

## **MISSIONS AND COMMUNICATION: A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF JESUS' METHODS OF EVANGELISM IN THE BOOK OF JOHN**

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### **Abstract**

Means and methods of communicating the gospel are very crucial in fulfilling the Great Commission. This paper explores Jesus' methods of communicating the kingdom of God in the Book of John. During His earthly ministry, Jesus employed different methods to reach out to the people of His time. Through the analysis of three texts (where Jesus changed water into wine, in His discussion with Nicodemus and when He washed His disciples' feet), Jesus' methods of communication are explored from a linguistic perspective. The study adopts Systemic Functional Linguistics as its theoretical framework. The finding shows that Jesus made use of the power of language to convince His addressees to believe in Him by employing an imperative mood to command or direct. It is also revealed in the study that cohesion is achieved through grammatical devices such as personal pronouns and lexical devices of repetition of words and phrases, antonyms/contrast and metaphors. Jesus used miracles, discussion and demonstration methods in His communication. It is concluded that missionaries and evangelists should adopt these communication methods and also pay attention to linguistic devices to be employed in their message of evangelism.

**Key words:** communication, method, language, evangelism, linguistic devices

### **1. Introduction**

Christianity is a relational religion. Right from the Garden of Eden, God has been looking for a way of relating with man. He created man in order to have fellowship with them. However, when man sinned against God, sin brought separation between God and man. The effort made by God to reconcile man back to Himself proved abortive until Jesus came to die for mankind thereby break the wall of partition between man and God. It is true that Jesus had come to show the way, but many have not come to him.

Before his ascension to heaven, he commissioned his disciples to make disciples of all nations as stated in the book of Matthew thus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). These verses of the scripture establish the need for the message of salvation to be communicated to all nations of the world. Our savior, after saving us, wants us to ‘go, disciple, baptize and teach’ all nations. All these are necessary in order to achieve the purpose of evangelism. As pointed out by Andrew Kirk evangelism is necessary because: The message of Jesus Christ must be passed on; human beings are more than they earn and consume, and human beings are confused by the dynamic of sin (Kirk 2000).

The above reasons are simplified by E. O. Yusuf and he highlights the following as the reasons why Christians need to be involved in evangelism:

- The lost are perishing.
- Love is constraining us.
- Christ is commanding us.
- The field is calling us.
- Jesus has chosen us.
- Joy is awaiting us. (Yusuf 2008, 3).

For effective evangelism and discipleship, the right method of communication needs to be adopted by Christians in reaching out to their world. Also, language plays a major role in communication, especially in communicating the gospel to people. This will help missionaries/evangelists to establish the gospel in the hearts of their audience. This is well captured by Andries R. Tsehle thus:

The Bible has a lot to say about God communicating His will to humanity in a contextually applicable method. God speaks in the language, forms and categories that are familiar to His audience. He wants to be intelligently understood and holistically obeyed. He wants His Word to find a home in the hearts and minds of His audience ... (Tsehle 2009, 48).

From the above, it is clear that God is interested in the way we make His way known to the people who do not know Him. Timothy C. Tennent even asserts that, “... when God chose to communicate Himself to humanity, He did so within the context and variegated nuances of human language and culture. He revealed Himself to Abraham and spoke through the prophets in specific languages and in ways that were culturally understandable for the intended receptors” (Tennent 2010, 324). Therefore, since the ways (or methods) by which we communicate is important, this study is embarked upon in order to

examine methods of evangelism/missions employed by Jesus in the Bible through a linguistic exploration.

## **2. Communication, Evangelism and Language**

Communication, which is the transmission of a message from one person to another, plays an important role in evangelism. In the words of Andrew Kirk, “evangelism is the communication of Christ to those who do not consider themselves Christians”. It is a call to salvation in order to restore the relationship between God and humanity (Kirk 2000, 60). Similarly, Viggo Sogaard explains evangelism as “the activity involved in bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to people who have not yet heard or do not yet follow Christ” (Sogaard 1993, 1). These definitions show that communication is central to evangelism. In fact, Christianity is a religion of communication. Right from the Garden of Eden, God has been communicating with mankind through creation, through Jesus and through the Holy Spirit. In the word of Peter B. Mweu, communication, Christianly speaking, “is first of all the process of creating and sharing a Christian culture on earth. We do this by using symbols, including words and images, which convey meaning” (Mweu 2001). With regards to communication and evangelism, they are of the opinion that:

... the Church Communication is central to practically everything that we do - work, play, worship - and not only to explicitly persuasive activities. However, contemporary notions of communication are greatly influenced by the practices of advertising and public relations, which have made "communication" and "persuasion" nearly synonymous. The church has increasingly imitated the modern communication theories of modern business, and has adopted its "manipulation" mode of communication because it fits well with the emphasis on the Great Commission (Mweu 2001, 12).

It could be deduced from the above that communication, especially when it is used to persuade people, is vital in evangelism. It plays a significant role in communicating the message of the gospel. Even from the origin of communication, its Latin root word, ‘communicare’ means, "to share" and evangelism is the sharing of the gospel. In communicating the gospel, the way of Jesus must be considered. By the way of Jesus, we mean how Jesus carried out His mission on earth to reach out to people in His own time. Though the way of Jesus may be complicated, missionaries and evangelists need to adopt His way as the standard by which they carry out the task of evangelism and measure their performance.

In presenting the gospel either to non-Christians or nominal Christians, there are certain principles that may be followed. These principles as identified by John T. Seamands (1981, 99) are:

- Be simple in the presentation
- Be positive in the preaching
- Be Christ-centered in the proclamation
- Be Christ-like in demonstrating the gospel
- Be sure to make the message relevant, and
- Have faith in, and depend upon the Holy Spirit.

We are much concerned with first, third and fourth principles. The first principle is reflected in the way the language is used and how the message is communicated. The third and fourth principle must as well be noted. The third principle emphasizes Christ as the message of the gospel. The Bible even makes it clear that the Apostle preached Jesus in proclaiming the gospel during their era as shown in the book of Acts. “And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33). “And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). Therefore, Jesus should be our message. On the fourth principle, the preacher of the gospel should be Christ-like in demonstrating the gospel. Kirk notes that Jesus associates with outsiders by meeting them, eating with them, touching them, healing them, forgiving them and proclaiming the gospel to them (1991, 48).

According to Peter Person, “evangelism is the process of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Person 1985, 53). As noted by George Adeniyi, it involves preaching of the gospel, introducing men to Jesus as savior, leading souls to accept Jesus as his or her personal savior, helping such souls to be having fellowship with God and brethren, establishing souls in the Lord through discipleship, and helping souls to be consecrated (Adeniyi 2013, 5).

Moreover, communication does not only involve the transmission of messages from one person to another, but it also involves exchanging symbols, ideas and information. Irrespective of what is exchanged, communication occurs through language. Mahmud made it clear that “Communication skills are the ability to use language (repressively) and express information (expressively), and these skills include lip-reading, finger spelling, sign language, and interpersonal relations” (Mahmud 2013, 127). This shows that language plays a significant role in communication. Salami, Osoba and Fakoya even describe it as “a means by which humans exchange ideas or pass on information” and “a tool for creating and maintaining interaction” ((2000, 9).

Language plays a key role in evangelism. John OmmaniLuchivia explains that “People respond to what they hear based on the degree of understanding. Response is a result of negotiation between what they hear and perceive to be correct based on their worldview. The new knowledge hopefully expands their worldview and they act in a different manner” (Luchivia 2012, 83). This is an indication that language may help in communicating the gospel effectively. If the message is well understood, people may respond positively and give their lives to Christ. However, if the message is not understood, people may not respond to the gospel.

### **3. Methods/Types of Evangelism**

There are different methods of evangelism, but it must be first said that any method to be adopted for evangelism must serve the biblical mandate to make disciples and be consistent with biblical teaching. John L. Rothra identifies and reviews seven (7) methods of evangelism. These are Lifestyle Evangelism, Servant Evangelism (aka Service Evangelism), Event Evangelism, Neighborhood Evangelism (aka Door-to-Door Evangelism), Street Preaching Evangelism, Tract Evangelism, Conversational Evangelism (aka Relational Evangelism) (Rothra 2014).

Of all the above method, it should be noted that Jesus used almost all except one or two. In this paper, we are concerned with the event and conversational evangelism. It must as well be noted that Jesus lived by example. His life of humility is worthy of emulation. Today’s evangelists need to learn from Jesus’ way of life.

In addition, Adeniyi explains that evangelism can be done in various ways by employing different methods. He further identifies personal evangelism, group/mass evangelism, and film evangelism as the types or methods of evangelism (2013).

### **4. The Book of John and its Structure**

#### **Authorship and Date**

The Book of John is written by John himself. The internal evidence proves this. In John 19:35, it is stated that, “He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth – that you also may believe.” This verse of the scripture is evidence that the book was written by him. Craig S. Keener states that the book was written in the 90s. This date raised an objection to the authorship of the book. Keener explains that, “The argument based on the data objects that the son of Zebedee would have been eighties or nineties when the gospel was written” (Keener 1993, 260). This is arguable because there is a probability that John lived more than ninety. The fact that his contemporary did not live longer does not mean that he might have not lived

longer than them. This is in line with Keener's assertion that, "According to strong tradition, John was one of the few original apostles to escape martyrdom" (Keener 1993, 319).

G. Campbell Morgan supports the fact that John wrote his book by saying that attention must be given to the writer's interpretation if we are to hope to understand this book. He further explains that the writer gives the reason for writing his book (Morgan 1931, 10) as stated in John ... that you may believe. John 20:31. Rogger L. Fredrikson even states it clear that he was convinced that John wrote this Gospel. He gives two reasons for accepting him as the writer. One, John gave natural and intimate details in the whole account and this shows that he lived with Jesus. Two, the early church fathers almost unanimously claim that John the Beloved is the writer (Fredrikson 1985, 19). The fact that John is the writer is supported by William Hendriksen. He explains that:

No one knew Jesus better than he [John] did. He walked with him from day to day, so that he had ample opportunity to observe his character-faults and personality-defects, had there been any. In that most sacred of all nights, the night of the Supper, he reclined on his bosom. He stood by his cross. He even entered his tomb (John 13:25, 19:26, 20:8). Yet, it is this very disciple who, as the author of the Fourth Gospel, does not shrink from proclaiming to all and sundry that this Jesus of history, whom he knew so well, is himself God! (Hendriksen 2007, 4).

It could be concluded from the above, without any doubt, that John is the writer of his book. Also, the name of the book suggests that he is the writer and that the book is named after him. The fact that his contemporary might have not lived long does not mean that he might have not lived longer than them. This is in line with Keener's assertion that, "According to strong tradition, John was one of the few original apostles to escape martyrdom" (Keener 1993, 319).

### **Themes in the Book of John**

Warren Dicharry identifies the following as the themes in the Book of John: The Theme of Light, The Theme of Love and The Theme of Life (Dicharry 1992). It is explained in the Global Study Bible that "The theme of John's Gospel is that Jesus is the long-awaited, promised Messiah and Son of God. By believing in Jesus, people have eternal life." Other keys themes identified are Jesus, The Trinity, Salvation, Eternal Life, and Mission (2012, 1475).

## Purpose

On the purpose of John, Gary Maxey explains that the purpose of the book is “to confirm and secure believers in their faith” (Maxey 2018, 84).

## 5. Theoretical Framework

In this study, Systemic Functional Theory (SFT) is employed. In SFT, language performs three functions; these are ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. These functions are regarded as metafunctions. Ideational functional refers to our experience of the real world which includes the inner world of our consciousness. It also deals with clauses as *representations*. Interpersonal function, on the other hand, deals with how we maintain social relations among people. It is concerned with clauses as *exchanges*. The last kind of metafunctions, textual function deals with how information is shared among speakers. It is concerned with the organization of language as *messages*.

M. A. K. Halliday explains that metafunctions – ideational, interpersonal and textual – are functional categories and they are regarded as semantic. The ideational function refers to the speaker’s experience of the real world including the inner world of his own consciousness. The interpersonal metafunction is concerned with the participants in discourses (Halliday 1994). It has to do with the role of participants and their communicative intention.

Halliday further explains that a clause in its experiential function is a way of representing patterns of experience. Through language, we are able to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around us and inside us. In short, it expresses what is actually going on. It deals with the representation of experience directly while the logical metafunction expresses the abstract logical relations that deal with experience indirectly. The experiential meaning focuses on the grammar of the clause as a representation. This is achieved through the concept of transitivity system, theme system and mood system. We are concerned with the last system. Mood system according to Wale Osisanwo is concerned with the situation of the subject in the clause structure whether a clause is in indicative or imperative mood (Osisanwo 2008, 74).

Moreover, language performs a textual function. This deals with the organization of language as a message and cohesive devices are used to create a text. According to M. A. K. Halliday and R. Hassan, ‘cohesion is what gives a text texture’ (Halliday and Hassan 1976). They further identify grammatical cohesion – reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction – and lexical cohesion which is achieved through reiteration, repetition, synonyms, hyponyms, part-whole relation, and collocation. While grammatical devices are used to show grammatical relations in a text, lexical devices are used to point to

the meaning bonds between sentences in a text to show that the sentences are semantically related (Arema 2004).

### 6. Data Presentation

**Table 1: Analysis of Text 1 – Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12)**

Tag	Expression	Sentence Type	Mood System
1	On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.	Compound	Indicative declarative Ind. declarative
2	Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.	Simple	Ind. declarative
3	When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."	Compound	Ind. declarative Ind. declarative Ind. declarative
4	And Jesus said to her, Woman, what does this have to do with me?	Complex	Ind. declarative Ind. interrogative
5	My hour has not yet come.	Simple	Ind. declarative
6	His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you.	Complex	Ind. declarative Imperative
7	Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.	complex	Ind. declarative
8	Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water."	Complex	Ind. declarative Imperative
9	" And they filled them up to the brim.	simple	Ind. declarative
10	And he said to them, Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.	complex	Ind. declarative Imperative Imperative
11	So they took it.	Simple	Ind. declarative
12	When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative

13	But you have kept the good wine until now.”	simple	Ind. declarative
14	This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory.	compound	Ind. declarative
15	And his disciples believed in him.	simple	Ind. declarative

Table 2: Analysis of Text 2 – Jesus’ Discussion with Nicodemus (John 3:1-15)

Tag	Expression	Sentence Type	Mood System
1	Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.	Simple	Ind. declarative
2	This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
3	Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
4	Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old?	Compound-complex	Interrogative
5	Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?	Compound	Interrogative
6	Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
7	That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
8	Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.	Compound-complex	Imperative
9	The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do	Compound-	Ind.

	not know where it comes from or where it goes.	complex	declarative
10	So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.	complex	Ind. declarative
11	Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”	Compound	Interrogative
12	Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”	Compound	Interrogative
13	Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
14	If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?	Compound-complex	Interrogative
15	No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.	Complex	Ind. declarative
16	And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.	Complex	Ind. declarative

**Table 3: Analysis of Text 3 – Washing of Disciples’ Feet (John 13:3-17)**

Tag	Expression	Sentence Type	Mood System
1	Jesus ... rose from supper.	Simple	Ind. declarative
2	He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
3	Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
4	He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?”	Compound-complex	Interrogative
5	Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative

	afterward you will understand.		
6	Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.	Compound	Imperative directive
7	Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
8	Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!	Compound	Ind. declarative
9	Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
10	And you are clean, but not every one of you.	Compound (ellipsis)	Ind. declarative
11	For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
12	When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you?	Compound-complex	Interrogative
13	You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.	compound	Ind. declarative
14	If <b>I then, your Lord and Teacher</b> , have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.	complex	Ind. declarative
15	For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
16	Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.	Compound-complex	Ind. declarative
17	If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.	complex	Ind. declarative

In Table 1, there are fifteen (15) sentences all in Text 1. There are six (6) simple, five (5) complex, three (3) compound and one (1) compound-complex sentence(s). Of all these, only five (5) clauses are not declarative clauses. They are imperative and interrogative sentences. Others are declaratives.

In Table 2, we found sixteen (16) sentences and there are nine (9) compound-complex sentences, three (3) complex sentences, three (3) compound sentences and one (1) Simple sentence(s). Of all, there are ten (10) declarative sentences while six (6) non-declarative – one (1) imperative and five (5) interrogatives.

In Table 3, there are ten (10) compound-complex sentences, four (4) compound sentences, and two (2) complex sentences, one (1) Simple sentence. There are only three (3) sentences that are not declarative, one (1) directive and two (2) interrogative sentences.

## **7. Analysis and Discussion of Jesus' Methods of Communication**

### **Miracle Method**

The first miracle performed by Jesus is recorded in John 2 when He changed water to wine. This is a method used by Jesus to pass across His message to His disciples and people of His days. In the preceding chapter, Jesus had prepared Nathanael for this. When Jesus told Nathanael that He saw him under the fig tree, John recorded it that "Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, you are the son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49). In response, Jesus made it clear to him (and possibly to other disciples) that he would see greater things. This may be the reason why the writer reported that, "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him" (John 2:11).

This shows that miracles play a significant role in preaching the gospel. This fact may be supported by looking at the grammatical phrase "the first of his signs" in verse 11. This is a noun phrase which has 'first' as its headword. This word means, 'number one,' 'pioneer' or originator to indicate that there is no one before it. The use of the article 'the' which preceded it, shows that it refers to the miracle performed in Cana. This is in line with Betty Kirkpatrick who is of the opinion that the definite article (the) "can be used in a sentence to refer back to a person or thing that has already been mentioned or identified". She further explains that article the "can also be used to identify someone or something as the only one of its kind" (Kirkpatrick 2010, 141).

Still on the same phrase, 'of his signs' is a prepositional phrase that functions as a qualifier of the headword (first). It must be noted here that the noun 'signs' is a plural form of 'sign'. This is an indication that Jesus performed more than one miracle. Jesus Himself even testifies to this that "So Jesus said to him unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe" (John 4:48). The fact that we are talking about Jesus' miracle can be established through the use of the possessive determiner (his) which refers to Jesus in the context of its usage. It is used cataphorically to point forward to 'Jesus' in the same sentence.

It could be deduced from this miracle that Jesus is Messiah and proved Himself as the creator who has power over everything both human and non-human. This is reflected in His use of language in verses 7 and 8 where He used imperative sentences to prove His lordship. These clauses – 'Fill the jars with water,' 'Now draw some out' and 'Take it to the master of the feast' – are commands used by

Him to direct the servants to do His bidding. These assignments carried out by the servants resulted in a miracle. Miracle is defined by Jones O. Kalu as “an act that could not be brought about primarily by any human or natural means” (Kalu 2018, 92). This definition testifies to the divine acts of Jesus. It could be said that Jesus used imperative sentences in Text 1 to show his authority over nature. He has the power to change things.

### **Discussion Method**

Jesus used the discussion method to communicate with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman in the book of John chapters 3 and 4 respectively. In John 3, Nicodemus came to Jesus in the night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” (v.2). Jesus quickly made use of the opportunity to let Nicodemus know that, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (v.3).

From verse 1 to 6, the writer used grammatical words – one and he – to hide the identity of the person that needs to be born again. However, in verse 7, Jesus shifted person from general pronoun and third person pronoun to the second person pronoun (you). Jesus said, “Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born again”. Here, Jesus made use of the power of language to let His interlocutor know that it is imperative for him to be born again. It is an imperative clause with a subject. It is used as a command. Other types of imperative mood employed in the book of John are:

1. Give me a drink. (John 4:7)
2. Go, call your husband, and come here. (John 4:16)
3. Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. (John 4:21)

All the sentences above are imperative sentences. They are without subjects, but from the context of their usage, we may know who is to carry out the action mentioned in the proposition. For instance, the performers of sentences 1 and 2 above can be identified in John 4:7, John 4:16 thus:

A woman from Samaria came to draw water.  
Jesus said to her, Give me a drink... Jesus  
said to her, Go, call your husband, and come  
here.

This passage shows that the performer is the Samaritan woman. She was the one to give Jesus water to drink. ‘Her’ as an objective pronoun is used anaphorically to point backward to ‘a woman’ from Samaria who came to fetch water. She was the one talking to by Jesus to go and call her husband. The

possessive determiner 'your' indicates that Jesus was talking about the woman's husband.

On the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus, in order to establish his point, Jesus made reference to the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament (Numbers 21:8-9). "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 4:14-15).

### **Demonstration Method**

Apart from miracle and discussion methods employed by Jesus in communicating His message in the Book of John, He also used demonstration method. In John 13, Jesus demonstrated to His disciples the need for them to serve others. The life of servanthood demonstrated by Jesus may be explained grammatically by examining the clause structure of this text. All the clauses except three (3) are indicative declaratives. This shows that Jesus just made statements and showed His disciples how to live and behave. They were to serve others as they were served by Jesus. This is buttressed by the conditional statement made by him, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). The use of a conditional sentence in this text is an indication that the condition for the disciples to serve others is contained in the fact Jesus did it. If Jesus could serve them, they could serve others.

Moreover, the use of 'also' an additive conjunction which is used as an intra sentence connector is used to join the second clause to the first one. It is used to give additional information on the previous clause. It means 'in addition', 'too' or 'and'. Its semantic implication is that the disciples would not be the first to serve others; Jesus had served others before them and they needed to emulate Him and walk in His footsteps.

Regarding three statements that are not indicative declaratives, two of them were used by Peter while Jesus employed only one. These are:

- He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet? (Interrogative)
- Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet. (Imperative)
- When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? (Interrogative)

From the introductory clauses of the first two sentences, we know that Peter was the speaker. In the first sentence, he used the interrogative sentence by asking Jesus a question regarding what he was doing – washing disciples' feet. Without understanding what Jesus was doing, he told Jesus not to wash his feet. This kind of sentence is referred to as a command with a subject by Bolaji Aremo. According to him, this kind of imperative sentence "is often used when one is angry with the addressee(s)" (Aremo 2000, 363). This may be true of this text. Jesus may be 'angry' (or surprise preferably) that Jesus wanted to wash his feet.

Since sentences that are used as commands are used to instruct someone to do or not to do something, it could be deduced from the context of the above sentence that Peter had no authority to instruct his Master (Jesus) not to wash his feet. This may be buttressed by what Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:16). By implication, Jesus is the Master (as pointed out in verse 13 – "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am") and His disciples are not greater than Him. It may also be said that Jesus was talking directly to Peter in verse 16 because of the two phrases used there. 'A servant or a messenger' is singular, and not plural (servants or messengers) to refer to all disciples.

### 8. Cohesive Devices

Cohesive devices are the devices that are used to hold a text together. In the texts analysed, both grammatical and lexical cohesion are used to bind the texts together.

**Lexical devices:** These are achieved in the texts through:

1. Repetition of words: Jesus, Lord, Nicodemus, Peter, Spirit, wedding, mother, born, believe, wash, feet and truly.
2. Synonyms: Rabbi/teacher
3. Antonyms: master/servant, teacher/disciple, good wine/poor wine, earthly/heavenly, ascended/descended,

**Grammatical Devices:** Grammatical devices found in the text are: also, now, and, so, when

Examples Found in the Selected Texts

1. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.
2. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew) ...
3. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God..."

4. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.
5. And his disciples believed in him.

In sentence 1, 'also' is used as an inter-sentence connection to link the previous sentence ("On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there") and to give additional information. 'And' in Sentence 2 also performs the same function of giving additional information. It must, however, be noted that 'and' here is used as an intra sentence connection although both have the same semantic implication while 'and' in Sentence 5 is used as inter-sentence connection. It implies that it gives additional information on the previous sentence "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory". It is possible that if Jesus did not perform the miracle, the disciples may not believe Him then (and their day of salvation might have been postponed). In Sentence 2, 'when' is used to show the time of action of tasting by the master of the feast and 'now' indicates that the wine is no more water. It is a temporal conjunction that helps us to understand the change that had occurred in the text.

In Sentence 3, it could be said that 'Rabbi' and 'teacher' are synonyms. It is used to build the text in order to avoid repetition of the same word. The use of contrastive words – servant/master – in Sentences 2 and 4 should be noted. These words are antonyms that are used to build the text. The word 'truly' is repeated in Sentence 4. This word appears several times in the book of John for emphasis sake. Jesus used it to show to His interlocutors that He meant what He said. Another repetition in our text is 'believe' as shown in Sentence 5. This word is central to the book of John because the book is even written for people to believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

## **9. Conclusion**

It is established that sharing of the gospel cannot be effective if the target people do not understand the message, and for the message to be understood, the right method must be used. During His earthly ministry, Jesus used many methods to communicate. As people called and commissioned by him to continue the communication process he began, we too must employ them to effectively communicate the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Through a linguistic exploration of three texts taken from the Book of John chapters 2, 3 and 13, it was found that Jesus used miracle method, discussion method and demonstration method in communicating His message to His audience.

It was also discovered that Jesus made use of the power of language by employing imperative sentences to command, direct or instruct His audience to carry out a specific assignment. This is evidenced in His communication with

the servant to fetch water, to draw some out and to take to the master of the ceremony when performing a miracle of changing water to wine. Through the use of language as well, we were able to show that this miracle is one of the many performed by him in the Bible. The power of language was also demonstrated by Jesus when discussing with Nicodemus. Jesus shifted person and confronted him to be born again, and also to emphasis His point. This shows frankness in His speech.

Through the choice of words such as master, servant, greater and so on, Jesus proved that He is the Master. The repetition of lexical items is to show the semantic relationship among the sentences in these texts. Likewise, the grammatical device of conjunctions is used to build the texts. Basically, many of conjunctions employed are used to give additional information either on the previous clause, sentence or paragraph. It is important to mention the use of contrast in our data. For instance, 'good' and 'poor' wine are used to show the difference between the items compared. All these point to the important role of language in communicating the gospel.

Therefore, it is concluded that missionaries and evangelists should adopt these communication methods and also pay attention to linguistic structure and devices employed in their message of evangelism. However, it should be stressed here that Jesus did not go to the social gathering – Wedding at Cana – to perform a miracle. He went there as a guest to honour the invitation.

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