

The Original Transformational Leader:  
An Inner Texture Analysis of Mark 1:16-20

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Abstract

This paper explores the transformational leadership style of Jesus Christ from the text of Mark 1:16-20. Through an inner texture analysis of the selected passage, it is revealed that Christ exhibits all of four factors of transformational leadership: individual consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and inspirational leadership. This paper also demonstrates how Christ's example provides a useful example for aspiring leaders to model.

Much has been written about Jesus as the penultimate model of leadership (Blanchard & Hodges, 2008). Much of the literature has even focused on his demonstration of transformational leadership. However, this literature is often focused on the systems and culture he was responsible for changing (McCabe, 2008). Less writing exists regarding the individual transformation he instilled in his followers as he lead and disciplined them. This paper examines the first of those transformations by using the inner-textural method from Robbins' (1996) socio-rhetorical model of exegesis to examine Mark 1:16-20. The inner texture method of analysis considers the placement of words in the text to derive meaning. The data analysis shows that Jesus truly does act as a transformational leader, even in the "hiring" phase of his ministry. Burns (1978) first presented the concept of transformational leadership in his research on political leaders. Bass (1985) then developed this concept into a formal theory of transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio (1994) later outlined four elements of transformational leadership, commonly called the "Four I's." These are a) individual consideration, b) idealized influence, c) intellectual stimulation and d) inspirational leadership. Results of the data analysis reveal Jesus acting in each of these elements throughout the selected text. The data also provide a useful model for aspiring leaders to follow.

#### Inner Texture Analysis

Inner Texture analysis, one of the five methods of socio-rhetorical criticism, focuses on the language of the text itself (Robbins, 1994). This method of analysis examines six types of inner texture: repetitive, progressive, narrational, opening-middle-closing, argumentative and sensory-aesthetic texture. Examining these varied textures within the same text allows the analyst to gain an intimate knowledge of words, word patterns, voices, structures, literary

devices and modes in the text, which provide context for the meaning and meaning-effects knitted within the text.

*Repetitive Texture and Pattern*

Repetitive texture concerns itself with the words and phrases that occur more than once in the selected text (Robbins, 1994). The repetitive texture of a selected text provides initial glimpses into rhetorical movements within the discourse. The data collected from Mark 1:16-20 (NRSV) are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Progression of People and Topics in Mark 1:16-20.**

Verse	Word									
16	Jesus	Simon	Andrew	net	Fisherman					
	He	His	they							
		they								
17	Jesus	them	them		Fish	said	Follow			
	Me	their	their							
18	Him	they	they	nets			Followed			
19	He			nets				James	Zebedee	John
								their		their
20	He					called	followed	them	Zebedee	them
	Him							they		they
								their		their
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

The table shows that the text’s main focus is on Jesus’ calling of his first four disciples (Simon Peter and Andrew first, James and John second). In the selected text, there are eight references to Jesus and two references to his calling or saying something to the disciples. Simon Peter and Andrew are referenced six and five times, respectively. James and John are both referenced five times. The word “follow” occurs three times in the text. Also of importance is the concept that the disciples are fishermen, shown in two references to fisherman or fish and three references to nets. Lastly, Zebedee, the father of James and John, appears twice in the text.

*Progressive Texture and Pattern*

Progressive texture emerges out of repetition and focuses itself on the sequences of words and phrases throughout the text (Robbins, 1994). There is one obvious repetition that occurs twice in the selected text: Jesus calls, disciples follow. This repetition reveals two scenes within the text. First, Jesus calls Simon Peter and Andrew, promising that if they follow they will fish for people, and they immediately follow (Mark 1:17). Second, he calls James and John and they follow immediately too (Mark 1:20). This concept that Jesus merely called out “Follow Me” and the disciples dropped everything to follow him reveals that there is something about what he said or how he said it that compelled them to follow immediately.

*Narrational Texture and Pattern*

Narrational texture considers the voice or voices through which the words of the text speak (Robbins, 1994). Often narrational texture reveals a pattern that moves the discourse forward. Except for the direct speech in Mark 1:17, the text is entirely narrational. This creates a pattern of the disciples’ actions, Jesus’ speech and drastic action in response by the disciples. This pattern is found in both scenes. It is interesting to note that in the second scene, Jesus’ speech is not quoted. It is tempting to assume that this is because what he said was so similar to the first quotation it was not worth quoting again. This assumption gives even more importance to the first, and only, speech in the text.

The data from this method of analysis conform to one of Bass and Avolio’s (1994) four elements of transformational leadership: individual consideration. Individual consideration refers to the transformational leader’s ability to give attention to the individual needs and backgrounds of the followers. The leader shows empathy and support, but also challenges followers. Jesus demonstrates this in the text by speaking the language of the disciples. They were fishermen, and

he refers to them as such. However, Jesus goes a step further and tells them that he can help them achieve a higher goal: to fish for people (Mark 1:17). Aspiring leaders need to speak to their followers in language they can understand, but provide goals that are both comprehensible and challenging.

*Opening-Middle-Closing Texture and Pattern*

Opening-Middle-Closing texture resides in the beginning, middle and concluding sections of the discourse (Robbins, 1994). The selected text displays this pattern. We see the opening as Jesus passes along the Sea of Galilee (Mark 1:16). In the middle, Jesus is engaged in the pattern of calling to the disciples and the disciples following (Mark 1:17-20). The text concludes with Zebedee, alone on the boat with his hired men, his sons having left him to follow Jesus (Mark 1:20).

The results from this type of analysis conform to a second of the four elements of transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Intellectual stimulation refers to leaders' capability to stimulate curiosity and creativity in their followers. Transformational leaders challenge normal beliefs and views of a group. This concept is similar to Kouzes and Posner's (1996) "Challenge the Process" principle. Kouzes and Posner argued that leaders seek out ways to innovate and that innovation often comes from unexpected sources, such as the front line of the organization. Jesus demonstrates this by calling his disciples from a group of fisherman. The process of becoming a rabbi involves laborious study and testing (Bell, 2005). If young students fail in the series of study and testing, they are encouraged to go home and learn the family trade, as James and John were likely doing with their father Zebedee. Jesus does not go to the temple to select his potential new hires from the top of the pool. Instead, he walks by the Sea of Galilee and selects young boys, who had possibly tried and failed to be

rabbis and were now learning to be fishermen (Mark 1:16). In doing so, he challenges the views of the community, and potentially even the disciples themselves, by proclaiming these as his new pupils. Aspiring leaders need to find ways to encourage followers to think beyond preconceived notions. Asking, “what if?” is a good start, such as “what if a group of fisherman and tax collectors became disciples of a rabbi? How would that change the way the rabbi’s message spread?”

### *Argumentative Texture and Pattern*

Argumentative texture and pattern examines multiple kinds of inner reasoning in the text (Robbins, 1996). This reasoning, either logical or qualitative, persuades the reader to think and act a certain way. This text displays a qualitative pattern, in which the quality of the images and descriptions convinces the reader to accept the portrayal as true. In this text, we see Jesus calling out to his disciples saying, “Follow Me” and they immediately follow. The scenes in this text are very familiar to the dialogue a rabbi would have with his new disciple (Bell, 2005). After testing a young student and judging him worthy, the rabbi would say, “Come follow me.” The Greek word used to describe the disciples leaving everything to follow Jesus is “*Akoloutheo*,” which means, “to join one as a disciple.” The qualitative argument in this text establishes roles for the characters. It establishes Jesus as a rabbi, and Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John as new disciples of the rabbi.

This argument also shows Jesus demonstrating the presence of idealized influence, the third element of transformational leadership. Idealized influence refers to the leader’s charismatic traits and the influence they have on followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Followers view the leader as a role model and seek to model him in order to tap their full potential. Jesus is seen as a rabbi, a teacher respected in his community, whom young boys studied hard to be

allowed to follow. Aspiring leaders need to remember that, if they are to become truly transformational leaders, they will serve as role models and as such, need to demonstrate the qualities they desire from followers.

### *Sensory-Aesthetic Texture and Pattern*

The sensory-aesthetic pattern develops from the range of senses the text embodies or evokes and manner with which it does so (Robbins, 1996). Often these sensory-aesthetic patterns can be classified into three metaphorical “body zones.” These are the zone of emotion-fused thought, the zone of self-expressive speech and the zone of purposeful action. Table 2 shows the data for this type of analysis.

**Table 2: Key Phrases and Sensory-Aesthetic Patterns in Mark 1:16-20**

Verse	Phrase	Emotion-Fused Thought	Self-Expressive Speech	Purposeful Action
16	a) Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee...			X
	b) ...he saw...	X		
	c) ...casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen			X
17	a) And Jesus said to them...		X	
	b) ... ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people’...			X
18	a) And immediately they left their nets...			X
	b) ...and followed him.			X
19	a) As he went a little farther, he saw...	X		X
	b) ...who were in their boat mending the nets.			X
20	a) Immediately he called them...		X	
	b) they left their father Zebedee...			X
	c) ...and followed him.			X

In this discourse, we see Jesus as the only character who presents any emotion-fused thoughts (in both instances this is through his seeing the disciples) or self-expressive speech (in both instances this is shown in his calling to the disciples). The disciples only engage in purposeful action. This tempts the analyst to assume that Jesus is seeing and expressing what he saw in the disciples. The Greek word used for “saw” is “*Harao*,” which means “to see with the



mind, to perceive.” The disciples are responding to Jesus’ expression of what he sees in them with purposeful action.

These assumptions conform to the fourth element of transformation leadership: inspirational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Inspirational leadership refers to the leader’s capacity to spread a vision that is inspiring to followers. Some writers have suggested that as Jesus calls to the disciples as a rabbi would, immediately the vision of themselves as disciples of a rabbi re-emerges (Bell, 2005). This vision is so compelling, that they leave everything, even their father, to follow Jesus. Aspiring leaders need to recognize the importance of vision in their followers. Jesus demonstrates that vision does not refer to a grand, over-arching vision of the leader or organization, but leaders need to provide followers with a vision of how they fit into the mission. Indeed, Jesus does not tell them he will go on to die for the sins of the world, instead, he gives the disciples a vision of how they will impact the world around them.

#### Discussion

The fact that the disciples cease everything and follow Jesus after his simple call raises questions about what he said or how he said it that compelled them to follow. Through an inner texture analysis of the passage, we see elements of transformational leadership already at work in Jesus’ ministry, even as he makes the first “hires” of his new organization. After establishing himself as a rabbi, a respected teacher, Jesus challenged the standard norms and selected fisherman and tax collectors as his disciples. Beyond that, he demonstrated how to provide followers with a compelling vision, not of what he, as leader, would accomplish, but rather a vision of what the disciples would accomplish. Aspiring leaders would be wise to consider the lessons Jesus gives us about transformational leadership when interacting with their followers. Leaders ought to consider that they are role models for their followers, from the moment they

chose to follow. In addition, leaders need to encourage their followers to think in ways they had not before, even if it means challenging established norms. Lastly, leaders need to provide a vision to their followers, one that considers individuals and what they will go on to accomplish if they follow.

### Conclusion

Two thousand years ago, Jesus called his disciples to follow him and in doing so, demonstrated transformational leadership in all its elements. While writers tend to focus on later tales from Jesus' ministry, through an inner texture analysis of Mark 1:16-20, a picture of Jesus as transformational leader begins to develop. Jesus demonstrates individual consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and inspirational leadership. This picture is useful to the aspiring leaders of today as a model for how leaders, even in a simple act such as recruiting followers, can demonstrate the fullness of transformational leadership.

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