

Transformational Leadership: Assumptions and Synopsis

Transforming Followers into Leaders

By Rickie L. Bradshaw

When we talk about transformation, we normally describe it as a transformation of systems and organizations without the awareness of transformation within. The former reflects from a rational and linear approach to achieving organizational success. The latter reflects from a fundamental approach to personal transformation. This form of transformation is a sign of personal and organizational behavior. Therefore, the goal of transformation is related to being transformed as appose to doing transformation. When the Bible talks about transformational leadership, it discusses the "*being*" transformed as a model to be reproduced within an organism, as is the church. As a basic premise for transformation, the Bible encourages transformed leaders to experience the invitation to transform the world around them. With this end in mind, there are three basic assumptions about transformation:

1. **Assumption #1:** The Lord Jesus Christ's main purpose of presence is to transform the world through transformed people. Jesus said to His followers, "Follow Me, and I will make you Fishers of Men", Matthew 4:19. Not, followers, but leaders.
2. **Assumption #2:** God's only means for Global transformation was and is through transformed individuals. In Jesus' sermon on the mount, He said to His followers "You are the Salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world.... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven, Matthew 5:13-14".
3. **Assumption # 3:** Transformed followers of Jesus Christ passionately engage in displaying the transforming power of the gospel locally and globally.

Biblical Model for Transformational Leadership

As we review the gospel writings, Jesus was committed to leading a group of transformed followers who followed Him to learn the art of transforming communities of people. As such, the goal of transformational leaders is the same, to lead a group of transformed individuals who in turn will learn the art of transforming their communities

and the world. The mission of transformed leaders is to follow the transformational model of Jesus Christ. This purpose reflects the success of the leader based on his or hers actions and behaviors as exhibited by Jesus Christ. The leaders' actions are similar to Jesus Christ in practice. They imitated Jesus in five core practices:

1. *His practice of spiritual and relational vitality.*

His practice of spiritual and relational vitality postured Him to experience and expresses the presence and power of God in His life. Jim Herrington in his book, "[Leading Congregational Change](#)", describe the elements of spiritual and relational vitality in a fourfold process (p18): Encountering God's holiness (Isaiah 6:1-4), Experiencing God's grace (Isaiah 6:5-8), Embracing unity in authentic Christian community (Ephesians 4:1-3), and Engaging community through transformed Christ-like followers.

2. *His ability to establish a core of followers.*

His practice of establishing a core of followers by using His influence and character enabled Him to create an environment for reproduction. Jesus' character harmonized with who He was. This enabled Him to build a following based on His capacity to demonstrate personal transformation. Transformational leaders that model character create momentum for transformed leaders

3. *His ability to engage and influence the core in reproducing His purpose.*

Jesus demonstrated his ability to influence His followers to participate in His mission. John Maxwell in his book, "[Developing the Leader Within You](#)", describes leadership as influence, that is, the ability to influence others to follow. He developed a working model that illustrates how transformational leaders lead by influence. There are five levels of influence:

- Level One: **Position** – (Rights) People follow because they have to
- Level Two: **Permission or Personal Relationships** – (Relationships) People follow because they want to
- Level Three: **Production** – (Results) People follow because of what you are able to achieve for the organization

- Level Four: **People Development** – (Reproduction) People follow because of what you have done for them
- Level Five: **Personhood** – (Respect) People follow you because of who you are and what you represent

Jesus demonstrated all five of these levels of leadership as a means of engaging followers in establishing a vision community of leaders. They follow Jesus with knowledge of His position as the Lamb of God (John 1:35-37). To establish relational vitality among His followers, Jesus invited them to His home (John 1:38-39). Throughout His ministry Jesus developed relational capital with His followers. As a leader, He demonstrated the ability to produce results. This caused His followers to express the desire to embrace His vision (Luke 5:1-11).

Growth occurred when he spent personal time and effort to develop them (Matthew 4:18-19). When there was creative tension among His followers towards the vision, they continued to embrace the vision based upon His personhood (John 6:59-69). As we study the life of Jesus in the gospels, we discover the art of turning followers into leaders. This is at the heart of transformational leadership.

4. ***His ability to achieving and maintaining widespread impact by cultivating and empowering followers into leaders.***

To achieve and maintain impact and empowerment of followers into leaders, it requires 3 important elements:

a. Establishment of a new model for leadership within the core. A new definition for leadership will help the process of turning followers into leaders. A definition can be as the following: A leader is a **Person** who influences **People** to **Participate** in a God given **Purpose**.

b. Empower leaders by creating a sense of urgency. Creating urgency is very necessary for achieving and maintaining widespread impact. It creates energy and motivation for change that is generated by the contrast between an accurate perception of reality and God's ideal. Jesus' message created a profound sense of urgency by giving God's ideals in contrast with the religious perception of reality

of the religious leaders in His sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7).

c. Removing obstacles that prohibit transformational values is needed to enable leaders to sustain impact and to achieve transformational goals. **Putting the right people on the right bus, in the right seat and going in the right direction**, helps to sustain the right vision. Jesus chose His followers and He helped them to identify their strengths and growth areas. He also provided the right vehicle for them to achieve their goals. He provided practical, refreshing, and highly effective tools and process for generating deep transformation

5. ***His ability to encourage the core to create an eye on their community to expand the vision community of reproducible followers.***

As a transformational leader, Jesus had the profound awareness that for a people movement to be achieved, a vision community of leaders must capture an eye for their own communities. Transformational leaders must develop the skills of discovering their mission field based upon who and what they are. This is quite different from the western model for church growth. In this model believers are extracted from the world from which they live and connect, to participate in the institution's ministry objectives. The existents of the believer's ministry evolve within the context of the local church geographically and as well as institutionally. Jesus' model was to encourage believers to create an eye for their "oikos". In the story of Jesus and His disciples traveling to a region called the Gerasenes, Jesus delivered a man with an evil spirit. Upon His departure after healing the man from his demonic past, the man desired to go with Jesus. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell what good things God has done for you (Mark 5:1-21)". Jesus encouraged the man to create an eye for his community to expand the vision community of reproducible followers. In a rapid period of time, the man became a part of the vision for rapid reproduction.