

Five Clear Ways to Lead from a Place of Love

The love of God is both incomprehensible and incomparable.

It's difficult to fully understand the depth of God's love. There's no end to it. It's a love that surpasses knowledge. (Ephesians 3:19)

Paul prays that [we] have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide, and long, and high, and deep is the love of Christ." (Ephesians 3:18)

A perfect love can't be measured, or fully understood, but it can be experienced. It can be expressed, and that's what God asks of us, to lead with this kind of love.

A love that is incomparable – "the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7)

It's because of His great love for us (Ephesians 2:4) that we do what we do.

I don't know about you, but that can be an overwhelming thought at times.

I have to rest in His grace to know that He can use me to lead based on a motive of love. My love is so imperfect, yet God's love says this is exactly what he wants me to do.

There are two things that help me grasp something as grand as this.

1. God reminds me that it's not about me and my love. It's about God and His love. And if I genuinely seek to express God's love, He helps fill in where I fall short. That doesn't remove my humanity, it elevates God's love and power.
2. If I remain diligently focused on His purpose, that helps keep my motives pure.

It's easy for any leader to get caught up in the everyday responsibilities from first time visitors to staffing issues and end up missing the big picture.

The following paragraph is a devotional I wrote in an attempt to capture a succinct biblical summary of God's purpose for the church and the nature of our calling.

It helps me keep focused on the big picture.

Our salvation (Eph 2:5,8), and the work that we have been divinely prepared for (Eph 2:10), was established in love (Eph 2:4; 3:17), according to His eternal purpose (Eph 3:11). And now, through the church (Eph 3:10), and with his power (Eph 3:20), we are called to know this love, (Eph. 3:19) and lead with this love, to fulfill His purpose.

The church does not exist for itself, but for God's glory. The purpose (Eph 3:11) is the

revelation of God by reconciliation through Christ. My leadership can't exist for itself, it has to be for God.

So how do we carry the love of God and His purpose into our leadership?

How do we make this practical?

We can start by acknowledging the temptation (not intention) to lead from a platform of power rather than a platform of love.

Love keeps us on purpose and helps throttle power.

It's easy to veer off purpose and occasionally misuse authority. I'm not suggesting something of malice or intentionality, but things like overwork, pride, pressure, insecurity, jealousy, fear etc., are common every day realities that can temporarily pull us off the purpose that God's Word has made clear.

A misuse of power or authority is not a reflection of God's love. It might be faster, but it doesn't work in the long run.

God's biblical picture of love helps us stay on track.

The following 5 expressions of God's love are core to you and I leading the way Jesus models for us.

They help us as we cast vision, create strategy, and drive forward to make progress – but doing it the way He has designed while remaining focused on His purpose.

5 practical expressions of love in leadership:

1) Grace

The body of Christ depends on relationships working in a redemptive manner. When there is conflict, giving the benefit of the doubt and extending forgiveness if needed is foundational to loving leadership. It's not always easy, but it's the model Christ set for us.

Disagreements within the church have existed since the early church.

From a theological division to someone is mad about the kind of coffee the church serves, conflict is not new. But it's still up to us as leaders to do everything we can to resolve conflict in order to maintain strong and healthy relationships without sacrificing the purpose.

That's the key. It's not about passivity or a people pleasing posture, that loses ground for the Kingdom, it's about grace while staying on God's purpose.

2) Truth

We all know the scripture about speaking the truth in love. I love that passage because it's so practical.

It's easy to use the grace we just talked about in order to avoid the tough conversations that are necessary in leadership.

Grace isn't an invitation to lower standards, it's an obligation to speak truth.

God's love is anything but soft and weak. It's strong, courageous and requires the strength to say what needs to be said.

How we say it makes all the difference. Truth doesn't require force or anger to back it up, truth can stand on its own. Truth backed up by love is a leader's greatest ally.

3) Generosity

Generosity is often thought of first in connection to finances. When someone is generous, they give freely of their financial resources. But there is so much more to generosity. In fact, it's far more a spirit within you, a disposition and a way of life than merely how much money you give.

Generosity is connected to giving your time, expressing kind words of encouragement, and opening doors of opportunity. A generous leader is quick to offer help, wisdom and good ideas, and loves others sincerely.

4) Compassion

As a young leader, compassion was difficult for me. I didn't want to slow down. There was so much to do. But as I've matured, (and still have much to learn), it's become abundantly clear how close compassion is to God's heart.

I've learned that compassion can't be expressed on the run. You have to stop to express care. It doesn't mean if you don't stop that you don't care, but it does mean that no one will know you care and experience the love you have for them, if you don't slow down at the appropriate moments.

That's a real tension for a busy leader. You can't stop for every need, but you and I must remain attentive to God so that we can tend to the moments of compassion He needs us to attend to.

5) Sacrifice

Sacrifice is at the core of God's love. He gave His son for our eternal life. But how can we possibly model that example? The purity and commitment of that love is staggering, which can

take us back to that overwhelmed feeling I mentioned in the beginning of this post.

The idea of sacrifice can get weird quick if we are not careful. It's not about a works-based leadership. It's not about performance or getting attention because we work so hard.

Sacrifice simply acknowledges that love always gives more than it takes. That's enough. Personally, that's a lifetime challenge for me to attain as a leader. But God helps me find the joy in it, the joy in serving others and seeing people live better lives – more closely connected God.

So, how about you?

Which ones are you doing well? When you think about grace, truth, generosity, compassion and sacrifice, where are you strong? What needs improvement?

> [Read more from Dan.](#)
