

Higher Ground

Blog Transcript for Monday, October 19, 2015 | No. 42

I did an interesting thing this weekend. However, the events leading up to it almost masked its reality. I placed a man in another church that I formerly pastored as their new pastor. It went quite well. This continues to confirm in me that relationships are everything, even in ministry. When I returned to Calvary for the evening service, I presented on the screen a few photos of the day's events. In that moment I realized what I had just done.

To date I have placed two pastors in two churches in our area. As I stood and shared with Calvary what that means, I only began to recognize it myself. Our church does have regional influence. It's not the size of the church (in terms of numbers) that matters, its the ability it has to impact people's lives. When we raise up, train, and place people in ministry, we are impacting communities far and wide. This has been the heritage of Calvary for many years. There are many people who were raised in our church who have gone on to impact many others with their lives and ministries. We should all be humbled that God would use us to change the lives of people, families, and churches throughout the nation.

As I stood before The River Sunday morning, they presented me with a card of appreciation. I believe they genuinely appreciated the labor Susan and I poured into The River over this past year. That appreciation continues on to our superintendent, Don Gifford, for his compassion and commitment to churches in smaller communities throughout our state. My respect, admiration, and prayers increase for him daily.

Just being involved in the transitions of two churches over the past two years caused quite a bit of strain in my life. I cannot imagine the numerous pastoral changes and church struggles our superintendent handles every day. This is the first step in my journey to having the heart of compassion the Lord said he would give me. Compassion issues forth not only out of a heart of love, but also from a mind of great understanding. This revelation made me figure out the answer to some people's questions about these other churches. The truth is, I care about people, I care about what they care about. This comes from understanding their hearts and their needs. This is the birthplace of compassion.

In Nehemiah it gives the explanation as to why the Lord did not give up on Israel when he took them out of Egypt and they turned away from him in the desert and in the Promised Land. It was his great compassion.

*"Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the desert.
By day the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path,
nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take."*

Nehemiah 9:19, NIV.

He repeats this in verse 28 when he says, *"In your compassion you delivered them time after time."* The Lord is merciful and forgiving, but the motivation behind his patience and tolerance is compassion. The Lord is our heavenly Father. What father would not continue to help *"time after time,"* even when his child goes astray?

*"As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him."*

Psalms 103:13, NIV.

When we mature in the Lord I believe the evidence of that maturity is not being judgmental but compassionate. We begin to understand how difficult it is to keep ourselves free from sin and deception in our own

lives. We begin to seek to help wherever we can, rather than to condemn and judge. I say this because I see so many believers who tout themselves to be mature still belittling and criticizing those around them. If you consider yourself mature in the Lord then where is the compassion for those who are not as mature as you? If we consider ourselves spiritual fathers, then how is it we fail to understand the needs of the spiritual children all around us. Why do we beat them up and not give them opportunity to grow and express their giftings in the Lord?

"The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made."

Psalms 145:9, NIV.

I will briefly state though that compassion has its limits. When continued *compassion* becomes *permission*, then we have forgotten its purpose in our lives. Having said that, *"The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."* (Numbers 14:18, NIV.) No one pulls anything over on the Lord. If you see someone who seems to be "getting away with it," it is because the Lord knows what we do not. Their day of repentance or restitution will come. However, God's first desire, as ours should be, is to show compassion on the weak and faltering.

*"You will arise and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come."*

Psalms 102:13, NIV.

Six times in Matthew alone it says Jesus had compassion on people. Matthew also states the reason:

*"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them,
because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."*

Matthew 9:36, NIV.

So what is the conclusion of this matter? Well, as I have said, the Lord is teaching me to be compassionate, in the same way he taught me to be generous. It was compassion for others that has carried me through this last year. I believe when God begins to teach you something, he is really just revealing to you what you already possess inside you by the power of the Holy Spirit. When times arise that you need these qualities is when you truly realize that you have them. It is what he has created us to be. On the other hand, stressful times also reveal those who don't have it—the pretenders, the hypocrites, the self-deceived. Sad, but true.

I'm not saying that I have become as compassionate as the Lord desires me to be, but I know now that compassion is truly a motivation behind some of the things I do (as it was for Jesus). Knowing this I will continue to allow compassion to grow in my life through developing a greater understanding of the needs in the lives of the people around me. May the Lord also use this compassion as a strength in your life to carry you through the difficult times of helping others.

Pastor Brian P. Jenkins

Lead Pastor | Calvary Assemblies of God

www.calvaryassembliesofgod.org | pastorbrianjenkins@gmail.com

