

3-2020

The Cost of Team Leadership in Mark 6:7-13: A Sanctifying Work

Brian C. Legg
University of the People

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Legg, Brian C. (2020) "The Cost of Team Leadership in Mark 6:7-13: A Sanctifying Work," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 14: No. 1, 10-18.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol14/iss1/3>

This Biblical Reflections is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Applied Christian Leadership by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

BRIAN C. LEGG

THE COST OF TEAM LEADERSHIP IN MARK 6:7–13: A SANCTIFYING WORK

Team leadership comes with a cost. It guards against self-interest and is a sanctifying work. Within the pericope of Mark 6:7–13 rests a fascinating insight into relational leadership and its resulting progressive sanctification. Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck (2016) write, “Leadership is not bad, but it is very powerful. We all know that powerful things are dangerous and must be handled with extreme caution” (p. 61). When the threat of danger is close at hand, it is good to have a partner to share in leadership’s burdens, one whom you can trust and who will hold you accountable.

Mark’s team leadership model’s focus is not on who the leaders were, specifically, but on the directives which Jesus provided to them. Mark presents the disciples in a constant state of confusion regarding their trust in Jesus and integrating their faith into action (Hooker, 1991). The disciples’ failures are a main theme in Mark’s Gospel; however, Jesus demonstrated perfect leadership, showing the necessity of a team leadership model. The purpose of Jesus’s directives to the disciples was to serve as modus of sanctification for these future church leaders.

The areas of life in which Christians submit to Christ may be broken into two categories: physical and relational. Using passages from Mark, we will address and discuss. It will be demonstrated that each thematic category overlaps, providing a holistic view of team leadership’s sanctifying effects.

Background

Mark’s Gospel begins with the proclamation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and climaxes with a Roman centurion declaring at the crucifixion, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39, ESV). The text exposes a tension between the Christ’s glory on earth and the future humiliation of rejection on the cross. Robert Gundry (1993) highlights the growing tension felt within Mark’s action-oriented tempo and looks specifically for interpretation, consid-

Brian C. Legg serves as a leadership consultant at the Lower Colorado River Authority in Austin, TX. Additionally, he serves as an adjunct instructor at the University of the People in the Master of Education program. He earned his EdD from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

B R I A N C . L E G G

ering the dichotomy of glory and humiliation. As the tension builds within the gospel, Jesus is rejected in His hometown of Nazareth and subsequently sends out twelve select disciples as messengers to continue His mission.

In Mark 6:7–13, Jesus sends the apostles (messengers) out in pairs to witness to their neighbors. The mission forced the disciples to rest completely in God for all of their provisions, their relational trust, and to build up their faith (Hooker, 1991). Although exposition of Mark 6:7–13 has typically been concentrated on missional models, the same sacrificial precepts may describe the cost of team leadership as a typology. This cost requires the Christian leader to put aside self and place physical and relational matters solely under the authority of Jesus Christ. The action of putting aside self and demonstrating humble submission to Christ inherently leads to progressive sanctification (Keathley, 2007).

Team Leadership Model in Mark 6

“And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits” (Mark 6:7).

Instead of a singular model of leadership, Mark presents a pluralistic—team leadership—model. Jesus commissioned twelve of the disciples to act as apostles (ἀπόστολος), or messengers, and sent them out in pairs. The purpose of sending the disciples in pairs, instead of as individuals, was to share Jesus’s authority and mission with each other. Jesus is the ultimate leader to emulate and follow. Andreas Kostenberger (2014) notes, “Jesus came in order to permanently fill the shepherd-vacuum that existed among God’s people in a way that prior shepherds—Moses, Joshua, and David—were unable to fill because of sin and death” (p. 43). By following the shepherd example of Jesus, the team leadership model provided an opportunity for 1) their faith to be tested and strengthened, 2) their trust in each other to be built, and 3) and their accountability with each other, fortified.

Through participation in the team-centric mission, the disciples took an active role in their own sanctification. James Edwards (2002) notes, “Traveling in pairs was advantageous in several respects: it provided company and common counsel, and it augmented each partner with complementary gifts” (p. 178). As these messengers traveled together to execute the mission set before them by Christ, they were appropriately yoked together for success.

Dynamics of Team Leadership

A successful team leadership model was not dependent upon the imperfection of the disciples. Instead, the success rested completely in Jesus’s perfection as the Good Shepherd (John 10:14–15). The disciples’ role was to submit to Jesus’s authority and act as His agents in the field with three very specific aspects: 1) mission, 2) authority for the mission, and 3) accountability.

THE COST OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

Mission

The mission was characterized by specific behaviors and how the disciples were to prepare. First, “carry out the commission by preaching, casting out demons, and healing the sick” (Gundry, 1993, p. 300). Second, the mission included instructions on what to take on the journey and what to leave behind. Further, the disciples received specific instructions on how they were to behave when they were provided provision and when they were not.

Authority

The disciples were to step out as coleaders of a mission to reach their neighbors and to do so not on their own authority, but under the authority of Jesus Christ. The disciples could not execute this mission on their own power or through active preparations. If they had overly prepared, they would not have met people in the towns who provided for their needs (e.g., ultimately, God provided for the disciples through these people). The disciples would not have taken part in the same intentional, relational interactions, and they would not have had their faith built in the same necessary ways.

The authority under which these messengers traveled as pairs was unmarked by their own power but rested in the authority which Jesus gave them. Mark 6:8 states that Jesus “charged them” (καὶ παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς), which calls attention to Jesus’s authority over the twelve. Gundry (1993) further notes that this authority is not ruled over the twelve but is “authority which Jesus shares with them and is exercised through them” (p. 301). This authority’s main idea is that if the messengers were accepted in the towns they visited, it would actually be Jesus who was accepted; likewise, if they were rejected, it would not be they who were rejected, but Jesus. Authority in team leadership is thus categorized as shared by the whole team and not placed on a single individual.

Accountability

A plurality of leadership is strengthened by the balance of trust and accountability inherent to partnership.¹ A singular leadership model is often flawed because it relies so much on self as the point of accountability (Barna, 2001). By sending out the disciples in pairs, they were to hold each other accountable to Jesus’s instructions regarding their mission and for how the mission was to be executed. This is, in itself, a test of faithfulness.

The team model is another preliminary phase for preparing these men for the role they would assume as leaders of the church when Jesus left. The two dynamics of team leadership in view are 1) Jesus’s command to trust in Him to provide what they needed for success in the mission, and 2) the team leadership model provided an accountability partner for each other. According to

¹Although not specifically used in Mark, the term συνεργός (synergos) is used 13 times in the New Testament to describe a companion in work, or a fellow worker (Rom. 16:3, 16:9, 16:21; 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 1:24, 8:23; Phil. 2:25, 4:3; Col. 4:11; 1 Thess. 3:2; Phil. 1:1, 1:24; 3 John 1:8). The concept of teamwork begins in Genesis with the helpmate of Adam and runs throughout the biblical narrative to the Godhead in Revelation, thus συνεργός could appropriately be understood in application to describe the ἀπόστολος working under the submission and in partnership with the authority of Jesus as co-laborers in the field.

B R I A N C . L E G G

Sandra Jackson (2000), empirical data shows a dynamic relationship between how accountability among shared leadership results in increased professional development, balances staff autonomy and managerial guidance, increases collaborative decision-making and individual accountability, and increases shared vision across organizations. Each of these dynamic relationships has an associated cost.

The Cost of Team Leadership

Jesus told the disciples and the crowd of followers, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

The pericope of Mark 6:7–13 is sandwiched between Jesus’s rejection in His hometown of Nazareth and John the Baptist’s martyrdom. Mark makes no hesitation in demonstrating the strict cost of following Jesus and doing God’s will. Edwards (2002) elaborates, “John’s martyrdom prefigures more than Jesus’ crucifixion, however. It also exemplifies the consequences of following Jesus in a world of greed, decadence, power, and wealth” (p. 183–184). The cost to self is steep. Jesus is stating that even your life may be required to fulfill the mission of being a disciple. Although some rejected the message, others received it. Through the model of team leadership, Jesus demonstrates the cost necessary to follow the Father’s will.

To submit to authority and to execute the mission, many areas of life for the apostles would need to change, be put off, and be laid down. J. Todd Billings (2011) states, “God’s gracious, loving call is, in fact, a threat to our autonomy, our deep and pervasive strategies to keep hold of our lives rather than losing them for the sake of Jesus Christ” (p. 21).

Likewise, Timothy Paul Jones (2018) writes:

When God raised up human leaders as shepherds, he was calling them to participate in his work of rescuing his people, remaining with them, and providing for them. This calling did not elevate leaders to position of sovereign lordship over the people; instead, it placed them in positions of sacrificial stewardship among the people of Israel . . . The position of God-called shepherd leader is one of service and obedience, guiding and guarding the people under the authority of the supreme shepherd. (p. 116)

Instead of becoming *puffed up* from the pride of emerging from their peer group as a leader, the opposite was intended. The leader should be humbled and, through the process of sanctification, be changed into the likeness of the greatest leader: Jesus. Further, from this partnering in team leadership, the servant leadership model naturally develops.

Putting aside self in order to serve others requires a passion for the mission and the people. Malphurs (2003) defines passion as, “a God-given capacity to

THE COST OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

commit oneself fervently over an extended period of time to meeting an objective” (p. 78). The apostles’ objective was to extend Jesus’s ministry into areas that had not received the Gospel in the region of Nazareth.

The Price to Pay for an Urgent Journey

The journey (εἰς ὁδὸν) the apostles would take implied urgency in their mission (Hooker, 1991). As presented in Mark, Jesus’s entire ministry conveys an urgent sense of mission and purpose to the reader. Jane Fryar (2007) succinctly summarizes this urgent call to action:

Jesus “comes” from Nazareth to the Jordan (1:9) to be baptized. The Spirit “drives” him into the wilderness (1:12). He “comes” back into the relative safety of Galilee when John the Baptizer is arrested (1:14). He “passes alongside the Sea of Galilee,” calling his disciples (1:16). He goes to Capernaum and “enters” the synagogue to teach (1:21). He leaves the synagogue to enter the house of Simon and Andrew, to teach and heal (1:29–33). Early the next morning he rises before daylight to find a desolate place to pray (1:35). From there, he travels “throughout all Galilee,” preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons (1:39). (p. 157)

Now Jesus sends the twelve apostles into the field. This urgency is given to the apostles to go into the regions around Nazareth and take the gospel message to their neighbors. An urgent call required submission and sacrifice to fulfill entirely what was asked of them. Timothy Laniak (2006) notes of service to Christ, “Self-sacrificing service is the hallmark of the Lord’s deputy shepherds” (p. 179).

Physical Cost

“He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics” (Mark 6:8–9). Mission’s physical toll would require the messengers to give up their physical possessions and take only what God immediately provided: sandals and one pair of clothes. Edwards (2002) states, “The barest of essentials, however, ensures that they place their trust not in their supplies and training but rather than in the one who sends them” (p. 181). Interestingly, they were permitted a staff or walking stick, but the focus was on what they are not to take: no food or money, not even extra clothing. The entirety of their mission would be contrary to normal practice in which messengers made preparations for a journey (Gundry, 1993). They would not need provisions since they relied on God to provide for their physical needs. The mission’s success rested in obeying Jesus in His commands and resting in the physical provisions necessary for the journey. Each member of the two-man team would need to help the other to stay the mission’s course and accomplish Jesus’s commands.

B R I A N C . L E G G

Relational Cost

And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. (Mark 6:10–13)

The relational cost is implied in several ways. First, the apostles were placed in pairs of two. Perhaps the naming of the apostles in Matthew 10 provides insight into how the disciples were paired to go on their mission (Gundry, 1993). The ordering of the pairs of names suggests a natural pairing in Mark 6. These pairs of messengers not only carried Jesus’s message of hope in the Gospel, they also were called to live out the message with one another.

When the pairs of messengers entered a town or village, they were to show Christ’s love for all by thankfully accepting hospitality, as it was given, as a sign of God’s provision. As guests, they were to demonstrate thankfulness by staying where God placed them. Moving from house to house would be an insult to those who first took them in and provided them with shelter, food, and hospitality (Edwards, 2002; Hooker, 1991). Those who rejected the messengers were to be shunned by the disciples’ shaking the dust from their sandals. Shaking the dust from the feet was a clear reference to Jews traveling abroad who would shake the dust off their feet before re-entering Palestine. Foreign dust would contaminate the Jewish land. This same action performed by the disciples indicated how those who rejected the gospel message were like the foreigners, cut off from the land promised by God to His true heirs (Hooker, 1991).

Second, the messengers were forced to change their views on what it meant to be a leader in the Kingdom of God and become open to Christ’s leadership. In the first century Roman times, traditional leadership models, compared to a relational aspect of shared leadership in Jesus’s time, were distinctly different. Bill Thompson (2015) notes how the disciples initially viewed their relation between Roman cultural leadership paradigms and how Jesus portrayed a new model of selfless leadership.

The disciples had bought into the reigning cultural leadership model, in which leaders controlled their subordinates through power and authority and in which leadership itself was seen as a vehicle to status and prestige. However, in the kingdom of God, Jesus called His disciples to follow Him instead of the leadership patterns of the world. Rather than relating to their followers as “master” or “lord,” they were called to serve their communities. (p. 59)

THE COST OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

The relational cost in the Roman world's view was to give up power to share; however, in God's Kingdom, the greatest gift is forfeiting your own life to save another (John 15:13).² The team leaders in Mark 6 were to shed their worldly views in order to take hold of the new dynamic of servant leadership and trust in each other as they trusted in Jesus for success. These leaders paid a sanctifying price for the cost of team leadership.

Sanctifying Effect of Cost

Sanctification represents the positional standing believers have before God being righteous in Christ (1 Cor. 6:19–20). However, sanctification also refers to the ongoing and continual effect of the work of God “by which He brings our experience into conformity with our position” (Keathly, 2007, p. 592). The experience of spiritual transformation is ongoing; believers are continually purified by the washing of the Word (Eph. 5:26). The process is started by God through the Spirit and requires a partnership in which the believer actively participates in the process by action (1 Thess. 4:3–5).³

Reflecting on the concept of active participation in Mark 6 allows the reader to view team leadership's cost through the physical and relational aspects that characterize its sanctifying effect. Both physical and relational costs remove self from the mission and place team leadership aspects ahead of self in the mission scope. Putting off one's self results in a sanctifying action through which the Spirit actively works with each team member (Eph. 4:22–24).

The physical cost of team leadership within the pericope of Mark 6:7–13 was to give up earthly possessions and rely on God's provision for all sustenance and accommodation. The strength by which they were to serve their neighbors was by the strength of God alone (1 Peter 4:11). God supplied their provision through the kindness of strangers who took them in. In later passages, Mark demonstrates that the tie to possessions keeps you from resting completely in God for all of your needs (Mark 10:17–27). By resting in this provision, the disciples' faith was strengthened, and the process of sanctification was persistent.

As the messengers found themselves partnered up for their mission, they would discover accountability to and from each other. The messengers were accountable to Jesus as their Master and to each other in their team relationships. The motivation for the messengers was in their shared mission. They were motivated by the desire to please their Master, Jesus, but also by a positive peer-to-peer pressure (Lencioni, 2002). As they were now yoked to each other,

²John 15:13, Jesus declares that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for another. This prophetic saying of Jesus impending death also serves to provide a viewpoint for how Christians can sacrificially love one another, even to the point of dying to save another from the clutches of Satan.

³Although 1 Thess. 4:3–5 specifically refers to abstaining from sexual immorality, the opposite principle is also true: to embrace the positive attributes as demonstrated by Christ in action. Keathley further makes the point by referencing Rom. 6:4, “Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,” Keathley, “The Doctrine of Salvation,” in *A Theology for the Church*, 596.

B R I A N C . L E G G

they were also yoked with God. Dale Lemke (2017) states, “In partnership with God and in recognition of the assets that disciples possess, ministry leaders are freed to partner with, journey alongside, and learn from those whom they have been entrusted to lead” (p. 282). Each team member embraced their role in order to carry out the mission and spread the gospel by word and deed.

The messengers were to put aside self and embrace the team aspect driven by the authority of Jesus. Eduard Schweizer (2002) states, “Everything, even the poverty and simplicity of the messenger, indeed even the courage to be rejected, must conform to the Word that affirms God is infinitely more important than all else” (p. 183). The Word of God leads and encourages the messengers to move from consideration of the Gospel as just good news to the Gospel’s demonstration through action. This action highlights the necessity of moving from merely positional sanctification to experiential sanctification. Kenneth Keathley (2007) rightly notes, “Our objective position in Christ provides the pattern and power of our subjective experience on living for him” (p. 596).

These sanctifying actions culminate in the positive report to Jesus by the messengers in Mark 6:30. The apostles returned to Jesus and told of all that they had done and taught. The summary account does not specify the exact deeds accomplished but identifies their reports of repentance, exorcising demons, and healing, in addition to teaching. This singular shift to a teaching element demonstrates how the apostles embraced the power of Jesus ministry. As they placed their deeds before their teaching, it stressed that action carried more weight in this mission, “Further, the switch from preaching (v. 12) to teaching (v. 30) implies that he shared with them his didactic authority too” (Gundry, 1993, p. 322). The apostles rightly joined Jesus in His authority to share the Word of God with others. In the final section of Mark 6, the disciples’ faith would be further tested, and their sanctification process would continue.

Conclusion

Christian leaders actively submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Believers cannot be made like Christ by staying the same as when they were first saved and justified before God. The process of changing to be more like Christ is called sanctification. As discussed earlier, sanctification is both positional and experiential—an ongoing process. As an action and process, the cost of team leadership calls on each team member to put off self and rely on God for all success. This paper argued that, although Mark 6:7–13 has typically been concentrated on missional models, the same sacrificial precepts can describe the cost of team leadership which requires the Christian leader to put aside self and place physical and relational matters solely under the authority of Jesus Christ for His mission. This inherently leads to sanctification.

THE COST OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

Although Mark sets out to show Christ's authority versus the disciples' inadequacy, he also demonstrates how authority in and through Christ bolsters team leadership as a model worthy of inclusion in modern-day applications. Just as the early disciples were inadequate for the task on their own, it is only through Christ that they were successful. Edwards (2002) contends, "The sending of reluctant and timorous disciples into mission is, on the face of it, completely mistaken. Uncomprehending and ill-prepared disciples typify believers in every age and place who are sent out by the Lord of the harvest" (p. 183). Believers grow through cost to self as an active process of sanctification and may fulfill God's mission through team leadership.

References

- Barna, G. (2001). *The power of team leadership: Finding strength in shared responsibility*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press.
- Billings, J. T. (2011). *Union with Christ: Reframing theology and ministry for the church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The gospel according to Mark* (Pillar New Testament Commentary series). Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.
- Fryar, J. L. (2007). Jesus as leader in Mark's gospel: Reflecting on the place of transformational leadership in developing leaders of leaders in church today. *Lutheran Theological Journal*, 41(3), 157–166.
- Geiger, E. & Peck, K. (2016). *Designed to lead: The church and leadership development*. Nashville, TN: B&H.
- Gundry, R. H. (1993). *Mark: A commentary on his apology for the cross*. Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.
- Hooker, M. D. (1991). *The gospel according to St. Mark* (Blacks New Testament Commentary). London, UK: A&C Black.
- Jackson, S. (2000). A qualitative evaluation of shared leadership barriers, drivers, and recommendations. *Journal of Management in Medicine*, 14(3): 166–178.
- Jones, T. P. (2018). The shepherd leader: A protector and provider who is present with his people. In M.S. Wilder and T.P. Jones (Eds.), *The God who goes before you: Pastoral leadership as Christ-centered followership* (pp. 109–136). Nashville, TN: B&H.
- Keathley, K. (2007). The work of God: Sanctification. In D. L. Akin (Ed.), *A theology for the church* (pp. 686–765). Nashville, TN: B&H.
- Kostenberger, A. J. (2014). Shepherds and shepherding in the Gospels. In B. L. Merkle & T. R. Schreiner (Eds.), *Shepherding God's flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and beyond* (pp. 33–58). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.
- Laniak, T. S. (2006). *Shepherds after my own heart: Pastoral traditions and leadership in the Bible* (New Studies in Biblical Theology Commentary series). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Lemke, D. L. (2017). A philosophy of disciple-centered leadership. *Christian Education Journal*, 14(2): 270–284.
- Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team*. San Francisco, CA: JoseyBass.
- Malphurs, A. (2003). *Being leaders: The nature of authentic Christian leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Thompson, B. (2015). Servant, leader, or both? A fresh look at Mark 10:35–45. *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, 9(2): 54–65.