The Leadership of an Empowering Savior:

An Intertexture Analysis of Matthew 16:13-20

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Abstract

This paper explores the leadership nature of Jesus Christ from the text of Matthew 16:13-20. Through an intertexture analysis of the selected passage, it is revealed that Christ exhibits three of the *Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* developed by Kouzes and Posner: Inspire a Shared Vision, Enable Others to Act and Challenge the Process. This paper also provides insight on how leaders can apply the lessons from Jesus' example.

In Matthew (16:13-20, NRSV), Jesus' disciple Simon Peter proclaims him as the Messiah and Jesus proclaims Peter as the rock upon which his church will be built. Jesus then transfers his authority to bind and loose to his disciples. Portions of this text have been used to explain everything from the absolute authority of the Catholic tradition (Ray, 1999) to how to exorcise demons (Foster, 1998). However, this scripture is seldom studied in the context of leadership. This text provides a demonstration of the leadership nature of Jesus as he discusses and transfers this authority to his disciples. This paper examines that selection of text using the intertexture method from Robbins' social-rhetorical model of exegesis (Robbins, 1996). The intertexture method considers the text in relation to the phenomena that lie outside of the text. The data analysis reveals similarities between the nature of Jesus' leadership and the *Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* developed by Kouzes and Posner (2007). These five practices are a) Model the Way, b) Inspire a Shared Vision, c) Challenge the Process, d) Enable Others to Act and e) Encourage the Heart. Results from the data analysis reveal that Jesus demonstrates several of these practices in his ministry as he develops his disciples into eventual leaders. This revelation adds to the validity of Kouzes and Posner's *Five Practices* as a model for aspiring leaders to follow.

<div align="center">Intertexture Analysis</div>

Intertexture analysis, one of the five methods of socio-rhetorical criticism, focuses on the relationship of the text within the phenomena of the world outside of it (Robbins, 1996). This method of analysis examines four types of intertexture: historical, oral-scribal, cultural, and social. Examining these varied textures places the text in proper context and allows the examiner to view the text's references and representations of the world in which is was produced.

Historical Intertexture

Historical intertexture concerns the specific details around the events depicted in the text (Robbins, 1996). This method of analysis examines varying natures of texts and seeks to confirm the historical events by comparing the text to other sources. Other tellings of the events depicted in the selected text appear in the accounts of Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-21. Comparison of these accounts with the selected text reveals that all of the accounts appear to be dependent on one another or that all of the information comes from one common source. This occurs often in the synoptic gospels because it is believed that Mark's account was written first, with Matthew's elaborating on Mark and Luke's author utilizing both these and other sources to compile his account (DeSilva, 2004). It is interesting to note that the selected text elaborates prolifically about the event compared to the other synoptic gospels. Possible reasons for this are discussed in the section below.

Oral-Scribal Intertexture

Oral-scribal intertexture explores a text's use of any other text outside of itself (Robbins, 1996). Within the selected text there is evidence of thematic elaboration, as discussed above. The Gospel of Matthew is most often considered an expansion of Mark's account (DeSilva, 2004). Matthew retains the outline of Mark's account but presents Jesus primarily as an interpreter of Torah, teaching his disciples the way that pleases God. The selected text is also found in Mark, however the account is far shorter. Jesus asks his disciples who others say he is and who the disciples believe he is. Peter responds that he is the Messiah, but Jesus orders the disciples not to tell anyone (Mark 8:27-30). Matthew's account adds a proclamation of Peter as the rock of a new church that Christ will build and a transfer of interpretative authority from Jesus to the disciples. This difference between Mark and Matthew aids the argument by Matthew that Jesus intended to build a movement separate from the parent religion of Judaism (DeSilva, 2004).

Within leadership context, Matthew's elaboration of Mark reveals a Jesus who shares his vision with the disciples of them as leaders of a new movement, a church that will stand against the "gates of Hades" (Matthew 16:18). This serves as an example of what Kouzes and Posner (2007) describe as the practice "Inspire a Shared Vision." Leaders passionately share an ideal image of the organization or movement in order to enlist or reinvigorate followers. This practice is also seen in the "inspirational motivation" factor of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Leaders can apply the lesson from the text's demonstration by creating an inspiring vision for their movement or organization. This vision must include the followers and be compelling enough to motivate them to work toward the achievement of the vision.

Cultural Intertexture

Cultural intertexture is found in words or phrases that interact with the traditions, patterns or norms of a culture (Robbins, 1996). In the selected text, there is a reference to the Jewish customs surrounding the interpretation of Torah. Jesus tells the disciples that whatever they bind will be bound in heaven and whatever they loose will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). *Binding* and *loosing* are references to how rabbis of the culture interpreted Torah (DeSilva, 2004). When an act was judged by interpretation of Torah to be forbidden, it was said to be bound. Likewise, when an act was judged to be permissible, it was said to be loosed. Examples of this are seen in the rhetoric in the Mishnah, in everything from discussions on drinking milk (*Nedarim* 6:5-7) to eating gourds (*Nedarim* 7:1). The disciples, raised in the culture of Judaism, would have understood this reference immediately, and its implication when said by Jesus: Jesus was giving them authority to interpret Torah. In the new church that Jesus would use them to lead, they would have the authority to decide what was permissible and what was forbidden based on their interpretation of Torah and Jesus' teachings.

Within leadership context, Jesus' transfer of interpretative authority from himself to the disciples serves as a picture of how to "Enable Others to Act," another of Kouzes and Posner's (2007) five practices. Leaders seek to actively involve followers, simultaneously challenging them to complete lofty acts and building their self-efficacy. This practice shares similar aspects to the "individual consideration" factor of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Jesus is enabling his disciples to act as interpreters of Torah, while at the same time strengthening them by letting them know he will support their interpretations after he has left them. Leaders can apply the lessons from this revelation by working to empower their followers while continuously challenging them to loftier acts in order to prepare them for eventual leadership.

Social Intertexture

Social Intertexture refers to the social knowledge shared by members of the culture the text originated in (Robbins, 1996). Social knowledge includes social roles, identities, institutions, codes and relationships. As discussed above, the selected text contains a depiction of Jesus transferring authority to the disciples for interpreting scripture. In doing so, Jesus is transferring a new social role to the disciples. The concept of keys suggests who had the authority in a household. In Isaiah, it is prophesied that Eliakim will be given the key to the house of David, referring to his being granted authority as governor under King Hezekiah (Isaiah 22:15-25). Josephus (75) reveals that the Pharisees were the socially accepted interpreters of Torah. These Pharisees had the authority to decide what was permitted by Torah and were said to have the *keys to the kingdom* (Bell, 2005). The Pharisees' social role in the community was to interpret. In the selected text, Matthew is depicting that Jesus had this authority and that he gave it to the disciples.

Within a leadership context, this serves as an example of the practice of "Enable Others to Act," as discussed above (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Additionally, it is an example of "Challenge the Process," another of the five practices. Leaders look for ways to challenge the accepted status quo in order to find innovative ways to further the organization or movement. Jesus does this by challenging the Pharisees' social role as interpreters and asserting that his disciples have the authority to interpret. This practice is similar to the "intellectual stimulation" factor of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Leaders can apply the lesson of this depiction by continuing to experiment and take risks in order to further their cause. In addition, leaders must understand that with risk taking comes occasional failure, so leaders must accept failures (from themselves and followers) with the understanding that failures are learning opportunities.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

The discourse in Matthew 16:13-20 calls attention to the picture Matthew paints of Jesus and the leadership lessons which can be learned. Through an intertexture analysis of the text, the event depicts Jesus demonstrating three of the *Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* developed by Kouzes and Posner (2007). Jesus proclaims himself as the Messiah to his followers and transfers authority over the new church he is founding and over interpretation of Torah. Jesus exhibits "Inspire a Shared Vision," "Enable Others to Act," and "Challenge the Process." Aspiring leaders can follow the example of Jesus by passionately sharing their ideal image of the organization or movement so as to recruit or reinvigorate followers. While leading, leaders can grow their followers by challenging the status quo and encouraging them to take risks, while understanding inevitable disappointment as learning opportunities. Once developed, leaders can

empower their followers and prepare them for leadership by continuously challenging them to achieve loftier objectives.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

While often confused or misused by writers to justify various practices, the depiction of Jesus found in Matthew 16:13-20 serves as an example of exemplary leadership. Jesus demonstrates several of the *Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* by inspiring a shared vision, enabling his disciples to act and challenging the process. This depiction provides a useful model of these practices that leaders and aspiring leaders can emulate while recruiting, developing and empowering followers.

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