of this style is seen in improving the quality of decisions because it considers various perspectives, professional development of team members through contribution opportunities and strengthening a collaborative work climate. However, this style takes more time in the decision-making process and is not effective for emergencies that require quick action or when facing immature teams (Waller et al. 1989).

Examples of appropriate applications are in strategy development projects, complex problem solving or management of established professional teams. With this approach, leaders not only get better solutions but also build a more independent and highly committed team (Waller et al. 1989).

Delegating

The 'delegating' leadership style is an approach in which the leader gives responsibility and authority to team members to make decisions and complete tasks independently. In this style, the leader plays the role of a facilitator who provides support and resources but is not directly involved in the execution of the task. Leaders give responsibility and authority to followers to make decisions. This is most effective when followers are highly mature and able to work independently (Koswara et al. 2023).

The delegating leadership style is an approach that gives high autonomy to team members. In this style, leaders delegate full responsibility, allowing team members to make decisions regarding their tasks independently. Leaders implement minimal interventions, not strictly supervising each step, thus making room for team members to innovate and develop their own ways of working. Nonetheless, leaders remain available to provide support when needed, acting as a source of guidance and advice. The main focus of this style is on the achievement of results, where leaders pay more attention to the outcome than the process undertaken (Ali 2017).

The delegation style is very apt to be applied in some special conditions. Firstly, when team members have sufficient experience and skills to carry out tasks independently. Secondly, in situations that require creativity and innovation, a more flexible approach can lead to new solutions. Thirdly, when leaders want to develop the abilities and confidence of team members because the responsibilities given will encourage them to grow professionally (Ali 2017).

The advantages of the delegation style of leadership include increased efficiency as leaders can focus on strategic tasks, developing team member independence, as well as room for greater innovation. However, this style is risky if applied to an unprepared team or an overly complex task without adequate guidance. Another challenge is the possible lack of coordination if communication is not properly maintained (Waller et al. 1989).

Examples of effective implementation are in specialised projects that require specific expertise, new product development or the formation of an established team of experts. With a delegation style, leaders create a work environment that encourages professional growth while building a culture of responsibility and accountability within the team.

Benefits of situational leadership theory in modern organisations

One of the main advantages of SLT is its adaptability and flexibility in dealing with various organisational situations. Situational leadership theory allows leaders to adjust their leadership style from directing, selling, participating, to

delegating based on the level of competence and commitment of followers (Thompson & Vecchio 2009; Manyuchi & Sukdeo 2021). This flexibility is particularly relevant in a dynamic and uncertain global business environment (Sutrisno et al. 2024; Westover 2020).

Situational leadership theory has also been proven to improve team members' performance and satisfaction. By adapting leadership approaches to followers' readiness, leaders can increase engagement, productivity and job satisfaction (Kapotwe & Bamata 2024; Westover 2020). For example, a team member who is still a beginner may need detailed direction, while an experienced team will be more productive with a delegated approach.

In addition, SLT plays an important role in leadership development. This theory provides a framework for leaders to train followers' skills through tailored approaches, such as providing appropriate direction, support and training (Kapotwe & Bamata 2024; Westover 2020). This not only strengthens individual competencies but also creates a pipeline of future leaders.

Another advantage of SLT is its broad application in various organisational contexts. Research shows the effectiveness of SLT in micro, small and medium businesses and the health sector, where leaders face specific challenges such as limited resources or complex team dynamics (Kapotwe & Bamata 2024; Walls 2019). Situational leadership theory's ability to adapt to changes in the business environment makes it a relevant theory in the disruptive era (Sutrisno et al. 2024).

Finally, SLT encourages effective communication as the foundation of leadership. Strategies such as transparency, regular feedback and active listening skills are the keys to the successful implementation of SLT (Sutrisno et al. 2024). Thus, SLT is not just a theory, but also a practical tool for building a resilient and responsive team.

The effectiveness of situational leadership in a religious context

Adaptability and flexibility: Situational leadership shows that adaptability and flexibility in the face of challenges can improve leadership effectiveness. This approach integrates relevant religious values in a modern context where leaders must face ever-changing challenges (Farisi 2024). Other studies show that situational leadership styles have a positive effect on organisational culture and spirituality (Samsuri 2020). The effectiveness of situational leadership varies. Despite the use of persuasion and sharing styles, overall effectiveness is assessed on average based on the self-perception of the leaders. This suggests that the effectiveness of situational leadership is not uniform and can be influenced by context and individuals (De Araújo et al. 2024).

Method

This study applied a qualitative design featuring a narrative approach and interpretive analysis. This

framework was selected to gain a deeper understanding of how Jesus applied the principles of situational leadership in his interactions with his followers and society at large. The approach will be implemented through a textual analysis of leadership narratives within the primary source, the Bible, with relevant verses drawn from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Additionally, an interpretive document analysis will be applied to secondary sources, such as articles, books, and reports discussing Jesus' leadership and situational leadership theory. This methodology is expected to provide comprehensive insights into how Jesus applied adaptive situational leadership within a biblical context.

Ethical considerations

This research was approved on 16 May 2025 and examined by Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Surabaya. It did not involve animals and/or animal-derived materials. The ethical clearance number is 00373/KEP-STTII Sby/EC/III/2025.

Results and discussion

Jesus' leadership model, as described in Matthew 20:20–28, exemplifies an altruistic and people-oriented approach to servant leadership, providing an effective and ethical leadership framework (Panjaitan 2020). This is in line with the concept of crisis leadership, where leaders must adapt to challenging situations while maintaining faith and setting an example for others (Firestone 2021). These biblical examples offer valuable insights into modern leadership practice, demonstrating the enduring relevance of situational leadership principles and the importance of ethical, servant-oriented leadership in a variety of contexts.

Situational leadership in Jesus' leadership

Luke 9:1–6

After Jesus called his 12 disciples, he gave them power and authority to cast out demons and heal diseases. And he sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Jesus said to them (Luke 9:3–5 BBE):

Do not take anything with you on the journey, do not take any rod or provisions, bread, money, or change of clothes. Wherever you are received, stay there until you leave the city. If anyone does not receive you, wipe off the dust from your feet, when you go out of their city, as a warning to them.

So they set out and they went around all the villages preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

In Luke 9:1–6, Jesus sent his 12 disciples to preach God's Kingdom and heal the sick. Jesus gave clear instructions to his disciples about what they should do. He gave them power over evil spirits and diseases, as well as commands to go into cities and villages to preach the gospel. This reflects the telling style, where the leader gives direct and specific direction to his followers.

Although not explicitly in the text, there is an element of selling that is reflected in the way Jesus explains the importance of their mission. By preaching the Kingdom of God and healing the sick, he helped the disciples understand the value and purpose of the assignment they were undertaking, which would motivate them to carry out the mission with zeal.

Before sending out his disciples, Jesus had been actively involved in their training and formation. He gave them first-hand experience of ministry and how to face challenges. Although in Luke 9:1–6, he did not go with them, the preparations he had made earlier showed a strong participating element in his leadership.

The delegating aspect is apparent in this passage. By sending out his 12 disciples and giving them the power to perform signs and miracles, Jesus delegated responsibility and authority to them. He entrusted them to continue the same work he had done, signifying the trust and training he had given.

From a strategic point of view, the disciples' dispatch in Luke 9:1–6 contains several weaknesses. *Firstly*, full dependence on the hospitality of the residents is very risky because disciples are prohibited from bringing any provisions (Widjaya & Sugiarti 2013). If the area is poor or inhospitable, they could go hungry or thirsty. *Secondly*, there is no contingency plan (Fiedler 1972); when they are rejected, they are simply ordered to leave without a follow-up strategy or evaluation of the causes of the rejection. *Thirdly*, the lack of specialised training to deal with theological opposition or miraculous failures has the potential to undermine the credibility of the mission (Fiedler 1972).

In addition, the absence of a clear leadership structure risks triggering internal conflicts, such as power struggles between disciples, as well as the absence of decision-making mechanisms in difficult situations. Finally, overly rigid instructions such as no carrying sticks or spare clothing make it difficult to travel long distances and be less adaptive to field conditions. This rule may be meant to test faith, but from a management perspective, it reduces the mission's effectiveness and safety.

The advantages of Jesus' approach (as a comparison) are the following:

- Test of absolute dependence on God: Disciples learn faith without human reservations.
- Preventing the commodification of services: Not bringing money avoids materialistic motives.
- Efficiency and focus: Without physical load, they can move quickly.

However, the success of this mission (Lk 9:6 shows they did it with joy) shows that divine power is more important than human planning.

Matthew 10:1–6

In Matthew 10:1–6, Jesus sent his 12 disciples to carry out a specific mission. At the beginning of this passage, Jesus gives clear instructions to his disciples. He established who would be sent and gave specific directions on what they should do, including preaching the Kingdom of Heaven and healing the sick. This reflects the telling style, where the leader gives direct and firm orders.

Although not explicitly in this text, there is an element of selling that is seen in the way Jesus conveys his mission. By sending them out to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven, he communicated the importance of that mission and the greater purpose behind it. It helps the disciples understand the value and meaning of what they do, which can motivate and inspire them.

Before sending them, Jesus had participated in the lives of the disciples during his ministry. He trained them, gave them hands-on experience, and showed them how to do the job. Although in Matthew 10:1–6, he sent them, the preparation and training that had been done in advance showed the element of participating.

The delegating aspect is obvious in this passage. By sending out his 12 disciples and giving them the responsibility to preach the gospel, Jesus delegated his mission to them. He entrusted them to carry out the same work that he had done, which showed the trust and training that had been given to them.

On the other hand, the disciples' dispatch in Matthew 10:1–6 shows some problematic strategic weaknesses. *Firstly*, the restriction of the territory of the ministry to only the Israelites (vv. 5–6) was seen as a narrow and non-inclusive policy, even though the message of the gospel would be addressed to all nations. *Secondly*, the prohibition on carrying travel provisions (vv. 9–10) creates an unhealthy dependence on hospitality, which is at high risk given that not all communities will receive them well. *Thirdly*, the absence of an evaluation mechanism in the face of rejection (v. 14) indicates a lack of planning for failure scenarios, a crucial thing in modern mission management.

From an operational perspective, this dispatch contains significant structural weaknesses (Yukl 2013; Northouse 2019). The absence of a clear team leader appointment has the potential to cause internal conflicts among disciples. Overly rigid instructions on travel gear also do not take into account the variation in field conditions that may be encountered. The most problematic is the lack of preparation to face theological and practical challenges, such as how to behave when their healing powers are not functioning or when dealing with opposing religious authorities (Hayati 2014). This approach of Jesus, while perhaps intended as an exercise in faith, from the perspective of modern management looks immature and overly reliant on supernatural factors without adequate strategic support.

Matthew 28:18–20

In Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus gave the disciples a clear command to go, teach, and baptise. This reflects the telling style, where leaders give direct and specific instructions. He directed them to carry out a clear and focused mission.

Jesus also emphasised the importance of this mission by stating that all power in heaven and on earth has been given to him. In this way, he 'sold' the idea that this mission was part of a larger and more important plan, and it encouraged the disciples to carry out his commandments with faith. It reflects the element of selling, where the leader strives to inspire and motivate his followers.

Although Jesus would not go with them after this commandment, he had participated in the lives and ministries of his disciples for the previous 3 years. He has trained them, giving them the necessary experience and knowledge. Thus, there is a participating element that is visible in the preparations he has made before sending them.

The aspect of delegation is clearly reflected in this passage. By commissioning the disciples to go on mission, Jesus entrusted them with both responsibility and authority. He charged them with continuing his work and serving as evangelists, thereby demonstrating his intention that they actively participate in the *Missio Dei* by proclaiming the gospel.

From a strategy and leadership perspective, the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20 contains several weaknesses that need to be examined. *Firstly*, the instruction was too general – Jesus simply gave a global mandate to 'go and make disciples of all nations' without clear operational instructions on methods, regional priorities or implementation strategies (Fiedler 1972). *Secondly*, the absence of a detailed organisational structure – although Jesus mentions baptism and teaching, he does not explain how to establish a system of continuous training or oversight mechanisms to ensure doctrinal consistency. *Thirdly*, the absence of promised resources – disciples are sent with spiritual authority, but without logistical, financial or physical support to face rejection and persecution (Hayati 2014).

Practically, this mandate faces serious challenges in execution. There is no set timeline, no measurable success indicators and no contingency plan for failure. Nor did Jesus provide a solution to the potential internal conflict over the interpretation of his teachings that would later lead to divisions among his followers. Most crucially, despite the promise of participation until the end of time (v. 20), there is no concrete guarantee of how this heavenly power will manifest in the practical difficulties the disciples face. This approach, although visionary, from the point of view of modern management, seems naïve because it ignores the complexity of implementing a global mission without a systematic framework.

This style relies on the understanding and readiness of disciples who may be diverse. Some disciples may feel unprepared for the challenges ahead, which can lead to confusion or uncertainty. Although Jesus gave clear instructions, there was a potential that the disciples could misinterpret the proper purpose or method of carrying out the command. This leads to inconsistent execution of the mission.

Situational leadership styles require flexibility and the ability to adapt quickly. If disciples do not have the necessary skills or knowledge, they may face difficulty in fulfilling the assignment given. The task of reaching out to all nations could be at odds with the religious and political authorities that existed at the time. This can lead to conflicts that may be difficult for disciples to deal with.

While this mandate is important, there is a risk that focusing on immediate tasks can overlook the development of long-term strategies for church growth and deeper teaching. Matthew 28:18–20 shows Jesus' situational leadership style that was adaptive and responsive to the needs of his disciples. However, this approach also has criticisms and shortcomings related to reliance on student understanding, potential ambiguity and a risk of conflict, which can hinder the effectiveness of the implementation of the mandate.

Luke 10:1

In Luke 10:1, Jesus sent his 72 disciples to go to the cities and places he was going to visit. Jesus gave clear instructions to his disciples about their duties. He stated that they would be sent, which shows the telling style in which the leader gives specific and direct instructions. Here, Jesus directs them to go to a certain place and deliver his message.

In this context, although Luke 10:1 has not yet been explained in depth, Jesus communicates the importance of their mission. By sending them, he gave meaning and purpose to the mission, inspiring them to understand the importance of the work they were about to do. It reflects the element of selling, where the leader strives to motivate and inspire his followers.

Although Jesus did not go with them on this mission, he had previously participated in training and preparing them for the task. During his ministry, Jesus was directly involved with his disciples, providing them with the experience and knowledge necessary to carry out the mission. Thus, there is a visible participating element in the preparation.

This is the most obvious aspect in Luke 10:1. By sending out his 72 disciples, Jesus gave them the responsibility to take his message to the places he would visit. He entrusted them with the mission and trained them to become independent leaders. This shows a strong delegating style, where the leader gives authority and responsibility to his followers.

Although Jesus' approach to this mission is often praised for its flexibility and contextualisation, some of the criticisms and weaknesses that can be raised from a management, leadership or mission strategy perspective are:

- The lack of detailed logistical preparation (Hayati 2014): Without logistical preparations, the disciples were completely dependent on the hospitality of the locals, who were at risk if they were rejected (Lk 10:10–11).
- Dependence on listener response is included in the category of high-risk strategy (Widjaya & Sugiarti 2013): This approach relies on the listener's response, so it can be ineffective if many people refuse. There is no alternative strategy in the event of mass rejection.
- No clear hierarchical structure (Bosch, 2011): Without a clear structure, there can be conflicts or confusion in the implementation of the mission.
- The lack of training specific to various situations (Fiedler 1972): If they fail in the miraculous ministry, it could damage the credibility of the mission.
- There is no contingency plan (Fiedler 1972): In modern mission strategies, rejection is usually followed by evaluation and reassessment, but Jesus gives no further instructions.

Although Jesus' situational leadership style in Luke 10:1 is spiritually effective because it relies on divine power, from a management and organisational strategy perspective, this approach contains several significant drawbacks: over-reliance on miracles and local friendliness makes the system vulnerable to uncertainty; the absence of a backup plan to deal with failures indicates a lack of risk management; and a loose team structure has the potential to cause problems in coordination and division of roles.

However, the mission success recorded in Luke 10:17–20 proves that in the context of divine ministry, reliance on supernatural inclusion can overcome the limitations of human planning, so this criticism is only relevant when judged through the lens of modern management and does not apply entirely within a framework of faith that recognises divine intervention as a determining factor.

John 20:21

In John 20:21, Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection and said, 'Peace be with you! Just as the Father sent me, so now I am sending you'. In his statement, Jesus gave clear instructions to the disciples that they, too, would be sent. This reflects the telling style, where leaders give direct and firm directions. He told them about the mission they had to serve.

Jesus not only gives commands but also communicates the meaning and importance of the mission. Using the phrase 'Peace be with you', he created a supportive and inspiring atmosphere so that the disciples could understand the value of the mission. This is the aspect of selling where the leader strives to inspire and motivate his followers.

Although not directly involved in the physical act in this passage, Jesus' own presence amid the disciples indicates participation. He was there to provide reinforcement and support. Jesus shared his experience and strengthened them with his presence, which demonstrated a supportive leadership trait.

The most obvious in this context is the delegating element. By sending out his disciples, Jesus gave them the responsibility to continue his mission. He entrusted them to do the same work that he did, which was the core of the delegation. He trained them to be leaders who would continue his work after he was gone.

Although John 20:21 is the theological basis (*missio Dei*), this mission has significant strategic weaknesses. Jesus simply gave a general mandate ('as I am sent by the Father') without specific operational instructions about the target of the ministry, the method of evangelisation or the handling of rejection – in contrast to the more detailed instructions in Matthew 28:19–20 about baptism and teaching. Structural problems also appear in the absence of a clear division of roles, thus triggering potential conflicts of authority as seen in the competition between Peter and John (Brown, 1970; Bauckham, 2006). More problematic, Jesus relied on the past experiences of the disciples without providing new training that adapted to the post-resurrection context, even though the situation of the early church required a different approach.

From a logistical perspective, this dispatch ignores crucial practical needs (Hayati 2014). Jesus did not provide financial resources, support networks or physical protection – an omission that proved problematic when the disciples faced persecution in Acts. The most critical is the absence of a contingency plan to deal with failure (Fiedler 1972). When persecution divides the church (Ac 8:1), no emergency protocol has been prepared. From the perspective of modern management, this approach relies too much on improvisation while ignoring the principles of strategic planning, although it must be acknowledged that the simplicity of this mandate allows for flexibility of adaptation in various cultural contexts.

The discipleship in John 20:21, although theologically visionary, contains a glaring strategic flaw. The mandate, 'as I was sent by the Father', is given without an operational explanation of: (1) what specific tasks to be performed; (2) strategies for dealing with challenges in the field; or (3) a clear team leadership structure. This overly general approach risks creating confusion in implementation, in contrast to the more technical instructions such as in Matthew 28 or Luke 10. From the point of view of modern management, the absence of such practical signs can interfere with the effectiveness of mission execution.

But paradoxically, this 'minimalist' approach proved effective through the growth of the early church in Acts. This success shows that the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:22) can compensate for the limitations of human planning.

Managerial criticisms are only relevant if we judge this text through the lens of the modern organisation, while from the perspective of faith, the simplicity of Jesus' instructions makes room for a more dynamic divine work. Thus, this text teaches that in spiritual missions, reliance on divine inclusion can be more decisive than the perfection of human strategy.

Luke 19:45–46

In Luke 19:45–46, Jesus took a very bold action by driving the merchants out of the temple and warning them about the abuse of the sanctuary. Jesus directly gave orders and instructions by taking decisive action, which was to drive out the merchants and said that his house was supposed to be a house of prayer, but they had made it a den of thieves. This reflects the telling style, where leaders give clear and firm directions without compromise.

Although Jesus' actions are very direct, there is also an element of selling in them. By expelling the merchants and declaring the intent of his actions, he 'sold' the idea of the sanctity of the temple and the importance of guarding places of worship from improper practices. He communicates the moral and spiritual values that underlie his actions.

In this context, Jesus participated directly in the situation that took place in the temple. He not only talks about the changes that need to happen but is actively involved by taking bold action. This shows that he not only gives instructions from afar but also participates in changing circumstances.

Although not obvious in this passage, we can see that Jesus was preparing the disciples to understand the importance of the sanctity of the place of worship and their responsibility to keep his teachings. In a broader context, Jesus often gave his disciples the responsibility to continue his mission after he left, although in this text, the actions of the delegation are not directly revealed.

Jesus' situational approach in Luke 19:45–46 can be criticised for being too confrontational and abrupt. Instead of starting with dialogue or warning, Jesus immediately took physical action by expelling the merchants, which risked provoking resistance from the Jewish religious authorities. From the perspective of modern leadership, such a move is considered less strategic because it ignores the principles of gradual negotiation and conflict management, which can reduce tension and increase acceptance of change (Aulia, Julaiha & Sudadi 2024).

Moreover, Jesus' actions were not accompanied by a follow-up plan or oversight structure to ensure continued reform. There is no indication that he established a team or system to prevent the return of corrupt practices in the temple. This shows a weakness in follow-through, where drastic changes are not supported by mechanisms capable of sustaining them in the long term. As a result, although Jesus' actions were effective as a symbol of protest, their effects may have been temporary.

Jesus' approach also ignores the socio-economic dimension of the expelled merchants. They lost their livelihoods without being given alternative solutions, such as relocation or reform of the sacrificial trading system. In the context of situational leadership, there should be consideration of the needs of all stakeholders, not just religious goals. Although this action succeeded in highlighting the irregularities in the temple, the lack of attention to the humanitarian and economic aspects diminished its worthiness as a holistic model of leadership. Theologically, however, this action remains meaningful as a prophetic rebuke to practices that undermine the sanctity of the temple.

John 13:4–17

In John 13:4–17, we see Jesus performing a very symbolic and profound act by washing the feet of his disciples. In the early part, Jesus instructed his disciples about the importance of serving one another. Although he did not use many words, his own actions became powerful teachings. He shows them what is supposed to be done, and this reflects the telling style, where the leader gives clear directions.

In the process of washing feet, Jesus not only performed physical acts but also communicated the values of humility and service. He is 'selling' the idea that being a leader means serving. In this way, he inspired the disciples to understand the importance of an attitude of service in the context of leadership.

The act of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples is a profound demonstration of participation. He not only gave instructions but also carried out tangible acts that involved everyone around him. By participating directly in these acts of service, Jesus showed that leadership is about genuine engagement and authentic example. After washing their feet, Jesus emphasized that they should do the same for one another (Jn 13:14–15). This represents a form of delegation, in which he entrusts his disciples with the responsibility to carry on the teachings and values of the ministry. In doing so, he trains them to be leaders who also serve.

In John 13:4–17, Jesus used an unusual approach of washing the feet of his disciples – an action usually performed by a servant or slave. From the perspective of modern leadership, this action can be criticised for not being in line with a clear hierarchy and leadership structure. A leader who takes on the role of a servant can create confusion in the team about their respective authority and responsibilities (Marisa & Oigo 2018). In addition, there is no practical explanation of how disciples should apply this principle in their ministry, so it risks being perceived as mere symbols without real implementation.

Although Jesus emphasised the importance of humility and service (vv. 14–15), he did not provide concrete guidance on how to balance this attitude with the need for assertive leadership, such as making difficult decisions or facing opposition (Prajogo 2019). Disciples may be

confused about how to apply 'foot washing' in a broader context, such as internal conflict or external pressure. In situations where authority and assertiveness are needed, this leadership model can be considered impractical or even counterproductive.

The principle of servant leadership taught by Jesus is prone to being misinterpreted as a justification for exploitation or a lack of assertiveness. Without clear boundaries, disciples can get caught up in a leadership pattern that is too passive or allow themselves to be taken advantage of (Prajogo 2019). In addition, Jesus did not include an evaluation mechanism to ensure that these principles were applied correctly, thus risking creating an imbalance in team dynamics. Beyond this criticism, however, Jesus' actions still have deep theological value about humility and faithfulness in ministry.

Although Jesus' approach in John 13:4–17 is effective as a moral teaching, from a management and practical leadership standpoint, this model has weaknesses in terms of clarity, implementation and the balance between humility and the firmness required in leading.

Mark 1:16–20

In Mark 1:16–20, we see Jesus calling his disciples, Simon Peter, Andrew, and James and John. In this context, Jesus directly commanded the fishermen to follow him. It does not go into much detail about what will happen, but it indicates the desired direction. This reflects the telling leadership style, where the leader directs and gives clear instructions.

Although Jesus gave the command, there was also an element of selling where he caught the attention and inspired the disciples with a greater vision – to be fishers of men. He not only gave commands but also offered a more noble purpose, which could motivate the disciples to follow him.

In this context, Jesus also showed involvement with his disciples. After they follow him, he not only directs them but also participates in their lives. He invited them to get involved in his mission and share experiences. Although not yet fully visible in this passage, this style would emerge later as Jesus involved the disciples in specific missions and tasks. He gave them the responsibility to continue his work after he was gone.

In Mark 1:16–20, Jesus calls his first disciples with a very spontaneous and direct approach. From the perspective of modern human resource management, this recruitment method has several weaknesses (Budiono 2024). Jesus did not conduct a comprehensive selection process – no in-depth interviews, background checks or competency evaluations. He only called Simon, Andrew, James and John while they were at work, and they immediately left everything to follow him. This approach risks recruiting people who may not be truly prepared or qualified for a demanding ministry task.

After calling the disciples, Jesus did not provide orientation or basic training before entering the ministry (Budiono 2024). There is no period of adequate probation or skill debriefing. In the context of modern leadership, this is a significant weakness because disciples are immediately faced with great responsibilities without adequate preparation. They are forced to learn on the go, which has the potential to lead to mistakes that could be avoided with more structured training beforehand.

Nor did Jesus make a clear covenant or agreement with the disciples about each party's expectations, rights and obligations. There is no clarity regarding the duration of the service, support system or evaluation mechanism. In modern management, the absence of such a structure can cause problems later on, including potential conflicts (Aulia et al. 2024), misunderstandings or even resignations. Although this approach of Jesus was successful in the context of his ministry, it is difficult to replicate it in modern leadership situations that require a more mature structure and planning.

The fundamental differences between Jesus' leadership and modern leadership

Main goal: Spiritual transformation vs. organisational efficiency

In Jesus' leadership, his primary purpose was not to build an efficient organisation or a long-term project in this world, but to introduce the Kingdom of God, call people to repentance, make disciples through personal relationships and prepare disciples to continue the mission of spreading the gospel after his ascension, depending on the power of the Holy Spirit (Mt 4:17; 28:18–20; Ac 1:8). The focus is on the transformation of the heart and character. In modern leadership, it often focuses on achieving specific, sustainable, measurable and efficient organisational goals within a temporal time frame. Structures, backup plans and logistics are tools to minimise risk and maximise success in achieving these goals (Robbins & Judge 2019).

Formation model: Relational discipleship vs. functional specialisation

In Jesus' leadership, he chose disciples primarily based on willingness to follow him (not special qualifications) and shaped them through daily life together (Mk 3:13–14). Teaching occurs in a tangible context (e.g. the parable of the sower, Mt 13), direct service (casting out demons and healing) and personal discussions. Their 'job description' is to be like the Master and do what he does (Lk 6:40; Jn 14:12). Flexibility and spiritual preparedness are more important than rigid structures. In modern leadership, it relies more on specialisation and clarity of role descriptions to ensure efficiency, accountability and avoid overlap. Training is often formal and structured before full assignment (Mintzberg 2009).

Dependence on resources: Faith and divine participation vs. logistics planning and assurance

Under Jesus' leadership, he explicitly instructed the disciples to leave without excessive supplies (Mt 10:9–10; Lk 10:4),

teaching them to rely on God's provision through the hospitality of those they serve and through miracles when needed. This is an exercise of faith and absolute dependence on God, not a logistical omission. His presence and power are the ultimate 'guarantee' (Mt 28:20b). In modern leadership, risk management and careful logistics planning are considered essential for sustainability, predictability and safety. A contingency plan is an anticipation of uncertainty and a way to ensure that the organisation continues to operate in the event of a disruption (Daft 2018).

Socio-cultural contextualisation: The Mediterranean World of the 1st century

The ministry of Jesus and the early disciples was characterised by its local, mobile, and relatively small scale in comparison with modern global organisations. Consequently, the logistical demands and the need for formalised structures were considerably lower. Within the context of ancient Mediterranean societies, the prevailing culture of hospitality and collective values provided a supportive social framework that enabled and sustained their ministry. Trusting the host to provide basic needs is natural and expected (Malina 2001). This reduces the need for complicated self-paced logistics. The eschatological hope in the context of that time is that the early disciples lived in the hope of the coming of the full Kingdom of God in the near future (although the time is unknown, Mt 24:36). This affects the approach to worldly long-term planning.

'Contingency' in the model of Jesus: The power of the Holy Spirit and Wisdom

Although there is no written 'backup plan' like the modern leadership model, Jesus provided the disciples with flexible and adaptive spiritual principles, as well as the promise of the Holy Spirit who would lead, teach and give them the right words when needed (Jn 14:26; 16:13; Mt 10:19–20). Its 'contingency' lies in its dynamic reliance on divine wisdom and inclusion, not on procedural documents.

Conclusion

An analysis of Jesus' situational leadership approach in various sections reveals a consistent pattern: tremendous spiritual effectiveness, but managerial weakness when judged by modern leadership standards. Historically and theologically, this model was successful because it relied on divine authority, miraculous power and the absolute dependence on God's inclusion, as evidenced by the growth of the early church. But based on modern leadership theories, this approach is often lacking in structure (unclear division of tasks), logistical preparation (reliance on hospitality) and contingency strategies for failure – factors considered important in contemporary management theory.

The absence of formal structures such as backup plans, detailed job descriptions and self-paced logistical support in Jesus' leadership is not a failure of planning, but is a direct reflection of the main purpose, method and context of his ministry. His purpose is to build a spiritual and transformative

Kingdom of God, not an earthly organisation with intensive methods of discipleship through living relationships and example, and relying on direct divine participation and provision. His context is a Mediterranean culture that relies on hospitality, smaller scales of service and eschatological expectations.

In contrast, 21st-century leadership, with its global organisational complexity, accountability demands and high risk, does require modern management tools for sustainability and effectiveness. However, Jesus' model reminds us that at the heart of true leadership, especially spiritual leadership, lies personal transformation, authentic relationships, dependence on God and Spirit-led flexibility, which can be more important than even the most perfect structure. Criticism of Jesus' methods only applies if it ignores the supernatural dimension of his mission.

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Data availability

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