

The **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**
***“Barnabas”* Edition**

Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

Lesson Fourteen: A Leader's Need for Compassion

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CORE VALUE: The STABILITY for leading created by applying a balance of skills, character, and compassion.

BIBLE VERSE(S): Psalm 78:72 & Mathew 22:36-40

ONE SIMPLE TRUTH: The presence of compassion in a leader starts with a love for God that flows unconditionally to others.

APPLICATION: Fall deeper and more intimately in love with God. Go out of your way to love others, even the "unlovable".

Introduction:

An ENTRUSTED Leader is a person of vision who faithfully serves the investment God has "entrusted" in one's life by using skills, character, and compassion to guide others toward a common goal while upholding an ENTRUSTED Leader's Core Values. The concept of a leader creating stability for leading by applying a balance of skills, character, and compassion finds inspiration from the description of David found in Psalm 78:72: "David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them." (NIV)

David "shepherded" those he led. The Lord instructed David to lead Israel as a shepherd: "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler" (2 Samuel 5:2 NIV). Shepherding a flock involves feeding, nurturing, and protecting the sheep. Leading others involves understanding the needs of, caring for, and protecting those that follow. Leading as a shepherd produces trust, respect and loyalty within the leader – follower relationship.

The Hebrew term for “shepherded” found in Psalm 78:72 comes from the root word *raah*. Strong defines this term as follows: “**1** to pasture, tend, graze, feed... 1A1A to shepherd. 1A1B of ruler, teacher (fig). 1A1C of people as flock (fig)... **2** to associate with, be a friend of. 2A to associate with. 2B to be companions.”¹ The basic concept behind this word relates to the relationship a shepherd has with a flock of sheep. A good shepherd has compassion on the helplessness of his sheep and cares for them. In the Old Testament, *raah* describes how God intends a leader to view one’s relationship with those who follow. The idea of a leader of people being a shepherd communicates God’s desire for a leader to have compassion on his or her follows and care for them. *Raah* is used in Psalm 78:72 to describe David’s compassion for those he led.

The motif of a shepherd is used throughout the Bible to describe the type of leader God desires to use. “Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jeremiah 3:15 NIV) God wants shepherd-leaders to care for and lead his people. God desires to use selfless leaders who will compassionately care for the needs of others. In contrast, God warns of judgment on leaders who uncaringly use followers for selfish gain.

⁷“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, ⁹ therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I

¹James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), H7462.

will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.” (Ezekiel 34:7-10 NIV)

At the core of a shepherd-leader resides a compassionate heart. Compassion for others fuels the actions of a leader who cares for and protects his or her followers. Only a selfless leader with a heart oriented towards others will lead compassionately.

Perhaps, more than any other trait, people want to follow a leader who they believe truly cares for them. Followers long to trust that a leader has their best interest at heart. People want to follow a leader who displays compassion for others. The leader who truly empathizes with his followers wins their support. The individual who can relate to and sympathize with the struggles of others gains respect and loyalty. A leader cannot fake authentic compassion. This trait only flows from a selfless heart truly committed to serving others.

Sadly, present society remains short on compassion. We have become a selfish and self-centered people. Individuals ruthlessly protect their individual rights at the expense of others. A dog-eat-dog world exists where people fight to take care of “number one.” A sense of entitlement motivates many to take whatever they can grab from others. Feeling abandoned by their leaders people gravitate to self-protection. The rat races most people run leave them so wound-up that they lash out in anger at anyone in their way or who impedes their progress. Incredibly, such selfish and cold-hearted behavior seems as likely these days among people who claim to follow Jesus as those who do not. Even Christians seem to extend very little compassion to others outside the context of a ministry situation where compassion is expected. Let’s consider a definition of “compassion.”

What do we mean by the term “compassion”?

How do you define “compassion”? _____

What does it mean to you that a leader possesses “compassion”? _____

Describe how a leader’s compassion might impact his or her relationship with others?

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary says of the term “compassion”:

“sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it”² This definition contains two vital aspects necessary to understand what compassion means.

The first concerns an awareness of others. A good leader selflessly works on understanding the circumstances of his or her followers. By contrast a selfish leader never takes his or her eyes off self long enough to gain a clear picture of why his or her followers struggle. The second concerns a desire to impact the circumstances of one’s followers in a positive fashion. Leaders have to be able to relate to their followers. Leaders must desire to help them. Understanding the needs of others and desiring to relieve sufferings combine to generate compassion.

Selfless love resides at the heart of compassion for others. Extending compassion requires one to act on love for another with no expectation of personal gain.

Unconditional love such appears unnatural for humans. True compassion for others

²Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

extends from a heart that overflows with the love of God. Allowing God to love others through you becomes the key to having compassion for them. Read Matthew 22:37-39 and answer the following questions.

”Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (NIV)

Questions of the Biblical Text³ (Matthew 22:37-39)

What does it mean to “Love” God with all your heart, soul, and mind?

What actions can you take to increase your “Love” for God?

Explain what, if any, correlation might exist between time spent alone with God and the depth of “Love” one might have for God is his or her heart, soul, and mind.

Explain what relationship might exist, if any, between a person loving God with all his or her heart, soul, and mind, and one’s ability to extend love and compassion to others?

³ Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader’s Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

What impact do you see on a leader's relationship with one's followers as a result of the depth of love the leader has for God in his or her heart, soul, and mind?

What does it mean to "Love" other people as you love yourself?

Is real love simply an emotion or does love involve actions? Explain your answer.

Who do you think might qualify as a "neighbor" of yours whom Jesus wants you to love?

By definition, compassion requires an understanding of the circumstances that another person faces. What initiatives can you take to gain a greater understanding of the "neighbors" currently living around you?

Discuss what, if any, correlation you see between the depth of a person's love for God and a person who initiates loving actions towards others.

What impact do you see on a leader's relationship with his or her followers as a result of a leader who initiates loving actions that clearly indicate compassion for others?

Commentary

Christian scholars often refer to Matthew 22:37-39 as "The Great Commandment." Jesus spoke these words in response to the question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matthew 22:36 NIV) Jesus answered by quoting two seemingly unrelated Old Testament passages. The first passage quoted by Jesus comes from Deuteronomy 6:5: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (NIV) The second quote comes from Leviticus 19:18: "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." (NIV)

The Deuteronomy passage quoted by Jesus became well known by the people of Israel in his day. Students of the Old Testament commonly call this passage of scripture "The Shema." The emphasis of this Old Testament scripture involves a person's devotion to God with the totality of one's being and commitment. Loving God with all one's heart, soul, and mind depicts a relationship with God of the most intimate nature. Jesus begins his answer with a statement that marked a person's love for God as the most important relationship in every human's life. This love should permeate every bit of a person's being. The health and vitality of every human relationship depends on the health and vitality of our relationship with God.

One might consider the Leviticus passage quoted by Jesus as more obscure than the Deuteronomy passage. This verse resides in the middle of a long list of laws Moses gave to Israel which describe what holy living looks like. The Deuteronomy and Leviticus passages were not passages commonly linked together as Jesus did in Matthew 22. In doing so, Jesus essentially summed up the Ten Commandments and the subsequent laws of Israel. Love for God and love for others lies at the foundation of all Old Testament scriptures according to Jesus. Consider Walvoord's and Zuck's comments on Matthew 22:34-40:

22:34-40. When **the Pharisees** heard **that Jesus had** answered **the Sadducees**, they quickly sent a representative, a well-versed **expert in the Law**, to Jesus with a **question . . . Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?** This question was being debated among the religious leaders at the time and various commandments were being championed as the greatest. Jesus' quick reply summarized the entire Decalogue. He replied that the **greatest commandment** is to **love the Lord . . . God with all one's heart . . . soul, and . . . mind** (cf. Deut. 6:5). He added that **the second commandment** is to **love one's neighbor as oneself** (cf. Lev. 19:18). The first summarizes the first table of the Law, and the second summarizes the second table. Jesus said, **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments**, that is, all the Old Testament develops and amplifies these two points: love for God and love for others, who are made in God's image.⁴

From Jesus' connection of these two Old Testament passages, one concludes that a total and intimate love relationship with God becomes the starting point for all healthy human interaction. When a person loves God with all his or her heart, soul, and mind, he or she begins to see others as God sees them. As love for God grows in a person, love naturally overflows to others. The truth remains that God begins to love others through

⁴John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:73.

the person that loves God. A person's capacity to love others directly relates to one's love for God. Loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind, does two things that impact our love for others. First, love of God shifts the focus of one's life from self to God and others. Secondly, loving God generates a reservoir of God's love that naturally flows to others.

Love for God grows in a person's heart the better one gets to know him. Activities such as Bible study, prayer, worship, and fellowship with other Christians expand one's understanding of God's love and his ways. The more time a person spends alone with God, the better one knows him and the deeper love grows. The leader who truly loves God with all his or her heart, souls, and mind will extend love and compassion to those who follow. Consider the examples of David and Jesus who both sought time alone with God the Father.

David

In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait in expectation. (Psalm 5:3 NIV)

Jesus

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark,
Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a
solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35 NIV)

Humans by nature love self. People typically order their lives to satisfy any number of real or perceived needs. Humans by nature approach relationships with others selfishly. Most people's first thought involves what they can get from a relationship with other people that might satisfy some need or desire. Jesus described the human heart as follows: "For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality,

theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. (Mark 7:21-22 NIV) For the most part, this list describes unloving acts of human interaction that one initiates at the expense of another.

God created mankind in his image. Consequently, we do have the capacity to love others and extend compassion to them. Sin, however, inhibits man's ability to love others selflessly. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ liberates a person from the bondage of sin that inhibits love and compassion. Loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind opens the gate for God to love others through us selflessly and compassionately.

Most people have little trouble loving "self." We order the priorities and actions of our lives to serve selfish interests. We may not always love what we do, but, typically, deep down inside we love ourselves. By nature, people tend to love themselves first while all other priorities fall in line after self. Loving others involves choosing to put the needs of others ahead of our natural inclination to place self first.

Loving others as yourself involves more than mere emotions. This type of love requires a reordering of priorities. Loving others takes initiating actions on the behalf of others in order to meet their needs.

Who qualifies to be your "neighbor"? Who does Jesus expect us to love as ourselves? The Greek term for neighbor used by Jesus was *plasion*. Consider how Strong describes who our neighbors are: "...according to Christ, any other man irrespective of race or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet."⁵ Anyone we happen to meet or associate with during the normal course of a day qualifies as our neighbor.

⁵James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G4139.

Certainly, for the leader every single follower qualifies as a “neighbor” that Jesus commands us to love.

We have already discussed that the depth of a person’s love for God increases in proportion to the time invested in getting to know God and his ways better. The same is true for human to human relationships. The more time a leader invests in getting to know another person, the greater the understanding he or she has for them. The better a leader understands others, the greater his or her capacity for love becomes.

Application

Jesus’ teaching on The Great Commandment has very practical application to the leader-follower relationship. An ENTRUSTED leader needs compassion to serve as a balance to one’s skills and character. True compassion for one’s followers starts with and cannot be separated from a loving relationship with God. The more a leader fosters intimacy with God, the more he or she is able to display the love of God to one’s followers. Prayer, worship, and Bible study deepen a leader’s relationship and intimacy with God; which in turn increases one’s compassion for others. Learn how to love God with every bit of your being.

Compassion requires an understanding of the needs of others. Every follower qualifies as a leader’s neighbor. Compassionate leaders take time and initiate the action necessary to develop a clear understanding of the needs of his or her followers. Compassion does not end with understanding, but requires action. The compassionate leader not only understands the needs of one’s followers, he or she seeks to serve them by satisfying these needs. Learn how to love your neighbors like you love yourself.

Conclusion

The presence of compassion in a leader starts with a love for God that flows unconditionally to others. How a leader treats his or her followers dramatically impacts the leader-follower relationship. God desires a leader to nurture, care for, and protect followers just as a shepherd does for his or her flock. A compassionate leader's actions indicate understanding, empathy, and kindness towards followers. Leaders who display compassion typically find that their followers return their love with loyalty, respect, and trust.