

Article

The Power of Example: Following Jesus on the Path of Spirituality in Luke-Acts

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Abstract: Luke sets up Jesus as an example of spirituality in Luke-Acts. In Luke, Jesus does not simply tell his disciples to adopt spiritual practices; he models them, inviting readers to imitate him as well. The first century world was familiar with the power of example. Leaders in Luke's literary world were often idealized because they taught or legislated not just through words, but through the virtuous example of their lives. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus invites his followers to follow him on the pathway to prayer and simplicity in a similar manner. Like the Lukan Jesus, Numa and Lycurgus, Plutarch's legendary kings, legislate piety and simplicity through their own lifestyles during their lifetimes. Plutarch devotes significant attention to the issue of their influence after their deaths. Luke's authorial audience also might have wondered how the powerful effect of Jesus' exemplary instruction might be sustained after his crucifixion and ascension. In Acts, we see that Jesus' followers have internalized his instruction and example of prayer and simplicity through the power of the Holy Spirit, adopting Jesus' spiritual patterns as their own. Early receptions of Lukan texts on prayer and simplicity in Luke-Acts show that the early church continues to follow this practice, looking to Jesus as a model of spirituality for their own lives and the lives of their communities.

Keywords: Luke-Acts; Gospel of Luke; book of acts; prayer; simplicity; philosopher king; Plutarch; Numa; Lycurgus; Holy Spirit; spirituality; spiritual practices; spiritual formation; reception; reception theory; reception criticism



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1. Introduction

In Luke, Jesus does not simply instruct his disciples to adopt spiritual practices; he models them, inviting his disciples (and Luke's readers) to emulate him, as well. Luke describes Jesus as "mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19) and summarizes the content of his Gospel as "all that Jesus did and taught" (Acts 1:1).¹ Of the four Gospels, Luke most frequently highlights the correlation of Jesus' words and deeds (Danker 1982, p. 340). The expectation for a correlation between the life and teaching of ideal leaders was a frequent topic of philosophical discussion from the time of Plato until the early church, as Goodenough has shown (Goodenough 1928, pp. 55–102). Talbert observes, "We know that in the Lucan milieu that stream of thought which furnished him his controlling image for thinking about Jesus and the disciples emphasized the value and necessity of choosing a master who embodied his teachings and making him one's pattern to imitate" (Talbert 1974, p. 98). As Talbert notes, "In terms of the philosophic image, Jesus is the master who is the source of the Christian way of life" (ibid., pp. 98–99). Luke intentionally roots the disciples' acts and teaching in the words and deeds of Jesus (pp. 96–97; Luke 11:1–13, 22:39–46). For Luke, even after Jesus' death, the power of Jesus' example is extended through his followers' emulation of his life and teaching. In Acts, correspondence to the life and teachings of Jesus becomes the norm by which the apostles are judged and a basis for their authority (p. 103), so that they can even point to the effectiveness of their own example (Acts 20:18).

This essay will highlight the power of Jesus' spiritual example in Luke-Acts with respect to two spiritual practices, prayer and simplicity, major themes in Luke that illustrate

vertical and horizontal dimensions of Lukan spirituality. In Luke-Acts, prayer is the means through which God's redemptive purposes are accomplished (Plymale 1991, p. 1) and the vehicle through which God's will is revealed both to Jesus and to the early church (ibid., p. 105). As "*the way* to avoid falling from the faith" (p. 109), prayer is essential for spiritual strength, both for Jesus and for those who would emulate him (Luke 11:4; 22:39–46). Luke sets Jesus up as the "paradigmatic pray-er", contrasting Jesus' courage that he receives through prayer with the disciples' failure, and interceding for their perseverance even after they fail (Crump 1992, pp. 167–75; Luke 22:31, 54–62). Jesus prays continually and before the critical moments in his life and ministry (Harris 1966, p. 196; Luke 3:21–22; 5:16; 6:12–16; 9:18, 28–36; 11:1–4; 22:39–46), a pattern evident in Luke's literary world (Fuhrman 1981, p. 287). In Acts, in imitation of Jesus, believers offer constant prayers and are seen praying before the key moments of the narrative, inviting the saving work of God and furthering God's redemptive history (Plymale 1991, pp. 110–15; Acts 4:29, 31; 10:4; 10:30; 22:17–21). Luke, likewise, sets up Jesus as a model of simplicity who teaches through the power of his own example. Jesus, who has no home or possessions (Luke 6:1; 9:13, 58) and teaches without payment, encourages his disciples to seek the kingdom alone, (Luke 11:1–13; 12:32) dispossessing themselves (Luke 12:33; 18:18–30) and trusting in God's benefaction, without worry (Luke 11:3, 8; 12:28–29). The earliest Christian community in Acts is an embodiment of Jesus' own lifestyle and teachings on simplicity. It is a tightly-knit group of believers who share their possessions to care for the poor among them (Acts 2:44–45; 4:34–35), in imitation of Jesus' teachings on almsgiving (Kim 1998, p. 232; Luke 6:30; 12:33; 16:9, 19–31). The apostles follow Jesus' teachings on simplicity so well that at times they themselves become exemplars (Hays 2010, pp. 225, 258; Acts 4:36–37; 30:33–35). Paul, for instance, points to his own lack of greed (20:33–35), offering a sermon in which he is "explicitly presented as a model for the presbyters to follow" (Johnson 1977, p. 31), as he himself emulates Jesus (Talbert 1997, p. 189).

Contemporary readers often face challenges when reading ancient texts because our culturally driven assumptions can be quite different from those implied by the ancient text. Our reading of Luke-Acts and our ability to be spiritually formed by Luke's message will be greatly enhanced if we can try to ask the kinds of questions that Luke's intended audience might have asked and that the narrative attempts to answer. This article begins by exploring the potential expectations that Luke's authorial audience² may have had for his portrait of Jesus as a model of prayer and simplicity. The intended readers or authorial audience are the readers presupposed by the text who "read in a particular socially constituted way that is shared by the author and his or her expected readers" (Rabinowitz 1987, p. 22). They are the "contextualized implied readers," (Rabinowitz 1989, p. 85) that form the hypothetical audience that the text assumes and for whom it was written.³ Luke's intended readers would have known that the key to moral change comes from the power of personal example (Goodenough 1928, pp. 55–102). Writers in Luke's literary world did not simply point to abstract ideals; they sketched portraits of those who best personified them in the hopes that readers would emulate their heroes' virtuous lifestyles. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus invites would-be disciples to follow him on a pathway to spirituality in a similar manner, by patterning themselves after his own example. In Acts, we see that Jesus' followers have internalized his example, adopting Jesus' spiritual practices as their own. Receptions of Luke-Acts among the early Fathers show that Luke's actual readers continued in this trajectory, looking to Jesus as a model of spirituality for their own lives and the lives of their communities.⁴

2. The Power of Example in Luke's Literary World

Luke's literary culture includes idealized portraits of leaders whose lives were so exemplary that they provided models of virtue for their followers to emulate. For instance, two of Plutarch's ideal kings, Numa and Lycurgus, are able to form their subjects in prayer and simplicity through their own virtuous lifestyles.⁵ Such portraits also were likely designed to inspire virtue in the work's readership.⁶ Plutarch contrasts Lycurgus,

who successfully instructs the next generation, with Numa, who fails to ensure that his successors will follow in the ways of their legendary king, resulting in an almost immediate end to his influence (Plutarch 1914c, *Lycurgus and Numa*, 4.5–4.6). Plutarch's two leaders provide an interesting point of comparison and contrast with the Lukan Jesus, whose unity of life and teaching in prayer and simplicity provides an effective example for the next and subsequent generations of readers, by the Spirit's power.

2.1. Philosophy as a Guide to Life

Luke's authorial audience would have expected Jesus to demonstrate a unity of life and teaching, since this was an essential characteristic of an ideal teacher or king. In Luke's literary world philosophy was seen as a lifestyle, not just a collection of abstract ideals. For Seneca, philosophy is "not devised for show. It is not pursued in order that the day may yield some amusement" (Seneca 1917, 16.3). Rather, it "orders our life, guides our conduct, shows us what we should do" (Seneca 1917, 16.3). Philosophers themselves pointed to the necessity to live out their teachings. For Epicurus, we must not merely pretend to study philosophy, but "study it in reality: for it is not the appearance of health that we need, but real health" (Oates et al. 1940, p. 43). The example of a virtuous life was a critical supplement to verbal instruction. Seneca notes that Cleanthes could not have followed Zeno's example so well had he only listened to his lectures. Because he "shared his life, saw into his hidden purposes, and watched him to see whether he lived according to his own rules" he was able to emulate him well (Seneca 1917, 6.6). In the ancient Mediterranean world, there was such an expectation for philosophers to teach through the pattern of their lives that spending time with a philosopher, even if he or she was not actively teaching, was seen as an ideal form of education. For Seneca, one who hopes to grow in philosophy should find a model of "high character," and then "keep him ever before your eyes, living as if he were watching you, and ordering all your actions as if he beheld them" (Seneca 1917, 11.8). The pattern of one's lifestyle was so important that it could even replace verbal instruction. Seneca points out that, "one can be helped by a great man even when he is silent" (Seneca 1917, 94.42). For Musonius, those who teach philosophy well "do not need many words" (Musonius 1947b, *What Means of Livelihood is Appropriate for a Philosopher* 11). *Secundus, the Silent Philosopher* describes a completely silent philosopher who taught exclusively through his actions, refusing to speak even when threatened with execution (Perry 1964, p. 15). The expectation for a unity of lifestyle and teaching was so pervasive in Luke's literary world that Luke's authorial audience would likely have expected Jesus to demonstrate a unity of life and teaching as well.

2.2. The Model of the Philosopher King

Luke's first readers were familiar with morally bankrupt rulers. However, that did not diminish their long-held desires for virtuous leaders who could rule through personal example. Writers since the time of Plato believed that an ideal king who embraced virtue with the heart of a philosopher could provide the best form of government for a people. Such a philosopher king was thought to personify a law higher than the written laws of the land because he lived his life in accordance with the law of God (Plato 1926, *Laws*, 9.875c).⁷ For instance, Xenophon has Cyrus' father tell him that he must be "the most righteous and law-abiding man in the world" (Xenophon 1960, *Cyropaedia*, 1.6.27). Musonius writes that it is "of the greatest importance for the good king to be faultless and perfect in word and action, if, indeed, he is to be a 'living law' as he seemed to the ancients . . . a true imitator of Zeus" (Musonius 1947a, *That Kings Also Should Study Philosophy* 8, p. 65). Isocrates tells Demonicus to "pattern after the character of kings, and follow closely their ways," to consider "their manner of life your highest law" (Isocrates 1928, *To Demonicus*, p. 36). Plutarch notes that even his experience of writing about the lifestyles of ideal kings has moved him to greater personal virtue (Plutarch 1918, *Timaeus*, 1.1). Luke's authorial audience, sharing in cultural expectations for an ideal king to lead others to virtue through personal example, may have approached Luke's portrait of Jesus, who instructs others

in prayer and simplicity through the example of his own virtuous lifestyle, with similar expectations for transformation.

2.3. *The Power of Example among Plutarch's Ideal Kings*

Plutarch is an important figure for studying a hypothetical first reception of Luke-Acts, highlighting persisting ideals that would have been part of a shared literary culture. In his first book of *Lives*, Plutarch highlights the unity of lifestyle and teaching in Numa, who legislates from a model of exemplary piety, and Lycurgus, a man of simplicity who creates an ideal state of shared possessions. Plutarch clearly sees Numa as the embodiment of Plato's philosopher king model and sees in Lycurgus' Sparta a parallel to Socrates' ideal republic.⁸

For Plutarch, Numa, who was “universally celebrated for his virtues,” (Plutarch 1914d, *Numa*, 4.6) is a “manifest illustration and confirmation of the saying which Plato, many generations later, ventured to utter regarding government, namely, that human ills would only then cease and disappear when, by some divine felicity, the power of a king should be united in one person with the insight of a philosopher, thereby establishing virtue in control and mastery over vice.” (ibid., 20.7).

Plutarch points to the formative effects of Numa's example. When the people “see with their own eyes a conspicuous and shining example of virtue in the life of their ruler, they will of their own accord walk in wisdom's ways” (20.8). For Plutarch, this “is the noblest end of all government, and he is most a king who can inculcate such a life and such a disposition in his subjects” (20.8).

Plutarch also highlights the power of example in the spiritual life of his ideal king Numa, who “passed most of his time, performing sacred functions, or teaching the priests, or engaged in the quiet contemplation of divine things” (9.1). Numa, who “devoted his hours of privacy and leisure . . . to the service of the gods, and the rational contemplation of their nature and power,” (3.6) “called in the gods to aid and assist him” in the spiritual formation of his citizens (7.3), an undertaking he sees as his service to the gods (6:2). In addition to regulating public worship, he deepens the religious motivation of his people, teaching them to not just go through the motions of worship while “occupied with other matters,” but give their full attention to their religious duties, “with their minds prepared for it” (14.2). For Plutarch, Numa's exemplary leadership finds its ultimate expression in the formation of a people with habits like his own (15.1; 20.6–7).

Lycurgus' legislation also proceeds from his own example, but with respect to his simplicity. Lycurgus, who seeks to alleviate the poverty-induced suffering in his city by introducing iron money and redistributing the land, (Plutarch 1914b, *Lycurgus*, 8.1–9.2) wants to “banish insolence and envy and crime and luxury” so that his citizens would be “seeking preeminence through virtue alone” (ibid., 8.2). As the wealthy riot in response to his legislation, one youth attacks him, putting out his eye. He remains with him “sharing his daily life” and eventually “came to know . . . the rigid simplicity of his habits,” becoming his “devoted follower” (11.1–3). Lycurgus instills this same character of simplicity in his citizens so that eventually “luxury . . . died away of itself” (9.4). Through the power of his personal example, Lycurgus “gave, to those who maintain that the much talked of natural disposition to wisdom exists only in theory, an example of an entire city given to the love of wisdom” (31.2).

2.4. *After the Death of an Ideal King*

If an entire population could be moved to virtue in emulation of an ideal leader, how would they fare after the death of such an exemplary figure? That such questions were not alien to first century readers may be seen in Philo's portrait of Moses. Philo highlights similarities between biblical descriptions of Moses and the philosophical ideal of a ruler who can instruct through personal example as a “living law” (Goodenough 1929, p. 179). As the “reasonable and living impersonation of the law” (Philo 1935, *Moses* 1.28.162), Moses legislates by “setting before them the monument of his own life like an original design to

be their beautiful model" (Philo 1939, *Virtues* 9.51) so that "in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us, like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it" (Philo 1935, *Moses* 1.28.158). All is not lost, however, upon Moses' death. Philo notes that Moses

received the divine command that he should exhort his successor and create in him the spirit to undertake the charge of the nation with a high courage, and not to fear the burden of sovereignty. Thus all future rulers would find a law to guide them right by looking to Moses as their archetype and model, and none would grudge to give good advice to their successors, but all would train and school their souls with admonitions and exhortations. For a good man's exhortation can raise the disheartened, lift them on high and establish them superior to occasions and circumstances, and inspire them with a gallant and dauntless spirit. (Philo 1939, *Virtues* 11.70)

For Philo, Moses' influence and the power of *his* example extends even after his death through the appointment of his successor.

Not all ideal leaders effect such lasting change. Plutarch, citing Plato, notes that the rule of Numa was a "divine felicity" (Plutarch 1914d, *Numa*, 20.7), a rare, serendipitous moment in history. Colman writes, "At the pinnacle of political life the loss of the virtuous ruler as the object of emulation may then inevitably precipitate the end of the regime. No educational program nor system of laws can suffice as a stand-in for the presence of the virtuous ruler" (Colman 2015, p. 7). During Numa's reign, people saw the "shining example" of his virtue and therefore also strove to "unite with him in conforming themselves to a blameless and blessed life" (Plutarch 1914d, *Numa*, 20.8). However, after Numa's death, his principles "straightway vanished from the earth with him" (Plutarch 1914c, *Lycurgus and Numa*, 4.6). Numa felt that his teaching should "not be entrusted to the care of lifeless documents" and asked that they also be buried upon his death (Plutarch 1914d, *Numa*, 20.8). As a result, after his death "not even for a little time did the beautiful edifice of justice which he had reared remain standing, because it lacked the cement of education" (Plutarch 1914c, *Lycurgus and Numa*, 4.6). Lycurgus' legacy lasts significantly longer. He does educate the next generation, so that "his legislation remained in force, like a strong and penetrating dye" for five hundred years (ibid., 4.5). Eventually, however, the people departed from his teaching, and "just as soon as they forsook the precepts of Lycurgus, sank from the highest to the lowest place, . . . and were in danger of utter destruction" (4.8). Plutarch criticizes Numa, noting that his "first care" should have been the moral training of youths (4.4). For Plutarch, however, Numa remains the ultimate fulfillment of Plato's ideals for a philosopher king. Plutarch concludes his comparison of Lycurgus and Numa with a note about the power of Numa's example: Numa "changed the whole nature of the state" not through "arms or any violence" but "by his wisdom and justice won the hearts of all the citizens and brought them into harmony" (4.8).

3. The Power of Example in Luke-Acts

In Acts 1:1, Luke describes his first volume as concerning "all that Jesus did and taught." Luke's authorial audience, familiar with cultural portraits of ideal heroes who taught and legislated through the example of their own virtuous lives, would have been conditioned to see Jesus as an ideal leader, as well. Because they understood the formative power of such a moral example, they would likely have come to the reading of Luke's Gospel, not just for the sake of information, but in order to become like Jesus.

3.1. Prayer in Luke-Acts

Jesus' life and teachings on prayer in Luke highlight the effectiveness of Jesus' example as an ideal leader and the priority of prayer for Jesus and the church. Luke, who includes more about Jesus' teachings and habits of prayer than any other Gospel, transforms stories about Jesus' life into narratives about Jesus' example and instruction on prayer (Luke 3:21–22; 6:12–16; 9:28–36; 22:39–46). For the Lukan Jesus and those who emulate him in

Acts, prayer precedes visions and dreams (Luke 3:22; Acts 9:11–12; 10:2, 4, 9, 30–31; 22:17), is connected to revelation and makes known the divine will (Luke 6:12–16; 9:28–36; Acts 1:24; 10:34), provides spiritual strength, deliverance, and healing (Luke 22:39–46; Acts 12:1–17; 16:25–34; 28:8), and invites the empowering Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14; Acts 1:14, 2:2; 8:15; 10:2, 4, 9, 30–31).

Luke emphasizes the unity of Jesus' lifestyle and teaching on prayer, which Luke's authorial audience could recognize as a characteristic of ideal leaders. Like ideal heroes in Luke's literary world (Wright 2020, pp. 143–62), Jesus prays continually (Lk 9:18; 22:39) and before significant events in his life (Lk 3:21–22; 4:14; 6:12; 9:28–29; 22:39), teaching his disciples about the necessity of prayer for spiritual strength (Lk 11:4; 22:39–46), and the need for boldness and perseverance in prayer (Lk 11:5–8; 18:1–8). Luke crafts the setting of the Lord's Prayer to highlight the unity of Jesus' life and teaching on prayer (Lk 11:1–2). Here, the model of Jesus' prayer practice is so powerful that his disciples see its emulation as having the ability to distinguish them as his followers (Green 1997, p. 440). When Jesus prays at the Mount of Olives, he prays for the ability to accomplish God's Kingdom purposes (Lk 22:39–46), just as he has taught disciples to do (Lk 11:2). The inclusio of Luke 22:40 and 46, in which Jesus instructs to the disciples to pray that they may not come into the time of trial, bookends Jesus' example of doing just that. The power of Jesus' example is further emphasized by the contrasting models of Jesus' reception of spiritual strength in response to his prayer and the disciples' faltering immediately after this narrative (Lk 22:54–62).

Acts is carefully designed to show that the early church's prayer practices follow Jesus' lifestyle of prayer and teachings about prayer in Luke's Gospel (Holmås 2011, p. 161). Luke clearly portrays Jesus as "the church's paradigm for prayer" (Crump 1992, p. 241); just as Jesus continually prayed, the early church in Acts is "constantly devoting themselves to prayer" (1:14; 2:42; 6:4). In fact, for both for the apostles (6:4) and the church as a whole (2:42), prayer is *the* distinguishing mark of the believing community (Holmås 2011, pp. 161, 167). Specific echoes of Luke's gospel in Acts illuminate the point that the church has learned to emulate Jesus well. Jesus prays before he chooses his disciples, and the church in Acts prays before choosing Judas' replacement (1:15–26). Just as Jesus' prayer ensured God's will with respect to the specific choice of the disciples in Luke, so in Acts, the choice of Matthias is the Lord's choice (1:26).⁹ Jesus prayed at his crucifixion, committing himself to God (Lk 23:46), and Stephen commits himself in prayer to Jesus at his martyrdom (Acts 7:59).

Because the early church is faithful in their emulation of Jesus' practice and teaching about prayer, they experience the power of the Spirit in response to prayer, as Jesus did. The Holy Spirit falls upon them (2:1–13) after their continual prayers (Acts 1:14) according to Jesus' promise (Luke 11:13), just as the Spirit is poured out upon Jesus after his baptismal prayer (3:22). The Spirit energizes Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:14), and the church's mission: after Peter's speech, three thousand come to faith in a single day (2:41), something so miraculous that it can only be the work of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 4:31, in response to the church's prayers, the Spirit is poured out upon the gathered believers, granting them boldness and power (4:33). In Acts 8:15, following the apostles' prayers, the Spirit is given, an act so remarkable that Simon wants to purchase it (8:18). The prayers of Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10:2–4, 9, 30–31) set the stage for the Spirit to fall upon Cornelius' household.

Luke emphasizes the power of the divine hand in response to prayer, not only to prompt his readers to confident prayer (Luke 11:5–13), but to underscore God's providential direction over church history (Holmås 2011, p. 167). Just as Jesus' prayers drive the mission of God forward in Luke's Gospel, so also in Acts the church's imitation of Jesus' prayer patterns leads the way for the growth of the church. Jesus previously invited his disciples to pray for the Kingdom (Luke 11:2), a prayer that assumes their participation in it (Talbert 2002, p. 135). Prayer in Luke-Acts is the means through which divine will and the mission of the Kingdom is accomplished because through it God "leads the pray-ers in how they may best participate in his plans for salvation history" (Crump 1992, p. 177). In Acts, prayer

prompts healings (3:1; 28:8–9), outpourings of the Holy Spirit (1:14; 8:15), visions (9:11–12; 10:2, 4, 9, 30–31), miraculous rescues (12:1–17; 16:25–34), and even raising the dead (9:40). It leads to boldness in ministry (4:29, 31) and sets the stage for the spread of the gospel. While Paul is praying, he receives divine direction to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17–21). Twice Luke records that Cornelius' prayers have been heard (Acts 10:4; 10:30), before the Holy Spirit falls upon the Gentiles. The theological issue of divine sovereignty ultimately lies behind Luke's prayer emphasis (Crump 1992, p. 176). The narrative of Acts is a story of answered prayer (Holmås 2011, p. 266), pointing to the fact that God, having directed, empowered, and sustained the efforts of the believing community, is the "ultimate causative factor" for the growth of the church (ibid., p. 167).

In Luke-Acts, confident, persistent prayer that prompts the action of God is the only fitting response to crisis and persecution. In Luke, Jesus warned his disciples that prayer was the only means to successfully survive trials (11:4; 22:39–46). In order to carry on Jesus' mission in the difficult days ahead, they must pray continually and not lose heart (18:1). In this, they are imitating Jesus' own example (22:39–46). In sharp contrast to their behavior in Luke (22:45), Jesus' followers in Acts show that they have finally learned how to pray in the midst of persecution. It is noteworthy that believers in Acts ask not for the elimination of persecution, but for God's mission to be accomplished (4:24–31; 7:59–60; 12:5, 12; 16:25. Green 2001, p. 192). Here too, they have imitated Jesus well. Jesus' instruction to pray that they not be led into the time of trial, is not a request to be removed from difficult things, but that they might remain in God's care, receiving boldness and courage as they face the certainty of resistance to God's purposes (Bovon 2013, p. 93). Opposition to God's salvific purposes is to be expected and, within that context, trials are not a sign of God's displeasure (Green 2001, p. 192). Instead, the church finds solidarity with Jesus' suffering (Acts 4:24–30; 7:54–60) and maintains a focus on divine will instead of personal rescue (ibid.).

Acts demonstrates that Jesus' followers have learned a great deal about prayer from Jesus' lifestyle and teachings. They have learned how to pray continually, responding to crisis and persecution through prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:24–31; 7:59–60; 12:5, 12; 16:25 cf. Luke 11:4, 9–13; 18:1–8; 22:39–46). Their prayer habits show a devotion to God and commitment to God's purposes (Acts 1:24; 13:3 cf. Luke 11:2, 13), even in the face of suffering (Acts 7:59–60; 14:19–23; 16:25; 20:36 cf. Luke 22:39–46). While God's graciousness sometimes surprises them (Acts 12:14–16), their prayer habits show an expectancy for God to act (Acts 4:24–31; 9:40; 28:8 cf. Luke 11:5–13). Prayer transforms their theological imagination (Green 2001, p. 201 Acts 9:9–12; 10:2–4, 9–16, 30–31; 11:5; 22:17–21 cf. Luke 11:2, 13), opening the Kingdom to the Gentiles and Samaritans (Acts 8:14–17; 10:2–4, 9, 30–31). While the disciples' experiences of prayer are marked by failure in Luke (22:45–46), in Acts, they are exemplars for the church (ibid., p. 183) and provide a pattern for future generations of believers to follow.

3.2. Simplicity in Luke-Acts

Luke emphasizes the unity of Jesus' life and teachings on simplicity and generosity. In Luke, Jesus tells his disciples to devote themselves to the Kingdom, placing their security solely in God. Jesus, as one who has no place to lay his head (9:58), does the same (6:1; 9:13; 10:4–5). Jesus teaches the necessity of providing for the poor (Lk 12:33; 14:13, 33; 16:9; 19–31; 18:22), and he himself, although he has no money, gives the greatest gift he has, the gift of the Kingdom, without cost (12:32).

In Acts, the early church has quite literally put Jesus' teachings on simplicity into practice. They live communally, selling their possessions for the care of the poor (2:44–45) such that Luke declares that there was "not a needy person among them" (4:34). In this practice of radical generosity, the church becomes an embodiment of Jesus' teachings, demonstrating the "effectiveness of their teacher" (Keener 2012, p. 1023). Of course, for Luke, the reason that they can do this so well is due to the power of the Holy Spirit.

The description of the church in Acts 2:43–47 and 4:32–35 illustrates the degree to which the early church has emulated Jesus' pattern and teaching of simplicity. It contains

a mix of widely held ideals for Greek idealized communities, for friendship, for Jewish sharing of goods, and for family life.¹⁰ The community acts like a group of friends or a large family (Pervo 2009, p. 90), the meeting of one another's needs going beyond mere religious duty. Luke's authorial audience might see the widely repeated maxim, "friends have all things in common" embodied in 2:45, as members of the community sell their possessions for distribution to those in need.¹¹ Plato reflects on a time in early Athens when its members "regarded all they had as the common property of all" (Plato 1929, *Critias*, 110C–D).¹² Iamblichus idealizes a Pythagorean community devoted "to an amicable sharing of their worldly goods" (Guthrie and Fideler 1987, p. 63). There, they "dwelt together in the greatest general concord, estimated and celebrated by their neighbors as among the number of the blessed, who, as was already observed, shared all their possessions" (Guthrie and Fideler 1987, p. 63). In the same way, Luke notes that the church's generous habits also prompt "the goodwill of all the people" (2:47). Plutarch also depicts an ideal community of sharing under the leadership of Lycurgus, as previously indicated, and in the reigns of Agis and Cleomenes, two later kings whom Plutarch notes followed Lycurgus's example (Plutarch 1921, *Agis and Cleomenes*, 9.3). Both Agis and Cleomenes live a life of simplicity and offer their own possessions for the benefit of the community, leading their citizens to follow suit (*ibid.*, 4.1, 3; 9.3; 10.1; 11.1). In Acts 2:43–47 and 4:32–35 also, believers do not claim their possessions for their own exclusive use. Barnabas exemplifies Jesus' teachings on possessions (Lk 12:33; 16:9; 19–31; 18:22) and provides a concrete positive example of Acts 4:34–35 (Hays 2010, p. 211) when he offers the proceeds from the sale of his land for the care of the poor. In so doing, he contributes toward the formation of an ideal community and functions as a model for readers to emulate (*ibid.*, p. 225).

The church in Acts "breaks bread" together, "following the example of Jesus", for whom meals were a regular occasion for ministry (Parsons 2008, p. 49). Because of the grammatical link between "breaking bread" and "fellowship," (2:42) it seems likely that their "daily" common meals were funded by those who could afford to buy food and had houses large enough to host part of the community (Keener 2012, p. 1003). This practice too is an expression of Jesus' teaching to extend table fellowship to those who are unable to repay the favor (Luke 14:12–14). One also might be reminded of Plutarch's hero, Cimon, whose table was "democratic and charitable" and "gave daily sustenance to many" (Plutarch 1914a, *Lucullus and Cimon*, 1.5–6).

Luke provides examples of two benefactors who embody Jesus' teachings on simplicity. Tabitha's generosity prompts the activity of God and moves the narrative forward (Acts 9:36–43). She exhibits "good works" that likely come at great personal expense. The fact that Tabitha is sewing clothing for the widows herself suggests that she shares with them out of her poverty, perhaps like the widow of Luke 21:4 (Parsons 2008, p. 139). Luke's authorial audience would have recognized that acts of charity prompt divine response and favor. Tabitha's sacrificial giving makes her worthy of resurrection, a point echoed in Luke's literary world (Kim 1998, p. 219). For Tobit, "almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin," (12:9) and keeps one from "going into the Darkness" (4:10). Sirach likewise encourages, "Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from every disaster" (29:12). Cornelius' almsgiving, which brings clear benefit to the people, much like the centurion in Luke 7 (Parsons 2008, p. 143), also prompts the activity of God, ultimately resulting in official recognition of the Gentile mission (Kim 1998, p. 221).

In Acts, emulation of Jesus is possible by following the example of those who pattern their lives after Jesus. In Acts 11:27–30 and 12:25, the Gentile converts in Antioch show the same commitment to generosity as we see in Acts 2:43–47 and 4:32–35, now sharing their money with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. While in the general Roman culture, benefaction was typically practiced by the wealthy, here all members of the community share the role of benefactor (Parsons 2008, p. 169). In this way they are acting like their teacher Barnabas (4:36–37) who exhibited radical generosity in imitation of Jesus (Talbert 1997, p. 117). In Acts 20:17–37, Paul encourages the church to embody Jesus' instruction by emulating him as he follows Jesus.¹³ Paul points to his own example of relying on manual

labor to support himself and his companions as a fulfillment of Jesus words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive”,¹⁴ and a model for the church to follow. Here, Luke presents Paul in a manner typical of the way in which the lifestyles of philosophers were set up as models for emulation; Luke’s authorial audience would likely have recognized it as such (Talbert 1997, pp. 188–89). The passage functions as a “call to imitation” (Parsons 2008, p. 295), highlighting the fact that the “Lukan Paul has been faithful to the Lukan Jesus” (Talbert 1997, p. 189).¹⁵

In Luke-Acts, simplicity is a characteristic of Jesus’ followers. Luke instructs the church on the proper use of money through his portrait of Jesus’ exemplary lifestyle and his characterization of those who pattern their lives after him. Paul emulates Jesus’ simplicity so well that he can point to his *own* virtuous example. For Luke, as for his early readers, as we will see below, simplicity itself is enabled by the Spirit (Keener 2012, p. 1027). Luke understands the Pauline concept that we do not labor for our sanctification solely through our own strength (Johnson 1992, p. 14). If this were not the case, Luke’s authorial audience might well wonder about the fate of subsequent generations of Christians who no longer have Jesus to guide them. Jesus has ascended, but believers need not struggle to emulate him through their own efforts alone. Instead, it is the essential work of the Spirit to empower the church to become like Jesus (ibid.).

4. The Power of Example for Luke’s Early Readers

Luke’s early interpreters continue to focus on Jesus as an example for spiritual practice. For Chrysostom, the reference to “all that Jesus did and taught” (Acts 1:1) refers to “His miracles and teaching; and not only so, but implying that His doing was also a teaching” (Chrysostom 1979, *Homiliae in Acta apostolorum* 1, p. 4). Bede similarly observes, “Note also that he says, *which Jesus did and taught from the beginning*—first ‘did’ and then ‘taught,’ because Jesus, establishing the pattern of a good teacher, taught nothing except those things which he did” (Bede 1989, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* 1.1). Chrysostom also points out that Jesus’ example for the Church finds continuity in the life of Paul. After noting “how Christ accredited his words by His deeds,” he says,

Wherefore Paul also said, ‘So as ye have us for an ensample.’ (Philip.iii. 17). For nothing is more frigid than a teacher who shows his philosophy only in words: this is to act the part not of a teacher, but of a hypocrite. Therefore, the Apostles first taught by their conduct, and then by their words; nay rather they had no need of words, when their deeds spoke so loud. (Chrysostom 1979, *Hom. Act. 1*, p. 4)

These early readers of Luke-Acts are quick to observe Luke’s own emphasis in the power of example, both through the unity of Jesus’ life and teachings and in the way that believers in Acts emulate Jesus and become exemplars in their own right.

4.1. Early Receptions of Jesus Example in Prayer in Luke-Acts

Many in the early church wrestled with the idea that Jesus needed to pray. For some of the church Fathers, Jesus does not need to pray to discern God’s will or receive spiritual strength since he himself is fully divine and in need of nothing (Cyril of Alexandria 1983, *Commentarium in Lucam* 70, pp. 298–99). Therefore, Luke’s inclusion of the stories of Jesus at prayer must be primarily for the benefit of the church. Ironically, perhaps, their readings highlight Luke’s own emphasis on Jesus as a model of spirituality.

Jesus spends the night in prayer prior to choosing his disciples (Lk 6:12). Several of the church Fathers highlight Jesus’ exemplary role. Cyprian asks, “He both labored and watched and prayed, how much more ought we to be instant in prayers?” (Cyprian 1995a, *To the Clergy*, 7.5). For Ambrose, Jesus’ night spent in prayer is “An appearance is given to you, a form is prescribed which ye must imitate” (Ambrose 2003, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 5.43). Of course, for some of the Fathers, this text functions as an example for the church because it can be nothing else; Jesus, being fully God, already knows his Father’s will. Cyril of Alexandria warns that an “enemy of truth” might use this text to

suggest that Jesus is not “one with his Father” (Cyril of Alexandria 1983, *Comm. Luke* 23, p. 123). For Cyril, Jesus needs nothing. He asks, “And what did He seek to obtain as/not yet possessing it?” (ibid., p. 124). Cyril continues, emphasizing the power of Jesus example,

All that Christ did was for our edification, and for the benefit of those who believe in Him; and by proposing to us His own conduct as a sort of pattern of the spiritual mode of life, He would make us true worshippers. Let us see, therefore, in the pattern and example provided for us by Christ’s acts. (ibid., p. 123)

In his discussion on the Lord’s prayer in Luke, Cyril of Alexandria again observes that Jesus does not *need* to pray because “certainly He is in need of nothing; for He is *full*” (Cyril of Alexandria 1983, *Comm. Luke* 70, p. 298). Cyril warns that we should not withdraw from the belief that Jesus “ceased not to be God by becoming like unto us, but continued even so to be whatsoever He had been” (ibid., p. 299). Instead, for Cyril, this text also functions as an example for the church. Christ prays “to teach us not to be slack in this matter, but rather to be constant in prayers” (ibid., p. 298). Here too, in highlighting Jesus’ example, Cyril underscores Luke’s emphasis.

One difficult text for the early church is Luke 22:39–46, particularly Jesus’ “not my will, but yours” (Luke 22:42). For Ambrose, this text “should not be explained away.” Nonetheless, he argues that Jesus’ grief was not for himself, but for humanity: “Therefore, He Who had no reason to grieve for Himself grieved for me.” He cries, “Thus, Lord, Thou art pained, not at Thy, but at my wounds, not at Thy Death, but at our infirmity” (Ambrose 2003, *Exp. Luc.* 10.57). For Cyril of Alexandria, Jesus’ prayer at the Mount of Olives in Luke is a “pattern for thy conduct” (Cyril of Alexandria 1983, *Comm. Luke* 147, p. 585); “He might not benefit them by words only, but be Himself an example of what they should do” (ibid., p. 584). Cyril adds, “And let no man of understanding say that He offered these supplications as being in need of strength or help from another . . . but it was that we might hereby learn” (ibid.). While Cyril’s theological motives in emphasizing Jesus’ exemplary role are transparent, here too, he highlights Luke’s own emphasis.

The early readers of Acts note the connection between the church’s faithfulness in prayer and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Chrysostom points out that the church learned their devotion to prayer (Acts 1:14) from Jesus: “For this is a powerful weapon in temptations; and to this they had been trained” (Chrysostom 1979, *Hom. Act.* 3, p. 17). Such emulation in prayer invites the Spirit. Bede observes on 1:14: “With one mind they persevere in prayer who wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit” and “anyone who longs to receive his promised gifts should with perseverance apply himself to prayers found in fraternal charity” (Bede 1989, *Comm. Acts* 1.14). Bede notes that “it is not easy to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit unless the mind is raised from material things by concentration on the things which are above” (ibid., 2.15). The Holy Spirit then provides the necessary empowerment for the apostles’ ministries. For Chrysostom, “no human strength could ever possibly effect such great results” (Chrysostom 1979, *Hom. Act.* 1, p. 5). He adds that just as soldiers must be armed for battle, “so Christ did not suffer these to appear in the field before the descent of the Spirit, that they might not be in a condition to be easily defeated and taken captive by the many” (ibid., p. 6).

Although the Fathers’ desire to defend Jesus’ omnipotence motivates their impulse to affirm Jesus’ role as exemplar, in so doing, they rightly capture Luke’s own emphasis of Jesus as a model of prayer for the church. The early readers of Luke-Acts are quick to observe that the believers in Acts learned their prayer habits from Jesus, and that the Spirit, in response to their prayers, is responsible for the church’s miraculous growth. Finally, Luke’s early readers continue to commend these prayer practices to their own communities.

4.2. Early Receptions of Jesus Example in Simplicity in Luke-Acts

For some in the early church, following Jesus on the path to simplicity is a way of imitating his death. For Tertullian, embracing a lifestyle of simplicity is one of the ways in which the Christian dies to self in order to follow Christ. He reminds his audience, “If you

wish to be the Lord's disciple, it is necessary you 'take your cross, and follow the Lord,'" and then asks, "Faith fears not famine. . . . It has learnt not to respect life; how much more food?" (Tertullian 1973, *De idololatria* 12). For Cyprian also, a lifestyle of simplicity is a form of imitation, not just of Jesus' habits in life, but of his death. Commenting on Luke 12: 33, Cyprian notes that one "becomes perfect and complete who sells all his goods, and distributes them for the use of the poor, and so lays up for himself treasure in heaven" (Cyprian 1995b, *On the Lord's Prayer* 4.20). This person "is able to follow Him, and to imitate the glory of the Lord's passion . . . " and "accompanies his possessions, which before have been sent to God" (ibid.). For many in the early church, a life of radical simplicity is the only appropriate lifestyle for the Christian. With a plea that the "torments of the rich man be a restraint upon us and the example of the poor man an incentive to us," Jerome reminds the church that a simplistic lifestyle is fitting for "the soul of him who naked follows the naked Christ" (Jerome 1966, *Homily* 86, p. 208).

For early interpreters of Acts, the Holy Spirit provides the necessary power for the church to realize Jesus' teachings and instruction on simplicity. Chrysostom notes that the apostles "once so timorous and void of understanding, on the sudden become quite other than they were; men despising wealth, and raised above glory and passion" (Chrysostom 1979, *Hom. Act.* 1, p. 1). He observes, "They are all become angels on a sudden; they saw that spiritual things are common, and no one there has more than another, and they speedily came together to the same thing in common, even to the imparting to all" (Chrysostom 1979, *Hom. Act.* 7, p. 46). Chrysostom notes the dramatic change from the disciples' former attitudes, again pointing to the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit to empower them to live out Jesus' teachings: "This was an angelic commonwealth, not to call anything of theirs their own. Forthwith the root of evils was cut out. By what they did, they showed what they had heard: this was that which he said, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation'" (ibid., p. 47).

For the early readers of Acts, imitation of Jesus roots out the evils of wealth and makes an ideal spiritual community possible. Chrysostom observes, "When riches were done away with, wickedness also disappeared" (ibid., p. 48). For Chrysostom, dispossession is rooted in Jesus' life and teachings: "And on this account Christ too did not allow the parting of riches alone to suffice, but what saith He? 'Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow Me'" (p. 49). This is necessary spiritual protection because "ten thousand roads on all sides lead the lover of money to hell." Arator notes that wealth must be "trodden down" because humanity is "taken captive" by it, from which "every evil springs" (Arator 2020, *Historia Apostolica*, 1.405, 420). In embracing Jesus' teaching and example on possessions through the power of the Spirit, the church creates an ideal community. For Chrysostom, the church's sharing of goods "drew tight the cords of love" (Chrysostom 1979, *Hom. Act.* 11, p. 71) and created a community that was "heaven upon earth" (ibid., p. 74). Arator observes that this community had "no boundary when it comes to owning possessions, when love is mutual" (Arator 2020, *Historia Apostolica* 1.210) and that "their wealth, once shared out, is doubled with a joyous fruitfulness" (ibid., 1.215). For Bede, the church's sharing of goods is "a great token of brotherly love" (Bede 1989, *Comm. Acts* 2.44) and a key characteristic of a community that has "completely left the world behind" and now lives in harmony "as though born from the womb of one and the same mother" (ibid., 4.32).

Many in the early church take Luke's call to simplicity with absolute seriousness. For them, adopting Jesus' patterns of simplicity and following his teachings about generosity and dispossession is a way of imitating Christ's death. Early readers of Luke-Acts rightly see the Spirit's role in enabling believers to create an ideal community of sharing. For them, such an example should continue to inspire the Church to follow Jesus' own habits of simplicity.

5. Conclusions

Luke's intended audience was familiar with the power of example. They knew that ideal leaders had the ability to effect virtue in the lives of their people. Not every virtuous teacher or king had the power to bring about lasting change, however. Numa, whom Plutarch thinks best exemplifies the ancient philosopher king model, was unable to effect change beyond his death (Plutarch 1914c, *Lycurgus and Numa*, 4.6). Luke upholds the ideal for exemplary leadership, pointing to the effectiveness of the unity of Jesus' life and teaching for spiritual instruction. Luke's readers, however, might wonder about the fate of the next generation. After all, in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus' followers have drastically fallen in numbers (1:15) and still do not seem to understand his teachings (1:6). After Pentecost, however, through their own emulation of Jesus, the apostles prompt the church to continue to follow Jesus' lifestyle and teachings of prayer and simplicity. Luke highlights parallels between them and Jesus, setting them up as a means through which the church can continue to emulate Jesus. While the disciples struggled to emulate Jesus effectively in Luke, in Acts, the same Spirit who fueled Jesus' ministry (in response to his prayer) transforms and empowers the church (following their devotion in prayer), enabling them to live out Jesus' teachings and example, an observation also noted by early commentators on Luke-Acts. As a result, an ideal community is birthed of the Spirit, and believers are devoted to God in prayer and to one another in the sharing of goods, continuing to embody Jesus' teaching and example of prayer and simplicity. Like Luke's authorial audience, Luke's early readers do not just read for information, but seek to emulate Jesus. Luke's words are "medicine for an ailing soul" (Bede 1989, preface, p. 4) and "for the building up of the faith of his readers and hearers" (ibid., p. 5). Luke's early readers read for spiritual formation: they continue to uphold the power of Jesus example, extended through the exemplary lives of the apostles, as means for the church's growth in prayer and simplicity, enabled by the Spirit.

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Notes

- ¹ Luke reverses the typical Hellenistic word–deed sequence, highlighting the importance of Jesus' deeds for Luke's audience (Danker 1982, p. 340).
- ² The authorial audience is a hypothetical target audience, to be distinguished from Luke's subsequent, actual reception in the early Church Fathers, who, as we shall see, also read Luke's portrait of Jesus as a model for their own formation in prayer and simplicity.
- ³ Jauss argued that by familiarizing ourselves with literary works that share a similar cultural context to the text being studied, we might better understand the expectations that its first readers might have had (Jauss 1982, p. 28). This hypothetical reconstruction can help bridge the "hermeneutical difference" between ancient and modern ways of understanding the text (Jauss 1970, p. 19) by helping us to read with the kind of questions and expectations that the text may have been written to answer. While we cannot erase the modern presuppositions with which we read, we might "pose questions that the text gave an answer to, and thereby . . . discover how the contemporary reader could have viewed and understood the work" (Jauss 1982, p. 28). Talbert notes, "To read as authorial audience is to attempt to answer the question: If the literary work fell into the hands of an audience that closely matched the author's target audience in terms of knowledge brought to the text, how would they have understood the work? . . . We must reconstruct the conceptual world that was used in the creation and original reception of the text" (Talbert 2003, pp. 15–16). The focus on the authorial audience should not be confused with authorial intent, although we may speak of "Luke's intentionality" in terms of the text's apparent assumptions. We also should not assume a single, homogenous, actual readership. Rather, this essay proposes that we don a particular set of colored glasses through which to explore "the reception of the text by the audience that the author had in mind when he wrote his Gospel" (Parsons 2015, p. 16; 2008, p. 19). We might ask how the authorial audience may have heard Luke "within the web of other texts and contexts familiar to that audience" (Parsons 2015, p. 17). We need not assume a highly specific Lukan community. Instead, Luke wrote for "a general audience of early Christians living in the ancient Mediterranean world" (Parsons 2015, p. 19). We also do not need to assume a direct influence of these texts on the author or readers of Luke-Acts. There is no implication that Luke or his actual readers were consciously aware of specific texts or even that the texts pre-date the writing of Luke. Rather, in the words of Charles Talbert, "these texts help to establish the

most likely conceptual world of the readers, the authorial audience,” and to understand the “broader societal ways of looking at the world” (Talbert 2003, p. 16).

- 4 For a fuller exploration of first and subsequent receptions of Jesus as a model for prayer, simplicity, and humility in the Gospel of Luke, see Wright (2020).
- 5 See examples below.
- 6 Charles Talbert has shown that one of the purposes of ancient biography was “to reveal the character or essence of the individual often with the purpose of affecting the behavior of the reader” (Talbert 1977, p. 17).
- 7 Plato thought that government by a philosopher king was ideal, noting that the “best thing” is that a person who is “wise and of kingly nature” be ruler (Plato 1926, *Laws* 9.875c).
- 8 As Boulet observes, he is “bent on carving his two *Lives* using Plato’s *Republic* as a model” (Boulet 2004, p. 245). Plutarch references Plato over 500 times in his writings (Boulet 2004, p. 245). He also makes a number of implicit and explicit (Plutarch 1914d, *Numa*, 1.3, 4; 8.4, 6–10, 22.4) references to Pythagoras, who created an ideal philosophical community known for their sharing of goods.
- 9 We should not assume that drawing lots indicates that the church failed to hear from God; rather, its use (Luke 1:9; Acts 1:15–17, 67; Acts 2:17–18) indicates “divine superintendence” (Keener 2012, p. 772).
- 10 Talbert notes that pagan and Jewish ideals of friendship, an ideal period in history, or an ideal state in both pagan and Jewish thought are all echoed here, but it is “difficult to reduce the background of Acts 4:32, 24 to any one of these idealizations,” (Talbert 1997).
- 11 Johnson notes the widespread and proverbial use of this phrase (Johnson 1992, p. 59).
- 12 While Plato notes that none of the members of this group owned any private property (Plato 1929, *Critias*, 110C–D), believers in Acts 2:43–47 and 4:32–35 share their goods by voluntarily liquidating their privately owned property as the need arises for the benefit of poor within the community. The parallel in Luke is one of community sharing, not specifically the cessation of all private property or a mandate to complete dispossession as a requirement for joining the community.
- 13 See other parallels in (Talbert 1997, p. 189).
- 14 The saying of Jesus itself, while not recognizable as a specific saying in the canonical Gospels, may function “as a summary of a series of Jesus’ teachings on almsgiving” (Kim 1998, p. 223) and has parallels in 1 Clement 2:1 and the Didache 1.5. It is likely not original to Jesus. Pervo notes that “by closing with a saying of Jesus, Paul affirms all the teachings of Jesus” (Pervo 2009, p. 539). No other sayings of Jesus are quoted in Acts.
- 15 Luke has not dropped his initial emphasis on sharing; these examples show continuity between Jesus’ teachings on possessions, the Jerusalem church’s implementation of those teachings in Acts 2:43–47 and 4:32–35, and the generous activity of believers in the rest of Acts. See (Hays 2010, p. 190).

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