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Throwing Aside the Cloak of Darkness for the Light of the World: A Social and Cultural Texture Analysis of Mark 10:46-52

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In Mark 10:46-52, the Destitute Disciple Narrative (DDN), blind beggar Bartimaeus, who lived in darkness, boldly disregarded the demands for silence from Christ's disciples and loudly begged for mercy. The divine Christ modeled a new form of interventional transformational leadership by teaching His followers to remain attentive to serving those in need even as they focused on their vision and journey. As Christ called him forward, Bartimaeus demonstrated unconditional faith in the Lord's intervention by throwing aside his blind beggar's protective cloak in exchange for a transformational new life of sight and discipleship to the Light of the World. Through the lens of social and cultural texture analysis of the DDN, exploring the impact of Christ's interventional transformational leadership on His previous disciples and new followers, the DDN provides examples leaders can follow and a new interventional transformational leadership approach for further study. Current leadership theory can expand to address St. Mark's DDN interventionist transformational leadership model that helped existing and new followers address

current needs and discover what it means to be a disciple of core values, vision, and a righteous path forward.

Keywords: interventional transformational leadership, Bartimaeus, disciple, blind

Addressing the perceived complexity of the divinely inspired Bible requires the Holy Spirit's assistance (Kennedy, 1999). The Robbins (1996) socio-rhetorical process provides an effective analytical tool for inspecting textures within the rich Biblical tapestry. In addition to a helpful inner/intertexture analysis, examining the authors' and audiences' religious worldviews and understandings through a social and cultural texture review helps to fully appreciate any important nuances (Henson et al., 2020; Robbins, 1996). This analysis provides a social and cultural texture analysis of the Destitute Disciple Narrative (DDN) in Mark 10:46-52.

This analysis will focus on Christ's new form of transformational leadership (Dixon, 2021; Northouse, 2022). Transformational leaders pursue a vision with values and focus attention on the needs of their followers so that they may experience fundamental and material change. Contemporary transformational leadership scholarship typically ignores perceived miraculous and other significant interventions as drivers of a new follower's loyalty to a leader. Exploring how followers act differently from and to recipients of great gifts from a leader is similarly under-analyzed. Leaders can change the behaviors of the many by intervening to focus on the needs of the few, which is also an understudied area of transformational leadership. In the DDN, Bartimaeus transformed from disabled and poor to a fully-abled dedicated follower of Christ. Accordingly, this social and cultural texture analysis explores the DDN to examine a previously ignored follower who received something special from a dynamic interventionist transformational leader juxtaposed against the actions of previous proteges not so rewarded.

Other Evangelists wrote versions of the DDN (Matt. 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43; and arguably John 9:1-12). However, the four descriptions have a few linguistic, translational, historical, and numeric differences. For example, Achtemeier (1978) noted that in most healing or miracle narratives, the only person named would be Jesus, thus raising questions about the naming of Bartimaeus in the DDN. Similarly, Williams (1994) noted that St. Mark bookended his central Holy Gospel section with two blindness healing miracles; however, Bartimaeus was named, and the blind man healed in Bethesda was not so acknowledged (Mark 8:22-26). Achtemeier (1978) nevertheless concluded the DDN was central to St. Mark's critical teaching message of what it means to be a disciple and how one finds that path.

Ultimately, the differences in the other Evangelists' versions of the DDN are not material to this analysis and, thus, are not discussed in detail herein. However, Brookins (2011) offered an enlightening and detailed exegetical comparison of St. Mark's and St. Luke's versions of the DDN. Achtemeier (1978) also studied the DDN compared to the companion versions in St. Matthew's and St. Luke's accounts, which were more in line with the traditional miracle and healing narratives of the time. A qualitative meta-

analysis of these differences would be enlightening but is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, this analysis will focus on the last of the healing miracles performed by Christ, reported by St. Mark.

Social and Cultural Texture

Robbins' (1996) socio-rhetorical analysis called for exegetes to read pericopes from different perspectives to unlock the depth of their Divinely inspired meaning. One approach focused on the Biblical mosaic's social and cultural textures by examining how a pericope fits contextually within a contemporary environment or time (Henson et al., 2020). The social and cultural texture draws from the viewpoints of anthropology and sociology to understand more deeply the cultural and societal aspects affecting a pericope since individuals look at the world differently (Henson et al., 2020; Robbins, 1996). Because every Biblical text was a product of certain cultural elements and institutions with which readers of the time would be familiar, understanding the assumptions made by an author helps a reader better understand the pericope (Bayes, 2010). This analysis will concentrate on Henson et al.'s (2020) social and cultural template to explore the DDN in the three major categories of (1) common social and cultural topics, (2) specific social topics, and (3) final cultural topics. The DDN did not reflect every perspective or category. Accordingly, this analysis will focus on the presence of any of the five common social and cultural perspectives, seven specific social perspectives, and six final cultural perspectives that facilitate an audience beginning a relationship with the author.

Common Social and Cultural Topics in the DDN

This common social and cultural topics analysis of the DDN, as presented by Henson et al. (2020) and Robbins (1996), will focus on (1) honor, guilt, and rights, (2) dyadic content, (3) economic exchange system, and (4) purity codes. The challenge-response (riposte) common social and cultural topic texture is an insignificant focus of the DDN and is not discussed herein.

Honor, Guilt, and Rights Cultures

During Christ's time on the earth, cultures were extremely hierarchical and focused on one's position, which was inexorably tied to one's perceived honor, resulting in certain privileges and rights (Henson et al., 2020, p.141). As a result, the pursuit of honor and avoidance of guilt was critical in the culture of that time. One would have logically expected a destitute, disabled, lowly beggar to be incapable of having high status or honor. However, explicitly naming Bartimaeus in the DDN potentially had significant Biblical and honor/guilt/rights implications.

Even though Menken (2005) pointed out how the Synoptic Gospels generally failed to provide the names of most characters, Bartimaeus was named at the beginning of the DDN (v. 46). Achtemeier (1978) identified the DDN as the only healing miracle story with a named beneficiary. Menken (2005) further noted that the healing beneficiary's relationship was identified only two other times in all miracles the Lord

performed (1) St. Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:30), and (2) Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-23).

Given this distinction, one might presume an intended relational honorability significance to identifying Bartimaeus as the son of Timaeus (v. 46). Yet, Menken (2005) could not identify a reason for this specific identification norm deviation. Stoffel (1976) went further and lamented there was no indication of Timaeus's status or sins. Perhaps, as Tolbert (1996) suggested, it was a culturally significant reference to a famous published dialogue by the same name (Timaeus) offered by the renowned philosopher Plato that contrasted simultaneously being able to see physical things and being blind to the eternal. On the other hand, Carter (2013) postulated that St. Mark received the DDN with Bartimaeus' name included from prior Greek-speaking Christians who added the explanatory parenthetical of lineage consistent with their story-telling traditions.

However, Achtemeier (1978) asked if Bartimaeus was the beggar's actual name or if it represented a combination of an Aramaic word phrase followed by a Greek translation confirming the beggar was the son of Timaeus. Given the linguistic confusion, Achtemeier (1978) suggested this was the reason the versions of the DDN in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke never named the beggar. Thus, while not understood today, the accuracy of the beggar's name and the seemingly essential and unexplained connection to the unknown Timaeus may have been meaningful to people of that time and place. Accordingly, whatever honor or dishonor Bartimaeus received by virtue of his family is not apparent to current exegetes.

Nevertheless, as Allen et al. (2008) pointed out, in John 9:32, God reserved the right to restore blindness (vv.51-52). Allen et al. (2008) concluded that Bartimaeus' calling the Lord the Son of David (vv. 47-48) acknowledged that He was the Messiah with the power to cure blindness (Is. 29:18). In the DDN, the return of Bartimaeus' sight was what allowed him to gain the honor of abandoning his begging (v. 50) and joining the Messiah's sojourners (v. 52).

In a symbolically significant manner, Allen et al. (2008) concluded that Christ's passing through Jericho (v. 46) brought honor to a city previously associated with sinfulness and systemic brokenness (p. 1346). For example, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), robbers in Jericho almost killed a man. Luke 19:1-10 introduced the evil tax collector Zacchaeus, who lived in Jericho. The city also played a prominent role in Joshua 6. Thus, Allen et al. (2008) concluded that the Lord chose Jericho to cure Bartimaeus' blindness as a symbol of Christ's ability to restore all of humanity (p. 1346).

Dyadic Agreements

Unspoken cultural or relational understandings can be critical social and cultural references. For example, reciprocity and one's network of relationships, and the value of those networks form one's social capital (Putnam, 2000). In Christ's time, a fundamental notion of fairness required reciprocation for people of similar standing, whereas superior/subordinate reciprocity required serving the higher-status patron

(Henson et al., 2020, pp.140-141). While typical reciprocity involved returning any favors extended, Putnam (2000) discussed a higher level of golden rule reciprocity, which included no need to return a favor. This later culturally atypical dyadic relationship was Christ's teaching in the DDN.

Bartimaeus crossed all dyadic boundaries by being among the lowest human classes and circumstances. He seemingly had nothing to offer in return when he shouted to receive something from the Lord. The crowd following Christ identified Bartimaeus' lowly status and thus warned him to stop yelling (v. 48). The interventionist transformational leader Christ broke that reciprocal and dyadic boundary and relationship. The Lord dispatched the crowd who shunned and shushed Bartimaeus to bring him to the Lord for healing with no expectation of anything in return. However, the beautiful irony of golden rule reciprocity was that the Lord nevertheless received a powerful gift in return. As Christ instructed Bartimaeus to go his own way, Bartimaeus chose the way of the Lord (v. 52). Indeed, Menken (2005) noted the formerly blind and destitute Bartimaeus' association as a new follower of the Lord was a unique detail among the synoptic stories of healing that would have been noteworthy to the people of those times.

Economic Exchange System

The economic exchange of goods, services, and money element of common and social-cultural topics was not the primary focus of the DDN. There was an apparent reference to the poverty of Bartimaeus, which the contemporaries would understand given the prevalent zero-sum game mentality, which saw the world as one of limited resources (Henson et al., 2020, pp. 144). Yet, Bartimaeus had nothing of value to exchange for the sight he desired. An astute observer would note that when Bartimaeus was asked by the Lord an open-ended question about what he wanted from Christ (v. 51), the needy beggar did not ask for anything to address his economic poverty. Instead, his only request was for the ability to see. The significance of the critical act of the beggar Bartimaeus leaving his cloak for other beggars to have without compensation is discussed in the next social-cultural element because of its purity and status implications.

Purity Codes

Class differentiation is a constant in human history. One way people have distinguished perceived winners and losers is their socio-economic status. During Christ's earthly ministry, Jewish culture understood a relationship between purity, holiness, and cleanliness (DeSilva, 2018, p. 83). This purity code focused on the ancients' view of how one's virtue and righteousness corresponded with their economic, social, or other status (Henson et al., 2020). Indeed, Henson et al. (2020) noted the correlation between uncleanness and physical maladies in relation to other healing stories in St. Mark's Gospel. Perhaps no more straightforward example existed of the sin/disability correlation than another blind healing miracle reported in John 9:1-12. There, Christ's disciples specifically asked the Lord whether the blind man or his parents had sinned and thus were to blame for his disability (John 9:2).

At the time of the DDN, it would be difficult to imagine a person held in less esteem than a poor blind beggar. The miraculous healing of blindness was the understandable focal point of the DDN. This is especially true when the prevalent belief was that physical disabilities were proof of one's sinfulness (2 Sam 5:8; John 5:14; John 9:1-2).

However, it was his abject poverty that placed Bartimaeus outside Jericho, likely with the other beggars (Matt. 20:30). Fascinatingly, Menken (2005) described Bartimaeus' begging as his occupation, which no doubt the many followers (v. 48) would have believed given the culture of the time (p. 275). This would have been a dishonorable and impure occupation even in Jericho. However, Bartimaeus had no idea if he would ever be in the presence of the Lord again, so he recognized his moment to act when Christ passed by.

One could easily miss one of the seemingly minor messages of the DDN story because of the drama of a blind man gaining sight. When told the Lord would see him, Bartimaeus first threw aside his cloaking garment (v. 50). The cultural importance of this seemingly trivial item of clothing cannot be overstated. Menken (2005) described the absolute criticality of a cloak to beggars and others. For example, cloaks were so significant that if one was offered as security for a loan, it must be eventually returned (Exod. 22:26).

To a poor person, a cloak was a rare item of clothing and shelter, so the Bible required its return to the beggar before nightfall (Deut. 24:12-13). Menken (2005) added that a cloak was also a tool of the trade for beggars and would be the receptacle for any coins the beggar collected. Yet, Bartimaeus immediately threw his cloak aside when called to meet the Lord (v. 50). Critically, poor Bartimaeus did this culturally unimaginable act even before he had any idea what would result from the pending encounter with the Man they called Jesus of Nazareth. As stunning as the subsequent curing miracle was at the time, it was culturally incomprehensible that a beggar would willingly part with his only cloak, his beggar's tool, and his only shelter, all without any promise of a return or compensation. By abandoning his cloak, Bartimaeus sacrificed any possibility of returning to his former life. This blind act of faith in Christ was a noteworthy transition in the formation of a new disciple.

Indeed, Brueggemann (1986) concluded that the Lord's acknowledgment that Bartimaeus' faith healed him (v. 52) was a powerful reminder that faith involved hope in a better future, as promised in Holy Scripture. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Williams (1994) likened Bartimaeus' act of faith in dropping everything from his former life to follow Jesus to the similar actions of conviction by (1) St. Peter and St. Andrew who abandoned their fishing business (Mark 1:18), (2) St. James and St. John who did likewise (Mark 1:20), and (3) St. Matthew who abandoned his lucrative tax collection business (Mark 2:14).

The feeling of aloneness and disenchantment among the impoverished or homeless is documented in the rare instances when they are interviewed. When surrounded by crowds and abundance, those beyond the outer fringe of civilized society

feel isolation and impurity regardless of their being made in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27) and having inherent worth (Heb. 2:16-17). This feeling of aloneness, hunger, thirst, pain, and disillusionment amid abundance was documented in a unique modern experiment conducted by the author. Marianes (2021) recorded the social-cultural perspectives of a tragically destitute blind beggar left on the outside looking in among many wealthy passers-by. In this experiment, as with Bartimaeus, almost all the blessed people ignored him or called the legal authorities to remove him since this decrepit beggar did not belong among these privileged Christians in an exclusive Phoenix resort. The DDN similarly transformed the purity and social and cultural assumptions of those who heard it as the Lord modeled the interventional transformational behavior he taught.

Specific Social Topics in the DDN

Every person lives in a series of cultures, from the most intimate family to the world at large. As the diversity of the cultural group increases, the differences in worldviews become more pronounced. Accordingly, the diversity of the most significant cultural groups will suggest distinct solutions as issues are identified. The specific social topics assessment provides diverse worldviews from which an exegete can assess a pericope (Henson et al., 2020). The following elements of the specific social topics texture are not the focus of the DDN and are not discussed herein (a) revolutionist, (b) introversionist, (c) gnostic-manipulationist, and (d) utopian.

Conversionist

This social worldview assumes that if evil exists in a world of people, solutions can be achieved by fixing the people (Henson et al., 2020). This perspective at the level of personal transformation has some reference within the DDN. Menken (2005) identified the significance of the conversion experience of the multitude that included Christ's Apostles who were initially hostile to Bartimaeus and tried to silence him (v. 48). However, after receiving interventionist instructions from Christ to bring Bartimaeus to Him (v. 49), they immediately converted their message to one of great enthusiasm and good cheer. They encouraged Bartimaeus to celebrate the Lord's calling. Thus, those with a conversionist worldview would find solace and support that even large crowds could rapidly transform through an externally motivated and self-executed improvement (Henson et al., 2020, p. 127).

Thaumaturgical

This worldview embraces the divine, magical, or supernatural as a vehicle to transform lives (Robbins, 1996). Henson et al. (2020) added that positive transformation was possible with a focus on personal healing and efforts to address the challenges one faced. The word thaumaturgical is derived from the Greek words for miracle and work and was sometimes used to explain magic or the interventional work of Christian Saints to improve the world or lives of specific people.

The DDN was a quintessential example of both elements of this worldview. Bartimaeus focused on the personal healing he sought by crying out to all who could

hear (vv. 47-48). He then asked Christ directly for a miracle to address his most significant challenge, blindness (v. 51). Bartimaeus was mindful of the Divine opportunity before him. Williams (1994) noted Bartimaeus' fearless faith and refusal to be silenced demonstrated his confidence in the Lord. Spencer (2017) indicated Bartimaeus first referred to the Lord based on His Davidic lineage by calling out to the Son of David. This acknowledgment of Christ as the Son of David described the Lord as the chosen one rather than merely Jesus of Nazareth, whom the crowd told him was passing by (Ossandón, 2012). An additional irony noted by Ossandón (2012) focused on a blind man seeing in the Savior what some sighted people could not. This anomaly fulfilled the promise (Is. 29:18) where the blind saw out of the darkness (p. 392).

Subsequently, blind Bartimaeus called the Lord Rabboni (v. 52), the Hebrew word conferring respect (Brookins, 2011). This term also often meant teacher or master and was used to identify a spiritual instructor (Menken, 2005). The blind Bartimaeus saw the Lord as a wise Hebrew teacher and the Son of David who could divinely and thaumaturgically cure his blindness.

Lyons (2021) extensively analyzed the New Testament healing stories to conclude that Bartimaeus was most likely blind from birth (like the blind man in John 9:1). Culturally, Lyons (2021) explained how Christ's miracle of restoring sight to a presumably sinful previously sighted person who became blind was a more fantastic miracle than granting sight to those born blind. Allen et al. (2008) ascribed further thaumaturgical significance to the DDN because this supernatural miracle of curing blindness (vv. 42-43) symbolized the future of humanity after Christ's resurrection who would believe without seeing Christ themselves (p. 1308). Furthermore, Allen et al. (2008) explained those who sought to silence Bartimaeus (v. 39) represented the faithless individuals throughout time who persecuted the Church, seeking to silence its fundamental belief in a risen and transcendent Lord capable of miraculously solving all problems (p. 1308). Raffety (2020) pointed out that as consequential as it was for the Lord to heal Bartimaeus, Christ's transformational healing of the multitudes was an equally important miracle. The Lord caused everyone to stop their journey to give healing, extend respect, and restore honor to a blind beggar who believed Christ was who he said he was (Raffety, 2020).

Reformist

In any culture, some look at a reformation of the current environment as necessary and presume the ability of humanity to address those flawed systems and processes (Henson et al., 2020). Robbins (1996) further amplified this approach by concluding that people engaging in worthy efforts can transform and reform current sub-optimally performing institutions. The DDN provided a powerful example of the reformation of Bartimaeus. This man, who lived in darkness, immediately threw away his cloak of blindness (v. 50), overcame the social and environmental stigma of the blind and beggars, and became a recipient of Christ's gifts and a follower of the Lord (v. 52). These transformative changes of heart did not change the world; however, they did result in a fundamental metamorphosis of the witnesses and existing followers (vv. 48-49).

Final Cultural Topics in the DDN

The final methodology explores the perceived location of a people within the context of their culture and their articulation of beliefs (Henson et al., 2020). Robbins (1996) explained that discovering the voices of the people within the pericopes was much like an archeologist identifying diverse observations from a particular archaeological site (p. 167). In exploring these cultural elements, Henson et al., 2020 believed the nuances of a pericope and its meaning could be discovered (p. 149). The following elements of the final cultural topics texture are not the focus of the DDN and are not discussed herein: (a) dominant culture rhetoric, (b) subculture rhetoric, (c) counterculture rhetoric, and (d) contraculture rhetoric.

Liminal Rhetoric

This approach is transitional, where people move from a current cultural identity to a preferred future one of their making and more aligned with their values (Robbins, 1996). Interestingly, Henson et al. (2020) noted that people with this perspective could be on the societal outside looking in and perceived as fringe players on a fearful journey to somewhere new. This perspective speaks to the life of Bartimaeus and his fellow beggars who were relegated to the outskirts of Jericho (v. 46). As noted previously, Jericho was associated with sinfulness (Luke 10:30, Luke 19:1) and systemic brokenness (Allen et al., 2008, p. 1346). Thus, a destitute beggar was on the outskirts of a challenging city in transition. The DDN demonstrated a personal liminal transition as Bartimaeus metamorphosized from the lowliest of the low in extreme poverty (v. 46) and afflicted with a debilitating disability (vv. 49, 51-52) who eventually transformed from the darkness of his blindness into a visible follower of the Light of the World (John 8:12).

This transition led Allen et al. (2008) to conclude that the Lord curing Bartimaeus from his impoverished state in a fallen land provided a symbolic example of the liminal journey of all believers because of Christ's ability to restore the entire human race (p. 1346). The DDN modeled this belief as the great crowds following Christ, including His Apostles/disciples, went from chastising Bartimaeus to be quiet (v. 48) to an enthusiastic encouragement of Bartimaeus to answer the Lord's call (v. 49). What was noteworthy in this liminal journey was the only event occurring between the hostility and welcoming was Christ's interventional commandment to bring the blind man to him. Unlike other Holy Scripture passages where the Lord went to the person asking for a favor, Christ commanded His faithful followers to bring the blind beggar they had previously discarded to Him (v. 49).

Equally symbolic of the desired behavior of the faithful when allowed access to the Lord was how Bartimaeus, without hesitation or concern for the future, immediately discarded his cloak (v. 50), his primary possession crucial to his survival. The DDN is both the hope and the road map for every human afflicted in any way or impoverished in any condition. For all Christians on a transformational liminal journey of discipleship, the

DDN provides invaluable guidance. The DDN identified the way out of the darkness to become the Light of the World (Matt 5:14-15) through unwavering faith and resolute action to pursue a journey with the Lord.

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership model is widely researched because of its emphasis on moving followers and organizations to meet the moment by focusing on critical change elements such as the team's feelings, interactions, ethical behaviors, satisfaction, and motivations (Northouse, 2022, p. 185). Dixon (2021) identified the change agency impact of transformational leaders and their ability to inspire followers to excel. Burns (1978) focused on the constantly iterating interrelationships between followers and leaders as they respond to continually changing circumstances. Masood et al. (2006) summarized some of the critical elements of the transformational leadership style, which include (a) creating a vision, (b) establishing a model and process to achieve the vision, (c) inspiring the followers to embrace the vision, values, and process, (d) establishing superior performance expectations of followers, (e) providing follower support and encouragement, and (f) creating a motivational and stimulating environment (p. 942). Northouse (2022) reiterated the importance of transformational leaders modeling and prioritizing morality instead of unrighteous behavior based on the Burns (1978) concept that such leaders can lead incredible transformations. Northouse (2022) emphasized the importance of transformational leaders establishing lofty expectations for their followers and inspiring and stimulating them to act consistently with these values.

However, Masood et al. (2006) concluded that certain organizational cultures created by transformational leaders led to differing results. An organizational culture model developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011) focused on how the success of change initiatives driven by transformational leaders depended on the degree to which the team's culture fostered collaboration among the members (clan culture) and promoted autonomous and creative behavioral responses to changing circumstances (adhocracy culture). The research of Masood et al. (2006) concluded that using the Cameron and Quinn (2011) model, transformational leaders prefer clannish and autocratic environments by a significant margin, which has implications for how leaders are selected and how followers respond.

DDN Transformational Leadership

The Lord closely modeled many elements of traditional transformational leadership in the DDN, as well as new interventionist elements that could modify or enhance conventional applications of this leadership approach. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) distinguished transactional leaders who are more focused on themselves versus true transformational leaders whose worldview broadens to integrate their family, friends, and those around them. The later definition aligns with an expanded transformation Christ sought in His followers through His interventionism.

The DDN suggests several changes or amplifications to traditional transformational leadership theory by emphasizing the need to intervene quickly,

immediately stop misbehaving followers, and cause them to change their attitudes and actions, which were inconsistent with the shared values and vision. The more transformational leaders powerfully and lovingly intercede during these teachable moments, the more aligned the old and new followers can be with the expectations of excellence and adherence to the core values and vision that transformational leadership demands. Indeed, rather than Christ going to Bartimaeus or healing him from afar as was done in other miracles, Christ intervened and commanded His followers to bring Bartimaeus to Him (v. 49). According to Stoffel (1976), this masterful skill to pause and engage with one's surroundings is a critically important leadership skill. The Lord's immediate intervention regarding His followers' actions inconsistent with His core values (v. 48) was emblematic of His new interventional transformational leadership approach. In so doing, Christ was modeling one of the other behaviors of charismatic, transformational leaders outlined by Howell and Avolio (1992) by empowering followers to think and embrace proper behaviors that facilitate them eventually becoming leaders themselves. This is critical if one expects their followers to make other disciples globally at scale.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) identified true transformational leaders whose worldview extended beyond self to include one's family and friends. Christ expanded the transformational leadership model by intervening to refocus His followers who were oblivious to the people around them and commanding them to bring Bartimaeus to Him (v. 49). Indeed, Tyler (2013) concluded that while Christ was understandably preoccupied with what awaited Him in Jerusalem, He nevertheless modeled how the new era of transformational leaders must never lose consciousness with their surroundings, vision, and values. Rather than a monomaniacal focus on transforming the culture to His vision, Christ modeled a different form of interventional transformational leadership. He stopped everyone on their journey to respond to an urgent plea for help, thus gaining another disciple. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) identified that true transformational leaders were charismatic and established a cultural ethos of lofty expectations from their followers. In the DDN, Christ went even further than conventional transformational leadership by stopping His followers and finding a teachable moment for those who were inattentive and unresponsive to the needs of the afflicted people like Bartimaeus. The DDN amends traditional supportive transformational leadership with a new interventionist component.

This type of constant individualized, practical, and interventional teaching and coaching for followers to help them improve and strive toward more significant growth and accomplishment should be a hallmark of the traditionally discussed transformational leaders (Howell & Avolio, 1992, p.189; Northouse, 2022, p. 194). The DDN's new interventionist model creates tension with traditional transformational leadership theory that focuses primarily on caring for the thoughts and feelings of existing followers. Fortunately, the DDN pushed through that tension by demonstrating tough love for followers more assertively, immediately, and aggressively. This intervention redirected a follower's incorrect behavior and helped encourage others on the periphery to join the cause.

Indeed, Peters and Haslam's (2018) research among Royal Marines found that those who self-identified as natural leaders failed to convince their colleagues of that ability, whereas those who self-identified as followers proved to be the best leaders. Thus, Peters and Haslam (2018) identified that Christ's unusual collection of followers was taught excellent followership practices and became better suited to make other disciples globally (Matt. 28:19). This was critical because the growing crowds around Christ created distance between Him and those He wished to serve (Mark 2:4-5). Thus, Menken (2005) noted that the ever-increasing intercessory space must be broken down by faithful followers seeking to help those in need rather than keep them away from the Lord.

A hallmark of effective transformational leaders is maintaining and promoting the highest ethical standards and procedures (Howell & Avolio, 1992). The DDN displayed Christ's efforts to transform His followers to encourage Bartimaeus to be enthusiastic that the Lord had called him (v. 49). Menken (2005) noted the quick crowd metamorphosis from silencers (v. 48) to encouragers (v. 49). However, followers of transformational leaders must be passionately committed to such integrity. Chaleff (2009) discussed the duty of every follower to remain faithful to integrity, which requires them to refuse further participation with any person they cannot stop from acting immorally or improperly (p. 122). Regrettably, however, Butler and Spagnolo's (2020) research discovered that only a third of followers exhibit such integrity and are willing to blow the whistle against a misbehaving colleague or senior person. Since the highest ethical behavior is not necessarily the norm, the DDN pushes transformational leaders and their followers to a heightened intervention and commitment to ethics and proper behaviors.

In this powerful lesson, the DDN provided ten recommended steps for all people to either become, or follow, an interventionist transformational leader:

1. Never lose faith that the Lord will come (v. 46).
2. Keep crying out to the Lord, regardless of those who try to silence requests (v. 47).
3. Immediately pursue any opportunity to interact with the Lord (v. 50).
4. Live one's journey with complete faith and be ready to abandon possessions, obstacles, or anchors that previously grounded one or provided temporary comfort (v. 50).
5. Approach the Lord without hesitation (v. 50).
6. Speak with the Lord whenever possible (vv. 47, 48, 51).
7. Always ask the Lord for what one most needs on their journey (v. 51).
8. Ask for critical and lasting things, not items of fleeting insignificance (v. 51).
9. Show gratitude by willingly giving up everything to serve the Lord (vv. 50, 52).

10. Follow the Lord without hesitation, even if the journey takes one to a Jerusalem where persecution is likely (v. 52).

Achtemeier (1978) concluded St. Mark's worldview and objective were not to connect miracles with calling but to model the need for a continuous belief and preparation for the opportunity to live one's calling and serve. Furthermore, Achtemeier (1978) suggested the blindness afflicting Bartimaeus was symbolic of the inability of all disciples of Christ to fully see and understand the Lord's message and their calling. This affliction can exist in traditional transformational leaders not fully embracing a new interventionist leadership model as presented in the DDN. Additionally, Menken (2005) explained the significance of Bartimaeus throwing aside his cloak while he was blind, allowing him to depart his old ways, receive the miracle of sight, and complete his transformation by following Christ (p. 283). This lesser-included miracle shows how grateful followers can become fully engaged with interventionist transformational leaders. However, for that to occur, transformational leaders must also be more observant of those who are not yet followers and be willing to intervene to expand their team.

St. Mark made clear that even the most divine of transformational leaders cannot succeed in adequately leading every follower. Christ undoubtedly transformed the entire trajectory of Bartimaeus' life in every conceivable way by undoing a disability, transitioning him from begging to following Jesus, and ending his isolation by having him join the multitudes of followers (Menken, 2005). However, before Christ successfully engaged Bartimaeus, St. Mark reported the failure to transform the rich young man (Mark 10:17-31). Instead, the emotional consequence of that unsuccessful transformational leader interaction left that young man departing in sadness from hearing the truth yet being unwilling to act on it (Jacobsen, 2016). The DDN also contrasted Bartimaeus' appeal with the request in the immediately previous story (Mark 10:37). Bartimaeus requested sight, which the Lord could grant. In the prior pericope, St. James and St. John asked to sit on Christ's right and left, which was unreasonable given His imminent journey to the cross (Williams, 1994, p. 158). Thus, the DDN pushes transformational leaders to acknowledge that they sometimes must give up on a follower or prospect like the rich young man when they do not meet the commitment to excellence and the shared values and vision.

This social and cultural texture analysis explored in the DDN examines a previously ignored follower who received something special from a dynamic interventionist transformational leader juxtaposed against the actions of previous proteges not so rewarded. Conventional transformational leadership typically focuses on a consensus vision and core values inculcated in the followers. However, Christ's followers did not always act according to His vision and core values and instead tried to silence a destitute blind beggar (v. 48). In contrast, the miracle recipient Bartimaeus immediately embraced Christ's vision and became a loyal follower even though the journey to Jerusalem would be difficult. This suggests a question in the contemporary transformational leadership model regarding the different actions of followers who receive something of extraordinary value versus those who do not.

This behavioral gap could be assessed through an experiment to evaluate differential performance and loyalty with four different classes of follower subjects under a dynamic leader. The four groups of experimental subjects include (1) less-qualified, low-status individuals who receive a unique and significant benefit from the leader and are given the opportunity to join a high-echelon team (like Bartimaeus), (2) less-qualified, low-status individuals who do not receive a unique and significant benefit but are nonetheless given the opportunity to join a high-echelon team, (3) highly-qualified, high-status individuals who are already part of a high-echelon team but who nonetheless receive a unique and significant benefit from the leader, and (4) highly-qualified, high-status individuals who are already part of a high-echelon team but who do not receive a unique and significant benefit from the leader. The DDN suggests that group one (Bartimaeus) subjects would perform at a level equal to or above the existing high-echelon team members. It would be fascinating to see if there was any differentiation in the other three classes of team members or whether a transformational leader could reduce or eliminate any performance distinctions.

Conclusion

The DDN's fascinating narrative of persistence, unconditional faith, miraculous healing, and inspiring interventional transformational leadership featured many cultural and social aspects understood by early church members. St. Mark's DDN and two previous stories modeled a new interventionist method for people of faith, both past and present. This approach encourages immediate intervention with followers to look for new opportunities when they ask for help, act consistent with core values and vision, and model faith in the Lord's limitless power and grace. This interventional transformational leadership encourages followers to stop and interact, meet the pressing needs of others, and thus recruit new team members.

However, additional study is needed to ascertain the full impact on organizational effectiveness and leader perceptions among both existing and new followers if an interventionist transformational leader addresses or fails to remediate their most pressing needs. A recommended experiment can assess St. Mark's DDN interventionist transformational leader model against personal and organizational effectiveness by providing/withholding transformational benefits to high/low-status current/potential followers. Also, a qualitative meta-analysis of the differences in versions of the DDN written by St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John would be enlightening.

Bartimaeus is never mentioned after the DDN. However, his inspirational story leaves believers with two critical personal questions (1) what crucial thing would they ask of Christ if given the opportunity, and (2) are they willing to throw aside their equivalent of Bartimaeus' cloak of darkness to travel with and become the Light of the World?

About the Author

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