

Most of us have been taught that leadership looks like a title, a role, or a position of authority. It's the framed certificate on the wall or the name on the door that says to everyone – *this is who's in charge.*" But for Jesus, He wasn't impressed w/ a person's credentials hanging on a wall. He was far more attentive to what a person did when there was no audience or applause.

He preferred a towel. A towel represents something very different. It doesn't draw attention or announce status, and it'll never look as impressive as a framed degree; but when something needs to be cleaned, carried, or cared for – a towel becomes invaluable.

**Sadly** – most people want the certificate, while very few want the towel b/c culture trains us to climb – to gain influence, earn authority, and expand control. YET Jesus modeled something very different.

Jesus redefined leadership by asking: *What's in your hands when someone is needs help, direction, counsel, or encouragement?* A towel may not impress anyone, but it meets people at the point of their real need.

***I call this leading w/ your hands.*** It means choosing a towel over a title – rolling up your sleeves and being willing to get your hands dirty to influence/help someone who is in need.

It's leadership that never says, "That's beneath me," but instead asks, "What needs to be done?" This is why Jesus' definition of leadership unsettles us – b/c it pulls leadership out of the office and into real life.

This tension b/w the certificate and the towel is exactly what Jesus addressed in Luke 10 in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

**In context**, Jesus was asked what is necessary to have eternal life? And the answer was simple – love God w/ every fiber/aspect of your being and love others as you want to be loved by others and God.

Then the question was raised – ***who is my neighbor?*** Launching Jesus into this prolific parable.

*Jesus said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. He said 'Look after him, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."* Luke 10:30-37

So, two men – who both had the right calling, credentials, and cause, walked right past a broken life in need of help. On paper, they looked like influencers, but in actuality, they weren't b/c leadership isn't proven by who follows you – but by who you stop for.

Then Jesus introduced a 3<sup>rd</sup> man – not distinguished by a title or position, but by compassion. He stopped. He moved toward the need not from it. Not b/c it was expected or b/c it'd earn him recognition, but b/c love demanded action. In that moment, Jesus shifted the question from *who someone is* to *what someone does*.

To Jesus, leadership, isn't measured by influence, outcomes, or authority, but by love in action. You can talk about servant leadership all day, but eventually it has to be proven by visible, costly action – and the parable of the Good Samaritan is Jesus' mandate for His followers to get their hands dirty.

Note – let me remind you of the key truth of this series. As a Christian, your calling is to use your influence to **exalt God only** but if you're not intentional/careful, you can use your influence for self and **edge God out**.

*The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration, but its donation.* Corrie ten Boom

So, if leadership isn't proven by what's on the wall but by what's you do w/ your hands, then how do we live this out? We have to lead w/ our H.A.N.D.S.

## **H — HAVE Eyes to See the Need**

The two religious leaders saw the wounded man yet deliberately *passed by on the other side*. The Greek carries the idea of choosing a different route rather than merely walking past incidentally. IOW – **they went out of their way to go out of their way**.

This contrast makes Jesus' point – the tragedy in life isn't that suffering exists, but that people who could help often avert their gaze and protect their schedules instead of engaging the need of their neighbor.

But not the Samaritan. He saw the man and was moved w/ compassion. He saw the interruption not as an inconvenience/disruption but a divine appointment.

This word-picture forces a deeper question about leadership and fellowship – do we have eyes to see, or have we been trained instead to blink at suffering?

We learn from the priest/Levite that you can come from God's presence and still miss His heart – unless we have trained our eyes to see as God sees.

This means leading w/ action begins where awareness replaces avoidance; it requires not just passing by, but *seeing w/ compassion and responding w/ intention*.

## **A — APPROACH Instead of Avoid**

The Samaritan didn't merely feel compassion, he *closed the distance*. He *came where he was* and then *went to him* – a deliberate contrast to the priest/Levite who created space and passed by on the other side.

In His words, Jesus was stacking action verbs to show that compassion isn't passive or theoretical but **directional** – it moves toward need not away.

Real leadership does the same. It doesn't manage pain from afar or offer concern at arm's length; it steps into messy, risky, and inconvenient situations b/c love refuses to remain distant.

It's a picture of what Jesus has done for us by entering our condition rather than loving us from a distance. That's why this principle is so confronting: titles tend to create separation, but love always closes the gap.

Most people are willing to *feel bad* from the other side of the road. But the Samaritan shows us a different kind of love – the kind that gets close enough to lift, bandage, and carry. Compassion at a distance is sentiment; compassion up close is ministry. Yet we don't need a platform to be faithful – just proximity.

## N — Meet the NEED in Front of You

The Good Samaritan didn't preach a sermon or propose a policy, he bandaged wounds, poured oil and wine, and lifted the man onto his own animal.

Leading w/ action means doing what is needed *now*, not what looks impressive later.

A nurse met a woman w/ a horrible but treatable condition – her leg was so distorted it was hard to look at. But the nurse cleaned and bandaged it anyway. Suddenly, the woman began to cry – not b/c it hurt, but b/c it was the first time anyone had touched her in nine years. This is meeting the need in front of you: sometimes the most healing thing you can offer isn't impressive – it's present, practical and personal.

## D — DISRUPT Your Comfort for Compassion

Jesus carefully recorded the price of love. He said the Samaritan interrupted his journey, expose himself to risk on a dangerous road, placed the wounded man on his own animal (meaning he walked), paid two denarii (two days' wages), and committed to future expenses.

Compassion that merely *feels* is cheap; compassion that *acts* always pays. The priest and Levite chose what was efficient and safe, but the Samaritan chose what love demanded – even when it was inconvenient, expensive, and unrecognized.

Spurgeon wrote. “When the Samaritan set the man on his own beast, he “*denied himself*,” a quiet but piercing reminder that real love always yields something tangible.” This is why leadership that mirrors Jesus can't be reduced to good intentions or kind words.

*If love doesn't cost time, comfort, resources, or reputation, it probably isn't love – just sentiment b/c compassion that costs nothing heals nothing.*

It's easy to click “like,” say “praying for you,” or feel sympathy from a distance. But the Samaritan teaches us that love shows up w/ receipts—time lost, money spent, plans changed. Convenience keeps compassion theoretical; sacrifice makes it transformative.

## S — STAY Engaged Until the Job Is Finished

The Samaritan's didn't stop w/ first aid, he continued into responsibility. He arranged care, paid the cost, and promised to return. He didn't help and vanish; he ensured the man's recovery was secured.

Biblical leadership isn't hit-and-run compassion; it's sustained responsibility. Compassion isn't complete until responsibility is assumed.

Truth is, most people will rush to the scene of a crisis, but far fewer will stay for the recovery. The GS teaches us that lasting influence shows up tomorrow – b/c love that reflects Jesus goes the distance.

One evening, a pastor received a late-night call to visit an elderly man who was dying alone in a hospital room – no family, no friends, no recognition. Just a nurse who didn't want him to pass w/out someone there. Expecting to pray and leave, when the pastor arrived, he saw a restless, uncomfortable man who was soiled from being unable to move – and something stopped him. So, he did what he hadn't planned to do. He rolled up his sleeves, grabbed a towel, and helped the nurse clean and reposition the man to make him comfortable. For over an hour, no sermons were preached, no titles announced, no audience watching – just quiet, faithful care. As the man finally settled, he whispered thru tears, “*Thanks for staying.*” Minutes later, he passed away peacefully. Reflecting

on that night, the pastor said, “*No one asked what my title was. No one cared about my credentials. In that moment, leadership looked like a towel—and a willingness to stay.*”

1. **Intentionally Slow Down to See People** – Resist hurry and building margin.
2. **Move Toward Need, not Away** – there will never a convenient time to lean into another person’s need.
3. **Do the Next Right Thing w/ What You Have** – You don’t need a platform or perfect plan – use what’s already in your hands—time, resources, skills, etc.
4. **Refuse Hit-and-Run Compassion** – follow up, check in, and take responsibility beyond the moment.