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Reclaiming Compassion: How Compassion Moved from Virtue to Benefit, and How to Move it Back

Jon Talbert
George Fox University

This research is a product of the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

RECLAIMING COMPASSION

HOW COMPASSION MOVED FROM VIRTUE TO BENEFIT,
AND HOW TO MOVE IT BACK

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JON TALBERT

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

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George Fox Evangelical Seminary
George Fox University
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Jon Talbert

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on October 28, 2016
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Semiotics and Future Studies.

Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: Ron Clark, DMin

Secondary Advisor: AJ Swoboda, PhD

Lead Mentor: Leonard I. Sweet, PhD

Expert Advisor: Kimberly Shumate

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To my forever sweetness, Cheri

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the growing movement of compassion that has developed and emerged in the 21st century and its impact on the current landscape of society. Section 1 takes a closer look at how compassion moved from a virtue to a benefit, and the expectation of reward that subtly crept into the developmental psyche of the culture. Section 2 traces that benefit-mentality into the seven domains of culture, including: Business, Faith, Government, Social Sector, Education, Arts & Entertainment, and the Media. Section 3 introduces a new line of thinking that reestablishes compassion to its purest form by identifying the makeup of individuals, his or her unique gifting and motivation, and then empowering him or her into a world that desperately needs a hero.

SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

There is something about genuine demonstrations of compassion that draws people into the story. Compassion is, at its core, that raw, empathetic emotion one feels when becoming aware of someone who is suffering or in need, followed by an intuitive desire to respond in kind.

Just hearing the words, “*Move that Bus!*” elicits an emotional trigger for millions of Americans who witnessed one of ABC’s *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* episodes of Ty Pennington revealing a brand new home to a family in need. Viewer ratings over the show’s nine seasons illustrate the allure of a story including, suffering, empathy, and active compassion.¹ But popular TV shows only scratch the surface of what has really happened in Western culture over the past 25 years as it relates to the rise of popularity in compassion.

Since the mid 1980’s, the United States has become more aware of suffering and brokenness within its own borders and abroad. The evolution of TV and the Internet has made the issues around the world more evident and hard to ignore, and the rise of global social media has amplified the idea of *cause*, thus allowing the general populace to not only see opportunities around them, but to actively do something about it. From the 80’s to today, the idea of philanthropy, compassion, and service has taken center stage in a media-saturated society. The evolution of marketing, broadcasting, and social media has

¹ *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* had 8 of its 9 seasons ranked in the top 50 shows, according to Nielson Rating.

been hugely instrumental in the rise of giving to disasters globally, volunteerism has increased and the establishment of nonprofits has risen significantly over the past 10 years.²

The world has witnessed the global response of disasters, both natural and man-made, that lends evidence to the fact that the world is closer and more connected than any other time in history. Many companies have established a *corporate social responsibility* value within their business model that enables their employees to *give back* time by volunteering in their local community. Faith communities have moved their ministries outside of the walls of their respective places of worship to the needs of the surrounding community. Entertainers and popular TV shows have leveraged their platforms to raise awareness or to fund a particular cause they are passionate about. Even the NFL, which boasts of the highest ratings of all professional sports, outfits its coaches and players with bright pink uniform accessories (gloves, cleats, towels, etc.), to showcase Breast Cancer Awareness during the month of October.³

More compassion, more giving, more volunteerism, more awareness than any other time in history, seem to be real positive signs of active compassion within the consciousness of society. But like anything that is good, has *too much* of a good thing caused compassion to become blasé?

² “Quick Facts about Non-Profits,” *National Center for Charitable Statistics*, accessed October 2014, <http://nccs.urban.org/statistics/quickfacts.cfm>.

³ “A Crucial Catch,” *National Football League*, accessed October 2014, <http://NFL.com/pink>.

Compassion: A Good Thing Gone Bad

It does not seem that something like *helping others*, in its purest form, could actually become a bad thing. Many of the writings of ancient wisdom literature, both philosophical and religious, point to the fact that serving others captures the heart and purpose of human existence.⁴ But like anything good, intuitively right, or moral, comes with a flipside where the value has the potential to become ineffective.

For some values that lose their effectiveness, it is easy to identify and self correct because of its apparent contrast when things go bad. But that is not the case with compassion.

Compassion, with moderately impure motives, still looks and feels like compassion and becomes difficult to identify when it drifts from its intended virtue. Even in the ancient story of the early church, Annanias and Saphira who gave generously in the audience of others, were not corrected until a higher power intervened and exposed their subtly tainted motivation demonstrating just how easy it is for a good act to be improper.⁵ Motives, attitudes, and actions can easily subvert the original idea of compassion to some degree. Some are more blatant and obvious than others, but for the general populace, there is a growing shift in the motive of compassion that has been subtly souring the story being told.

⁴ Galatians 6:2 NIV. “*Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.*”

⁵ Acts 5:1-11 NIV.

Benefit vs. Virtue

It turns out that the struggle between virtue and benefit has occurred for many centuries. While the philosophical framework for the virtue has always existed, the offerings of personal benefit are an ever-changing enticement that allures and animates our thinking, causing the option of virtue to go almost unnoticed. From our earliest memory of *benefit* to the rise of multi-million dollar *brand awareness* claiming “social responsibility,” the draw of benefit captures our attention and taps into a core attitude that centers on self-advancement, thus placing our own interests over the interests of others. Throughout history great men have clarified the deep meaning of otherness with often quoted phrases, such as:

Do not look out for your own interests, but also the interests of others.

— The Apostle Paul⁶

You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.

— John Bunyan⁷

Both the apostle Paul and John Bunyan are two of the many writers, poets, songwriters, theologians, teachers, and thought leaders expounding the idea serving mankind with a pure motive.

In a recent Washington Post article entitled “*Why merit pay doesn't work for teachers,*” columnist Valerie Strauss argues that while the notion of merit pay for teachers is the “hot new idea of the moment” that “teachers vigorously oppose merit pay

⁶ Philippians 2:4 NIV.

⁷ “John Bunyan,” *GoodReads*, accessed October 2014, https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/16244.John_Bunyan.

even though they are the ones who are supposed to reap the rewards.”⁸ Strauss goes on to argue that even the best teachers recognize that the *merit* benefit they would receive undermines the culture of the school with its emerging value of collaboration. The shift towards benefit seeps into the mindset of compassion, eroding its foundation of virtue, moving the attitude to an ever-increasing expectation of reward.

Expectation of Reward

In the early 1930s, General Mills sought to create an advertising campaign that would brand their new breakfast cereal. Their local market included advertisements at the downtown ballpark, known as Nicolette Park where the minor league Minneapolis Millers played. Around the outfield fence was one of their large billboard advertisements that prominently displayed General Mills’ new breakfast cereal *Wheaties*. Knox Reeves, an ad executive on the *Wheaties* account, was asked what else could be printed on the billboard sign, and it was then that “he took out a pad and pencil, sketched a *Wheaties* box, thought for a moment, and then printed *Wheaties - The Breakfast of Champions*.”⁹

The popular marketing phrase, “The Breakfast of Champions,” along with the endorsement of top athletes, who found their faces on the cover of an orange cereal box, became an iconic symbol in American culture over the next 80 years.¹⁰ Those who ate the cereal were elite athletes and the nutritional value of the General Mills product rewarded

⁸ Valerie Strauss, “Why Merit Pay for Teachers Doesn’t Work,” *The Washington Post* (2011): 65.

⁹ “General Mills history of innovation: *Wheaties* – The Breakfast of Champions,” *Wheaties General Mills*, accessed October 2014, http://generalmills.com/~media/Files/history/hist_wheaties.ashx.

¹⁰ “Athletes Who Have Appeared On *Wheaties* Boxes,” *Ranker*, accessed October 2014, <http://www.ranker.com/list/athletes-who-have-appeared-on-wheaties-boxes/arthur-roderick>.

athletes in their sport, and if the average American wanted to excel in *their* sport, then they should eat Wheaties too. “Better eat your Wheaties” became a common phrase for moms and coaches across the country. This marketing phenomenon is a classic example of how western culture becomes so inclined towards condition-response. Marketing experts have capitalized on Pavlovian tendencies that are common to all, using a technique called “classic conditioning.” Merriam-Webster defines it as “conditioning in which the conditioned stimulus (as the sound of a bell) is paired with and precedes the unconditioned stimulus (as the sight of food) until the conditioned stimulus alone is sufficient to elicit the response.”¹¹

The supposition that Wheaties makes you a better athlete, or the myth that spinach makes one stronger, or that Nike’s Air Jordan shoes help athletes jump higher, are all tied to what marketers have scripted in one’s presuppositions about how one *feels* about those products. The associations a person feels affects the assumption he makes about himself. The idea of *feeling* better, stronger, or jumping higher, in connection to regular consumption of these products is exactly the conditioning target that marketers are trying to hit. Classical conditioning takes root, therefore *if* you eat Wheaties, *then* you will be stronger ... at least that’s what the product leads people to believe.

The ubiquity of “if/then” statements framing rewards and incentives towards certain behavior has certainly and unknowingly crept into the behavior development of adolescents, creating an unmitigated expectation of reward. Parents regularly use “if/then” classical conditioning techniques in raising their children, as do businesses with employee production incentives. The motivational methodology of the stick and carrot

¹¹ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, s.v. “Pavlovian,” accessed October 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pavlovian>.

has existed since the beginning of time, and has been used both consciously and subconsciously to transform behavior and business production. But as Daniel Pink, author of *Drive*, wrote, "... extrinsic motivators – especially tangible, "if-then" ones – can also reduce the depth of our thinking. They can focus our sights on only what's immediately before us rather than what's off in the distance."¹²

The mindset associated with serving others has been shaped by "if/then" conditional response behavior modification that has blurred the understanding of what motivates people to demonstrate genuine altruistic compassion. The intrinsic virtue inherent within humanity to demonstrate compassion becomes crowded-out by a field of rewards that cheapens compassion from what it could become. Our reward-based culture has traded virtue for a *personal prize*, or as Pink puts it: "In environments where extrinsic rewards are most salient, many people work only to the point that triggers the reward – and no further."¹³

Good *Karma*

The *personal prize* is masked in a few forms that make it difficult to identify as the substitute for virtue. The first personal reward is good *karma*. *Karma* is that simple, cyclical idea that good (or bad deeds) done will eventually find their way back to the person doing them in this life (or another life). While *karma* finds its roots in ancient Hindu culture, many people embrace the idea that *karma* does exist, and it influences their behavior as they interact with others.

¹² Daniel Pink, *Drive* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2009), 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Christianity illustrates a similar idea to *karma* with its reference to the laws of the harvest. The apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians offers a warning that is similar to the idea of *karma* through farming metaphors. He states "a man reaps what he sows"¹⁴ as it relates to his behavior and investment in things that are of the "flesh" or the "Spirit."

Regardless of the differences between *karma* and the Laws of the Harvest, the idea of doing good to others for a *karma*-induced kickback subtly taints the purity of the virtue. Even Jesus trumps the idea of *karma* as a motivation for loving others. He qualifies the "how" in the question: "How would you like someone to treat you?" in the *Sermon on the Mount*. Jesus admonishes the crowds to consider treating others as they would want to be treated.

*"Do to others as you would have them do to you."*¹⁵
~Jesus

But even Jesus taps into an internal virtue as he encourages his listeners to look far past the personal benefit and do good to those whom, in fact, intend you harm. Jesus steps out of the flow of *karma* into hostile territory when he says, "Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."¹⁶ The benefit is even questioned when he goes deeper in his line of thought, as he asks, "*What credit is that to you if you lend and hope to receive back?*"¹⁷

¹⁴ Galatians 6:7 NIV.

¹⁵ Luke 6:31 NIV.

¹⁶ Luke 6:27-28 NIV.

¹⁷ Luke 6:34 NIV.

The underlying premise behind the law of *karma* is that “*every action generates a force of energy that returns to us in like kind,*”¹⁸ and while the outworking of how one would approach *karma* is good for mankind, its motivating factor has some “in-kind” favor that benefits the originator. This is what makes Jesus’ comments in his *Sermon on the Mount* so provocative. What if goodness is never returned? What if goodness brings about negative retribution? This line of action spoils the fruit of *karma* and requires motivation to find itself in the deeply hidden recesses of virtue where goodness happens for goodness’ sake.

Good Feelings

Another personal prize that is connected to condition response is the idea of *good feelings*. A common phrase that is said after a service project or helping someone on the street is “I give because it makes me feel good about myself.” The emotional rush connected to service is evidenced even in the advertisement and motivational messaging used by organizations targeting individuals with *feel good* opportunities.

The Red Cross, for example, fine-tuned their blood donation campaigns with a *feel good* personal prize to inspire people to donate blood. “*The need is constant, the gratification is instant. Give Blood!*”¹⁹ Their campaign subheading communicates the *urgency* of the need alongside the *immediacy* of the reward, all of which plays directly into the personal prize of compassion. The Red Cross has moved beyond savvy

¹⁸ “The Law of Karma or Cause and Effect,” *The Chopra Center*, accessed October 2014, <http://www.chopra.com/articles/the-law-of-karma-or-cause-and-effect>.

¹⁹ “The need is constant. The gratification is instant. Give Blood.™,” *American Red Cross*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.redcrossblood.org>.

marketing ploys and sticky language to the actual cutting-edge science and makeup of the human brain.

The emotional *feel good* response has more to do with science and the biological makeup of the human brain than just slick marketing. In the newly developed field of Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), researchers have measured and mapped brain activity and its patterns of blood flow as it relates to various external stimuli. In an article published by the Harvard Business School faculty, scientists show similar recurring patterns of blood and oxygen levels as the brain is exposed to both happiness and charity. The article determines that, “*at the most basic level, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) evidence shows that giving money to charity leads to similar brain activity in regions implicated in the experience of pleasure and reward*”²⁰

Science, in fact, proves that compassion expressed towards others touches off pleasure points in the brain. As one teenager puts it, “community service can be a great self-esteem lifter.”²¹

One cannot fight the post-service, *feel-good* rush that accompanies good deeds, nor would one want to. Those endorphins expressed in the brain can have healing effects on one’s physical condition. Cami Walker, a Los Angeles-based business consultant, was diagnosed with MS shortly after her wedding day. She spent most of her days in pain and depression until a friend challenged her to shift her emotional energies to “giving

²⁰ Lalin Anik, Lara B. Aknin, Michael I. Norton, Elizabeth W. Dunn, “Feeling Good about Giving: The Benefits (and Costs) of Self-Interested Charitable Behavior,” *Harvard Business School* (2009): 8.

²¹ “Community Service and Teens,” *Ms. M’s Lit Corner*, September 20, 2012, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://afnorthliterature.weebly.com/language-arts-9-blog/september-20th-2012>.

something away, every day, for 29 days.”²² To the amazement of medical professionals treating her condition, Walker focused her attentions on random acts of kindness and serving others.

On the improvement of her condition, Walker resolves that altruism “... changed my thinking, which in turn had a positive impact on my health. It let me look at what I’m capable of every day. It helps shift my attention, because I was just completely obsessed with my misery. I really do believe that there’s great power in my thoughts, and if I’m spending all day obsessing about how I can’t walk, I’m just inviting more frustration into my life.”²³

Cami Walker’s story is both inspiring and motivating as she has encouraged thousands to follow her idea through her book *29 Gifts*.²⁴ However, the intention to *feel good* (or feel better) about oneself, can subtly move into the psychological driver’s seat of motivation and steer the vehicle of compassion down a road where both narcissism and personal gain intersect. The attention given to the results of *feeling happy* rather than to the reward of *serving others* creates a chasm of disconnect between emotion and motivation. The pursuit of the personal reward called *happiness* can be detrimental and deceiving.

As one group of researchers put it, “one corollary of the happiness zeitgeist is that people should strive for happiness whenever and however possible.” They go on to conclude, “that the pursuit of happiness does not always appear to lead to desired

²² “The Giving Prescription,” *Oprah.com*, Lynn Okura, November 20, 2009, accessed November 2014, <http://www.oprah.com/spirit/Cami-Walkers-29-Gifts>.

²³ “Giving Gives Woman with MS a New Outlook.” *National MS Society*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/online-community/personal-stories/cami-walker/index.aspx>.

²⁴ *29 Gifts Book*, *29 Gifts*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.29giftsbook.com>.

outcomes. In fact, at times, the more people pursue happiness, the less they seem to be able to obtain it.”²⁵

Good Rewards

A third personal prize of compassion comes in the form of *good rewards*. The tangible reward offered for acts of service towards others turns the pure act of serving on its side for the sake of the accolade. Research has shown that incentivizing good deeds, by offering an external reward for an internally motivated behavior, becomes difficult to move back to good behavior for good behaviors sake.

The idea behind good rewards for good behavior became amplified with every child from 1862 to present day with the evolution of Santa Claus in American culture. Thomas Nast (1840-1902), a caricaturist and editorial cartoonist for *Harpers Weekly* animated and embellished the character of Santa Claus in a series of drawings and engravings that were featured in the popular magazine from 1862 to 1886. Before Nast’s depictions, the prevailing idea of Christmas was that all kids would receive gifts from Santa. That concept soon changed as Nast conceived the idea that Santa would be “watching children through his telescope to see if they were being naughty or nice,”²⁶ and that bad children didn't get gifts from Santa.

In 1934, songwriters Fred Coats and Helen Gillespie built upon Nast’s *performance-based* Santa in the lyrics of their hit song “Santa Claus is Comin’ to

²⁵ Jane Gruber, Iris B Mauss, and Maya Tamir, “A Dark Side of Happiness? How, When, and Why Happiness is Not Always Good,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (2011): 226.

²⁶ “Santa Claus and Thomas Nast,” *Every Life Has a Story*, Lynda Pflueger, LyndaPflueger.com, accessed December 2016, <http://www.lyndapflueger.com/?p=86>.

Town.”²⁷ The understanding that Santa was watching children during their sleeping and waking hours,²⁸ as well as keeping frequently checked *lists*, thus allowing him to reward naughty and nice behavior accordingly gave huge incentive to be good “for goodness sake.”²⁹

The pursuit of good rewards as incentive for good deeds traces its way from scouting merit badges³⁰ to schooling Gold Stars, none of which are inherently wrong. An unexpected acknowledgement or reward can pay out huge dividends in the long run when the incentive, in its purest sense, is truly rewarding a recipient for a job well done. But when tangible enticements become the *goal* and the charitable act the *means*, compassion becomes the cart that pulls the horse.

Good Advancement

A fourth personal prize is the notion of *Good Advancement*. Similar to Good Rewards, advancement has become less about a tangible reward and more about the sequential progression of one’s personal situation, opportunity, or success. There are a

²⁷ “Santa Claus is Coming to Town,” *The Hymns and Carols of Christmas*, accessed November 2014, http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/santa-claus-is-coming-to-town-notes.htm.

²⁸ Note: Today, Santa would be in violation of a number of laws and ordinances given the activities of monitoring children and intrusion. For a complete list of violations on Santa go to Law and the Multiverse website article, “Santa and Restraining Orders” <http://lawandthemultiverse.com/2012/12/26/santa-and-restraining-orders/>.

²⁹ “Santa Claus is Coming to Town,” *Metro Lyrics*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/santa-claus-is-coming-to-town-lyrics-christmas-song.html>.

³⁰ “Merit Badges,” *Boy Scouts Of America*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.scouting.org/meritbadges.aspx>.

number of those who leverage compassion and service for their own advantage and use the opportunity to function as a personal means of advancement.

One such advancement subtly emerged in 1966 when county judges in Alameda, California were looking for alternative sentencing options for convicted offenders of traffic violations. Instead of exacerbating an already over-crowding of county jails, sentencing convicted criminal activity to community service became a new and widely popular option. “The practice spread across the country in the late 1970’s,” writes *Sensible Justice* author David Anderson. “Sentencing offenders to unpaid labor inspired some judges' creativity as they combined community service with jail or a fine or both.”³¹

Not only did alternative sentencing alter incarceration numbers, it gave back to the very community it violated. Anderson writes, “Community service sentencing provided free labor for public works or nonprofit groups, held offenders accountable for the damage they caused, and perhaps even left them with some new job or life skills to help keep them out of further trouble.”³² The concepts of alternative sentencing are rooted in ancient practices of restorative justice,³³ where the convicted restore, repair, and refund the victim (or community) for the offenses committed.

Restorative justice community-service hours became problematic over time. Many justices found the option of alternative sentencing appealing, but state and federal cutbacks caused shifting oversight, along with no sentencing standardization³⁴ and many

³¹ David Anderson, *Sensible Justice* (New York, NY: The New Press, 1998), 7.

³² Ibid.

³³ Exodus 22, Leviticus, Numbers 5, Luke 19 NIV.

³⁴ Alternative sentencing has a range of bizarre punishments designed to shame offenders, but are coming under scrutiny within the legal system. For more information on bizarre punishments, go to [Creative Punishments the New Trend in Criminal Justice](#)

convicted felons (and notable celebrities) viewed alternative sentencing as *Get Out of Jail Free* cards.

Alternative sentencing follow-through came down to the oversight of the parole officer who would list community service options that were available, rather than strategically aligning the punishment to fit the crime. The problem arose when the hours and community services performed to satisfy sentencing requirements matched the hours and community services that would satisfy university entrance requirements. In his *Time* magazine article “Why Community Service Should Not be a Punishment” Eric Liu writes, “The real issue is what this practice does to service itself. It broadcasts an image of community work as unpleasant and to be avoided – something that in fact must be compelled. By making service a lesser and often laughable form of punishment, we utterly degrade it.”³⁵

The similarity between both service requirements lends evidence to a larger problem. Compassion and community service become problematic when the priority is personal advancement. The paradox within a work crew on the side of the road is that one may be serving time to amend a DUI, while the other is serving time to improve a GPA. Whether the work performed is for academic placement or incarceration avoidance, the idea of serving someone with an undercurrent of self-serving advancement loses its altruistic true north.

Incentivizing compassion with the expectation of reward – be it *karma*, feeling good, accolades, or personal advancement – spoils the true heart of compassion, justice, community service, generosity, or empathy on any level, and thus prevents the goodness

³⁵ Eric Liu, “Why Community Service Should Not Be A Punishment,” *Time* (2012): 48.

of mankind from going deep or wide in their thinking and responding to the needs of humanity for the long haul. As Pink puts it, “Rewards, we’ve seen, can limit the breadth of our thinking. But extrinsic motivators – especially tangible, “if-then” ones – can also reduce the depth of our thinking. They can focus our sights on only what’s immediately before us rather than what’s off in the distance.”³⁶

When the reward is *not* the motivation, ironically, the more abundant the reward becomes. LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman is quoted as saying: “It seems counterintuitive, but the more altruistic your attitude, the more benefits you will gain from the relationship. If you set out to help others, you will rapidly reinforce your own reputation and expand your universe of possibilities.”³⁷

Poisoned

Of the cultural nuances that have impacted the potency of compassion, none has poisoned the landscape and caused more emotional disconnect than consumerism, individualism, and prejudice. The hardened, unfeeling nature that exists towards those in need has resulted from collective poisons that have surfaced in popular culture; the evangelical church is not immune from this callous-causing poison either, but rather is just as contaminated as the rest of the world. As Darrell Guder writes, “We share the

³⁶ Pink, 56.

³⁷ Adam Grant, *Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success* (New York, NY: Viking, 2013), 31.

conviction of a growing consensus of Christians in North America that the problem is much more deeply rooted.”³⁸

Toxins

The physical body is harmed through the ingesting of toxic poisons, so also is there danger when human culture is poisoned by toxic attitudes. One of the main cultural toxins has been the rise of consumerism. Many Americans have unknowingly ingested a cultural toxin that, for many years, has wreaked havoc on compassion in the 21st century.

In the aftermath of the Great Depression and two World Wars, the United States government cultivated a new path for economic recovery that facilitated a snowballing consumer mindset into the post-war era. During his presidential campaign speech in 1932, Franklin Roosevelt said, “I believe that we are at the threshold of a fundamental change in our popular economic thought, that in the future we are going to think less about the producer and more about the consumer.”³⁹ While this consumerist mindset led the valiant public duty of the Greatest Generation⁴⁰ for post-war recovery, it seeped into the veins of the developmental psyche for the baby-boomer generation.⁴¹

³⁸ Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 3.

³⁹ “Address at Oglethorpe University,” *Works of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, accessed November 2014, <http://newdeal.feri.org/speeches/1932d.htm>.

⁴⁰ *The Greatest Generation* is the title given to the generation born between 1901-1924 as well as the popular book written by television journalist Tom Brokaw.

⁴¹ “American Generation Fast Facts,” *CNN*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/06/us/baby-boomer-generation-fast-facts/>.

Lizabeth Cohen, in her book *A Consumer's Republic*, develops this ideal more as she writes, “Out of the wartime conflict ... emerged a new post-war ideal of the purchaser as citizen who simultaneously fulfilled personal desire and civic obligation by consuming.”⁴² The consumer mentality has grown and matured with marketing, mass production, and technology into a virus that permeates every area of our current culture.

Even in first century Palestine, crowds gathered to hear Jesus address issues of consumerism. He said, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”⁴³ When reading that question, one might ask whether people would have gathered and listened in Jesus’ day if the shopping malls had existed and were open? The answer may quite possibly be yes for first century listeners, but most probably no for 21st century consumers.

A recent study done by Massachusetts Institute of Technology economists Jonathan Gruber and Daniel Hungerman revealed that attendance and participation in faith communities dropped with the repeal of Americana Blue Laws.⁴⁴ Their research concludes that, “the repeal of these laws in cities and states substantially increases the opportunity cost of religious attendance by offering alternatives for work, leisure, and consumption.”⁴⁵ It seems as if Jesus could clearly see the effects of consumerism that would eventually hit his followers, the church, and the current culture. The toxic nature

⁴² Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York, NY: Random House, 2003), 119.

⁴³ Matthew 6:25 NIV.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Gruber, Daniel Hungerman, “The Church vs. the Mall: What happens when Religion Faces Increased Secular Competition?” *National Bureau of Economic Research* (2006): 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

of consumerism should alarm every leader in every church across the U.S. Author Alan Hirsch writes in his book *The Forgotten Ways*, “I have come to believe that the major threat to the viability of our faith is that of consumerism. This is a far more heinous and insidious challenge to the gospel, because in so many ways it infects each and every one of us.”⁴⁶

The Baby Boomer generation, which makes up more than a third of the U.S. population,⁴⁷ leaves a historic legacy that is marked more by influences of consumerism than anything else. *Forbes Magazine* contributor John Zogby writes that as the aging baby boomer generation looks back on its contribution to society it will not be the ideals that bring “lasting change in social and cultural values and ending a war”⁴⁸ but that this generation will need to work towards a second half of redemption citing that “42% said that the baby boomer legacy would be consumerism and self-indulgence.”⁴⁹

It seems logical to attribute the rise of consumerist mindset in American culture to the Baby Boomers when considering the realities surrounding that generation. On June 16th, 1958 *Life* magazine came out with a cover picture of 23 kids sitting on swings with the title reading *Kids: Built-In Recession Cure*, the tagline reading *How 4,000,000 a Year*

⁴⁶ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (n.p.: Brazos Press, 2006). 106-107.

⁴⁷ “50+ Facts and Fiction: Size, Wealth, and Spending of 50+ Consumers.” *Immersion Active*, David Weigelt, accessed November 2015, <https://www.immersionactive.com/resources/size-wealth-spending-50-consumers/>.

⁴⁸ “The Baby Boomers’ Legacy,” *Forbes*, John Zogby, July 7, 2009, accessed November 2014 <http://www.forbes.com/2009/07/22/baby-boomer-legacy-change-consumer-opinions-columnists-john-zogby.html>.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

*Makes Billions in Business.*⁵⁰ *Life* exposes more than just a birth rate boom, but "a brand new market for food, clothing, and shelter"⁵¹ that savvy entrepreneurs and businesses could capitalize on, given the right marketing. Crafting a long-term marketing and business strategy would create what *Life* called "a backlog of business orders that will take two decades to fulfill."⁵² Within the span of eighteen years, Postwar America would experience not only massive population growth, but a radical socioeconomic variable that would shape the Baby Boomers, the world around them, and generations that would follow.

Cohen presses into the effects of consumerism embedded deep within the American way of life. She writes that, "*this period of unprecedented affluence did much more than make Americans a people of plenty. Undergirding the pursuit of plenty was an infrastructure of policies and priorities, what I have dubbed, for shorthand, the Consumers' Republic. In reconstructing the nation after World War II, leaders of business, government, and labor developed a political economy and a political culture that expected a dynamic mass consumption economy not only to deliver prosperity, but also to fulfill American society's loftier aspirations.*"⁵³

The purchasing power of the consumer created the demand for increased goods and services that, coupled with slick advertising, created a shopping psyche that would fuel consumerism to new heights. The American Dream of becoming a homeowner

⁵⁰ "Rocketing Births: the U.S. has a Business Bonanza in the Needs of Its Kids," *Life Photographic Essays* (1958): 83-92.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Cohen, 8.

received major traction in 1947, when developer William Levitt mass-produced affordable housing that would launch the idea of suburban living to families looking to buy their own track home.⁵⁴ Television broadcasting not only lured the consumer to purchase the TV unit, but then bombarded television viewers with commercials and jingles that would constantly call them to purchase their way into a better life. TV set ownership in the U.S. jumped from 6000 in 1946, to 7,000,000 in 1953,⁵⁵ and growing up with a television was common. Fictional TV suburban families such as those portrayed on *The Donna Reed Show*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, and *The Ozzie and Harriet Show*, not only entertained the masses, but also set expectations of what suburban living should look like.

The emergence of common and convenient⁵⁶ modern appliances to make life easier, such as toasters, vacuums, washers and dryers,⁵⁷ appealed to the convenience-factor for families. The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 brought about the great need for transportation. Chevrolet contracted with Dinah Shore to lure American television viewers to their nearest dealers as she sang the catchy Chevrolet jingle “See the USA in your Chevrolet,”⁵⁸ causing a generation to be on the move and eventually in need of a

⁵⁴ Eric Pace, “William J. Levitt, 86, Pioneer of Suburbs, Dies,” *The New York Times*, Obituaries, January 29, 1994.

⁵⁵ “The Birth of a Boom,” *America in the 1950s*, Lance Fuhrer, accessed November 2014, http://lancefuhrer.com/birth_of_a_boom.htm.

⁵⁶ “Power Words That Sell,” *Beyond Business*, accessed November 2014, <http://beyondbizmarketing.com/top-50-words-that-sell/>, Note: Of the top 50 marketing power words that sell, “convenient” is #8.

⁵⁷ “1950’s Appliances including prices,” *The People History*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/50selectrical.html>.

⁵⁸ “From ‘See the USA in your Chevrolet’ to ‘Like a Rock,’ Chevy Ads Run Deep,” *Advertising Age Magazine*, October 31, 2011, accessed November 2014, <http://adage.com/article/special-report-chevy->

second family car. Consumer transportation and leisure was evidenced with the opening of Disneyland in 1955 with 40% of their guests coming from outside of southern California by car.⁵⁹ The rise of music and the entertainment industry with the arrival of Elvis, the Beatles, and American Bandstand tapped into the purchasing power of the American teenager. These are just a few of the many examples of marketing and consumer response.

The skyrocketing birthrate of the baby boomer generation caused a “business bonanza”⁶⁰ that impacted so many sectors of production and commerce, but more importantly, solidified a consumer culture in postwar America. The effects of consumerism can still be felt in today’s emerging culture, or as *Consumed* author Benjamin Barber puts it, “In the new gospel of consumption, spending is holy”⁶¹

Ironically, when it comes to giving and charity, the baby boomer generation was actually able to maintain its consumer ethos while making contributions to needs around the world. AARP⁶² reports that the “boomer, more than any other age group, gives the largest share of donations to charities.”⁶³ In fact, the retirement advocacy group has researched the generations past and present, and found that “boomers, combined with the generation before 1946, are responsible for nearly 70 percent of the estimated total given

100/100-years-chevrolet-advertising-a-timeline/230636/#1950. Note: “See the USA in your Chevrolet” ranked No 5 among the top 10 ad jingles of the 20th century.

⁵⁹ “The Grand Opening of Disneyland,” *This Day in Disney History*, accessed November 2014 <http://www.thisdayindisneyhistory.com/disneylandgrandopening.html>.

⁶⁰ *Life*, 83.

⁶¹ Benjamin Barber, *Consumed* (New York, NY: Norton, 2007), 42.

⁶² AARP is the American Association of Retired Persons and serves as an informational and advocacy group for 37 million people in the US. www.aarp.org.

⁶³ “Boomers Most Generous at Charitable Giving,” *AARP Online*, Carole Fleck, August, 8, 2013, accessed November 2014, <http://blog.aarp.org/2013/08/08/boomers-most-generous-at-charitable-giving/>.

to charities annually.”⁶⁴ While those born between 1946-1964 have grown more generous in their later years, they can only hope that their legacy will reflect how they finished the game of life rather than how they started it.

The truth is, the generations that followed the baby boomers may have been the ones largely affected by the toxin of consumerism, and it is this toxicity that will continue to shape the character and worldview of future generations. In *Generation Me*, Jean Twenge chronicles how the marketing target became more focused on the generations following the baby boomers. She writes, “Boomers were exposed to nascent beginnings of marketing to children in the 1950’s, but advertising aimed specifically at children has increased exponentially within the last few decades. If it’s plastic and it’s advertised on TV, kids want it.”⁶⁵ Twenge develops the impact of marketing and consumerism stating that “materialism is the most obvious outcome of a straightforward, practical focus on the self: you want more things for yourself. You feel entitled to get the best in life: the best clothes, the best house, the best car. You’re special: you deserve special things.”⁶⁶

While the children of baby boomers, called Generation X⁶⁷ and Y,⁶⁸ have their own distinct sociological make-up, there is no doubt that the impact of the consumer culture plays out on their compassion and generosity ethos. AARP reports that last year,

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Jean Twenge, *Generation Me* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2006), 100.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Those born between 1960-1980.

⁶⁸ Generation Y (also called Millennials), born between 1980-2000.

Generation X gave less than half of what the previous generation gave in overall annual contributions, and Generation Y was almost half of what Generation X gave annually.⁶⁹

Another area where the impact of the consumerist toxin continues to play out on the next generation is through volunteerism and compassion. In an article published by LiveScience entitled, “Young People Becoming More Focused on ‘Me,’” writer Wynne Parry contends that “Today’s young adults are more generation Me than generation We.”⁷⁰ Parry argues that involvement in the community and compassion for others has actually declined over the past four decades while the goal of personal wealth has increased. Parry also cites Twenge⁷¹ who states that, “the data analyzed here suggest that the popular view of millennials as more caring, community-oriented and politically engaged that previous generations is largely incorrect.”⁷²

The lingering poison of consumerism has penetrated into the national character of American culture and continues to wreak havoc on the landscape of compassion and generosity, stunting its growth potential and preventing it from what it could become.

Individualism

Another common toxin ingested is individualism. Individualism finds its roots in the political framework of the United States formation. Where “Life, Liberty, and the

⁶⁹ *AARP Online*.

⁷⁰ “Young People Becoming More Focused on Me,” *LiveScience Journal Online*, Wynne Parry, March 15, 2012, accessed November 2014, <http://www.livescience.com/19095-generations-young-people-community.html>.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

pursuit of Happiness” is every man’s “unalienable rights”⁷³ according to our Declaration of Independence. In fact, rugged individualism has been touted as an American ideology from its inception to its expanse across an open uncharted territory. Leadership writer and expert Warren Bennis notes, “The myth of the triumphant individual is deeply ingrained in the American psyche ... we are a nation enamored of heroes – rugged self-starters who meet challenges and overcome adversity.”⁷⁴

Restating the ideals of individualism was a campaign theme of candidate Herbert Hoover’s pursuit of the presidency. He spoke of “rugged individualism,”⁷⁵ as the foundation of America’s “unparalleled greatness.”⁷⁶ The basis for Hoover’s references to individualism is actually rooted in a concern that he had during the Great Depression that government aid would impede the economic and personal recovery of individuals needing to work and getting back on their feet. Individualism would serve as a passageway that would lead Americans back into normalcy and financial solvency. This ethos of individualism predates the formation of the United States all the way back to colonialism and the settlements established in New England.

From 1776 onward, the independent nation relied heavily on this value of individualism and the personal gain that came with it. In the late 19th century, the U.S. Congress passed a number of laws that played into the consciousness of individualism for

⁷³ Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence” [1776]. [Manuscript Copy], Uniform Title: “Declaration of Independence.”

⁷⁴ Warren G. Bennis, *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1998), 1.

⁷⁵ Landmark Document in American History; Box 91, Public Statements, Herbert Hoover Library, West Branch, Rugged Individualism Speech, Herbert Hoover, 1928.

⁷⁶ Note: Hoover’s “Rugged Individualism” speech came almost exactly one year before the stock market crash of 1929, followed by the Great Depression.

immigrants and pioneers, which allowed them to acquire something that gave them purpose and destiny in the early settlement of the unoccupied U.S. territories. The Homestead Act of 1862,⁷⁷ followed by the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889,⁷⁸ were just a few of the laws passed that allowed not only the swift acquisition of the land, but also required individual stewardship of the homesteaders' newly acquired territory.

(As depicted in the movie *Far & Away*)

Joseph Donnelly: “*This land is mine!... Mine by destiny*”

Shannon Christie: “*Go ahead Joseph, claim it*”⁷⁹

Rugged individualism was essential to the development of uncharted territory on the western frontier and would solidify the backdrop to a developing nation that was barely 100 years old. But that unique season of individualism that brought about development and personal gain to a young nation expired in the 20th and 21st centuries and became detrimental to ethos of American culture. Like any prescribed drug that has surpassed its shelf life, the prescription of individualism expired and became toxic, however was left on the shelf for future generations to ingest along the way.

Individualism needs to morph and adapt to the ever-changing needs within the developing nation. An over-emphasis on individualism has created a mentality of self-reliance that birthed the ideology of *ME-first*. Bennis argues that, “We cling to the myth

⁷⁷ “Teaching With Documents: The Homestead Act of 1862,” *National Archives*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act/>.

⁷⁸ “Land Run of 1889,” *Oklahoma Historical Society’s Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=LA014>.

⁷⁹ *Far and Away*, (1992 Movie), accessed November 2014, <http://www.subzin.com/quotes/M11620d28b/Far+and+Away/This+land+is+mine%21>. Notation as quoted by characters Joseph Donnelly and Shannon Christie.

of the Lone Ranger, the romantic idea that great things are usually accomplished by a larger-than-life individual working alone. Despite the evidence to the contrary, we still tend to think of achievement in terms of the Great Man or Great Woman, instead of the Great Group.”⁸⁰

The most toxic form of individualism that has developed on the American landscape is the ever-growing attitude of narcissism. The children born to the baby boomers have overdosed on the expired prescription of individualism where their parents told them to *believe in yourself*. Much of the Generation X and Y grew up on what can be called the Barney Culture. Barney is a purple dinosaur that interacts in a learning forum with preschool children on a television show that was called *Barney & Friends*.⁸¹ In each episode, Barney sings songs and interacts with the children in a way that immerses them in the ideals of individual specialness and an environment where everyone wins and everything works out perfectly. During each episode, the purple dinosaur, together with his real life human cast of kids, would enter into a storyline that ended in an unrealistic win and actually denied any notion of the harsh realities the world may offer. *Parents* magazine ran an article that unapologetically examined the effects of indoctrination of the Barney culture. “What’s so dangerous about Barney? In a word, *denial*: the refusal to recognize the existence of unpleasant realities. For along with the steady diet of giggles and unconditional love, Barney offers our children a one-

⁸⁰ Bennis, 2.

⁸¹ “Barney & Friends,” *Internet Movie Data base (IMDb)*, accessed November 2014, www.IMDb.com.

dimensional world where everyone must be happy and everything must be resolved right away.”⁸²

The reality of this mindset has been demonstrated on the popular TV show *American Idol*, where contestants do singing auditions for a coveted spot in the singing competition. After the brief audition each singer is given feedback from the three judges who ultimately decide who goes to Hollywood. The effects of the Barney culture usually become evident with responses of those contestants who are faced with the reality of rejection. During the show, emcee Ryan Seacrest does interviews before and after the audition segments to capture the candid reaction of the contestant entering and exiting the audition room. The tell-all signs are the pre-audition interview, the actual audition, and the reaction to criticism. Contestant judge Simon Cowell, who is the most blunt of the three judges, draws harsh reaction from the viewing public, but has become a cultural icon of truth-telling and insensitive candor. When the contestant is interviewed prior to auditions the conversation generally revolves about his or her dreams and impending fame, and depending on how badly the audition goes, the reaction usually references comments from family members who think their child is the best, regardless of Cowell’s “hurtful” evaluation.

One such contestant was William Hung who appeared on the 3rd season of the show with his rendition of Ricky Martin’s hit song “*She Bangs*,” who has since become immortalized in *American Idol* rejection lore. The pre-audition interview captures Hung, a nerdish, buck-toothed, Berkley University civil-engineer student, authentically telling Seacrest in a thick Chinese accent, “*I really like music... I want to make music my*

⁸² Chala Willig Levy “The Bad News about Barney,” *Parents* (1994): 191-92.

living.”⁸³ What followed was his painful attempt to replicate the vocal tone and dance moves of the popular Ricky Martin song to both the judges and millions of television viewers. After he had been stopped and two of the chuckling judges pulled themselves together Cowell said, “You can’t sing; you can’t dance, so what do you want me to say?” Hung, who stood surprised he had been stopped and was receiving such harsh criticism, replied, “Um, I already gave my best, and I have no regrets at all,” upon which co-judges Randy Jackson and Paula Abdul applauded, with Abdul sympathizing, “That’s the best attitude yet.”⁸⁴ While the aftermath yielded a short-lived musical career, what was displayed in the small interaction that brought William Hung to fame was the lasting effects of individualism played out from the Barney culture. Parents kept offering their offspring the one-dimensional unconditional reassurances such as “believe in yourself,” “pursue your dreams,” and “you can become anything you want to be” all the while denying all of the harsh realities that the real world dishes out.

William Hung represents a generation of young people steeped in a false notion that they can do little wrong with fame and fortune just within their grasp. Four years after his first appearance on the show, Hung was interviewed in an *American Idol* follow up show where he reiterated the undertones of the narcissism that brought him to fame in the first place, saying, “I tell people constantly, everywhere I go, just never give up on your dreams.”⁸⁵ In 2011, Hung retired from his music career and became a technical

⁸³ All quotes from the William Hung audition came from “William Hung Original American Idol Audition” *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d5eP0wWLQY>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ “Dish Of Salt: ‘American Idol Extra’ – William Hung,” *Access Hollywood*, accessed November 2014, <http://www.accesshollywood.com/videos/dish-of-salt-american-idol-extra-william-hung/>.

crime analyst for the LA County Sheriff's Department.⁸⁶ Twenge cites critics who conclude that Simon Cowell "has led a rebellion against the tyranny of self-esteem that is promoted on talk shows and in self help book – the notion that everyone deserves to win." She concludes that this is just "young people doing precisely what they have been taught."⁸⁷

This toxin of individualism with its symptom of narcissism is inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus who called his followers into a community that brought about the value of otherness. Jesus never taught his disciples to pursue their dreams, but rather to "lose your life."⁸⁸ The Jeffersonian ideal of "the pursuit of happiness"⁸⁹ stands in contrast to Jesus' statement "happy are the poor in spirit."⁹⁰ Much of the toxic nature of individualism spoils the communal design of which God intended. The second chapter of Acts chapter two illustrates the high regard for the value of community in the church and the benefits of compassion that follow.

It reads,

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple

⁸⁶ Samantha Grossman, "American Idol's William Hung: Where Is He Now?," *Time* (2012): 32.

⁸⁷ Twenge, 87.

⁸⁸ Matthew 10:39 NIV.

⁸⁹ Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*.

⁹⁰ Matthew 5:3 YLT.

*courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.*⁹¹

While the early notion of individualism served the formation and expansion of our country, and is often spoken of as a philosophical approach to success, it has expired into a toxin that is regularly ingested in 21st century pop culture, thus driving a new generation to live more selfishly rather than selflessly. Along with ingesting expired toxins there are harmful pollutants being emitted that have contaminated the surrounding cultural landscape of compassion.

Pollutants

Pollution by definition is “the introduction of substances or energy into the environment, resulting in deleterious effects of such a nature as to endanger human health, harm living resources and ecosystems, and impair or interfere with amenities and other legitimate uses of the environment.”⁹² Given this definition for the numerous forms of pollution, i.e. air, water, land, radioactive, noise, and light, the argument could be made for the cultural pollution of prejudice. The pollutant of prejudice is often assumed with the extreme and overt racism seen on daytime talk shows, but researchers have found that prejudice permeates much of our common culture as well. People often say, “I’m not prejudiced,” however, *TIME* staff writer Touré in his article *Inside the Racist*

⁹¹ Acts 2:42-47 NIV.

⁹² *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, s.v. “Pollution” accessed November 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pollution>.

Mind writes that “studies show that most people have some sort of prejudice or bias.”⁹³

He cites author Michelle Alexander, saying that, “decades of cognitive bias research demonstrates that both unconscious and conscious biases lead to discriminatory actions, even when an individual does not want to discriminate.”⁹⁴

Throughout history the cultural pollutants of prejudice have continued to affect civilizations. But it is the toxic nature of prejudice, particularly within socio-economic circumstances, sexual orientation, gender, and racial assumptions that have polluted the cultural landscape and tainted the fresh waters of compassion. Today, the fullness and potential of what compassion could become has actually deteriorated because of these underlying prejudices that exist across society. Ironically, the church has played a big part in the pollutant of prejudice where its teachings would call its followers to live otherwise.

The Pollutant of Socioeconomic Status

There are numerous variables that enter into the socioeconomic makeup of people in any given society. Income, education, employment, race and family social status are some of the indicators that are measured on one’s socioeconomic status. The combined sum of this web of variables creates a social class system that dominates the landscape of large cities and small towns across the US. Most places in the US have the polar opposites of the wealthy, educated, and advantaged versus the poor, uneducated, and disadvantaged. There is no escaping the diversity of socioeconomic class. Even Jesus

⁹³ “Inside the Racist Mind,” *Time*, Touré, May 7, 2012, accessed November 2014, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2113166,00.html>.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

acknowledged the obvious socioeconomic realities when he said to his followers at a dinner party that, “the poor you will always have with you.”⁹⁵

The concern is not about what puts people in specific categories or what injustices might keep them there, but the prejudicial reality of how people treat one another within a given social structure. The categorization and treatment of people has become the toxic pollutant that continually demonstrates the socioeconomic prejudice in society today through lack of compassion. Even within faith communities that are designed to care for the marginalized of society, one writer states that, “if prejudice does not manifest itself in outright discrimination, it is often revealed in exclusiveness or lack of social compassion.”⁹⁶

The Pollutant of Sexual Orientation

When it comes to prejudice that impacts compassion, none is more riddled with inconsistency and hypocrisy than that of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation has been an ongoing struggle in popular culture, and in particular within the faith community, for a long time. While the church struggles to articulate its position on same-sex marriage and sexuality in the 21st century, it has clearly dropped the ball as it relates to responding to the global AIDS pandemic. Since the emergence of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the early 80’s, the LGBT community and those suffering from HIV/AIDS have experienced discrimination, judgment, ostracism, bullying, and violence.

⁹⁵ Mark 14:7 NIV.

⁹⁶ Roger Dudley, “The Christian and Prejudice,” *Ministry: International Journal For Pastors* (1988): 42.

In 1984, at St Joseph's Hospital in his hometown of Kokomo, Indiana, a 13-year-old boy named Ryan White was infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. Ryan was diagnosed with a hereditary blood coagulation disorder at the age of three rendering him a hemophiliac, and sometime earlier that year Ryan received tainted blood that carried the deadly virus through a routine transfusion and contracted the deadly disease that would end his life just six years later, just one month shy of his high school graduation. During his years in junior high school and part way into his high school freshman year, what happened with White shortly after his diagnosis, became the flashpoint of national debate about the understanding of how HIV/AIDS was transmitted along with the ostracizing, bullying, and violence that accompanied the ignorance and fear surrounding the disease at that time.

While Ryan White became the poster-child for understanding HIV/AIDS, the town of Kokomo, Indiana, became the poster-city that would symbolize ignorance, prejudice, and cruel behavior. In his seventh grade year, when his diagnosis was made public, parents and teachers from Western Middle School signed a petition asking the school board to ban White from attending classes. After a court battle which the Whites had won, he returned to school only to find close to half the student body refusing to attend class while the boy with AIDS was present. White was ostracized and teased ruthlessly as being homosexual and queer throughout the remainder of his seventh grade year and during his eight grade school year was forced to use an alternate bathroom, eat with disposable utensils, shower separately, and endure other various forms of humiliation and shunning.

After a shooting incident that threatened the family's safety, the Whites moved to the small town of Cicero, Indiana, just 40 minutes south of Kokomo, where the town and school embraced the high school freshman in his journey of living with HIV/AIDS. White would live the remaining four years of his life in Cicero and die just one month before his high school graduation. His story of cruel treatment and prejudice drew national attention. White was befriended by celebrities and politicians who stood alongside the young man who would serve as the spokesperson, and of whom advocates of AIDS education would later say, "served as a deterrent to bigotry throughout the nation."⁹⁷ His obituary would go on to read that "after seeing a person like Ryan White - such a fine and loving and gentle person - it was hard for people to justify discrimination against people who suffer from this terrible disease."⁹⁸ Yet, the town of Kokomo stands as a cruel reminder of the realities and injustices caused by the attitudes of prejudice that came out towards those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The vilification of Ryan White, who was in fact not gay, illustrated just how deep the prejudice towards the gay community actually ran. White's journey thrust the conversation about HIV/AIDS awareness from a small town to the national spotlight, but more importantly exposed the presuppositions and stereotypes held by the general public along with the prejudice responses that would follow. It is not surprising to note that Kokomo hosted the largest Ku Klux Klan gathering in US history in 1923.⁹⁹ The legacy of overt prejudice spans multiple generations and offers a clearer picture of the genesis of

⁹⁷ Dirk Johnson, "Ryan White Dies of AIDS at 18; His Struggle Helped Peirce Myths," *The New York Times*, Obituaries, April 9, 1990, final edition.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Dirk Johnson, "Old List of Klan Members Recalls Racist Past in an Indiana City," *The New York Times*, August 2, 1995, final edition.

hatred and fear in Middle America along with a clear stigma towards the gay community and those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

In 2008, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon noted that the

stigma remains the single most important barrier to public action. It is a main reason why too many people are afraid to see a doctor to determine whether they have HIV, or to seek treatment if so. It helps make AIDS the silent killer, because people fear the social disgrace of speaking about it, or taking easily available precautions. Stigma is a chief reason why the AIDS epidemic continues to devastate societies around the world.¹⁰⁰

In 2006, one church in the San Francisco Bay Area decided to fight another stigma associated with HIV/AIDS by confronting its own prejudice and hypocrisy. This church had engaged in serving those affected by the AIDS pandemic globally, by purchasing a home and sponsoring 12 AIDS orphans in the city of Harare, Zimbabwe. Each year the support for the project grew as did the enthusiasm of the parishioners who gave sacrificially, and even sent teams to work at the house. The problem was the inconsistency they felt about responding globally, but doing nothing locally. In the Bay Area alone there were plenty of people with the disease, but the church completely disconnected from that community of people and were faced with a choice to cross into unfamiliar territory to build relationships with those that the church historically condemned.

Over time and through some bold moves, the church dealt with its position on what it meant to serve those who were suffering regardless of when, where and how they became sick. They were forced to look at the stories of Jesus and his disciples, who faced the same issue related to prejudice and stigma when they passed a blind man on the side

¹⁰⁰ Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, "The Stigma Factor," *The Washington Times*, Op-ed, August 6, 2008, final edition.

of the road one day. The disciples asked, “Who sinned, this man or his parents that he would be made blind?”¹⁰¹ The assumption in ancient times was that the afflicted or a relative of the afflicted committed some sort of sin that caused the ailment. Jesus answered and said, “Neither ... but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”¹⁰² Then Jesus healed the man and restored his sight.

The beauty of the story is that the disciples were looking at the problem with the intent to lay blame. They almost seem to be questioning and saying to one another, “Was it his parents that did something ... was it he who did something ... why is he this way? What caused this to happen?” when, in fact, Jesus doesn’t question or answer the *cause* of the problem, but points to the *opportunity* to respond to the problem. He then challenged his disciples that “as long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me.”¹⁰³

AIDS researcher and sociologist Dr. Paul J. Caratti writes,

For over two decades the majority of the Christian Church has been conspicuously silent, and their presence absent from showing any significant social concern toward the people who struggle daily with AIDS. Complacency, inaction and even judgment have kept most of the church from responding to the crisis in a timely fashion, allowing the disease to reach pandemic proportions.¹⁰⁴

While the debate about homosexuality will continue in evangelical circles, the approach to loving one’s neighbors must look entirely different. The pollutant of

¹⁰¹ John 9:2 NIV.

¹⁰² John 9:3 NIV.

¹⁰³ John 9:4 NIV.

¹⁰⁴ “AIDS and the Church,” *Global AIDS Day*, Dr. Paul J. Caratti, accessed November 2014, http://globalaidsday.org/html/aids_and_the_church.html.

intolerance and discrimination must stop while a new relationship and dialogue emits fresh air. Campolo continues this thought as he writes,

there *must* be good news for homosexuals. In the likelihood that their sexual orientations will not change, we must do more than simply bid them to be celibate: we must find ways for them to have fulfilling, loving experiences so that their humanity is affirmed and their participation in the body of Christ is ensured. Homosexuals are our brothers and sisters – and they must be treated that way. To do less is sin.¹⁰⁵

Compassion must be expressed even more so to those with whom we differ in ideology. To withhold love because the surrounding circumstances do not match one's personal worldview or do not qualify under personal rules of engagement is prejudice in the highest form.

The Pollutant of Racial Assumptions

Another pollutant emitted on the current landscape that affects the true nature of compassion would be found in the form of racial prejudice. Billy Graham speaks of this pollutant with his famous and accurate quote “eleven o’clock Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America,”¹⁰⁶ highlighting the issue of racism that began at the inception of this country and still exists today. While some churches ignore the issues of race and multiculturalism others go to great lengths to fan the flame of innovation to become racially and culturally diverse. The authors of *United by Faith* lay out a biblical/theological framework for diversity as well as chronicling race issues that have polluted the community's perception of the church and Christianity. They write that

¹⁰⁵ Brian D. Campolo Anthony McLaren, *Adventures in Missing the Point: How the Culture-Controlled Church Neutered the Gospel* (n.p.: EmergentYS, 2003), 144.

¹⁰⁶ “Billy Graham, the Unifier,” *Christianity Today Library*, Rob Moll, July 14, 2004, accessed November 2014, <http://www.ctlibrary.com/newsletter/newsletterarchives/2004-07-09.html>.

“authentic multiracial congregations must be places where people feel spiritually uplifted and personally affirmed in a society where racism significantly impacts individuals. Given the history of racism in the United States, it is easy to see why some persons of color may perceive that the Christianity of whites has no redeeming value.”¹⁰⁷ It is only when churches (staff and congregation) reflect the ethnic makeup of its particular community will the flower of diversity bloom upon a racially contaminated soil.

In the narrative of the United States, the pollutant of racial assumptions comes from a stained past that involves human trafficking, slave labor, war, emancipation, segregation, terrorism, and racism. The “jangled discords of our nation”¹⁰⁸ that many have worked to heal since the crowning achievement of President Lincoln’s presidency, that being the Emancipation Proclamation,¹⁰⁹ to the Civil Rights Campaigns of the 60’s, prejudice still holds a sour taste in the national psyche of the American public. Racism, both active and passive, still shows itself in attitudes and actions of people groups throughout the country. Even while there may be good feelings among African Americans after Barack Obama’s election, those feelings “co-exist with a persistent belief that discrimination and unfairness remain a part of life for African Americans in this country.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (Oxford: New York, 2003), 134.

¹⁰⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr.’s ‘I have a dream’ speech recorded in Coretta Scott King’s *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1969), 249.

¹⁰⁹ Emancipation Proclamation Signing, President Lincoln is quoted as saying “*If my name ever goes into history it will be for this act.*” From the Curated Groupings at *The Lincoln Collection Foundation*, accessed November 2014, www.LincolnCollection.org.

¹¹⁰ Carol Doherty, “For African Americans, Discrimination Is Not Dead,” *Pew Research Center* (2013): 52.

But while many continue the fight for justice and equality, and while the country presses forward to stamp out prejudice and racism, the effects of prejudice on compassion stand as a reminder of how far the US still needs to go.

When compassion is expressed to those in need, outwardly it looks like altruistic service. But the motive behind service can be tainted based on the mindset and presuppositions of the person serving. Service might be well and good, but the poison of prejudice causes one to serve out of pity rather than empathy. Pity is the internal emotion of feeling sorry for others, and it is often followed by an act of service that does something far greater for the person serving than the person being served. Empathy, on the other hand, identifies with and feels the feelings of others. Empathetic rhetoric served presidential candidate Bill Clinton in his quest for the White House in 1992. In his campaign speeches and conversations with voters his ability to demonstrate empathy was loud and clear, as he would tell them “I feel your pain,”¹¹¹ all the while painting his opponent as privileged and emotionally removed from the real problems of working class Americans. In the eyes of the voting middleclass (and the poor), Bill Clinton was one of them; he understood and could *feel* what they were going through. He was clearly empathic, while President George H.W. Bush’s campaign rhetoric took on the tenets of pity because he came from wealth and privilege, and any campaign promise he made was held in suspect.

From presidential candidates to faith leaders to average-concerned-citizens living anywhere in the US, the idea of serving another person with an internal empathetic

¹¹¹ “THE 1992 CAMPAIGN: Verbatim; Heckler Stirs Clinton Anger: Excerpts From the Exchange.” *The New York Times*, March 28, 1992. Made famous in a campaign speech March 27, 1992 in Manhattan when responding to an AIDS activist. The full exchange was published the next day in *The New York Times*. From that point on the same line was used throughout the Clinton campaign all the way to the White House.

understanding actually turns off presuppositions and allows compassion to find its purest form. Empathy discovers humanity, while pity retains its opinion of others. Christian missions and relief organizations have found themselves confronting this very pollutant of prejudice. Whether it is working cross-culturally or in the inner city, leaders have begun to discover more damage being done through humanitarian response that is rooted in a mindset of pity rather than empathy.

World Vision India head and innovative missiologist Jayakumar Christian develops the mindset of pity further calling it the *god-complex*, which is “a subtle and unconscious sense of superiority in which they believe that they have achieved their wealth through their own efforts and they been anointed to decide what’s best for low-income people, whom they view as inferior to ourselves.”¹¹² Writers Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert expose the prejudice of the *god-complex* further in their book *When Helping Hurts*. They write,

Why do you want to help the poor? Really think about it. What truly motivates you? Do you really love poor people and want to serve them? Or do you have other motives? I confess to you that part of what motivates me to help the poor is my felt need to accomplish something worthwhile with my life, to be a person of significance, to feel good use of my training in economics to save poor people. And in the process, I sometimes unintentionally reduce the poor people to objects that I use to fulfill my own need to accomplish something¹¹³

The pollutant of prejudice and racial assumptions has damaged compassion efforts and poisoned the landscape of good work globally and locally. While racism on any level remains an obvious stain in popular culture, the effects of prejudice on

¹¹² Jayakumar Christian, *Powerlessness of the Poor; Toward and Alternative Kingdom of God Based on Paradigm of Response* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary PhD. Thesis, 1994), 235.

¹¹³ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009), 65.

compassion are far more difficult to identify, thus rendering the act of compassion to be far less impactful than it could be.

SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The New Reality of Compassion

Introduction: Misplaced Ideology

Over the past 25 years, compassion has had both high and low points, with resources and volunteerism almost tripled, demonstrating the general public's high value of caring for others. At the same time, some forms of compassion have gone toxic, having been mishandled and even abused, causing it to lose its power on society. To understand the erosion of compassion and the potential that it has on present-day culture, it is imperative to grasp the full picture of the influential channels that exist within a given society and offer a comprehensive outlook of how compassion has emerged in the 21st century with mixed pretenses and the themes within these domains that are currently playing out on the entire cultural landscape of the American way of life.

The influential domains that makeup a particular community are often cast into the following seven categories: **Business**, including advertising/marketing, e-commerce retailers, services, finance, investments, securities, legal, technology, biotech, nanotech, science, and medicine; **Media**, including television, radio, publishing, newspaper, internet; **Arts & Entertainment**, including artist, film, literature music, fine arts, performing arts, sports, theater, video game entertainment; **Education**, including, public schools, private schools, charter schools, home school, college, university, graduate, adult, and continuing education; **Government**, including executive, judicial, legislative, military, public policy, and advocacy groups; **Social Sector**, including educational, family, foundations, trusts, marriage, and religious; and **Church**, including local

churches and para-church organizations.¹¹⁴ While this is not a comprehensive list (or sub-list), it encompasses the most influential cultural components that make up any town, city, or metropolitan area. Gabe Lyons, author of *The Next Christians*, maintains that “most people fit into one or more of these channels. Those who aren’t directly contributing to a particular one are likely influenced by it. Even if one doesn’t work in the film industry, the latest movie you saw probably affected your attitude and imagination. You may not be a politician, but the laws they make have a profound impact on your life, and so on.”¹¹⁵

In the 21st century, each of these channels of culture exists in their current form as an *ongoing* co-creation of what has been written as “our relentless, restless human effort to take the world as it’s given to us and make something else.”¹¹⁶ In each of these channels come individuals with worldviews, values, motivations, and personal agendas that are inherently imposed upon their place of influence within that domain.

Compassion, defined in its simplest form of helping one’s fellow man, has undoubtedly found its way in and alongside each domain and sub-set, as history has chronicled significant work done throughout the years. But within each domain compassion has also been leveraged from a virtue to a benefit, from an act of good will to an act of good advancement. Granted, within each domain there has also been phenomenal benevolent work done with pure and unadulterated motives, but a small

¹¹⁴ Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: The Good News about the End of Christian America* (New York, NY: DoubleDay, 2010), 116.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹¹⁶ Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IN: IVP, 2008), 23.

amount of poison poured into a vast amount of goodness can make the entire environment toxic.

Business

The first domain and often most prominent of any culture is that of the business sector. From the high power markets of Wall Street to the independent business owner who runs a local Taqueria “the purpose of a business” writes *Faith and Fortune* author Marc Gunther, “is to enable human flourishing.”¹¹⁷ The ethics within the corporate domain are largely influenced by the protestant work ethic and Christian values that kept greed in check. Methodist theologian and social reformer John Wesley preached that business owners should “gain all you can... save all you can ... and give all you can”¹¹⁸ as a model of godly ethics in the work place.

The practice and approach to building business has always been a topic of great discussion, not only for its strategic planning and process involving goods and services, but also to guard against the tendencies of mankind to lie, cheat, and steal. Over the years laws and regulations have been put in place to guard against injustices in the workplace. Unions, child labor laws, safety & health regulations, discrimination laws, equal pay and equal opportunity are just a few of the topics that have evolved within the labor history of the United States to facilitate healthy business practice. Even Pope John Paul II addressed the topic when he said, “the needs of the poor take priority over the desires of the rich; the rights of workers over the maximization of profits; the preservation of the

¹¹⁷ Marc Gunther, *Fame and Fortune: How Compassionate Capitalism Is Transforming American Business* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 124.

¹¹⁸ “The Use of Money” The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 50, *Wesley Center Online*, accessed November 2014, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-50-the-use-of-money/>.

environment over the uncontrolled industrial expansion; production to meet social needs over production for military purposes.”¹¹⁹ Greed is the recurring theme that emerges with each new scandal, as companies compete for bottom-line profits and/or personal gain leading to new and creative ways to blind the general public from its corporate transgressions.

Over the past 25 years, a growing trend within the business sector is the intentional marketing of corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility has always existed in some form even in the early practices of culture. The ancient near eastern civilization exercised corporate social responsibility in its Mosaic law:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and the sojourner.”¹²⁰

But corporate social responsibility has moved from businesses taking more ownership and involvement in particular areas of the community to the **marketing** of businesses taking more ownership and involvement in particular areas of the community. Through extensive consumer research, companies are leveraging public sentiment and favor by identifying causes to engage in that will elevate their brand in an oversaturated market. C.B. Bhattacharya, professor of marketing at Boston University’s school of management writes, “Marketing always has the knowhow to conduct meaningful campaigns and measure return on investment. Moreover, involving marketing

¹¹⁹ Pope John Paul II, “*Address on Christian Unity in a Technological Age*,” (Toronto, Canada, 1984).

¹²⁰ Leviticus 23:22 NIV.

in consumer research and analysis enables that department to coordinate how a corporate responsibility program is presented to those it wishes to influence.”¹²¹

Connecting to a particular cause that animates the consumer public becomes a tremendous marketing tool that affects the corporate bottom-line. If two independent brands produce an almost identical product, *and* whose market has an identical customer profile, the brand that hypes up a particular cause is the brand that wins. Yumbutter Peanut Butter, and Skippy Peanut Butter probably taste the same, but because Yumbutter strategically labels all their jars with “BuyOne:FeedOne”¹²² information ... the inclination in an altruistic economy is to go with the socially responsible company who engages in the community and the world. Wouldn’t parents rather make sandwiches for their kids with a peanut butter brand that helps malnourished kids around the world? Bhattacharya continues saying that the brand and the cause “creates a virtuous circle, giving marketing a useful tool, beyond its traditional mix of price and product, for differentiating the company and its products from the competition.”¹²³

Business schools throughout the United States of America are teaching in their marketing classes that companies must capitalize on the strategic implementation of brand identities with causes, or corporate responsibility. Disregarding the advantages and impact of corporate responsibility marketing in the 21st century marketplace can mean suicide for companies wanting to remain viable to the ever-vacillating consumer. While the cause-sponsoring business is making an impact, and in many cases a significant one,

¹²¹ CB Bhattacharya, “Corporate Social Responsibility: It’s All About Marketing,” *Forbes Magazine* (2009): 24.

¹²² “BuyOne:FeedOne,” *Yumbutter*, accessed November 2014, <http://yumbutter.com/buy-onefeed-one/>.

¹²³ Bhattacharya, 24.

the use of cause for bottom-line profits erodes the very motivation behind compassion. The cause moves from compassionate need to corporate greed as it is swept into the marketing moneymaking machine that will showcase the cause alongside company name, thus moving compassion from a virtue to a business benefit.

Faith

The motivation of why someone does compassion within the faith domain can also be held with suspicion largely due to the church growth movement of the 80's and 90's. The rise of the popular "seeker-sensitive" philosophy of ministry captured the imagination of pastors and leaders throughout the US attempting to replicate the growth statistics in their given areas of ministry, alongside the "church-growth" movement that followed in book and seminar form. As one church growth expert from the 80's writes, "*Beyond Church Growth* will help your church become more effective in ministry. Effective churches are healthy churches; healthy churches are growing churches – they make more and better disciples. This is precisely the focus of the church-growth movement."¹²⁴

One of the main elements that was essential for the church-growth movement was something called "needs based" ministry. Needs based ministry is the assessment of the essential needs of a church's demographic target audience and the development of ministry based around those identified needs. In his classic work entitled *Life-Style Evangelism*, Joseph Aldrich touches on this fundamental component for the church leader to address: "The responsible church leader must examine the programming of his church

¹²⁴ Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth* (Old Tappan, NJ: F.H. Revell, 1989), 17.

in light of his people's need for vital fellowship."¹²⁵ While this movement gave a fresh perspective to churches identifying with the needs of their cultural context, it also offered partial remedies for a holistic approach to discipleship. In hindsight, church leaders were enamored with what Hirsch calls "gather and amuse"¹²⁶ church growth theory. He argues that "we grew in numbers – but something primal and indispensable was lost in the bargain. We got more transfers from other churches, but the flow of conversion slowed down to a trickle and then ran completely dry."¹²⁷

Much like an independent mom & pop bookstore being swallowed up by the large retail Barnes & Noble with its endless book categories and options, the small local church stood no chance of survival eventually being absorbed by the mega-church that offered an assortment of niche ministries and felt-need ministry options. The ministry focus of the faith community became church growth at any cost. Pastors and leaders were working to replicate the same success in their local community by doing a carbon copy of the mega church lock stock and barrel.

Pastor Brian Kay of Trinity Presbyterian Church in San Luis Obispo comments on some of these trends. "Since the 1970's, many American pastors began to turn to the experts of the church-growth movement who told them the best way to reach people who thought the Church was irrelevant was to appeal to something that is undeniably relevant to the mass culture: being entertained." He goes on to comment on the impact of this philosophy of ministry and its long term impact on the church, maintaining relevancy in

¹²⁵ Joseph C. Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism: Crossing Traditional Boundaries to Reach the Unbelieving World* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1981), 120.

¹²⁶ Hirsch, 220.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

the world. He writes, “In a way the church-growth movement worked, because a lot more people started coming on Sunday. But, as its music and preaching became more trivial, many other sensible people stopped taking the Church seriously ... the church life they had witnessed, even in cases where the doctrine was solid, was pure mayonnaise.”¹²⁸

While the honest intent was about reaching people for Christ, the subplot was clearly about growing the largest faith community and tithing base in order to envision and build bigger and better things. Leaders in the faith communities became prone to looking for the church-growth-silver-bullet in the form of innovative ministry ideas, books, teaching series, or campaigns that would reach the world for Christ, all under the guise of church growth. Reggie McNeal writes, that “consultants, para-church ministries, denominational headquarters, and publishing houses prod and push the church towards whatever the current fad is. A spate of program fixes have consistently overpromised and under-delivered.”¹²⁹

In 2004, Willow Creek Church in Barrington, Illinois, the leading seeker church in the US, launched an exhaustive three-year study of the long term effects of their philosophy of ministry, the results of which caused senior pastor Bill Hybels to stand up and admit, “We made a mistake.”¹³⁰ The late political strategist-turned-theologian Chuck Colson challenges his readers that “we cannot let ourselves get caught up in a just-get-em-in-the-doors mentality, no matter how attractive and effective it looks.” Willow Creek

¹²⁸ Jennifer Ashley, *The Relevant Church: A New Vision for Communities of Faith* (Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books, 2004), 5-6.

¹²⁹ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 11.

¹³⁰ Chuck Colson, “Rethinking Church: Where is Willow Creek, and Where Are We?” *Prison Ministry Fellowship* blog, December 5, 2007.

published their findings in a book entitled *Reveal Where Are You?*¹³¹ Which served as a catalyst for a redirection of the many churches connected with the Willow Creek Association.

But even with the adjustments of catalyst churches away from program-based church-growth fads to discipleship/spiritual formation models, their tendency to fall back into program mode continues to show itself in the out-workings of the discipleship model, especially as it relates to compassion. Compassion and city-service type ministries fall back into a metric for success based on how many people who are served begin filling up the seats in church buildings. Reggie McNeal talks about churches changing the scorecard in his book *Missional Renaissance* when he writes, “The missional church in North America needs to be measured in a completely different way from the metrics the traditional church has been using.”¹³² His argument goes on to state what aspects of the church are historically being measured and what constitutes success. He concludes by saying that “this approach fails to capture the externally focused dimension of a missional expression of ministry.”¹³³ Compassion and city-service-type ministries that come alongside the local church to serve the city are still hearing requests for the return on investment statistics. “What are the statistics” one pastor asked, “that you’ve seen on church growth? “We would like to see the numbers of how serving people will help our

¹³¹ Greg L. Hawkins, and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal Where Are You* (Barrington, IL: WillowCreek Resources 2007).

¹³² Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 67-68.

¹³³ Ibid.

church grow!”¹³⁴ The growing movement of compassion, expressed by the church to the community around it, smells of yet another “winning formula” scheme of benefit over virtue. “Without the will to learn” McNeal writes, “the church defaults to methodologies and mental maps that keep them anchored to the old world and tethered to outmoded paradigms.”¹³⁵

Education

In 2011, Amy Chua, a working mother of two, published a parenting memoir called *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* that ignited a debate in parenting and education circles about discipline, values, and educating the next generation. What made her book so controversial was that she chronicled her parenting values which mirrored those of her first generation Chinese parents. In an essay published by the *Wall Street Journal* entitled “Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior,” Chua, who is a law professor at Yale University, criticized the Western parenting style. In the WSJ essay, she details how she “raised her daughters in the traditional Chinese way, with strict discipline and an emphasis on academic success and music lessons above all else, prohibiting TV, computer games, play dates and sleepovers.”¹³⁶

The book and the debates that followed opened a broader conversation about parents who hover and obsess over the critical path leading their children towards the

¹³⁴ These questions are commonly asked of the author of this essay in his work with networking churches and citywide compassion efforts.

¹³⁵ McNeal, *The Present Future*, 116.

¹³⁶ “Is There a ‘Tiger Mother’ Effect?” *The University of California San Diego Online News*, Inga Kiderra, May 4, 2011, accessed December 2014, http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/archive/newsrel/soc/5-4-11tiger_mother.asp.

college of their choice. The competitive nature of getting into universities has warranted the Tiger parent (also known as the *helicopter*¹³⁷ or *snowplow* parent¹³⁸) to have a greater involvement in the application process often leading to the college-application-hostile-take-over. According to the educational consulting company IvyWise, in 2013 “college acceptance rates dropped as low as 5.69% for the first time ever”¹³⁹ leaving thousands of students each year rejected,¹⁴⁰ thus warranting the over-involved parents navigating the pathway to ensure their kids have a fighting chance.

In *The Wall Street Journal* Op-ed piece offered by one student entitled “To (All) the Colleges That Rejected Me” high school senior Suzy Lee Weiss gained national attention with her scathing indictment of the system and the parents who subvert the application process to give their kids a competitive advantage. Ms. Weiss writes that she

should have started a fake charity. Providing veterinary services for homeless people’s pets. Collecting donations for the underprivileged chimpanzees of the Congo. Raising awareness for Chapped-Lips-in-the-Winter Syndrome. Fun-runs, dance-a-thons, bake sales—as long as you’re using someone else’s misfortunes to try to propel yourself into the Ivy League, you’re golden.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ “What is Helicopter Parenting?” *Parents*, Kate Bayless, accessed December 2014, <http://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/what-is-helicopter-parenting/>.

¹³⁸ “7 Signs You Might Be a ‘Snow Plow’ Parent,” *The Stir Blog*, Julie Ryan Evans, February 21, 2013, accessed December 2014, http://thestir.cafemom.com/big_kid/151554/7_signs_you_might_be.

¹³⁹ “Admission Statistics,” *IvyWise*, accessed December 2014, <https://www.ivywise.com/ivywise-knowledgebase/admission-statistics/>.

¹⁴⁰ “Palo Alto High’s ‘Rejection’ Wall Returns,” *Palo Alto Online*, Chris Kenrick, March 28, 2011, accessed December 2014, <http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2011/03/28/palo-alto-highs-rejection-wall-returns>. Students have created a “rejection wall of shame” where they post their college application rejection letters. These walls have served as wiki-peutic (collaborative group therapy) for disappointed students.

¹⁴¹ Suzy Lee Weiss, “To (All) the Colleges That Rejected Me,” *The Wall Street Journal* Op-Ed (2013).

Weiss calls out those who have the advantage of tiger moms, asking “Why couldn’t Amy Chua have adopted me as one of her cubs?”¹⁴²

With college application acceptance becoming more difficult, desperate university-hopefuls (and their tiger-like parents) need to beef up their arsenal of extracurricular activities to serve as a supplemental showcase to even be noticed. When it comes to college applications, parents reemploy the same tactics they used when they won their child’s fifth grade science project competition. Instead of a blue science ribbon, they seek the prize of a university letter with the words, “*You’ve been accepted into [insert college name here].*”

Unfortunately for students, compassion moves from its pure virtue to a benefit that students need to leverage to their advantage and advancement. Losing sight of the virtue of compassion has become painfully evident to guidance counselors and college admission boards as well. *Forbes* magazine exposes the thinking in its article “College Admissions Myths.” “Colleges are aware that many high schools enforce community service requirements, and they are especially wary of students who volunteer their time for the sake of transcripts. Says Bruce J. Breimer, head of college guidance at the prestigious Collegiate School: “One admissions officer told me, ‘If I read another essay about kids building houses in Costa Rica, I’m going to scream.’”¹⁴³

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Bruce J. Breimer, “College Admissions Myths,” *Forbes Magazine* (2006): 25.

To lay waste to such a vital virtue as compassion for the sake of personal gain echoes the sentiment of CS Lewis when he writes, “Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.”¹⁴⁴

Social Sector

The non-profit, social sector domain faces challenges that are vastly different from the for-profit business domain. While the for-profit is held in suspect for leveraging its cause for brand elevation, the non-profit mission only has its cause to leverage as its marketing tool. The cause (mission) becomes the sole reason for the non-profits existence thus intertwining the market messaging with the non-profits charter. Paul Light, author of *Sustaining Nonprofit Performance* says simply, “Whatever their ultimate goal – be it to end poverty, feed the hungry, change public policy, or produce great art – every organization starts with the same simple goal: to exist.”¹⁴⁵ With the cause as the actual brand, the amplification of that brand becomes essential for survival. In fact, with an ever-changing economy and unforeseen circumstances that have the potential to arise, nonprofits must be fluid enough to make strategic moves that can enhance their position with both funding and implementation strategy, which often involves leveraging their brand to exploit opportunities and broaden support.

What also is unique about for-profits is that their brand becomes a revenue-generating deliverable for the consumer, while the nonprofit functions as a two-headed business model that must satisfy the benefactor and the funder. The beneficiary is either

¹⁴⁴ CS Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2003), 25.

¹⁴⁵ Paul C. Light, *Sustaining Nonprofit Performance: The Case for Capacity Building and the Evidence to Support It* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 140.

tightly connected to the cause or, in fact, IS the cause, while the funder is the one that the marketing is directed toward. “Nonprofits are an entity with two businesses” writes the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, “one related to their program activities and the other related to raising charitable ‘subsidies.’”¹⁴⁶

Raising charitable subsidies has become the primary focus for nonprofit survival. The National Center For Charitable Statistics cites that (as of 2012) there are 1,406,820 tax-exempt organizations¹⁴⁷ in the U.S. alone. In 2010, nonprofits accounted for 9.2% of all wages and salaries paid in the United States.¹⁴⁸ Those numbers represent not only the vast array of causes, but also a large motivated pool of people with noble efforts honing in on a limited amount of donor funding. The sheer volume of nonprofits and the limited resources can refine a given mission and charter or become “tempting for nonprofit leaders to see money wherever they can find it, causing some nonprofits to veer off course.”¹⁴⁹

The idea of mission drift is common in the social sector, expanding the overall scope and purpose in order to sustain the model. Mission drift can occur when a nonprofit does not clearly know when to shut its operation down. The statistical increase of nonprofits annually suggests that this is a far greater problem than realized. Popular author/speaker Tony Campolo, who runs the nonprofit Evangelical Association for the

¹⁴⁶ William Landes Foster, Peter Kim, and Barbara Christiansen, “Ten Nonprofit Funding Models,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (2009): 34.

¹⁴⁷ Tax-exempt organizations include public charities, private foundations, chambers of commerce, fraternal organizations, civic leagues, etc.

¹⁴⁸ “NCCS,” accessed December 2014, [National Center For Charitable Statistics](#).

¹⁴⁹ *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 39.

Promotion of Education¹⁵⁰ shut down the ministry at large in June 2014, citing, “Sometimes Christian organizations become self-perpetuating and continue long after they have fulfilled their mission.”¹⁵¹ This self-perpetuating tendency of the nonprofit has become the norm in the social sector, or as Thenera Bailey writes, “Creating sustainable solutions to social problems gets replaced by the creation of solutions that will sustain our organizations and keep our doors open.”¹⁵² When a local homeless feeding program cries foul to the disruptive charter of a fellow organization that is actually eliminating homelessness and hunger altogether, *and* citing that they are “losing their client base... and their donor base” due to the disruptive entity, it becomes apparent that the original charter has unknowingly shifted its in their business model to justify the *means* as the *end*.

There are nonprofits that can actually declare victory and go home. “We never planned to be around forever,” said Scott Case, a co-founder of Priceline and vice chairman of Malaria No More. “We have thought of this more as a project than as an institution-building exercise, and the project is nearing its completion.”¹⁵³ Some nonprofit leaders have the wherewithal to know when it is time to close shop, while others continue to leverage compassion to sustain something that should have been weaned long ago. The

¹⁵⁰ Tony Campolo’s non-profit is Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, accessed December 2014, [Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education](#).

¹⁵¹ “It was time to stop,” *Faith & Leadership*, April 7, 2014, Tony Campolo, accessed December 2014, <https://www.faithandleadership.com/qa/tony-campolo-it-was-time-stop>.

¹⁵² Thenera Bailey, “Nonprofits Should Be in the Business of going Out of Business,” *Huffington Post*, March 15, 2012.

¹⁵³ Stephanie Strom, “Mission Accomplished, Nonprofits Go Out of Business,” *The New York Times* (2011).

social sector needs to follow the wisdom of Kenny Rogers when he sings, “You got to know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em.”¹⁵⁴

Government

There is probably no more blatant abuse and exploitation of compassion and the perception of generosity in any other domain of society than that of government.¹⁵⁵ Government, be it local, state, or federal, has politicians who have made significant change in public policy that demonstrates genuine compassion, yet even in its most altruistic sense, a proposal, bill, law, vote, appearance, photo-op, or speech is *always* leveraged by partisan strategist as a political move for the sake of power or legacy. When second president John Adams took office in 1797 he had already offered his thoughts on the governments role in the lives of its people.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, Adams, an advocate for the American independence wrote, that

Government is instituted for the common good; for the protection, safety, prosperity and happiness of the people; and not for the profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family, or class of men: Therefore the people alone have an incontestable, unalienable, and indefeasible right to institute government; and to reform, alter, or totally change the same, when their protection, safety, prosperity and happiness require it.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Kenny Rogers, “*The Gambler*,” United Artists, 1978.

¹⁵⁵ Confession and disclosure: I am a Republican who voted for John McCain in 2008, and Mitt Romney in 2012. But along with this self-indictment I would also submit that I work at a church, which also received its share of indictments in the previous section on *Faith*.

¹⁵⁶ John Adams, *Thoughts on Government, Applicable to the Present State of the American Colonies*, 1776.

In a 2014 *Washington Post* article entitled “Listening to the Founding Fathers,” political opinion writer Michael Gerson cautions that “it is not enough to praise America’s Founders; it is necessary to listen to them.”¹⁵⁷ While the political and cultural landscape has changed over the past 200 years, the vision of our Founding Fathers remains the same, thus requiring elected leadership to make adaptations to the implementation of the vision. He goes on to argue that “in the tradition of the Federalist Founders, Abraham Lincoln believed the federal government should be capable of adjusting to changing circumstances and active in pursuit of national purposes.”¹⁵⁸ In the ever-present demands of a developing country, the requirements of a government, thought Lincoln, was to “do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but can not do, at all, or can not, so well do, for themselves — in their separate, and individual capacities.”¹⁵⁹

Lincoln and the Founding Fathers called for “required action” meaning the bipartisan cooperation of government to appropriately meet the needs of the people such as “public roads and highways, public schools, charities, pauperism, orphanage, estates of the deceased, and the machinery of government itself.”¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the bipartisan cooperation needed for the sake of compassion gets lost in ideological debate and gridlock. The party that promises (or gives the perception of promise) garners the votes, stays in power and continues to drive its political ideology. Promising (and many times over-promising) compassion, in the form of change, hope, or fairness, keeps elected

¹⁵⁷ Michael Gerson, “Listening to the Founding Fathers,” *The Washington Post* (2014).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Abraham Lincoln, *Fragment on Government*, July 1, 1854.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

officials in office and parties in power. Compassion has moved far from the ideals of the Founding Fathers and has fallen into the struggle between opposing political worldviews. The incessant battle being waged for control continually leverages compassion as both a weapon and a stepping stool to maintain governing power.

“Governments are bad at compassion,” writes James DeLong author of *The Compassion Trap*. “In part because it is a candle to power-seeking moths. The heavy lifting of compassion belongs in the private sector, where it is divorced from the impulse to impose continually greater levels of control.”¹⁶¹

Arts & Entertainment

The Arts and Entertainment domain has one of the fastest and farthest reaching effects of any other cultural sector, with its celebrity star power and pop culture fame. One powerful story of leveraging the arts and entertainment domain for the sake of compassion is that of Bob Geldof. In the mid 1970’s a group of six musicians just outside of Dublin Ireland formed the punk rock band The Boomtown Rats. With Geldof as its lead singer the band found local and national success in the edgy UK market with two number one songs in 1978 and 1979 respectively.

While The Boomtown Rats continued to grow their European following, across the Atlantic the American media conglomerate Viacom launched a cable and satellite channel that would forever alter the arts and entertainment domain globally called Music Television or MTV. With the inauguration of MTV in the early 80’s alongside of their

¹⁶¹ “The Compassion Trap,” *The American*, James DeLong, July 29, 2011, accessed December 2014, <http://www.american.com/archive/2011/july/the-compassion-trap>.

growing UK fame, the Boomtown Rats were early pioneers of the music video and grew international recognition. In 1981, at the request of Amnesty International, the Boomtown Rats were asked to play a (British) star-studded charity benefit show called “The Secret Policeman’s Other Ball”¹⁶² at which time Geldof was struck with the idea of leveraging celebrity for the sake of a cause.

In 1984, following a BBC television exposé on the famine in Ethiopia, an inspired Geldof co-wrote the song “Do They Know It’s Christmas” and launched a compassion dream of his own by recording the song with fellow artists from the UK (and US)¹⁶³ and donating the proceeds for famine relief. The Christmas single was released December 3, 1984, and became the biggest selling single in UK Singles Chart history.¹⁶⁴ From that experience forward, Geldof organized massive relief concerts from Live AID to Live 8, and became deeply involved in the ONE campaign. Of Geldof’s accomplishments and connections, none would be so noteworthy as his influence on a rising Irish singer named Bono from the emerging popular rock band called U2.¹⁶⁵

In his book *The Frontman: Bono (In the Name of Power)*, author Harry Browne describes the Bono/Geldof connection this way:

Bono’s emergence and status as perhaps the world’s leading ‘advocate’ for Africa is deeply strange, its history so contingent that it may be pointless to seek its origins in his Dublin youth, or anywhere else besides the 1984 phone call from acquaintance Bob Geldof asking him to take part in the recording of a charity

¹⁶² Review of “The Secret Policeman’s Other Ball” by Variety Staff, performed by various artist, hosted by Amnesty International, Variety.com, December 31, 1981.

¹⁶³ “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” accessed December 2014. For a complete listing of artist - <http://dotheyknowitschristmas.com/>.

¹⁶⁴ “UK’s million-selling singles: the full list,” *The Guardian*, accessed December 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/nov/04/uk-million-selling-singles-full-list>.

¹⁶⁵ “Bono leverages celebrity to impact Africa,” NBC Nightly News interview with Brian Williams, May 23, 2006.

single by 'Band Aid,' the dreadful, plodding, patronizing and very, very white 'Do They Know It's Christmas?'¹⁶⁶

Bono has continued to serve as the celebrity pitchman for African relief related to AIDS, fair-trade, economic development, human trafficking, and eradicating extreme poverty. His notoriety and star power has been a perfect combination to amplify a cause because of compassion. Like Bono, some celebrity pitchmen have been around for sometime, lending their fame to an array of good work around the world. The strength of marketing with a celebrity pitchman is a lucrative investment that dates back as far as 1920 where celebrity entertainer Al Jolson endorsed then-candidate Warren Harding in his bid for the presidency by singing "Harding, You're the Man for Us."¹⁶⁷

From Sarah McLachlan's animal cruelty awareness commercials to Arnold Schwarzenegger's After-School All-Starts, TV personalities, athletes, and cultural icons are putting their full weight into causes and change. But for many, alongside the *shine* of the cause comes the *shadow* of the narcissist, who leverages the opportunity to repair the broken image or amplify the personal platform. "It is difficult to say what is the true motivation behind charitable celebrities," writes JoEllen Redlingshafer of *PolicyMic*, "...but I am willing to bet that a large amount were encouraged to by their publicist, either to create an image or bolster a torn image."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Harry Browne, *The Frontman: Bono (In The Name of Power)* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books 2013), 55.

¹⁶⁷ "Harding, You're the Man for Us," by Al Jolson, *YouTube*, accessed December 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gq2rnv7xPWs>.

¹⁶⁸ "Celebrities and Charities Don't Always Mix," *PolicyMic*, Jo Ellen Redlingshafer, November 5, 2011, accessed December 2014, <http://www.policymic.com/articles/2273/celebrities-and-charities-don-t-always-mix>.

The celebrity compassion endorsement and brand management seems to be more developed in the US markets as evidenced when soccer star David Beckham and his wife, entertainer Posh Spice, relocated to the U.S. from Great Britain. The celebrity power-couple were advised on American pop culture standards about how they should engage in public charities in order to remain A-listers. The Beckhams needed to spend less time on the pages of magazines with high-end consumer goods, and instead “try to confine their public appearances to award shows and ‘disease parties’ (charity fundraisers).”¹⁶⁹

From the celebrity standpoint, a careful and intentional association with cause becomes a priority for the public image and brand of the celebrity over the actual help it brings to the cause itself. In an article entitled “I Feel Your Pain,” Jo Littler develops this idea of intentional association. She writes that “public displays of support for the afflicted are a way for celebrities to appear to raise their profile above the zone of the crudely commercial into the sanctified, quasi-religious realm of altruism and charity, whilst revealing or constructing an added dimension of personality: of compassion and caring.”¹⁷⁰

The relationship of celebrity and charity can turn strangely dysfunctional in the leveraging of compassion for image enhancement. Its codependent relationship actually robs the cause of its soul and divine purpose.

¹⁶⁹ Toby Young and Gareth McLean, “Hollywood or Bust,” *The Guardian*, January 16, 2007, accessed December 2014, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jan/16/usa.travel1>.

¹⁷⁰ Jo Littler, “‘I Feel Your Pain’: Cosmopolitan Charity and Public Fashioning of the Celebrity Soul,” *Social Semiotics*, vol. 18 (2008): 239.

Media

With the rise of social media over the past 10 years,¹⁷¹ the ability to get news and information in front of the public is no longer controlled by the major news outlets. The Internet has afforded subsets of major news outlets, like Digg or BuzzFeed to serve as specialized data mining services that bring news and information feed that fits the personal interests of its user. This new reality has brought more news and information to the general public that was virtually non-existent before the 90's. Publishing house Houghton Mifflin Harcourt adds that the "Internet has increased its role exponentially as more businesses and households 'sign on.'"¹⁷²

With the inundation of news and information, media outlets (primetime news or internet subsets) have the capacity to spin news and information in a variety of directions. FOX News, MSNBC, CNN, along with contributors to Digg or BuzzFeed have been accused of spinning media to match a particular social agenda. Consumers are pretty aware of the social/political leanings of the media outlets and consume a steady diet of their content of choice. With the diversity of views that exist on the media landscape, from radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh to MSNBC Chris Matthews, there are cultural war debates and fights happening every day. The battlefield takes place in print, on the Internet, and over the airwaves of TV and radio daily, working to capture the hearts and minds of the general consuming public and to make money. Media outlets have a long history of using the fine art of sensationalism to propel their message forward

¹⁷¹ "Number of Active Users at Facebook Over the Years," *Yahoo News*, accessed December 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/number-active-users-facebook-over-230449748.html>. Facebook had 1 million users by the end 2004 (the year it launched), to over 1 billion in 2014.

¹⁷² "The Role and Influence of Mass Media" *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*, CliffsNotes, accessed December 2014, <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/sociology/contemporary-mass-media/the-role-and-influence-of-mass-media>.

for one reason or another. One case in point includes the 19th century newspaper battle between Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer during which both men “... were accused of sensationalizing the news in order to sell more papers.”¹⁷³

In her book *Compassion Fatigue*, author Susan Moeller exposes the truth about how the media has created an unspoken set of rules and values that sensationalizes disease, famine, war and death. She writes, “Compassion fatigue reinforces simplistic, formulaic coverage. If images of starving babies worked in the past to capture attention for a complex crisis of war, refugees and famine, then starving babies will headline the next difficult crisis.”¹⁷⁴

The art of exaggeration has been in existence as long as the sport of fishing, and the skill of sensationalism has matured alongside the rivalry of competing newspapers, and sadly, leveraging compassion and brokenness to fuel the insatiable drive for attention-grabbing media deadens the empathic senses of humanity. Eagles singer Don Henley captures the mind of media gone wrong in his song “Dirty Laundry:” “I make my living off the Evening News/Just give me something – something I can use/People love it when you lose/They love dirty laundry.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ “Jon Stewart Blasts Sensationalism in the News Media, but is it Really So Bad?” *Journalism*, Tony Rogers, accessed December 2014, <http://journalism.about.com/od/trends/a/Jon-Stewart-Blasts-Sensationalism-In-The-News-Media-But-Is-It-Really-So-Bad.htm>.

¹⁷⁴ Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (London: Routledge, 1999), 2.

¹⁷⁵ Don Henley, “Dirty Laundry,” *I Can’t Stand Still* album, 1982.

Summary

Within all of culture, each independent domain certainly has its share of positive successes and social advancements of compassion where the motivation is pure and outcome is heartfelt. However, the deeper examination of each domain is intended to demonstrate how quickly compassion can lose its intended ideal thus allowing the outcomes to be mixed and ineffective.

SECTION 3: THESIS

Introduction

While the inherent nature of compassion remains the same, culture has used and abused it to its own liking. Compassion, by itself, prompts good feelings and benefits for those giving, but somewhere along the line, the expectation of reward for doing good became the driving motivation, causing a culture to opt for the benefit rather than for virtue. As society developed within its channels of culture, each domain twisted compassion to work within its own realm, only to exacerbate the problem into its current form and new reality.

Compassion Is Trending

In language that matches popular culture, it could be said that compassion's new reality is *trending*. Throughout history, there has always been an act of service or gesture of kindness offered from one human being to another, but in a digitally connected world, it is easy to see that compassion is happening all around. Creative and innovative expressions of serving humanity continue to emerge with an online culture making it easy to join in.

Christian organizations like Compassion International have made the implementation of global compassion user-friendly and extremely personable.

Compassion International profiles individual children¹⁷⁶ and has set up a system where anyone else in the world can not only sponsor that child, but communicate with them throughout the years as they grow into adulthood. Compassion International has effectively bridged the distance gap that allows the sponsor to be far more engaged than just making a donation.

The virtue of compassion is trending with disruptive innovation that has attached the ideas of local consumerism to responding to the needs of others. While on vacation in Argentina, a young entrepreneur named Blake Mycoskie came up with an idea that would put shoes on needy kids around the world in a for-profit (one for one)¹⁷⁷ business model. What was originally called “Shoes for Tomorrow” became what is now known as “TOMS shoes.” TOMS has given “over 10 million pairs of new shoes to children in need since it began in 2006.”¹⁷⁸ TOMS shoes meets a very basic need of kids around the world, all the while becoming a fashion trend in the US. The new reality of compassion has made its way into the mainstream of popular culture and is considered something cool to be connected to.

¹⁷⁶ Compassion Sponsorship, *Compassion International*, accessed December 2014, <http://www.compassion.com/about/about-us.htm>. Currently, Compassion International has sponsored 1.2 million children in 26 different countries.

¹⁷⁷ For one pair of shoes purchased TOMS donates one pair of shoes to a child somewhere in the world.

¹⁷⁸ Distribution Numbers, accessed December 2014, <http://www.toms.com/blakes-bio/1>.

Compassion Is Sexy

The new reality of compassion is also sexy. In March of 2002, the popular film star Angelina Jolie adopted a seven-month old Cambodian orphan named Maddox, after visiting and filming *Lara Croft Tomb Raider* on location in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Jolie, a beautiful A-list celebrity, and her new son were the talk of entertainment news, and the widely publicized adoption was the buzz around the country. More than three years later, Jolie (along with her new boyfriend, celebrity Brad Pitt) again adopted an infant orphan girl from Ethiopia named Zahara. After Jolie and Pitt had a biological daughter the following year, they adopted a third time in 2007, adding a Vietnamese orphan named Pax to their family.¹⁷⁹ The high profile of their multi-ethnic family and the celebrity fame of both Jolie and Pitt brought about much publicity as well as having an impact on adoption agencies that became known as the *Angelina-effect*.

In 2011, adoption agencies reported a dramatic rise in international adoptions, from 5% in 2005 to more than 40% that involve adoption of children to the U.S. from a different ethnicity in 2011. The Daily Mail reported in 2011 that, “rising numbers of American families are adopting children from different countries and races as they copy celebrities like Angelina Jolie and Madonna.”¹⁸⁰ Ann and Jason Hillard were one of the many couples drawn into the *Angelina-effect*. “I remember being at the store and seeing Angelina on the cover of, I think it was, People magazine... and I said, ‘Oh my gosh! We

¹⁷⁹ After the adoption of Pax, Jolie and Pitt discovered they were pregnant and gave birth to twins Knox and Vivienne in 2008, bringing the number of kids in their home from 0 to 6 in 6 years [also confirming God’s sense of humor].

¹⁸⁰ Daniel Bates, “The Angelina Factor: More Americans Adoption Children from Different Countries and Different Races,” *The Daily Mail*, accessed December 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1375752/Angelina-Jolie-factor-More-Americans-adopting-children-different-countries-different-races.html>.

can do this.”¹⁸¹ The article goes on to say that once the Hillards saw Jolie on the magazine cover with her adopted daughter, “their decision to raise a child from Ethiopia was clear.”¹⁸² The appeal of the Jolie-Pitt adoptions was made sexy and sensational, given the nature of their celebrity status, good looks, and designer baby clothes.

Compassion Delivers

Not only is compassion trending and sexy, but in the new reality, compassion delivers. Once people engage in a genuine, heart-felt compassion expression: bringing blankets to the homeless, tutoring an inner city child, buying TOMS shoes, or volunteering at a food bank, the experience usually delivers a feel-good-moment that is hard to describe but feels intuitively right. Emma Seppala, Director of the Compassion and Altruism Research and Education center at Stanford University, confirms how compassion delivers to the overall health of the individual: “The reason a compassionate lifestyle leads to greater psychological well-being may be explained by the fact that the act of giving appears to be as pleasurable, if not more so, as the act of receiving.”¹⁸³

There’s no doubt that compassion expressed in serving others has an impact on the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the individual. Something deep inside each person instinctively responds with compassion in its purest form to those in need. But this growing popularity of compassion-expressions in the 21st century comes with

¹⁸¹ ABC News, *Angelina Jolie Inspires International Adoptions*, Oct 1, 2005.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Emma Seppala, PhD, “Compassion: Our First Instinct,” *Psychology Today* (2013): 44.

cultural nuances, that in many ways, are founded on mixed pretenses and outcomes that have surfaced throughout all domains of society.

Although many aspects of serving mankind have subtly morphed into this new reality of personal benefit, an innovative and fresh understanding of how compassion is hardwired into the makeup of one's personality, alongside the unique makeup of the individual, can unleash an unprecedented level of compassion to others that brings both a heightened awareness of purpose and meaning, all the while serving the humanity in a unique way. The definitive break from the status quo of benefit-prone compassion starts with one who *clarifies* their personhood, *identifies* their unique contribution, and *amplifies* their motivation or what is called finding your Heroic Genius.

Simply put, Heroic Genius is about discovering one's unique contribution to the planet and having the courage to walk in it. Heroic Genius is not about *fixing a problem*; it is about *finding a person (yourself)*. It is not about exacerbating an issue; it is about empowering an individual. Not fully living in or exercising one's God-given calling robs compassion of what it could be and allows genius to idly sit by.

The Pieces

What makes someone a genius? *Time Magazine* asks, if it is "... possible to cultivate genius? Could we somehow structure our educational and social life to produce more Einsteins and Mozarts?"¹⁸⁴ In his book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell develops the learned genius model that has produced some of the greatest expert geniuses in their

¹⁸⁴ John Cloud, "Is Genius Born or Can It Be Learned?" *Time* (2009): 51.

respective fields after 10,000 hours of practice. He writes that "... practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good."¹⁸⁵

Others would argue that genius is inherited, that there are some who are born with a natural propensity to quickly develop expertise in a particular field. Names like Ludwig van Beethoven in music, Blaise Pascal in mathematics, Shirley Temple in acting, and Tiger Woods in golf; are all considered child prodigies with a freakish-like, natural ability to be a genius in their field. What, exactly, makes one a genius, be it nature or nurture, is not entirely clear. However, the collective biological makeup of the individual and the sum total of his life experiences, exposures, and abilities sets an individual up for endless opportunities to do and be something great. If genius is only qualified as an expertise in a particular singular discipline or field (such as music or science), then the question becomes, "What qualifies a field?"

Probably the most gifted pianist to ever walk the planet was Wolfgang Mozart, but was he the best *underwater* pianist? There is nothing recorded in any of his biographies that would suggest that he holds any expertise in that qualified field.¹⁸⁶ The idea of those two different disciplines (music and underwater recreation) seems absurd at first, but it serves as an illustration to the collective power of collaborative possibilities. In a "wiki" world, collaboration of different parts actually brings together something that no one imagined could ever exist. Don Tapscott, in his book *Wikinomics*, puts it this way, "Wikis have unleashed a powerful force: a self-fulfilling, virtuous circle of co-creation

¹⁸⁵ Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2008), 42.

¹⁸⁶ The record and distinction for underwater pianist goes to Dr. Hugh Montgomery. His profile is listed on ReachMD. <http://www.reachmd.com/xmradioguest.aspx?pid=75202>, accessed December 2014.

that hierarchical models are powerless to stop or replicate.”¹⁸⁷ The co-creation in the broad fields such as medicine, computer science, or sports has opened the doors of possibility for niche fields of expertise and genius. Snowboarding (a co-creation subset of the sport of skiing), for example, has various disciplines (specialist sub-set events) within its own field. Likewise, the collective biological makeup of the individual and the sum total of his or her life experiences, exposures, and abilities, sets an individual up for endless opportunities to do and be something genius with his life.

The sum total that makes up the potential genius of the individual starts with an internal assessment that basically asks the question: “*Where did I come from?*” This assessment includes an understanding of upbringing, family of origin, personality profile, and emotional makeup, along with the tragedy and triumphs of one’s life experience. This internal assessment is nothing that can be changed; it is simply a clarifying picture that answers the question: “*What makes a person who they are?*” The internal assessment discovers the particulars of a worldview, which are key to understanding the components of one’s collective genius.

The second piece of a potential genius is the external assessment. The external assessment answers the question: “*What am I great at?*” The external involves talents that one has either developed over 10,000 hours of practice, or has recently discovered. Alongside talents is training. Education that specializes in a particular field and knowing the ins and outs makes for talented doctors or umpires. Education must be looked at inside of institutional traditional models, as well as unconventional methods of learning. A degree in Communication from Stanford University or a degree from the San Francisco

¹⁸⁷ Don Tapscott, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (New York, NY: Portfolio Press, 2006), 77.

Comedy College¹⁸⁸ are all variables that can make up the educational training, thus affording each person a unique gifting-palette that plays into what makes them great.

In the faith community, gifts are qualified as God-given spiritual gifts that are exercised and built up into the person through life in the Spirit. Passages throughout the New Testament¹⁸⁹ make up the various gifts that God bestows on his people. Assessing external resources comes from answering questions like: “What do I have?” or “What am I willing to give?” or “Who do I know?” or “Where do I live?” The external assessment clearly answers: “*What do I bring to the table?*” and becomes another key piece in the genius makeup.

The last element that makes up the sum total of potential genius is the *motivation* behind what one could do. What actually drives someone to take “who they are” and “what they have” to do something is what can cause compassion to remain a virtue or become a personal benefit. The motivation is answered in the question: “*What drives me to do what I do?*”

For some it is a feeling of a “life calling” and he or she chooses a profession or volunteer position in compassionate service that fulfills that deeper longing in his or her life. Some have looked at life experiences (often wounding) from their internal assessment and recognize their unique place to give back. The organization Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) brilliantly illustrates the power of motivation. AA’s answer to “What drives me to do what I do?” is answered in the 12th step: “*Having had a spiritual*

¹⁸⁸ I am a graduate and alumni of the San Francisco Comedy College.
<http://www.sfcomedycollege.com/> Ironically, I’ve also lectured on Compassion to students at Stanford University.

¹⁸⁹ Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 4:11 NIV.

awakening as a result of these steps we try to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”¹⁹⁰

For many, the motivation lies within the tenets of their faith. The motivation behind serving others is born out of followers (or disciples) of Jesus, obediently adhering to His commands to “... love one another.”¹⁹¹ When asked what are the most important commands, Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... Love your neighbor as yourself”¹⁹² In the Christian community, the motivation for serving was for the benefit of church growth and evangelism.¹⁹³ A win on the scorecard is not *serving so that faith can be shared*, it is *serving because one has embraced faith*. Where people come from, what they are good at, and what motivates them to do what they do are all a part of the collective sum total of genius.

The Fusion

Discovering personal genius¹⁹⁴ is a significant step in anyone’s life. Most people only scratch the surface of understanding of who they are, or sometimes, not liking some of the internal discoveries, they mask them from ever being seen. Tragedy, brokenness, and wounding experiences often are the very catalyst that will start something much

¹⁹⁰ For an entire list of all 12 Steps go to: www.12step.org.

¹⁹¹ John 13:34 NIV.

¹⁹² Matthew 22:36-39 NIV.

¹⁹³ Note: I whole-heartedly believe in the calling to evangelism, but the motivation for ‘serving (loving) my neighbor’ comes from obedient discipleship and living a life modeled after Jesus.

¹⁹⁴ Genius as qualified under “*The Pieces*.”

larger than expected. On May 3, 1980, 13-year-old Cari Lightner was killed by a drunk hit-and-run driver in Fair Oaks, California. Cari's mother Candy, in the midst of her tragedy and pain, founded an organization she called Mothers Against Drunk Driving.¹⁹⁵ The group quickly grew and developed support groups and advocacy chapters throughout the United States. What Candy Lightner discovered was that she was not alone in her grief, and that her genius was born out of painful tragedy.

Genius can also be a combination of factors that bring about significant wealth, affluence, position, or privilege. As no two snowflakes are the same, neither are two people. The entire makeup of birth twins can have them growing up in identical circumstances, yet their life experiences cause them to choose differing paths that lead to individual and specialized interests. The collection and awareness of one's internal, external, and motivational makeup becomes essential to an empowered life.

The real significance lies in a fusion between genius and a broken and hurting world. When a person has discovered what his collective genius is, and has woven those unique specialties to serve those in need, something heroic happens. Compassion becomes a unique brand where the person serving employs the genius of who he is and what he brings to the table in a broken world. It is the same feeling one may get when trying to unlock a door with a ring of keys that all look the same. When the right key is found with a twist in the lock, there's a feeling of perfection and fit. This concept is presented within the context of Christianity by the apostle Paul who states, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which he prepared in advance for

¹⁹⁵ "Mission Statement," *MADD: No More Victims*, accessed December 2014, <http://www.madd.org/about-us/mission/>.

us to do.”¹⁹⁶ The fusion of who the person is, combined with what the world needs, is called *Heroic Genius*.

¹⁹⁶ Ephesians 2:10 NIV.

SECTION 4: TRACK 02 ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

In light of the research of Sections 1 and 2, and the conclusion and descriptions in Section 3, I am writing a secular, fictional leadership book entitled *Heroic Genius: A Fable of Personal Discovery, Compassion, and Calling*.

Heroic Genius chronicles one man's journey from perceived success to significance. The main idea of this fictional narrative is to give readers a clear understanding of how their own assumptions of compassion and serving others in the world has the high potential to be tainted by popular culture. The intuitive response of compassion and serving mankind has subtly shifted from a virtue to a benefit, and thus placed a conditional premium on the person *giving* rather than the person *receiving*. The journey towards realigning compassion back to its roots begins with a message that gives a glimpse into discovering the purest form of the virtue, its current operational standards, and a mentored model of how to live intentionally and love unconditionally going forward. Throughout the story, its principle characters are challenged with the issues that are deeply embedded in the makeup of American culture and the pervading ethos of a compassion always offering some kind of benefit. The intent of the book is to plainly identify the subtle shift of what compassion has become, to reorient the understanding of the virtue in the mind of the reader, and to inspire the reader of their true potential to make a unique contribution to the world through this fictional narrative.

Book Summary

Heroic Genius: A Fable of Personal Discovery, Compassion, and Calling

Heroic Genius tells the story of distinguished University professor and marketing consultant Malcolm Ross, who receives an unexpected invitation to California's Silicon Valley for a rebranding project with eBay. Through the summer this affluent family stumbles into a relationship with some insightful and winsome neighbors that would quickly become mentors. Their relationship is formed after an inspiring message from Father Samuels at St Christopher's where Malcolm's assumptions about compassion and serving humanity are shattered. After an awkward intervention at the grocery store, the Ross family would enter into the enchanting world of Harry and Marie, who would systematically reorient their worldview through stories, conversations, and random learning journeys that happened along the way. As their relationship builds, adventures unfold, where the entire Ross family is forever transformed.

NOTE: The characters in Heroic Genius are based on real people and many of the stories actually happened. The fable is pieced together with symbols and conversations that would showcase the work within the dissertation.

SECTION 5: TRACK 02 ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

BOOK PROPOSAL

Cover Letter to a book editor:

Greetings,

My name is Jon Talbert and I am submitting to you this non-fiction book proposal entitled *Heroic Genius*. For the past ten years I've served as a catalyst behind the compassion movement in the San Francisco Bay Area called Beautiful Day. This effort has mobilized thousands of people to serve and care for needs of those in the surrounding areas. Our efforts have collaborated faith communities with local government, education institutions, non-profit's, business and other domains within the city to unleash compassion on the highest and most engaged levels in our region of the country. The organization has received numerous acknowledgements from the city, state, and federal levels. These compassion efforts have brought clarity and insight into what I've developed as a personal roadmap for individuals (secular and faith-based) who want to reclaim compassion as a guiding value in their own life.

Heroic Genius captures the story of University professor Malcolm Ross and his family as they come to California on a summer consulting contract. The Ross family crosses paths with the winsome and wise Harry and Marie Collins who journey with them through the short season they share as neighbors. After a defining moment at the local parish Harry invites Malcolm into a journey that would eventually expose a national epidemic that has subtly eroded the inherent value of compassion. Their time together not only uncovers Malcolm's misguided values, but reorients his thinking to discover his own heroic contribution to the world.

It's nice to make a connection with you and your publishing house, and thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal. I'm hopeful not only to publish, but also to partner with an agency that wants to impact popular culture with the true values of compassion. I'm hopeful for a publishing relationship that both entertains AND inspires people to live differently.

Respectfully,
Jon Talbert

Title:

Heroic Genius: A Fable of Personal Discovery, Compassion, and Calling

Hook:

Heroic Genius is a fictional narrative set in the hustle of the Silicon Valley that highlights one man's journey back to the virtue of doing good, for goodness sake. This fictional tale is about exposing readers to the subtle motives inside of themselves that has muddied their understanding of how compassion has been tainted by popular culture. While the story chronicles a unique reconnect to a heartfelt virtue, it inspires the reader to find their own distinct expression through the make up of anyone daring to venture towards meaning, purpose and destiny.

Purpose:

- To expose what compassion has become in western culture
- To reorient the readers thinking towards compassion as a virtue, not a benefit
- To discover one's unique contribution in this world
- To empower others to live compassionately in their gifting

Promotion and Marketing:

Jon Talbert is signed with a speaking agency called Wolfman Productions and a Marketing publicist called Gray Area Marketing. Upon publication, Heroic Genius will be developed into a motivational message that will be marketed through the speaking agency, and through the publicist.

Speaking Agency: Wolman Productions

Speaking Agent: Scott Wolfman

Agency Website: www.wolfmanproductions.com

Personal Page on Wolfman Productions:

<http://wolfmanproductions.com/?s=jon+talbert>

Marketing Agency: Gray Area Marketing

Publicist: Katie Mancuso

Agency Website: <http://grayareamarketing.co/>

Heroic Genius will be developed into an online platform where users will be able to tell their own unique stories of compassion, service, and justice.

Competition:

- *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media sells Disease, Famine, War and Death*, by Susan Moeller Routledge Publishing, 1999. A recounting of four memorable crises and how the media shaped the narrative for popular consumption and response.
- *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win your Inner Creative Battles*, Steven Pressfield. Black Irish Entertainment, 2002. Pressfield journeys into the psyche of motivation, fear, and inner resistance that individuals need to understand and overcome in order to create something inherently special in this world.

- *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself*, Steve Corbett, and Brian Fikkert. Moody Publication, 2009. A cumulative work that dives into the ramifications of responding to felt needs without taking into account the nuances of poverty that actually makes issues worse not better.

Uniqueness:

Heroic Genius examines the very real issue of serving mankind and the underlying motivation behind it. The book is positioned as a fictional narrative that allows the reader to dive into the lives of individuals working through genuinely helping those around them, all the while exposing the dark side of compassion in organizations, businesses, churches, and, *ironically* ... themselves. Heroic Genius connects to its audience through the life of a lovable family whose unplanned transformational journey is not only enlightening, but personally empowering.

Endorsements:

TV personality: Josh Shipp
 Leadership guru: Patrick Lencioni
 VMWare CEO: Pat Gelsinger
 4-Time Emmy Winner: Julie Watts
 Sociologist Theologian: Len Sweet
 Author: Chip Heath
 Pastor/Writer: John Ortberg

Christian Theme:

The Christian theme of Heroic Genius is connected to the idea that Paul puts forth in Ephesians 2:10. *“You are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God planned in advance for you to do.”* This biblical theme is rooted in the fact that God has uniquely hardwired mankind to serve one another, and has created opportunities to bring service, justice, and compassion to those around you in a way that no one else can bring.

Intended Readers:

The intended personal goal is to see this book in every airport in the US. Readers are university age to 60+

- Primary audience is young professionals (married/single) and University students who are looking to change the world.
- Secondary audience is both the faith community and the business community.

Manuscript:

The manuscript of Heroic Genius is a third of the way written with just over 20,000 words. The entire manuscript would be completed within 30 days of a contractual book agreement.

Author Bio: (as taken from the Speakers Bureau)

*Jon is a speaker, motivator, Humorist who has established a national reputation as a “**Humanitarian Entrepreneur.**” Jon started a compassion organization called Beautiful Day that spread virally across the country serving thousands in random acts of kindness. Each year he inspires thousands of people to step into life-changing “acts of heroism” by creatively serving someone else on the planet.*

*Jon’s travels have taken him to numerous 3rd world countries working directly with AIDS orphans and human trafficking. Jon helps you cultivate and refine what he calls “your genius playlist.” He taps into the vast trove of your personal gifting, talents, resources... even your life experiences (good or bad), that makes up the entirety of who you are. He then showcases how your design is desperately needed in the world today. As Jon says, “it’s not until you put that unique design into play do we discover who the Heroic Genius’ really are in the world.” You are **genius by design, but heroic by choice.** Jon helps you to build a platform that accelerates and amplifies your passions to actually change the world.*

*Jon brings a **powerful message to University students, corporations, and non-profits organizations looking to inspire their people to live a “heroic” life.** Jon also speaks to professional Soccer and NFL teams, as well as conferences and corporations around the country.*

*With a unique background in both **compassion and comedy,** Jon discovered that there was a new story that needs to be told.*

Book Format:

The main idea of the book is to expose how compassion has moved from a virtue to a benefit, and how to actually move it back through the fictional story of Malcolm Ross. Through this narrative the reader will identify with the characters and their journey to see within themselves how compassion moved from a virtue to a benefit, and how to move it back. Heroic Genius will help people identify their own unique calling to live intentionally and love unconditionally that will actually change their world. Each chapter allows the reader to deeply identify with the characters flaws and misunderstandings about compassion and to work through their own process of reorienting to the intended

Sample Outline

Heroic Genius

“A Fable of Personal Discovery, Compassion, and Calling”

Part 1

PERSONAL DISCOVERY ... “*The Journey West*”

- An Opportunity That Would Change a Worldview
- Unexpected Friends and Lifelong Mentors
- Exposure to Real People with Real Needs
- Changing Expectations

Part 2

COMPASSION ... “*The Virtue, not the Benefit*”

- Shattering Assumptions and Testing Assumptions
- Embracing a New Paradigm
- Making Compassion Work
- Changing Paradigms at eBay

Part 3

CALLING ... “*The Contribution to the World*”

- The Journey Home to a New Adventure
- Teacher on a Mission
- Losing Clients and Refining Convictions
- Personal and Professional Legacy

SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT

There is a story that I identify with when it comes to my doctoral dissertation, found in John 11.

“Jesus came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. *‘Take away the stone,’* he said ... Then Jesus said, *‘Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?’* ... Jesus called in a loud voice, *‘Lazarus, come out!’* Then the dead man came out.”

I have a whole new appreciation for this story. I have always looked at that story from either the angle of Mary and Martha, or of the crowds, or even from Jesus’ point of view. But I’ve never thought through this passage from Lazarus’s point of view. Sick. Dead. Buried. Mourned. Remembered. Resurrected. For me, I was Lazarus.

I started this doctoral program in 2007. I have fond memories of our Advances with Len Sweet, Loren Kerns, my good friend Dan Kimball, and the rest of the cohort together, making sense of our programs in light of the ministry we were engaged in. I remember going to a comedy club in downtown Portland where I was invited to be an opening act for a local comic in town (my background is in comedy and entertainment). With most of the cohort joining me in the club, I performed my set with much laughter and applause, and was followed by a (female) comic who got on stage and flashed my entire cohort. I can still see Chuck Connery and his wife sitting in the front row when this happened and me thinking, *“I’m done. They’re going to kick me out of the program.”* They didn’t.

I remember the “summer” advance at Timberline Lodge, at the top of Mt. Hood, and it snowing the entire time. I remember having a friend fly me in his private plane to

Orcas Island, and having to do a couple fly-bys before we landed to shoo the sheep off the “runway” (it was more of a straight long road than a runway). I remember long nights, adult beverages, and brilliant conversations with my fellow cohorts. I hold in high regard my friendships gained and my connections with the University.

I joined the doctoral program because something special was happening to me in my ministry as it began to grow exponentially in the San Francisco Bay Area. The ministry is called Beautiful Day; it is a compassion service expression where churches host projects within the local community. At the time, the Bay Area had seen nothing like it, and Beautiful Day became wildly popular. I felt like the ministry and my role would greatly benefit from me pursuing my doctorate and that it would open the door for me to publish and speak on topics such as innovative compassion, church and community engagement, and leadership.

In the last year of the program, I was attending one of my required conferences, and was in New York City at a gathering called Q. I actually was approached to present at the conference and also joined in the conversations and sessions. It was at Q that I completely lost my purpose and drive to finish what I had started. Q made me question everything I was doing in the program and the church. I’ve been told that New York has a knack for doing that to people. Compassion wasn’t as innovative as I had thought, and what I was writing on was nothing special or new. There were those around the country doing far greater things than I was doing, and our efforts in the Bay Area felt disconnected from the big picture of the domain of faith actually shaping culture.

It was at that time I knew my dissertation had become “sick.”

I started to passively withdraw from the program, knowing that I had come this far, but didn't know where to take my writing. I offered a conference brief that was more of a confessional than an evaluation. I missed some deadlines and became immersed in my work. The compassion ministry grew — and still continues to grow larger. But the dissertation was nowhere in sight. There were a few attempts and misfires to try to get it done, but I found nothing really substantive that I could feel inside of me to put on paper. My dissertation and doctoral studies were dead right before the finish line.

From that time forward, I immersed myself in the efforts of compassion for our faith communities and our city. I found myself deeply affected by the conversations at Q and sought out meaningful relationships with city leaders, business leaders, non-profit leaders, educators, media folks, and a number of entertainers that I knew. I threw dinner parties and invited them to birthdays and social occasions that allowed me to build deeper friendships.

The idea behind Q was to shape culture by making more of it. The relationships I built within the Silicon Valley were significant, and as I continued to host large compassion efforts, those relationships shaped what would become a new season for me. I had forgotten my paper and stopped all contact with George Fox, and walking confidently in the circles I was finding influence in. It brought me to regular meetings (phone calls and texts) with mayors, city council, county supervisors, elected school board officials, state representatives, Congressional representatives, and even an invitation to Washington DC and the White House. I was being asked to speak at universities and conferences (both faith-based and secular), and was even given the opportunity to speak and do entertainment at The Emmys (in Northern California). I

figured I had hit my stride as a pastor, Silicon Valley compassion entrepreneur, and entertainer.

While I'm grateful for the opportunities that were/are afforded me, I still had a nagging frustration about my doctoral studies being laid to waste in New York and internally mourned the loss of the opportunity I had let go by.

In 2013, my role in the Bay Area would take a dramatic change. I was invited to a small gathering of influential business and faith leaders to talk about catalyzing a holistic gospel movement around the entire Bay Area, something that has never happened in the history of this major metropolitan area of Northern California. I reluctantly came with hesitations and high levels of skepticism. The meeting was held in the conference room of a large cloud-based computer company called VM Ware. At that meeting I was invited, with eleven others, to discuss the idea of collaborating together for the greater good of the Bay Area and to unify efforts on a high level. The room included business and marketplace notables such as John Ortberg, Francis Chan, Chip Ingram, Kevin Palau, Pat Gelsinger, Promod Haque, Kevin Compton, and the Ambassador to Bermuda Gregory Slayton. My invitation into this group was based on my work in the South Bay, and the unified church that grew out of our compassion work with Beautiful Day. The group, which called itself "*Transforming the Bay with Christ*,"¹⁹⁷ started to meet every month to pray and invite others into the larger conversation. Each meeting gathered momentum and a buzz around the greater Bay Area of something significant happening that has never happened before. In 2014, Transforming the Bay with Christ (TBC) established a board of directors, and hired me as their first employee that would initiate

¹⁹⁷ For more information about "*Transforming the Bay with Christ*" go to www.tbc.city.

the work, based off the momentum we had gained in the South Bay. In this season from 2013 to 2016, I have traveled to different cities, and met with compassion leaders and unity movements that have opened my eyes to how compassion has been leveraged in many ways for personal (or institutional) gain.

In my season away from GFU, I had come to some amazing and frustrating discoveries about compassion. That, as I integrated myself into the various domains of our city as a faith leader and compassion advocate, EVERY domain was using compassion for their own benefit--even the church, and true compassion got lost along the way. Some were pretty obvious about it, others were more covert, and some didn't even know; but for the 10 years that I've been doing this ministry and investing in each of the domains, I saw it clearly.

Each time I spoke, I found myself talking about how compassion had been used for personal gain, and would call it out within the domains where I spoke. Somehow and somewhere along the line, I remembered and reconnected to the passion of wanting to write again on this very topic. Not about how churches can do compassion within their cities, but how domains can reconnect to the original *intent* of compassion.

Unsure how it happened, one day, last year, I got a message and phone call from Loren Kerns asking me to come back and finish. I had told him about the pilgrimage back to clarity in my ministry and the opportunities that had been afforded me based on my discoveries way back at Q. He challenged me to finish and walk down the path towards resurrection. I'm not sure how well my paper and thoughts will be received, but I'm on a more refined path that has me in conversations with culture-shapers and influencers around the country. My territory has increased from the 2.2 million in the South Bay to

the entire Bay Area (8 million). I believe that I'm on the right track, and graduation will soon amplify my efforts to bring compassion where it should be, and launch a fresh take on this virtue that actually changes the thinking of people across the country.

SECTION 7: ARTIFACT/WRITING SAMPLE

Heroic Genius:

A Fable of Personal Discovery, Compassion, and Calling

PART 1

PERSONAL DISCOVERY

“The Journey West”

An Opportunity That Would Change A Worldview

THE OFFER LETTER

It was midday when Malcolm Ross opened his email and saw the offer. Two and a half months on a consulting gig in California during the summer months sounded pretty good. Because of his work pace and his teaching schedule at the University, Malcolm would normally take this time off to be with his family. Every summer the Ross' would enjoy some down-time to travel together and experience new things, but this offer was too good to refuse, and generous enough to bring the whole family for an extended time on the west coast.

Consulting large corporations in brand development and marketing came easy to Malcolm, and the time in California would give the entire family a chance to sleep in, lay low, and enjoy the west coast sunshine. However, what Malcolm was about to experience during this season would mark his family and forever change his worldview.

DENVER TO CALIFORNIA

There was not one person in the Ross family that had any reservations about abandoning the Colorado cold and going to California after the school year. It was the end of April 2013 and Denver had more snow in the past two months than it did in the past 50 years.

Malcolm was packing up a few essentials he would need from his home office when heard the car doors of his wife Suzanne's Range Rover closing. The conversation of his teenage daughters got louder as they made their way to the front door. He couldn't really tell what they were talking about, he could just discern from the tone that they were excited and actually getting along (which was uncommon for two teenaged girls).

The discussion never skipped a beat as the front door swung open, and they dumped their things on the kitchen table and talked about the move. *"I can't remember the last time I went to the beach,"* Taylor said. At 16, she was the eldest of Malcolm's daughters and had just finished her sophomore year in High School. Kayleigh was just 13 and going into the 8th grade next year. *"Mom, can we go bikini shopping before we leave for California?"* yelled the 13-year old from the kitchen. *"I actually need all new summer clothes before we go ... can we get new summer clothes?"* Kayleigh pitched the request with a slight whine in her voice. She had perfected it over the years. They all had.

The request, the look, and the whine were all things Malcolm was accustomed to with all the ladies in his house. Even Lauren, his 8 year-old was learning the art from her sisters, who weren't *entirely* spoiled, but were able to get pretty much anything they wanted.

The summer in the sun required a whole new wardrobe for the family, and Malcolm didn't mind. The Ross family made really good money and they knew there would be some luxury expenses they would add to the "*buy-before-we-leave*" list. California had some great golf courses, and Malcolm was sure to have several client meet-ups on the fairway throughout the weeks.

There was more excitement in their lives now that they could anticipate a move from snowy Denver to the golden coast of California.

Malcolm Ross was a distinguished professor at the University of Denver in the Daniels College of Business and served as a freelance marketing consultant for some of the largest companies in the greater metropolitan Denver area. Over the past 8 months he had been recruited to do some rebranding and marketing work at the eBay headquarters in the San Jose area, and the timing with his University teaching schedule and his girls being out of school was all perfectly aligned.

"How far is the beach from the house we're renting?" 13 year-old Taylor asked her mom. *"It's not too far honey,"* Suzanne answered, not knowing exactly how far it was.

“Every summer the family experienced some crazy new adventure” Malcolm thought, as he carried another packing box from his office to the living room. *“The Bay Area is full of great things for us to see and do,”* he yelled from the other room. *“You girls are going to go to a place where new ideas and new thinking actually changes the course of the world.”* Malcolm was referring to companies like Apple, Google, and Facebook ... not realizing he was forecasting something far more intrinsic and personal than tech and business innovation.

Sixteen year-old Kayleigh was already on her computer googling the distance from the Ross’ summerhouse in Willow Glen to the nearest beach. *“It says it’s 38 minutes to Santa Cruz, that’s not too bad.”* She added as Taylor started singing a line from Katy Perry, *“California girls we’re unforgettable Daisy Dukes... Bikinis on top”*
“Mom’ can I get some Daisy Dukes?” Lauren asked.
“NO” Malcolm grinned and yelled from the other room.

It was going to be a good summer as he looked out his office window at the blanket of late April snow.

What Malcolm was about to experience that summer would forever change his worldview for he and his family.

The Ross family lived a mile outside of downtown Denver in a quaint community known as Cherry Creek that represents the affluent upper middle class. Malcolm had built quite a career for himself, while Suzanne Ross was mostly a stay at home mom who left a

thriving legal career to be actively engaged in raising their three daughters; who all attended prestigious private catholic schools. Suzanne would still work as a legal consultant from time to time, but lately has immersed herself in navigating a critical education path for her daughters.

The Ross family is like many who find themselves in the suburbs surrounding the Denver area. Cherry Creek is one of the many regions and smaller cities that, like the Ross family, are doing their best to make a good living, raise their kids in the best environment possible, and give back to their community.

FIRST DAY IN SAN JOSE

The Ross family arrived at Mineta San Jose International Airport on Saturday June 9th in the mid afternoon. Malcolm didn't need to show up at eBay until a week from that Monday, so it gave he and Suzanne some time to acclimate with the girls to their summer home in the Silicon Valley. EBay had arranged for a driver to pick them up curbside, and their car and personal belongings had already been brought to their home off Dry Creek in Willow Glen. It was perfect, because the office was less than a mile from their home, and the neighborhood in Willow Glen reminded them of their home in Cherry Creek. As they settled into their rented furnished home, Suzanne had already checked the nearest parish for their family to attend, and mass was that evening at St Christopher Parish just a mile away.

During the service, Father Thomas Samuels gave a message he called *“Love With No Return”* from Luke 6, where Jesus says, *“Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”*

He touched on the topic of karma and how western thought has embraced the idea that good deeds done will eventually find their way back to the person doing them in this life. Malcolm listened intently as Father Samuels paused and then said, *“The problem is that it’s so counter to what Jesus was teaching. Jesus asks the question “what credit is that to you if you lend and hope to receive back?””* Father Samuels went on to say, *“If we at St Christopher’s love others for the sake of some karma-induced kickback, then we’ve subtly tainted the purity of the virtue.”*

Father Samuels went on to challenge all those who attended mass that evening to *“love those that are hard to love, to love our enemies, and to love those who are against us, and those who we’d rather not deal with.”*

Then Father Samuels said something that Malcolm could not stop thinking about all day ... *“This is what makes Jesus’ comments in his Sermon on the Mount so provocative. What if goodness is never returned? And, what if goodness brings about negative retribution. This would actually spoil the fruit of karma and force REAL compassion to discover its true motivation somewhere deeply hidden in the recesses of the virtue itself. Where goodness happens for goodness sake”*

Father Samuels looked up from his notes, and said *“This is what Jesus modeled to us when he calls us to love our neighbor.”*

As mass finished up, the Ross family stood with the rest of the parishioners for the final blessing. Malcolm stood slowly, pulled out a pen and quickly scribbled a note to himself on the back of his parish bulletin that was resonating from Father Samuels message.

“The real motivation for compassion is in the virtue, not the benefit”

He torn off the note, folded it, and tucked it in his back pocket, as Father Samuels said, *“Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”* Malcolm muttered under his breath with the rest of the parishioners *“Thanks be to God!”*

SAFEWAY PARKING LOT

As the Ross family left St Christopher Parish, Suzanne decided the family should head to a nearby Safeway to get some food in the house. She would do a big shop later, but getting some essentials for the next few days would be imperative. They saw a Safeway near their house off Dry Creek, and were headed that way. As the girls rattled off all the things they thought they needed, Malcolm drove quietly thinking about the message and tuned out the chatter in the car. When they pulled into the parking lot, Suzanne had a good start on a list and the girls were ready to join her in the store.

“I’ll be in a minute honey,” Malcolm said to his wife as they exited the car. *“I need to write a few thoughts down that I have in my head,”* he told her. This was not uncommon

for Malcolm to take a moment to write down his thoughts in random places, and his family knew it. As a creative brand and marketing guy, Malcolm would often get flashes of brilliance that would require him to capture it on paper before he would lose it. His wife and his girls knew the drill and allowed him to stay in the car with no objections as they headed into the store. *“Just meet us in there when you’re done”* Suzanne told him as she closed her door. Malcolm waved to them and sat quietly for a moment and reached for the torn note from his back pocket. The message was still fresh on his mind, but the note captured the core of what he knew he needed to think through.

“The real motivation for compassion is in the virtue, not the benefit”

Malcolm sat with the note for a moment closed his eyes and thought about his own journey. Why was this concept resonating with him so much? Or was Father Samuels message exposing something in his heart that he hadn’t thought through? He wasn’t sure, but he wasn’t going to let it go.

As Malcolm tucked the note back into his pocket, another car pulled into the stall next to where Malcolm was sitting. It was an older couple, probably in their 70’s, driving an old Mercedes, coming to get their groceries for the week, just like his own family. Nothing out of the ordinary, except the older gentleman waved to Malcolm as he got out of his car, just to be courteous, and walked toward the store with his wife.

Malcolm watched as they approached the store together, and what happened next caused him to get out of his car in a rush to their aid.

CONFRONTED AT SAFEWAY

As the elderly couple walked towards Safeway, three homeless men quickly came from across the lot to approach them. Malcolm saw the whole thing unfold and was certain he was about to witness some sort of crime right before his eyes.

As the three men hustled towards the couple, Malcolm summoned the courage to get out of his car and quickly approach the couple as they walked closer to the store entrance. “*What am I doing?*” he thought, as he made eye contact with the men, and gave clear indications he was heading their way. “*Excuse me!! Sir, excuse me ... you and your wife ok?*” he asked, not really sure what to say. The older gentleman turned around and saw Malcolm coming quickly towards him. The old man was more startled by Malcolm than the three homeless guys who were still headed his way. “*Can I help you?*” the elderly gentleman asked, as the three homeless men approached his wife, and to Malcolm’s surprise they each gave her a hug and exchanged pleasantries as the gentleman reached out his hand to Malcolm and said, “*My name’s Harry Collins, this is my wife Marie.*” Marie was clearly distracted while she hugged each of the three homeless men, giving each one her attention as she held both their hands and looking in their eyes to greet them ... like a beloved family member greets their clan members when they’ve returned from a long journey.

"Wow, I wasn't expecting that" Malcolm thought, as he shook Harry's hand, glancing back to Marie, then back to Harry. *"Weren't you just at the parish?"* Harry asked, as Malcolm's adrenaline subsided. *"Yes, yes ... we just moved here for the summer from Denver. We live off Dry Creek. My family is inside the store. I was just ..."* Malcolm was trying not to show he was catching his breath, but he couldn't help it. *"Did you think we were in trouble?"* Harry asked, as Malcolm let out a huge breath and sighed *"YES, I thought you were going to get ..."* he stopped himself because he knew the three homeless men greeting Marie could hear him and he wanted to be tactful. *"I wasn't sure, and ... um, no offense ..."* as he looked at the men who heard the whole conversation. One of them spoke up and broke the awkwardness *"none taken"* he said. *"You thought we were gonna mug Harry and Marie didn't you?"* Malcolm didn't say anything, he just slowly nodded yes, while the homeless man laughed, and said, *"I'd probably be scared of me too! And these two guys are even scarier!"* He jabbed his two buddies and they all laughed, albeit Malcolm's laugh was more a nervous gesture. *"I'm Marie"* Harry's wife beamed. She was a beautiful elderly woman, with a full head of silver hair, and dressed surprisingly hip for an old person. She smiled and asked, *"Did you say your name was Malcolm? I think I saw you at the parish."* She had piercing blue eyes, and when she looked at you, she locked on and focused intently into Malcolm's eyes. *"Yes, my whole family was with me, they're inside the store"* he said, now feeling somewhat embarrassed for the ruckus he created outside the store. *"Guys, I want you to meet Malcolm"* she said, *"Did I hear that you were from Denver?"* still locking onto his eyes. *"Yes ma'am ... Denver, we're here for the summer,"* he added. *"Well let me introduce you to my boys"* Marie said as she grabbed the coat sleeve of one of the presumed attackers and pulled

him and the others over to meet Malcolm. *“This is Daniel, Andy, and Marcus. They’re our friends,”* she said. Each man reached out a hand to shake Malcolm’s, and it was as if everything went into slow motion for Malcolm as his internal thought process raced through his head. *“These are homeless guys,”* he thought. *“They’re dirty, they smell bad, probably on drugs ... who knows where those hands have been.”* But right on queue Malcolm extended his hand to shake theirs. *“It’s nice to meet you guys ... and Harry and Marie, its nice to meet all of you two,”* he said hesitantly. *“I should probably go find my girls in the store. They’re waiting for me,”* he said as he made his way towards the automatic doors of Safeway. Harry and Marie smiled, and then focused on the three men she called her boys. Malcolm walked down the aisle way of cashiers looking for his family, but he kept peeking back out the window at the small group of unlikely folks talking, laughing and enjoying the company of one another.

Unexpected Friends and Lifelong Mentors

THE NOTE

Harry and Marie had lived in Willow Glen for about 30 years. They had two sons, and a daughter, all adult children who were married and lived in different parts of Southern California. All totaled up, they had 14 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. They were both retired teachers at Santa Clara University, Marie taught at the University’s School of Law, and Harry was a distinguished professor at Santa Clara’s Center for the Arts and Humanities department. Even though he was technically retired, Harry still

engaged in University life as a guest lecturer through the department he served for so many years. They actually lived just a block away from where the Ross's would stay for the summer on Kirkmont, and their paths would cross again and again, as the Ross' journey to the Bay Area would take shape. As the Collins left their friends outside the store, Harry noticed a piece of paper folded on the ground in front of him. It looked familiar, so he picked it up. It was a torn piece of the bulletin from St Christopher's Parish. He opened it and read the words ...

"The real motivation for compassion is in the virtue, not the benefit"

He smiled and put the paper in his pocket. He knew where it came from and he knew who wrote it.

This would become the new charter for Malcolm Ross and his family going forward, and they had no idea how their lives would forever change.

THE INVITATION

"There you are" Suzanne said as Malcolm found her and Lauren in the produce section.

"The other two are getting ice cream for tonight, and I'm sure a few other things that teenagers crave" she said with a smile. Malcolm was clearly distracted and looked at Suzanne with a look that said something was up. *"Are you ok?"* she asked with concern.

"Yeah, yeah ... I just met this older couple coming into the store. I thought they were going to be mugged by these three homeless guys, but it was so weird" he stopped to think.

"Wait, what?... start over!" Suzanne stopped her cart looking intently at Malcolm.

“These old people parked right next to me, and when they walked up to the store, I thought something bad was going to happen ...” Malcolm paused, looking dazed.

“And?” Suzanne asked, as if to say, *“Finish your sentence.”* *“And, they were the nicest people”* he finished. *“Who are you talking about? The homeless people or the old people?”* Suzanne blurted out as she was getting frustrated with the pace of the story.

“All of them” Malcolm said, *“Everyone. The old couple, the homeless people ... everyone. It was crazy. It was like I walked on to the set of a TV crime show in progress, then”* he paused again, *“then everybody hugged each other, like they were all best friends or something.”*

Suzanne briefly stared at Malcolm’s eyes shaking her head, when, he got diverted again, breaking eye contact and looking directly down the produce aisle at the Collins coming directly towards them with their cart. *“I swear honey, some days you are so ADD,”* she said with frustration. *“No, that’s them. That’s the old couple I was telling you about.”* Malcolm said enthusiastically. *“Seriously, they’re the nicest people. I want to introduce you to them.”* Malcolm walked towards the couple, when Harry noticed him, and said with a smile, *“You gonna save us again ... in the produce section!”* Malcolm grinned and said, *“I want you to meet my wife Suzanne.”*

A lively conversation ensued in the produce section that day in Safeway. Suzanne noticed too how Marie was incredibly present, and locked into incredible eye contact with each of their girls as they came to drop their items off in the Ross’ grocery cart. It was like they were the best kind of grandparents you could hope for with your kids.

"I heard you say you lived on Dry Creek" Harry commented. *"Yes, just for the summer"* Suzanne chimed in. *"While Malcolm does some consulting work for eBay, we thought we'd all join him as a family,"* she added. *"We live just one street over on Kirkmont. The two-story with the white picket fence in front."* Marie said. *"I have an idea"* she went on, *"why don't you all come by tonight after you drop off your things, for a quick snack. We can welcome you to the neighborhood."* Malcolm looked right at Suzanne's eyes as if to say, *"come on babe, it'll be fun!"* but he knew better than to say that out loud, so he simply said, *"What do you think honey?"*

"We have a wonderful dog named Jackson" Marie said, then paused, *"and we have a pool."*

"Mom, they HAVE a pool! ... and they're nice" Lauren sternly said to her mother under her breath with her teeth somewhat clinched.

Both Malcolm and Suzanne agreed, and the girls cheered. The two families parted ways from the produce section with the understanding they'd finish up their shopping, and head on over in an hour or so.

Harry turned to the next aisle and paused to pull out the note. He reread it again, and looked at Marie. She smiled at him and winked with her stunning blue eyes.

It was going to be a good night.

THE WALK OVER

After dropping off all the food at their summer home, and the girls getting their suits on, the Ross family walked over to the Collins house just one block away from their own. It was a warm June Saturday night and Malcolm and Suzanne, held hands as they listened to their girls talk about the things that interested them. Lauren already had her goggles on her face and had set a pace ahead of the rest of the family, Taylor was walking and texting friends, a skill she perfected ever since she got a phone, and Kayleigh was holding her towel and walking closely alongside Suzanne. She was the sensitive one, and always stayed close to her parents.

“Why don’t people do this any more?” Malcolm randomly asked. *“Do what?”* Suzanne relied. *“Stuff like this, like ...”* he paused to think, *“inviting neighbors over. I mean, just a few hours earlier, we were just strangers to them and now we’re heading over to their house to hang out and swim,”* he added.

Suzanne thought for a bit, and jumped in, *“we have people over all the time. We have clients and their families over ... we BBQ and entertain all the time”* she said. *“That’s just it”* Malcolm almost cut her off. *“We have CLIENTS over, potential or current customers and their families over”* he asserted, *“but when do we EVER have people over, just to have them over?”* Malcolm was getting passionate in his short walk over the Collin’s house, but he was recollecting a theme that had been building since they heard

Father Samuels at St Christopher Parish earlier that evening. *"We host great parties and have an amazing circle of friends"* Malcolm looked intently at Suzanne, *"but every time we host something, it has an underlying, unspoken hope for something in return to us!"* he said. *"You're being way too hard on yourself honey"* Suzanne almost cut him off. *"Besides your work at the University, these are your clients, and you've built up a great consulting business that has served our family well"* she exclaimed. Malcolm stopped walking and reached in his back pocket. *"It's gone,"* he thought, as he reached for the torn bulletin with the note he wrote for himself from Father Samuels message. He checked his shirt pocket, and other pants pocket ... nothing. *"Did you lose something?"* Suzanne asked. *"My note, I wrote myself a note from the parish tonight. It was ..."* still searching, *"it was this quote that Father Samuels said about compassion and loving others. He said it's moved from a virtue to a benefit"* quoting as best he could remember. *"You don't think we're very compassionate people?"* Suzanne questioned. *"No, I think we are, maybe. I mean, on paper we look pretty compassionate"* Malcolm was now referring to all the charity work that he had done with the University and the corporate social responsibility courses he had taught over the years at the Daniels College of Business in Denver. Getting more frustrated that he can't find that note, Malcolm raises his voice, *"where's my note?"*

"Come on honey" Suzanne said, *"let's talk about this later. We're good people, don't let this random topic ruin our night with our new friends."*

"Yeah Dad", Kayleigh said as she leaned into her mother. *"You're acting weird."*

"This isn't a random topic," Malcolm thought as they continued up to the Collins house. Lauren had already rung the doorbell twice and they could all hear Jackson barking inside. *"I need to just drop this for now and enjoy the night with my family and our new friends"* he continued in his thought process.

"But where the heck is my note?" he thought before Marie opened the door, and Jackson greeted everyone.

THE VISIT

As the Ross family walked in Lauren was immediately taken by Jackson the Portuguese Water Dog, who was clearly the baby of the Collins family. Jackson licked Lauren's goggles she was already wearing over her eyes. *"I can see his tongue,"* she yelled as she lay on the floor with the dog. *"It's so gross!"* she giggled. Everyone laughed and Harry closed the door. *"Welcome to our home. We're so glad you could come over,"* he said.

The girls walked into the family room and immediately started noticing things that caught their attention. Harry and Marie had a very unique décor that neither Malcolm nor Suzanne had seen before. *"I love your house"* Suzanne said politely, looking around and trying to think of a word to describe her style. *"We are into architectural salvage as a hobby,"* Marie said. Their house had all the standard furniture items that any house would normally have, but it also included things like old doors, stain glass windows that came

from old churches, columns, corbels, finials, and iron from an old gate. The family room had repurposed wood from a barn, and the room was decorated with some old signs, and one that said, *“Welcome to Collinsville, Oklahoma.”*

Almost everything in our house is something that came off an old building or house that would eventually end up at the junk yard or on the side of the road.” Harry said pointing to a few windows he had hung like art. *“I love how you’ve taken these items and incorporated them into your personal living space”* Suzanne said, as she touched some flowing fabric that was draped off the tall weathered columns. *“Will you teach me how to do this?”* she asked. *“I’d love to dear,”* Marie said.

Harry spoke up and said, *“When you first spot something that can be salvaged, it never really looks like it did in its original form. It’s weathered, broken, and forgotten. But over the years we’ve collected a few and have learned the power and beauty of restoration and repurposing.”*

“Harry clearly is talking about their décor ... right?” Malcolm thought.

The girls spotted the pool through the French doors, and it was as if Jackson led them to the edge of the water. *“Careful, he is a water-dog”* Marie called out to the girls. *“He’ll swim with you whether you like it or not!”* she exclaimed.

You could hear screams and laughter as the girls found themselves enamored with Jackson. It wasn't more than 3 minutes and they were all in the water, including Jackson. The girls were set, and they could swim all night.

THE TOUR

While the swim party was going on, Marie and Harry led Malcolm and Suzanne on a tour of their home. It was a huge house with 6 bedrooms, lots of pictures, and Harry's study. As they walked from room to room, Suzanne kept noticing all the architectural salvage items that were integrated in the purpose of the room. She loved how items that even she had seen as junk was used within that room. It was creative and thoughtful ... and she hadn't seen anyone's home with that kind of décor. They walked into the family room where there were family pictures of the young Collins family. Malcolm noticed, there were no posed studio pictures, but they were all random shots in different parts of the world. "*Where's this one from?*" Malcolm asked, pointing to one of he and his son Jonathan standing with a group of folks, it looked like it was from South America somewhere, and they were all smiling and completely soaked. Harry pulled the picture down and smiled. "*This was one of the most exhausting days of my life,*" he said, as he smiled and looked at he and his son, and all the soaked villagers. "*We were in El Salvador helping to dig a well a small village called La Tercera*" he adjusted his glasses, and said, "*we spent hours with the drilling team and the whole village came together in the final hour when the water burst open and it was like a gusher.*" Harry's voice changed tone, as he relived the moment. "*It was my son's high school graduation gift and we dug a well and celebrated with that village for four days afterwards,*" he said.

Malcolm and Suzanne were dumbfounded. *“Who does this?”* Malcolm thought. *“Your graduation gift to your son was digging a well ... in El Salvador?”* he said, *“how random”* he concluded in his mind. *“Yeah, it was his gift and that’s where he wanted to go,”* Harry added. *“He had done the research on how many kids die each year from contaminated water. He raised four thousand with his friends from school and paid for a well to be dug that would last for generations.”* Malcolm and Suzanne were speechless. They were thinking about sending Taylor to Hawaii with her friends for graduation. They weren’t even sure she knew where El Salvador was on the map, let alone the issues facing the country.

There was another picture of just Harry and Marie and they were clearly in Africa on Safari. *“This is a great picture”* Suzanne interjected. *“Were you on an African safari?”* she asked. *“Yes”* Marie smiled. *“It was a surprise. We both had no idea we were going on safari ... but aren’t the animals in the background beautiful?”* she asked. Suzanne thought and said out loud, *“how do you NOT know you’re going on Safari. It’s kind of a long flight”* she smiled, but wanted some clarity. *“Oh, Harry is on the board of Hands of Hope in Zimbabwe. They house and educate girls who are AIDS orphans and we support them through our parish. Harry and I had a conviction to do more, so we go over every year to visit our girls. The Safari was added on by some organizers who wanted to surprise us.”* Marie said.

“She did it again,” Malcolm thought. “She called the AIDS orphans HER girls just like she called the homeless men in front of Safeway her boys. Who are these people?”

“Wow” Malcolm said out loud. “Just ... wow.”

Marie moved them into the dining room where there were tons more family pictures that covered the walls. Harry and Marie had 3 kids, 14 grandkids, and 5 great grandkids.

“You have a beautiful family” Suzanne shared as she went from picture to picture. “Who is this little girl?” she asked, pointing to a young black girl in the mix. “You have an African American child?” Suzanne asked, not sure how to word it. Marie smiled, and said, “Well, she’s African. Kenyan actually. Our grandson and his family adopted her, because she had a heart condition. She wouldn’t have made it had they not worked to bring her here,” Marie explained.

“She’s beautiful ... what’s her name?” Suzanne asked. “Malaika Faith.” She’s our newest member.” Marie offered. Malcolm was just now taking it all in. It was pretty overwhelming and inspiring all at the same time. He could hear his daughters splashing and laughing together, in the same pool that the Collins kids played in for so many years. “How was it they their kids got this compassion gene so deeply embedded in them? It encompassed everything they did,” he thought. As they continued through the house, Malcolm couldn’t help from reflectively comparing, “We’re good parents, but this stuff NEVER resonates in our home. What are we doing wrong?” he thought.

“Let’s go sit out by the pool” Harry suggested. *“We have a bonfire pit there and can talk and enjoy a glass of wine.”* That sounded fantastic to Malcolm and Suzanne. It had been a long day, and relaxing by the pool with a bonfire and glass of Merlot sounded fantastic.

“That sounds great” Malcolm responded, as they moved towards the patio and the sounds of barking, splashing, and laughter.

THE BONFIRE

The bonfire pit was just to the left of the pool and the Collins had a bunch of Adirondack chairs around it. Harry lit the fire, while Marie brought out some apple slices, chips, and Gouda. The girls all came over and grabbed a few chips, while Jackson sat poised to pick up anything the young ladies dropped on the ground. The pop of the wine bottle cork could be heard from the kitchen, and Harry came back with a few glasses and a 2008 bottle of Dante Reserve Merlot for his guests. As he slowly poured into the four glasses, and the girls munched on chips, Harry lifted his glass and started out on a small toast he would offer to his guests.

“To new friends and family” he held up his glass and the others joined him as he finished by saying ... *“And may the real motivation for compassion and loving one another, be in the virtue, not the benefit”*

They all sipped their wine but Malcolm. *“Where did you hear that?”* he asked. Harry finished his sip, and looked at Malcolm saying *“From Father Samuels this evening”* he

paused to reach into his back pocket and pulled out ... *"My note!"* Malcolm said. Harry smiled and said, *"You dropped it out front of Safeway. I saw it after you left, and figured it was yours. So I grabbed it and figured I'd see you another time and give it back."*

"That's the note you were talking about?" asked Suzanne. Malcolm took the note, laid it out on the brick of the fire pit, and set his wineglass down next to it.

"Can I just say today has been a crazy day for me" Malcolm said with some relief. *"It's not a big deal, it's just something that I wrote down from the message that I'm trying to wrap my head around"* he continued.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked. Malcolm continued. *"Suzanne and I live a really good life. I have a good job, a great marriage, and some healthy kids. But today I felt like I was let in on a dirty little secret."* *"What's that?"* asked Harry. *"That all the things that we ... "* he corrected himself, *"that I ... thought I had done out of charity, compassion, volunteerism, service, and love ... ALL had an underlying motive that of personal gain."*

Suzanne interrupted, *"Honey, we just talked about this ... you're being WAY too hard on yourself."*

"No, I'm serious. As Father Samuels was talking today, I could feel it. Like he saw something inside of me that know one else knew. I feel like he exposed a dirty little secret"

that no one is talking about.” Malcolm was getting more passionate, as he picked up his note, and said *“It’s as if compassion has moved from a virtue to benefit.”*

“Keep going Malcolm” Harry replied, as he took another sip of wine. *“I think I get what you’re saying”*

Harry understood EXACTLY what Malcolm was saying. He has been watching this trend rise for the past 20 years in American culture, and taught classes in the Humanities Department at the University, and the growing cultural trend of compassion as a benefit.

Malcolm was in rant mode, and he clearly needed to get this all out. The girls went back into the pool for a second dip and the night sky was out. For some reason he was feeling vulnerable to share what was going on, and so he began to unpack more of his thoughts.

“The charity events we attend become networking gigs, the corporate social responsibility campaigns I coach my clients on are marketing ploys for brands to demonstrate to the public that they care.” Malcolm said with big hand gestures.

“And what are we teaching our daughters?” Malcolm asked, as he gestured towards the pool. *“I helped Kayleigh last month win the canned food drive at school. I did that! She needed more cans to come in first place, why? So she could win an iPod”*

From the pool Kayleigh heard her name and the word “iPod” and yelled back to Harry and Marie, *“I won an iPod!!”*

“Honey, she’s just a young girl,” Suzanne added. *“Sure, and it was fun for her ... but would she have done this if there was NO incentive?”* Malcolm asked.

It was a good point, but it was an awkward moment, and Malcolm was getting barebones about his feelings from the service earlier. Suzanne could tell it was weighing heavy on him, and the Collins smiled and just listened.

Marie, broke the awkwardness with a simple question, she asked, *“What makes you think we’re not all drawn to some sort of incentive?”* She continued, *“It’s human nature, we can’t help it.”* Then she locked onto Malcolm’s eyes like she had with so many before him and said, *“It’s the person who becomes keenly aware of this shadow-side of charity that reaps a reward very few will ever experience.”*

Both Malcolm and Suzanne sat with that truth hanging out there while the fire flickered and they both took a sip of wine and the same time.

“Mom, Dad ... watch!!” Taylor, KayLeigh, and Lauren were all lined up on the side of the pool. Jackson was there too. It was a race to the other side, and the dog was about to mess it all up by jumping in with them.

There was a huge splash, then chaos and laughter followed. The two couples got up from the bonfire, and Harry invited Malcolm to his garage, while Marie and Suzanne took the glasses and food platter into the kitchen.

THE INVITATION

Harry had a really clean garage, and it was clear he loved to tinker on old cars. When he flicked on the lights, Malcolm could make out a classic car under a car-cover when they walked in. *“This is my baby”* Harry said, as he pulled the cover off. It was a 1959 Austin Healey Bug-eyed Sprite. *“Marie loves architectural salvage, I love classic cars,”* he shouted. *“When I got this one, it was just a pile of junk that needed to be put back together. Now she’s a beauty!”* He said as he ran his hands along the fender-lines of his classic. Malcolm leaned over the car and slowly checked out all the restored detail.

Harry was giving details and dimensions that Malcolm would never remember, and then Malcolm paused and said to Harry, *“this whole thing that has happened today, the message at the parish, my note, the homeless guys at Safeway, and our conversation tonight. It’s like someone’s trying to tell me something”* Malcolm smiled, knowing that the question was vulnerable, and a little tricky to ask.

Harry looked at Malcolm and said, *“Usually when I hear the same message over and over, I figure that there’s something deep for me to learn.”*

Malcolm sat with that for a few moments, and then looked back down at the Healey.

“There’s a lot of classics out in the world just waiting to be restored” Harry said, as he too looked at his car. *“They’re just waiting to have someone who has no personal benefit to cash in on, to come alongside them to rebuild, restore, reuse, and repurpose”* Harry added.

Harry pulled out the note Malcolm had scribbled earlier that day. He left it out by the fire pit, and Harry grabbed it before they went to the garage.

“Hang on to this” Harry said, as he handed Malcolm the note. *“It’s clearly a theme that someone up there is trying to tell you,”* he added.

Malcolm took the note and put it in his pocket, while Harry asked, *“Hey, what are you doing tomorrow?”*

“Just unpacking some, and the girls were going to head to the beach ... why?” Malcolm responded. *“Do you golf?”* Harry asked.

Malcolm was wondering how long it would be before he hit the ground in California and wound up on the golf course. *“I love to golf ... why?”* Malcolm said with pep in his voice.

“Let’s go golfing tomorrow, but before we go, I want to show you something. It’ll be fun, and it’s all part of the same theme you’re on.” Harry said.

Malcolm agreed, and settled on a time to meet up with Harry back at his house tomorrow morning at 8:30 in the morning.

As the boys came back to the house from the garage, the girls were all out the pool, and had towels wrapped around them and were ready to go home. Suzanne and Marie had them all bundled and ready to go, and the families said their goodbyes.

“I like them” Lauren said, walking alongside her parents as they made their way towards home. *“We do too, honey”* Malcolm added. It was a warm night, and the entire Ross family had a full day.

“What are we going to do tomorrow?” Taylor asked

“You, your mom, and your sisters are going to the beach,” Malcolm said, *“and I’m going to play some golf.”*

Exposure To Real People with Real Need

LOS LAGOS GOLF COURSE

Back in 2002, designer Brian Costello opened what would later be termed the cornerstone of San Jose's recreational offering in the middle of this thriving expanse called the Los Lagos Golf Course. The course was not only built to accommodate the recreational desires of an affluent community, but was strategically created to blend into the surrounding habitat of Coyote Creek that ran through the city of San Jose near Willow Glen, carefully integrating the course to preserve the sensitive creek environment. Los Lagos lay on the naturally crafted direction of the creek-bed affording golfers the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the surrounding area while playing on one of the Silicon Valley's finest courses.

On the north end of this development lay the well-manicured 15th green and the 16th fairway. The 15th is nestled between a housing development, a business park, and the Coyote Creek trail where golfers head back towards the Los Lagos clubhouse, creating a pocket that is protected by an 11-foot high fence separating the course from the surrounding community. Groundskeepers have planted climbing Star Jasmine at the base of the fencing to provide shade for this section of the course, as well as to hide what is on the other side. A small stream of smoke rises near that section of Coyote Creek but golfers are encouraged to ignore what's on the other side of the fence just beyond the 15th green.

THE JUNGLE

Sunday morning rolled around, and the Ross girls were up early and ready to go to Santa Cruz. About a quarter after 8, the family was packed in their Range Rover and left Dry Creek to drop off Malcolm and his clubs at the Collins home, and then Suzanne and the girls would navigate their way over to the beach. Lauren had her goggles on her eyes again like she did the night before at the pool. *"You know you can put them on when we get there,"* Taylor said mockingly at her little sister. *"Leave your sister alone"* Malcolm said, as they pulled up onto Kirkmont Drive.

"Have a good time honey," Suzanne said as Malcolm gathered his things from the back of their car. He walked up to the passenger side window with his golf bag slung over his shoulder. He was wearing his new golfing gear they had purchased before they left, and the girls were in their new summer swimsuits. Malcolm looked at his ladies, and thought to himself, *"this is the good life"* as he reflected on how well he had provided for his family and how good they all looked. *"I love you guys ... have fun!"* he said, as the Range Rover pulled away and the girls sped off to their beach time adventure. *"I'm going to play some golf!!"* he declared in his thoughts.

Malcolm walked up to the Collins home and rested his golf bag against Harry's Mercedes. Marie was on the side yard watering her flowers and meticulously pruning her garden. This was her Sunday routine; Harry's routine was quite different. *"Hello dear"* she shouted from a row of lavender and tall stem bellflowers. *"Harry's in the garage, out back. Help yourself to some coffee."* Mary was in her element, and Harry was about to be in his. Malcolm walked through the front door and saw the coffee pot and helped himself

to a cup. He grabbed a black mug that said "*The Jungle*" on it. He didn't think anything of it, and found himself wandering towards the garage where Harry stored his classic car.

"I'm back here" Harry heard the side door to the garage open as Malcolm walked in. Harry was in the back pantry of the garage where there were five large storage cabinets. Malcolm walked into the pantry and saw Harry packing food and supplies. *"Whoa"* Malcolm said with some surprise. *"Is this like your emergency shelter in case of an earthquake"* he was sort of kidding, but he also knew California has earthquakes and the Collins seemed like the kind of people who would ration supplies. Harry was kneeling down in front of the cabinets and said, *"hand me those three blankets up there ... and there's a bottle of pre-natal vitamins."* Malcolm set his coffee down and quickly reached up to grab the requested items. *"What are we doing with all this stuff?"* Malcolm asked as he helped Harry load these last few items into a few duffle bags he had down on the floor with him. *"I'll show you. Grab that bag for me and let's load this in the car. Did you bring your clubs?"* Harry asked.

Malcolm grabbed his coffee and followed Harry out saying *"They're out by your car."* *"Perfect ... this is going to be a great day for golf"* Harry said heading out of the garage towards his car out front. He carried the other bag of supplies and grabbed his clubs with his other arm.

"This is weird, but I'm not going to say anything" Malcolm thought as they neared the car. Harry popped the trunk and put the golf bags in, and then put the supply bags in the back seat. *"I see you got The Jungle mug,"* Harry laughed. *"Yeah, I just grabbed one. Is*

there something special about it?" Malcolm asked. *"Nah, just a funny story I'll tell you later. Enjoy your coffee."* Malcolm looked at the mug before he took another sip. It said The Jungle on one side, and had a church website on the other. *"I wonder what that's all about"* he thought as he got in the car and the drove off.

DOWN INTO THE JUNGLE

As Harry and Malcolm pulled away from the house and headed towards the Los Lagos course, it was silent in the car for a few minutes before Harry said, *"I want to show you something near the golf course, if you don't mind."* Malcolm didn't mind, but listened to Harry as he continued, *"there's this place called The Jungle, that Marie and I visit every week. It seems like it goes along with this theme you've been wrestling with of compassion moving from a virtue to a benefit"* Harry said with his eyes focused forward on the road. *"I think this will open your eyes a bit. And our tee time isn't till 10, so we have a small window to go visit"* he said.

They parked off a main thoroughfare and walked down towards a dirt road with a sign that read Coyote Creek. Harry was carrying one supply bag, and Malcolm had the other. They were about the same size and weight as their golf bags they would carry later that morning. Malcolm noticed that this wasn't a conventional entrance to a park or recreational area; it was more like a back roads approach to the creek that went directly under the highway. Once they were under the bridge there was a dusty trail that would weave as far as the eye could see along the creek side and graffiti covering the underbelly of the overpass. The trail was littered with trash, broken glass, and random things

like shopping carts and wooden pallets. This was not anything Malcolm ever imagined being so close to where he lived, and so close to such nice neighborhoods. There was nothing like this in Denver, certainly not in Cherry Creek. Harry led the way into the jungle. It wasn't long before they came upon the first tent city, where they met with some men who told them their stories. Malcolm sat on a tipped over shopping cart and watched Harry ask questions that dug deep into the heart of each person he met. Harry found out their immediate needs, their next steps they needed to take, and the many roadblocks along the way. Harry spoke with encouragement as he meticulously took notes and always offered hugs and handshakes. He had Malcolm pull out a few things from his supply bag and hand it to the men. They were grateful and extremely warm towards Malcolm because of Harry.

"I've never experienced anything like this" Malcolm thought as they headed out towards their next encampment.

"How you doing?" Harry asked Malcolm as they zipped up the supply bags and started further into the jungle. *"This is crazy. I had no idea this existed. You can't tell when you drive down the road that this jungle is even here"* Malcolm said with an innocent voice.

"Very few people know it exists, but there are hundreds of people along the creek.

Families, women, and children, veterans" Harry added with a serious look. This wasn't golf, or classic car talk. Harry talked with a tone that showed intensity that Malcolm had not heard before.

In their walks between encampments Malcolm noticed that Harry would take a mental record that he would mumble to himself. “*Needs one sleeping bag, a can opener, and trash bags ...*” as if he were dictating a to-do memo to an assistant at the University. “*Get more water, call emergency housing at county, and bring a flannel shirt.*” Malcolm would lean in to listen to Harry’s “*self-talk*” as they made their way alongside creek to the final encampment. Their last stop was a grouping of tents where five men lived; two of the five were gone looking for cans to recycle, two were sleeping, and one man named Charlie was tending a small fire he was using to dry clothes and to cook a meal. Malcolm watched as Harry broke down social barriers and assumptions that may have existed and brought genuine empathy and compassion to Charlie, a US Army war Vet, who deserved some dignity. It became clear to Malcolm that Harry’s presence of compassion was a heroic gesture to a forgotten hero who needed to be remembered, and cared for.

Malcolm sat and witnessed Harry and Charlie talking by the fire as the smoke went straight up, through a canopy of trees, and rose just a few yards beyond the 11-foot fence separating *The Jungle* from the 15th green of the Los Lagos Golf Course.

PEEKING OVER THE FENCE

As the conversation wrapped up with Charlie, Harry stood and walked up the creek side embankment. There was a tree stump right by the fence that looked over at the golf course. Harry stood on the stump and looked at the 15th green and said, “*man, I love golf,*” as he watched the men actively attempting their shots on the green. Harry waved Malcolm up the embankment saying “*Malcolm, come see this!*” Malcolm made his way

up and stood alongside Harry on the stump looking over the fence. There was a foursome putting and waiting to play through to the 16th fairway. The backside of the putting green on the 15th hole overlooked Charlie's tent, where his campfire smoke was wafting through the air. Each of the foursome were all about Harry's age, dressed in plaid shorts and polo shirts, and looked almost identical to Harry. *"Lets finished up here and get out to the course"* Harry said with enthusiasm.

"Wait, we're just going to go golf now?" Harry asked after almost an hour journey through the jungle meeting folks and passing out supplies. *"That's the plan ... you still want to golf right?"* Harry asked. *"Yeah, but ... "* Malcolm paused. The irony of engaging in polar opposites was tripping up Malcolm's internal values grid. *"It's ok"* Harry interrupted. *"We came to golf, it'll be good for us to be out on the course, and it will give us some time to unpack what you're thinking"* Harry said, knowing exactly what was happening to Malcolm's worldview.

The two men journeyed back to their car not saying much, but waving to the friends they made along Coyote Creek. They gave one of the supply bags to the vet named Charlie, and the other to a family that would use it to collect cans to recycle. Harry and Malcolm left the jungle empty handed, sweaty, and bit dusty. They were ready to play golf.

Changing Expectations

THE FRONT NINE

It was about five minutes to 10, as the men walked out onto the first fairway of the Los Lagos golf course with their golf bags in tow. The sun was shining and the links looked fresh and ready for some swings. Malcolm had received a few texts and pictures of Suzanne and the girls in Santa Cruz. They made it to Seabright Beach and had already walked over to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. Malcolm knew they were having a good time, and during the summer he'd have plenty of time to join them, but today was about golf.

Or was it?

As they teed up, Malcolm just started talking and started unpacking what had just happened in The Jungle. *"It's super ironic that this encampment and the golf course are so close together,"* he said, not thinking about what it sounded like. *"Well, its not like any body planned it that way."* Harry responded, *"folks without a home just go and make do where they can"* he added. Malcolm thought for a moment, he wasn't sure what to say next, but he committed to being more careful how he would say things.

"How did you find The Jungle?" Malcolm asked as Harry took his first swing. It was a great shot down the fairway; Harry was clearly a good golfer. *"It's funny, I was golfing with some buddies like this, and saw the smoke rising up over the 15th green. They all ignored it, but I peeked over the fence they have there to block the view. I'm nosey that way."* Harry laughed. *"And you saw Charlie and the guys we just met?"* Malcolm added,

“No, it was someone else, but almost the same set up. Small encampment a fire, and a real contrast to what we were doing up here on the course.” Harry said.

Malcolm was teed up, and to his surprise hit his ball further than Harry did down the fairway. *“Nice shot!”* Harry yelled, as they grabbed their bags and walked together.

“So you saw over the fence and you went down the encampment like we did today?”

Malcolm asked. *“No, no ... I came back to my foursome, and kept on golfing. Had the worst game of my life that day.”* Malcolm looked at Harry as they walked together.

“Yeah, it didn’t sit well with me” Harry added. *“Here I was walking on a golf course like I do every week, enjoying the good life, while people just feet away from me were struggling to live, to find food, and survive”* he said.

“So what’d you do?” Malcolm asked. *“One of the guys in my foursome noticed I was being quiet, and said to the whole group ... What’s the deal with Harry, he’s so quiet?”* and we all got into this big conversation about homelessness.”

“And ... ?” Malcolm asked. *“And we sat at the clubhouse for hours over beer and sandwiches and talked about what we could do to help.”*

“Oh, so that’s a positive thing ... right?” Malcolm threw out there. *“Not really”* Harry responded quickly. *“Our conversations turned to a plan to host to golf tournament to help the homeless. We started planning it, and having meetings with the club about what it might look like.”*

“Sounds like something I’d be part of back in Cherry Creek” Malcolm thought.

“The problem is, that these guys were only willing to do something for people suffering if THEY got something out of it. It was the same with the club director; he wanted to publicize that the Los Lagos golf club was doing social good for the sake of the club not the cause”

“I get it.” Malcolm said, but knowing that he’s fallen into that same trap.

“The further we went down the road for this charity golf tournament for the homeless, the more I became aware of my own selfish motive when it came to serving others” Harry shared.

“So what happened?” Malcolm asked. *“Well that’s the thing”* Harry said, *“The tournament raised a ton of money. In fact, it was one of the most successful fundraisers they do here in the valley”* he said while shaking his head. *“People loved it, and the money we raised actually helped people who were hurting,”* he paused. *“The irony is, that compassion and charity, even when it’s self serving, still looks and feels like a good thing and it becomes difficult to identify when it’s off course.”*

“This sounds a lot like what Father Samuels was talking about yesterday at the parish” Malcolm added. *“Yes, it’s exactly what he was talking about”* Harry quickly said. *“There is a virtue we should all pursue because it’s deep inside us. It’s pure and simple. But*

when we use that virtue for the sake of OUR own benefit, it erodes the joy and meaning it was designed for.”

“Wow” Malcolm said, *“I need to write that down”* he reached for his note, and then read it out loud.

“The real motivation for compassion is in the virtue, not the benefit”

“And the real tricky thing is ... ” Harry added at the end of Malcolm’s reading, *“is that selfish compassion, and self-LESS compassion, look almost identical in the eyes of the general public.”*

Both men let that thought linger out for a bit before anyone said anything. In fact, they didn’t really bring that topic back up fully until they got to the fourth fairway.

Before the tee shot on the fourth hole, Malcolm asked, *“So what did you do to correct this motive thing?”*

Harry stood up from teeing the ball, and said, *“I worked through four expectations that I personally placed on the virtue that needed to be changed in me.”*

“Sounds deep” Malcolm interjected. *“I’d love to hear them”*

“Sure” Harry smiled, *“let’s just keep playing golf”* as he looked out towards the rest of the front nine.

LUNCH AT THE CLUB HOUSE

Lunch at the Los Lagos clubhouse was busy as usual. It was a Sunday, so the usual weekend warriors were in the restaurant and the bar. It was about 2pm and Harry and Malcolm still had the back nine to look forward to. It had proven to be an interesting day so far as Malcolm reflected on the past 48 hours since they flew out of Denver international to San Jose. Lots to take in, and even more learning. They two men sat by the window of the clubhouse as their sandwiches and ice tea arrived at their table.

Malcolm paused before jumping in, not knowing if Harry was a *“pray before you eat”* kind of guy. Harry looked at Malcolm and raised his hand and said, *“Thank you Lord for blessing us, may we be a blessing to others.”* Then he looked at Malcolm and said, *“I’m so hungry, let’s eat!”* There was no hesitation on Malcolm’s part; he jumped right in because he too, was famished. After a few bites and some quiet at the table, Malcolm wanted to thank Harry for the friendship and the conversations they’d been having. *“You know Harry,”* Malcolm started, *“I’m super grateful how you and Marie have been so kind to our family”* he paused, thinking through how to say the next thing. *“And the time you’ve taken to walk me through some personal journey stuff”* he added.

Harry was amused. He jumped in and said, *“we’re still in the middle of it,”* he laughed as they both took another bite of their sandwiches. It was clear that a real friendship was

forming, but to Malcolm, it would become more of a mentorship. *“Yeah, we’re clearly not done talking through things,”* Malcolm said as he sipped his iced tea. *“You were going to talk me through your own journey ... you said something about four expectations that needed to change?”* He said still holding his glass.

“Yes, my four expectations that I had placed on compassion that I needed to work through” Harry said, leaning back in his chair with his ice tea. *“It was crazy, because I was all caught up in the charity golf tournament, when I read this random quote from John Bunyan of all people”* he said. *“Is that the guy with the blue ox?”* Malcolm naively asked. *“Ahh, no”* Harry responded, *“This was the 17th century theologian... no ox. You’re thinking of Paul Bunyan”* Harry said, thinking that Malcolm clearly missed reading some of the early mystics in college. Harry went on saying, *“He has this line that I’ve memorized ... It goes “”You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you””*. Harry stopped and looked down at his food. *“I forgot where I read this, but it stopped me in my tracks when I read it”* he said.

“It’s always good to serve other people,” Malcolm added. *“Oh, but it’s so much more than that”* Harry responded. *“He’s saying two things that literally jump out on the page and grabs you by the throat. He’s saying to ‘Do something that NO ONE can repay you for’ ... there’s no chance that you get anything in return,”* Harry started to get passionate and other people in the clubhouse could start to hear him. He went on to say, *“compassion today gets crowded out by a field of rewards that cheapens it from what it could be”* Harry’s eyes started to get soft, and then he said, *“the other thing Bunyan is*

saying is that UNTIL YOU DO THIS ... ” he overemphasized his words, “you don’t really live.” He stopped and looked down. “This is a signature moment,” Malcolm thought as he listened to his friend. “From that time forward” Harry continued. “I decided for Marie and I ... we were going to live!!” He said in a soft voice.

Sitting in the clubhouse was almost a holy moment for Malcolm as he listened to his friend after all they had experienced.

They both finished up their lunch before Malcolm asked, *“What were those four expectations you placed on compassion that you said you needed to change?”*

Harry looked took a big sip of his ice tea and said, *“Let’s get back on the course ... I’ll tell you on the back nine.”*

They wrapped up their lunch and headed out to the 10th fairway. The lunchtime was refreshing for both men, both physically and spiritually.

THE BACK NINE

Both men had played a decent front nine, but it was getting late in the day and the conversation proved to have far greater value than the numbers on their score card.

Malcolm was teeing off with a full swing on the tenth down a medium length par-four. He had shanked it off the fairway, and yelled skyward in jest, *“what did I do to deserve*

that?" He and Harry laughed. Harry could remember so many times he thought the same thing. Malcolm turned to look at Harry and said, *"Ok, four expectations ... GO!"* He wanted to hear from Harry the expectations he had placed on the virtue of compassion, and what he needed to change.

Harry started, *"well first is, ironically, karma."* Malcolm smirked, *"that IS ironic."* Harry teed off and hit a great shot down the fairway. *"Father Samuels touched on this yesterday"* Harry mentioned. *"He and I have had some crazy conversations about the topic of karma over the years,"* Harry said reminiscing. *"The truth is, karma-logic is so counter to the teachings of Jesus. What if doing good never brings you good in return, what if it brings about negative retribution? What if Martin Luther King believed in Karma, or Gandhi? Both men, AND Jesus, served for the common good ... and they were killed for it! That trumps karma all day long!!"* Malcolm listened to the rant and wondered if Harry's expectations would all come out this passionate; but he didn't mind, all of this was good for his soul. *"Yeah, I get it"* Malcolm said. *"If I do good things for the sole purpose for good things to return, then I've definitely fallen short."* *"Yes!!"* Harry yelled out. *"Your shot in the rough had nothing to do with something that happened earlier in your day! In fact, you were serving the homeless! How does that make any sense? It's so arbitrary!"* Harry exclaimed as they walked toward where they thought Malcolm's ball went. *"And on the flip side of that, if the only reason I'm doing good is so something good comes back to me... it's far too arbitrary to qualify. I'll NEVER do good, unless I can make sure something good comes back"* Harry said almost exasperated.

“Karma is actually a lame excuse to do compassion,” Malcolm said candidly while looking for his ball. *“YES!!”* said Harry, *“That’s exactly what I’m talking about.”*

They eventually found Malcolm’s ball under some tall grass right in front of a tree blocking the fairway. *“You must have done something bad back in Denver to warrant that shot”* Harry said with a big grin. They both laughed.

As both men moved on to the next few holes, Malcolm received a flurry of text pictures and a couple phone calls from Suzanne and the girls. Nothing life threatening or of concern, but there were a few times Malcolm had to put Harry on the phone as she navigated her way back from the beach to the freeway that would bring them back home. Thanks to Harry Suzanne and the girls didn’t end up heading to Portland on their journey home.

Malcolm looked at a few of the pictures they text to him, and smiled. He loved seeing his ladies enjoying their time at the beach. He leaned over the Harry and said, *“check this out!”* It was a series of pictures where all four girls were trying to take selfies and Lauren gets sand in her eyes and starts to fuss. Taylor was in the forefront with her sister Kayleigh actually taking the pictures, and Lauren was in the background squinting her eyes, and then rubbing them with more sand on her hands. Each picture was funnier than the next as the two eldest daughters kept smiling while Lauren’s predicament got worse and worse. Suzanne eventually got her eyes flushed out with water, but the series of pictures were hysterically comical. Both men laughed as they looked through the pictures

a couple of times, and Harry said, *“You’ve got a great family my friend.”* Malcolm smiled as he glanced at the pictures one more time and said, *“Yeah, I do. Suzanne is so great with my girls.”* He went on, *“I love that they got to go to the beach today. In fact, everyone got to do what made them happy today. Beach, golf ... ”* he paused, and then said, *“It’s a good feeling knowing they’re enjoying themselves.”*

Harry smiled and looked at Malcolm. It was obvious his brain was locked onto some thoughts. Malcolm looked at him with an inquisitive face and said *“what?”* Harry smiled and looked down and said, *“That’s the second expectation I had to change about my view of doing compassion work.”*

“What do you mean?” Malcolm asked. *“Funny story”* Harry said as Malcolm set himself to chip the ball from behind the green back on the fairway.

“Marie and I were driving home from an event at the University in Santa Clara, and she saw a sign by the Red Cross that read “The Need is Constant, The Gratification is Instant, Give Blood”” he said as they walked further down the fairway.

“Ahh, you two are blood donors!” Malcolm added, *“That’s awesome.”* *“No ... I’m not”* Harry responded. *“I can’t give blood because of my work in Africa. But before Marie had joined me on one of my trips, she saw this banner for the Red Cross Blood Drive at the University”* he said. *“It was a catchy marketing slogan.”*

Malcolm thought the same thing. As a branding expert he could tell when a marketing campaign was well thought out like the Red Cross Blood Drive campaign. The ad slogan *“The need is constant, the gratification is instant, Give blood”* was actually brilliant because it stated the need, along with the return on investment, and the call to action ... all within ten words. *“Must have been a professional who came up with that one,”* he thought to himself.

Harry went on, *“Well Marie started talking about it, and I just kept silent.”*

“What do you mean?” Malcolm asked.

“She talked about the shortage of blood in California, and that local hospitals are always in demand for more blood, and it’s giving the gift of life to someone ... all good stuff” he said shaking his head and smiling. He continued, *“we both saw the sign, and I decided not to say anything, while she processed it all out loud.”*

“So what’s the big deal?” Malcolm asked with an inquisitive look on his face.

“Marie is deathly afraid of needles!” Harry blurted out with laughter. *“Malcolm”* Harry grabbed Malcolm’s arm just before he was about to putt on the green and looked right in his eyes and said slowly, *“Deathly afraid. As in panic-attack, pass-out, take-the-rest-of-the-day-off, afraid.”* Malcolm smiled big as Harry emphasized the fear Marie experiences with needles. *“Kayleigh is the same,”* Malcolm added. *“Suzanne and I were*

convinced she wouldn't ever go to kindergarten because she couldn't handle the shots!!"

he laughed.

"Well, it was the Red Cross slogan that got her" Harry continued. *"She bought into the 'instant gratification' connection for compassion. The truth is, serving others MAY make you feel better, and it may make you pass out on the floor,"* Harry said with a serious tone. *"This was the second expectation I had to work through when it came to serving others. Every time I hear someone talking serving people, it's always followed with how it makes THEM feel so good about themselves,"* he said.

"Nothing wrong with feeling good about serving people, is there?" Malcolm asked, and quickly added, *"I think it's part of the hardwiring in the brain."*

"Oh it definitely is" Harry shot back, *"but it's super subtle."* Harry grabbed his putter and squatted down by his ball as he aligned his shot with the flag Malcolm was holding. *"You see, when the feel-good rush you personally experience becomes the objective to serving rather than the virtue of service itself ...,"* Harry slowly said, then paused to putt a long ten-foot shot that beautifully curved to the left and dropped right in the hole. *"Then we've lost our true north,"* he finished.

"Brilliant" Malcolm said as the ball dropped into the cup. *"Thank you"* Harry said, and added, *"I've been working on my short game."*

“No, I mean your thoughts on serving others, and the motivation behind it. Seriously, it’s brilliant.” Malcolm handed Harry his ball and continued, *“Suzanne and I have had a hard time teaching that to our girls”* Malcolm exhaled as they walked to the next hole.

“What do you mean?” Harry asked. *“Remember last night when we were talking about the iPod my daughter Kayleigh won?”* Malcolm asked. *“Let me show you something.”* Malcolm pulled out his phone and started scrolling through all the pictures until he came to a certain series that included Kayleigh at her school back in Denver. *“Check this out”* Malcolm said with a hint of disgust in his voice.

The first picture was the back of their Range Rover filled to the brim with cans of food. *“That was our third trip from the store,”* Malcolm hollered, putting his hand on his forehead. *“Now check THIS out”* Malcolm showed the picture of Kayleigh in front of all her cans at school. It was as if she stood in front of an eight-foot wall that was three feet thick of canned goods. *“Crazy right?”* Malcolm asked Harry, who was clearly amused by the pictures. *“Now look at this”* Malcolm said in a rush to show Harry the end result, *“all those cans so she can get this”* Malcolm said, holding out his phone to show Harry. Harry squinted at the photo and smiled. The picture was a beaming Kayleigh holding her iPod and a first place ribbon, and Malcolm standing next to her with a very different look on his face. Harry barrel laughed out loud, *“That’s awesome!”* he shouted. *“Look at your face!!”* he took the phone and looked closer and laughed even more.

Harry's laughter caused Malcolm to lose it as well. It was a great moment for comic relief. The contrast between the two expressions was so polar-opposite you couldn't help but laugh at the photo.

"Can you send me that?" Harry asked. *"I've got to show that to Marie, she'll love it"*

"Sure" Malcolm said sheepishly. He knew it was funny, and appreciated the good laugh.

Harry looked at Malcolm and said, *"All for an iPod."* Malcolm nodded, *"yep, thousands of cans to win one iPod."*

"You could've bought her an iPod," Harry gently said. *"I could've bought every kid in the school an iPod!!"* Malcolm yelled. Both men laughed some more.

"I would hang on to that picture," Harry suggested to his friend. *"It's a good reminder for you to get the next expectation I placed on compassion that I needed to figure out"* he said.

"What's that?" Malcolm asked, *"to not buy the whole store just to get an iPod?"*

"Sort of" Harry said. He continued, *"I needed to figure out what you figured out, that is to not do compassion with an expectation of some sort of reward,"* he said.

Both men continued their game as Harry explained. *“When I was young I was in Boy Scouts.”* *“Me too”* Malcolm jumped in. *“So you’ll remember this”* Harry said as he explained the third expectation.

“When I was in scouts growing up, I became so obsessed with the merit badges I think I made my father insane” Harry started.

“Ahh yes, the merit badges” Malcolm chimed in. *“Well I was working on my badges and there was one that I dreamed about called the ‘Lifesaving’ badge. I could’ve taken a CPR class or learned things from a local doctor or nurse about Lifesaving techniques, but NO, I wanted to earn my merit badge in classical Harry Collins fashion.”* Harry laughed, while Malcolm smiled and said, *“This ought to be good. Go on.”*

Harry adjusted his sunglasses while the men continued golfing and launched into his story.

“I would lay in my bed at night and think about ways I could earn this stupid badge. I wanted my whole troop and my parents to be so blown away by what I had done that they would name the badge after me” he laughed. *“So on one family vacation here to California, we were at the beach and my younger brother Evan and I walked over to the bluffs above the waves. I thought, if I could just rescue Evan, and then tell the story of how I did it I could get my badge and have a cool story to tell.”* Harry said almost mockingly at himself.

“This is classic, keep going” Malcolm said.

“So, we’re hiking over on these bluffs in an area called Wilder Ranch near Santa Cruz, and the waves are crashing up against the bluffs and then the water goes out. We had to climb down on to these small coves and time ourselves to run to the next rock formation before the wave came rushing in. It was crazy. I figured if I could get Evan out there far enough where he was scared, I could direct him back to safety and save his life, and ...”

Harry paused.

“And get your badge!” Malcolm finished his sentence. *“Exactly”* Harry said.

“So Evan makes it, and is on the other side of the bluffs totally safe, and now it’s my turn. I jump down to sprint across the cove when this rogue wave comes in and I panic.” Harry starts laughing as he continues. *“I panic, and I run up to the edge of the bluff while the water is rushing around me. AND, our dad comes from around the corner to check on us and see’s me trapped on the edge of the bluffs with Evan standing on the other side directing me where to go and how to brace myself as the next wave comes in.”* he says exasperated as if it were happening as he told it.

“My Dad watches my younger brother Evan, who is ALSO in Boy Scouts, literally save my life” Harry says, and both men start laughing. Harry goes on, *“We’re sitting on the beach, and I’m completely soaked, and my dad looks at me and says, ‘Evan just saved*

your life!’ then he looks at Evan and says, ‘you could get your Lifesaving badge for this’”

“Total backfire!!” Malcolm yells, “That’s so funny!”

Harry gets out his wallet and behind his Driver’s License he pulls out an actual Lifesaving merit badge. *“They gave you a badge for that?”* Malcolm asked. *“No, I got this a year later for going to a CPR class. But my brother was actually in the newspaper for saving my life.”* Harry said wiping the laughter tears from his eyes.

“Oh man, that’s a great story! And you still have the badge” Malcolm says through a huge grin. *“Yeah, I keep my badge as a reminder to me to never try to serve someone in order to get a reward”* Harry said through his smile, but in a real sobering way.

The men walked together, enjoying the conversation and doing a little golf along the way.

THE 15th GREEN

It had been a long day and the men eventually worked their way up to the 15th green where they had peeked over from the other side of the fence where Charlie the homeless vet was living.

“Quite a different view on this side isn’t it?” Harry asked, looking at the fence, and then looking out beyond the 16th fairway.

“It puts things in a crazy perspective,” Malcolm said, not sure what to say. He had seen two sides of a community.

On one side had individuals living in luxury and recreational entertainment, while the other struggles to find a warm place to sleep and something to eat that day. The extreme differences of the *“haves”* and *“have-nots”* were hard to reconcile and there were no easy answers to solve the brokenness or inequality of those within that hundred-yard radius. It literally made no sense and was a problem for even these two men to have good answers. The social issues that surrounded San Jose, or any other city in America required good men and women not to just come up with better solutions, but to embrace guiding values like compassion at their core that would supersede any plan that might make an actual difference. Compassion, justice, empathy, and love would be the order of the day, while the long game of policy and programs would eventually find their way towards those in need.

As far as Malcolm could see through the fence, Charlie was not in his encampment. *“He must be gone,”* Malcolm said to Harry as he walked back towards the green. *“Yeah, Charlie told me earlier that he’d probably go searching for cans and recycling. They can get some good money for that stuff,”* Harry reasoned.

“I don’t even think about recycling, I guess that’s a thing here in San Jose” Malcolm added. *“Yeah, they separate things here in the Bay Area, and you can actually get a lot of money for the recyclables that most people throw in the trash”* Harry said.

It made Malcolm think about how many times he’s thrown cans, bottles, and plastic goods away. It felt like a waste of his time to keep it stored in a separate container then to drive it over to a recycling center for a few bucks.

“The small amount they get from recycling must seem like a lot from their perspective” Malcolm said, then continued, *“its making me rethink any recyclable that ever crosses my hands. How can I use my trash to help someone?”*

Harry smiled and thought to himself, *“He’s getting it.”*

“Hey, Harry” Malcolm spoke up, *“you said there were four expectations you personally needed to work through to have the right perspective on compassion. You worked through good karma, good feeling, and good rewards ... with the merit badge. What’s the last expectation you had to change”* Malcolm asked.

“That’s good,” Harry, said, *“you remembered them.”* *“How could I not?”* Malcolm smiled, *“Your stories are hysterical!”*

They both smiled. As they walked out of the 16th fairway where the jungle and the golf course connect, Harry started on his last expectation he needed to change.

“The last expectation I needed to work through was the idea of good advancement,” Harry said. *“Ok, good karma, good feelings, good rewards, and good advancement?”* Malcolm asked. *“I’m ready... GO!”* Malcolm urged Harry on.

“Well, you may be familiar with it in business, again it’s subtle, but the idea is that you use compassion, you use people like Charlie to advance your position, your brand, or your opportunity that mostly helps you out rather than the person in need.” Harry explained.

“Unpack that more” Malcolm asked.

“Well just last week, I had five high school students that know me from St Christopher Parish who wanted to go with me down in the jungle. We went and visited the encampments, and took some supplies, just like I did with you. We were there EXACTLY three hours, and then they all said they had to go. So we walked back to our cars, and their parents were waiting for them. It didn’t hit me until each one of them asked if I could sign off on their community service hours they needed to do for their high school.” Harry said with a hint of disgust. *“None of them said anything to me about what they learned or how it impacted them, they just got out their papers and filled in three hours and had me sign them. One girl looked at me and smiled and said, ‘I’m trying to get into*

Stanford. This will help' as if I was doing her a favor." Harry started to show emotion now.

Malcolm let this sit with him before he said anything. He too, was guilty of this misuse of compassion for personal advancement. His eldest daughter Taylor was entering into her Junior year in High School in a few months and she would also need to make sure her community service hours were MORE than enough AND in the right environments. He and Suzanne talked about this at length for their girls and wanted to get them into the best Universities they could. Community service hours were a key part to the application process.

Malcolm also thought about many of the college students he worked with at the University. He taught advanced business marketing and worked with local businesses to get students placed in internships all around Colorado. His marketing background and extensive networks opened up doors for students who wanted to get hands-on experience. His specialty was consulting companies who were working to elevate their brand through corporate social responsibility. There were so many great causes out there, that a company could leverage public favor by identifying a cause that would elevate their brand in an oversaturated market. Most of Malcolm's students would be offered entry-level social-media internships, working on brand enhancement through a corporate social responsibility campaign.

Marketing a *cause* was Malcolm's surefire recipe for landing his students valuable internships.

“This good advancement expectation that Harry was going to elaborate on was going to hit him very close to his personal world,” Malcolm thought to himself.

“Do YOU have any thoughts on advancement?” Harry threw out a reversal on Malcolm. For the duration of their time together, Harry would explain his position and why it needed to change, now he was asking for Malcolm’s position on using compassion for personal advancement. Malcolm froze.

“This one hits way too close to home for me,” Malcolm said almost defensively. They stopped along the course and pulled out a few bottles of water they had purchased at the clubhouse and were stored in their golf bags.

“Well, Taylor is going into her junior year, and I could very well see her as one of those students looking to get attractive community service hours that would look good on a college admission application.” Malcolm said as forthright as he could. *“I’m just being honest,”* he added.

“I get that,” Harry said. *“But, it’s almost like you’ve been given a window”* he said, almost baiting Malcolm to go deeper.

“Explain” Malcolm requested honestly. *“Well, let’s go back to your note. Why did you write it down? What was it that resonated inside of you so much?”* Harry asked, looking directly into Malcolm’s eyes.

“I’m not sure, it just seemed like it was something that I wanted to connect to deeper. Something that was larger than me, but I was somehow a part of it” Malcolm said candidly, not knowing where it came from.

“Exactly” Harry responded quickly. *“You ARE part of it, and it is something bigger than you. Compassion is something that everyone has inside of them.”* He went on, *“Father Samuels would say you’re made in the image of God, and that because God is a good, compassionate, loving God, that every person on the planet has the DNA of goodness inside of them. I call it the compassion-gene.”* Harry said. *“I agree with that. I see and feel that in my own life to some degree”* Malcolm added.

“But here’s the deal” Harry said as he leaned in towards Malcolm. *“Just because we have this pure compassion-gene inside of us doesn’t mean we don’t have outside influences or selfish motives that creep in that actually weakens the pure God-given capacity to love other people. We do!”* Harry said with wide eyes. *“I’m just on a personal journey to identify where I see selfish motives robbing me of what love and compassion could fully be”* he said with conviction.

Malcolm just listened, as Harry went on, *“My time with you isn’t an accident. Do you think the fact that you’re here in my town, living a block from me and Marie, and going to the same parish, running into each other outside of Safeway is all a coincidence?”*

Malcolm just shook his head and allowed Harry to go on.

“Maybe the timing of all this happening, and the timing with the life stage of your family is actually just IN time” Harry threw out there. *“Besides ... ”* he added, *“... you can’t afford any more iPods can you?”*

They both laughed, and needed an outlet at that moment. *“It was funny, but true,”*

Malcolm thought.

“So help me right-size this,” Malcolm asked his friend. *“I can’t just go on a rampage and change everyone’s thinking over night. Where do I start?”* he asked.

“I think you’ve already started” Harry said wisely. *“It starts with you getting something embedded deep inside of you WAY before you ever teach it to someone else”* he concluded. *“Look at it this way”* Harry interjected. *“Think about ALL the people you already influence in your consulting work, and at the University. Your reach in just the companies alone, as well as the students you teach who will start companies, not to mention your own girls. The reach of your influence is exponential”* Harry threw out for Malcolm to chew on some.

Malcolm hadn't thought about his influence this way. To him, teaching was just a passion and consulting was a huge financial boost since he knew marketing so well. He never ever thought about taking an idea, a virtue that has such deep roots within humanity and living out something that could go viral. Leveraging his influence for good never crossed his mind.

"My head is swirling right now," Malcolm said, as he sat with Harry's words and his own thoughts. *"This is a game-changer for me,"* he added. *"It is"* Harry said, *"It really is."*

The two men continued their conversation all the way to the 18th hole. It had been a long day, and the conversation would carry into the next week in ways no one had ever imagined.

PART 2
COMPASSION
"The virtue, not the benefit"

Shattering Assumptions and Testing Assumptions

THE DRIVE HOME

It was about 4:30 when the two tired golfers walked back to the parking lot of Los Lagos and packed up their clubs to head home. Malcolm didn't wear any sunscreen and his face was beaming red. *"I've been kissed by the California sun,"* he thought as he looked at his face in the mirror of Harry's Mercedes. *"Lets stop on the way home and get a Gatorade*

or something” Harry suggested as they loaded their bags in the trunk. *“Sounds perfect”* Malcolm said, as he dabbed the sweat off his red forehead with his shirt. *“We’ll stop by Safeway”* Harry said, as he closed the car door.

The two men pulled away, and Malcolm leaned his head back on the headrest and closed his eyes for a second. On the drive out, they drove past the overpass where they had brought supplies to the homeless down in the jungle. Malcolm recognized a few of the guys who were on the street near the opening of the Coyote Creek back entrance. They were pushing a shopping cart full of cans, bottles, and a few other things he didn’t recognize. *“It’s crazy”* Malcolm said as the window was down and the cool air blew on his sunburnt face. *“Had I not gone down to the Jungle with you, I wouldn’t have recognized these guys.”* He went on, *“and I don’t mean recognized them from when I met them earlier, I mean noticed that they were even here to begin with.”* Malcolm added.

“I know what you mean” Harry spoke out. *“It’s a matter of awareness that changes your perspective towards these guys.”* Harry offered. *“Yeah, I normally would’ve just passed these folks by ... in my car, or walking out of a store. But they are real people with a story.”* Malcolm added.

Harry jumped in quickly and said, *“Awareness is a huge step toward changing YOUR heart and not leveraging compassion for your own self interests.”* Harry looked and Malcolm and put out his fist for a fist-bump, *“nice work”* he said with a smile.

Malcolm bumped him back and said, *“Well, I don’t really feel like I did anything, but become aware.”* He shrugged his shoulders and sat back.

“No” thought Harry, *“awareness is a HUGE deal.”*

As they drove Harry looked down and saw the mug that Malcolm used for his morning coffee. It was the mug that said, *“The Jungle”* on it, with the church’s website on the opposite side. Harry thought for a minute, then pointed to it, *“Remember The Jungle mug I told you about this morning?”* Harry asked. Malcolm grabbed the mug and looked at it. It was stained with coffee from the morning commute to the jungle and to golf, and the tiny bit of residue on the inside and dried up in the heat of the car that was under the same sun that burnt Malcolm’s face. *“It says First Baptist Church of Willow Glen,”* Malcolm read out loud. *“Do they have some sort of ministry to the homeless in the jungle?”* he asked. *“They did”* Harry started, *“they started with such enthusiasm and energy to come alongside the homeless,”* he added. *“What happened?”* Malcolm asked. *“About a year ago, they would have teams come down every week to bring food and supplies to those in the jungle. I would help them navigate conversations and lead teams to care for those in need,”* Harry explained. *“Where are they now?”* Malcolm asked. *“It was interesting”* Harry paused to remember the story. *“They had been serving down here for a few months, and I heard they had a missions emphasis month at the church. So about a month before that happened, they came down to the jungle with cameras, and video teams ... to capture the stories of what was going on,”* he explained. *“No, it wasn’t bad initially, but that’s the subtle effect of using compassion for your own gain”* Harry

said. He went on, *“they used the footage to make really cool videos, I was even interviewed in one of them. They showed them at the church for missions month, and then had all kinds of booths and stuff for people to sign up for things and get involved”* he shared.

“Wow, talk about leveraging compassion for your benefit” Malcolm said with a bit of disgust in his tone, but not too much, because he had been guilty of this same offense.

“Yeah, it got weird” Harry said. *“The church had mugs made up, and told people to pray for those in the Jungle when they had their morning coffee. They made some Jungle shirts too. It was too much”* Harry said with a frustrated exhale. *“What happened?”* Malcolm honestly asked.

“Well, it was six months later, and the church had moved on to something else. I think they are doing human trafficking stuff now.” Harry said with a defeated tone. *“Whatever the trendy sexy thing is, you can count on the church to jump on board, exploit it for whatever they can, then move on”* he stated.

“I don’t even know how to respond to that,” Malcolm said.

“There’s no response you could come up with” Harry interrupted. *“This pattern has been going on for as long as I can remember”* he shared.

The men turned the corner onto Dry Creek. Suzanne and the girls were out front of their house and they saw Harry and Malcolm pull up. The girls came running to the car and as the doors opened there were hugs for both Malcolm and Harry. It was as if the girls had adopted Harry and Marie as their grandparents in the short time they had all been together.

Harry looked at Malcolm and said; *“we forgot to stop by Safeway for the drinks.”*

Malcolm hit his forehead, which probably stung some given his burnt face, and said,

“Ahh, that’s right. No worries, I’ll go back with the girls tonight to grab a few things,”

Malcolm said as he hugged his ladies and tried to listen to all the things they were saying.

Suzanne came out the front door and approached the commotion. *“Did you boys have a good time today?”* she asked.

“It was so great honey,” Malcolm said, as he hugged his wife. *“Whoa, you got fried on your face”* she said checking out Malcolm’s sunburnt face. *“I got sand in my eyes”*

Lauren said as she hugged Harry. *“I know you did... I saw the pictures”* Harry smiled and hugged little Lauren.

“Sir, it was a pleasure today” Malcolm stated formally as he looked directly at Harry showing sincere appreciation for the time. *“I enjoyed golfing together,”* Harry said. *“But I really enjoyed the conversation. It was refreshing,”* he stated.

“It was. It really was” Malcolm agreed.

Harry drove off, while the girls hung on their dad wanting to tell him of all their adventures in Santa Cruz.

“I need you to go to Safeway for a few things before dinner” Suzanne said, as they all walked into the house together. *“No problem”* Malcolm responded. *“Harry and I planned to stop by for some Gatorade after our time, but forgot,”* he said. *“Make a list, and Lauren and I will head on over”* Malcolm said looking at Lauren with a smile. *“I want to hear about her day,”* he added.

SAFEWAY part 2

As dinner approached, Malcolm had emerged from the shower and was getting dressed as he yelled out, *“Are you ready to go to the store Lauren?”* from the upstairs bathroom. Lauren was ready. Even if Lauren wasn't ready, she was the only female in Malcolm's world that could leave on a moment's notice to go somewhere. *“Once she discovers boys this will all change,”* Malcolm thought.

Suzanne was in the kitchen doing prep for a meal for the family, Kayleigh was watching reruns of The Voice, and Taylor was texting, AND on her laptop, and watching TV, all at the same time. She was a pro.

Suzanne had made a short list of things she needed Malcolm to pick up, and Lauren carried the list with her and would help get everything mom needed (and more) to finish

up dinner for the evening. They walked out of the house, and hopped into the Range Rover. Lauren buckled herself in, and was ready to roll. *“How was the beach sweetie”* Malcolm asked his daughter.

“It was so fun dad, you should’ve been there.” She said with the enthusiasm of an 8 year old who visited the beach for the first time. *“The waves were so big, and I got sand in my eyes”* she said, *“and daddy guess what?”* not waiting for Malcolm to answer, *“Taylor was talking to boys at the beach. Mom got mad, it was funny,”* she said in a hurried breath.

Malcolm gave his daughter a funny and disgusted look all at the same time as they headed down the windy road towards Safeway. When they pulled up to park, Lauren unbuckled with her list in hand, stepped out of the car and started walking with her dad towards the store.

As they walked up, Malcolm noticed the three men that came so quickly towards Harry and Marie the day before. He felt cautiousness come over him, but also a confidence in what had transpired for the past two days. He found himself completely aware of who he was, and who they were. He held Lauren’s hand, which was not uncommon for them to do, and approached them.

“Hey guys,” he said confidently. *“Well, there he is! Mr. Save the Day!”* one of the men said as he laughed. *“You’re Marcus right?”* The homeless man gave a surprised look,

“Wow, you remembered!” Marcus stuck out his hand, and said, *“you remember my two business partners Dan ...”* Malcolm interrupted *“Daniel and Andy ... yes! How are you guys doing tonight?”* The men stood shocked and impressed. *“That’s good man, nobody ever remembers our name. In fact, I didn’t remember yours”* he said, as the two other men shook Malcolm’s hand. Malcolm’s mind raced. He felt super grateful for Harry walking him through what it meant to become keenly aware of those who you’ve typically ignored. For Marie demonstrating tactical compassion with hugs and eye contact, and how she subtly gave people identity by calling the men her boys. He was also grateful for the Dale Carnegie class he took years ago to quickly improve his ability to remember names. Malcolm always remembered names.

“Who’s this little lady?” Marcus asked. Lauren looked at her dad, and then looked right at Marcus. *“I’m Lauren, I’m 8. Today I went to the beach and played in the waves. Do you know what? ...”* she didn’t stop, *“... we were taking a picture of my mom and sisters at the beach and I got sand in my eyes.”*

The men laughed, and Marcus knelt down and listened with a huge grin. *“Baby girl ...”* he said, *“it sounds like you had a great time.”*

Lauren looked at her dad. The confidence and ability to be present in that moment actually translated to Lauren. She modeled whatever her father was doing. Since Malcolm wasn’t in a hurry then Lauren wasn’t in a hurry, she also embodied an uncharacteristic presence and attentiveness. Malcolm noticed something different in himself that he also saw in his child at that moment.

The men continued to talk to Lauren and were enamored by the fact that someone would let their sweet child actually talk to them. Lauren rambled forward *“we’re here at the store, to get some things for dinner.”* One of the other men, named Andy, said *“Oh, that’s nice.”* Then Lauren looks at the men with her sweet concerned face and asks, *“Are you hungry? Do you want to come over to my house to eat dinner?”*

“Whoa” Malcolm thought. *“Hey honey, probably not tonight,”* he quickly said, not knowing exactly what to say. The men smiled and were gracious to Lauren and understood their place. They were more enamored that some man remembered their names, and let his little girl talk to them.

“Listen little girl” Marcus said, *“You are so sweet to think of us for dinner”* he said in a voice a child would understand. *“Me and my boys have some dinner plans already for tonight”* he said. Malcolm knew they didn’t, but appreciated how Marcus circled back with his daughter’s invitation. Lauren was sad for a moment, but already on to the next topic.

“Do you know Harry and Marie?” she asked the men. The subjected just shifted gears from awkwardness to familiarity. Leave it to Lauren. *“Oh course we do!!”* Marcus said, *“they’re like family to us”* Daniel replied. Daniel just smiled the whole time this conversation was going on. He hadn’t really talked to a kid, since he was out on the streets 15 years ago.

Lauren continued, *“they’re like our grandparents”* she said. *“We went swimming in their pool.”* Lauren rambled on about Jackson, and how he loves to swim too. Andy spoke up, *“We love Harry and Marie. We’d do anything for those two. They’ve done so much for us, and for friends who are like us,”* he said with conviction.

“We just met them yesterday” Malcolm said, *“They’re wonderful people”* he included.

“And they’ve done so much for us too” he thought.

Lauren said goodbye to the men and Malcolm did the same, each one by name. Then Lauren said, *“maybe we can have you over for dinner on another night.”* All three men smiled, and Marcus said, *“Sure thing little girl,”* knowing that would never happen. Malcolm turned and went into the store, grabbed a cart, and looked at Lauren’s list.

Embracing a New Paradigm

DINNER

The Ross family dinner was little unusual because the family had never sat down together for a meal at their summer home. Suzanne had a late start getting dinner on the table because she was acclimating to a new kitchen, and Malcolm and Lauren had taken longer than normal.

The table was set when Malcolm and Lauren eventually walked into the house from their visit to the store. *“Mommy, we made more friends at the store,”* Lauren said, as she was the first to bolt through the door, she was always the first through the door.

“That’s great sweetie, you’re good at making friends. Did you and daddy get my things at the store?” Suzanne asked politely, already getting dinner on the table.

“Hey babe, I got your stuff right here” Malcolm said as he followed Lauren in and shut the door. He came into the kitchen and set the two bags on the counter.

“Making more friends?” Suzanne said as she helped unload the contents of the two bags.

“Yeah, actually Lauren already invited them over for dinner” Malcolm answered. *“Wait, are you serious? Can we just have a normal dinner as a family please?”* Suzanne said with some frustration. She had a long day at the beach, getting lost, and driving all the way home from Santa Cruz. Entertaining on their second day was not something she remotely wanted to happen.

“No, no babe, we just met people at the store, and you know how Lauren is. She’d invite everyone if she could.” Malcolm said with a smile. *“That’s true!”* Taylor yelled from the other room while texting and watching TV. *“I was talking to some boys at the beach and she invited them over for dinner. Mom said no,”* Taylor said with a bit of teenaged angst. *“Yeah, I said no for a whole different set of reasons”* Suzanne muttered under her breath so only Malcolm could hear. Malcolm’s eyes went wide as he looked at his wife and then looked over in Taylor’s direction. *“Teenage daughters”* he thought. Then he looked upward as if to say, *“Lord, help me.”* Suzanne smiled at Malcolm and then announced *“screens off, come to the table.”*

Lauren was the first one there obviously, and the others sat down. Kayleigh and Taylor started loading up their plates, picking at the food, and started eating almost immediately. This was the normal routine for the Ross dinner table. Suzanne had a few rules, no screens at the table, no complaining, clear your plates when you’re done. Other than that, it was pretty open, but Malcolm was about to install a new family rule he had been thinking about ever since the Ross’ landed in San Jose.

“Everybody stop please,” Malcolm said from the head of the table. Kayleigh already had food in her mouth and Suzanne was right in the middle of dishing out some fruit salad onto Lauren’s plate. They all stopped abruptly, given that when food was on the table no one really talked except to ask for something to be passed to them. Malcolm typically led the charge when it came to filling up his plate, but this time his plate sat empty as he held up his hand and waiting to command everyone’s attention.

"I'm going to add a new family rule at our table going forward," Malcolm said with his hand still raised up to halt everyone. Suzanne gave her husband a strange *"what are you doing?"* look.

"When we sit down for dinner together, we're going to start our meal by going around the table and each person share something they are grateful for," Malcolm paused to see reactions around the table. *"I'll go first,"* Lauren said, raising her hand. Taylor rolled her eyes, while Kayleigh gave an affirming nod. *"What's this all about?"* Suzanne asked looking at her husband. *"I believe that we are all actually pretty grateful, but it would be nice to hear what we're grateful for, and to do it at the dinner table,"* Malcolm explained. Suzanne shrugged and gave a positive look while thinking, *"wouldn't hurt."*

"And the second new rule is, that after we're done sharing, I will say grace at the table" Malcolm added. No one in the family responded. There were no objections, and no affirmations, just stares. Malcolm looked around the table at each person and said, *"everyone ok with that?"* Everyone agreed.

"I'll go first" Lauren stood on her chair and declared. *"I'm grateful for Jackson ... I like him."* Then she added, *"Can we get a dog?"* *"No Lauren, no dogs, but thank you for sharing."* Malcolm interjected before she could go on. *"Everyone ..."* Malcolm declared, *"... Lauren is grateful for Jackson."* Kayleigh went next. *"I'm grateful for our new friends Harry and Marie,"* then she paused, and added, *"... and their pool."* Everyone

agreed, they were all grateful for the Collins and their pool. Taylor spoke up next, *“I’m grateful we get to be in the sunshine of California for the summer, and go to the beach.”* Suzanne looked at Malcolm’s sunburned face and added, *“it looks like your father got a bit too much of that sunshine.”* Everyone laughed at Malcolm’s red face. Suzanne went next, *“I’m grateful for this house we get to be in, and that we’re all together as a family,”* she said looking at all her girls.

It was Malcolm’s turn. It was actually his idea to share something to be grateful for, but he had no idea how to narrow his gratitude down to one thing. He paused for a moment and looked down at his empty plate, while his mind raced through the past 48 hours.

“Golfing all day, meeting the folks in the Jungle, the Collins, swimming in the pool, his job that provides abundance for his family to get to even go to California ... there were too many to choose from,” he thought.

Then he looked up at his family and said, *“I’m grateful for Harry. He’s been teaching me so much about things that never really crossed my mind before,”* Malcolm paused again, as he thought through all the conversations, the laughter, the challenging of his worldview, and the golf. *“Yeah”* he said confidently, *“I’m definitely most grateful for Harry.”*

Everyone agreed, without ever knowing that the Ross’ family would radically change through their experience in California because of Harry. In fact, the new dinnertime rituals around the idea of gratitude, along with a new found awareness and presence of

those less fortunate in the world was all due to time spent with Harry. It had only been 48 hours, but change was already happening to Malcolm, and to those closest to him.

Malcolm offered one hand to Suzanne on the left, and Taylor on the right. Taylor looked at her dad's hand, and then offered her right hand to Lauren; Kayleigh did almost the same thing with her mom on the other side of the table. Lauren stood up in her chair to reach her sisters from across the table, and still hold on to Taylors. It was a sweet moment that would forever mark their dinner table for generations to come.

They bowed their heads, and Malcolm offered up a prayer of gratitude.

MONDAY MORNING

Monday morning rolled around and the Ross family had planned to sleep in. It was pretty quiet, except for Lauren who was already up in front of the TV watching Frozen. The family would eventually make their way towards the kitchen around 10, and then out and about around noon. This was the week prior to Malcolm starting his work with eBay, so the entire family was pretty leisure.

Around eleven that morning, Suzanne and Malcolm were sitting on their front porch enjoying their morning coffee, when they saw Harry and Marie riding their beach-cruiser bikes down Dry Creek. Harry was holding the lease and Jackson, their dog, happily running beside them. As they cycled closer to the Ross' house, Suzanne stood and waved to them both. Harry and Marie crossed the street and rode up the Ross' driveway. "*You*

guys ARE really close to us, aren't you?" Marie said, with a little exasperation in her voice from cycling. "We usually ride this path, and run Jackson along Dry Creek every day," she added.

Lauren and Kayleigh both came out the front door and yelled "*Jackson!*" and the dog barked as if to call back to them. They were still in their PJ's, and they stood out front of the house playing with Jackson, picking up where they left off the night before.

"Can I get you both some coffee?" Suzanne offered up. "I just brewed a fresh pot." Marie started to refuse saying *"No no, we don't want to disturb ..."* Malcolm cut her off, *"There's no disturbing us ... we have nothing going on. Have some coffee with us"* he said persuasively. Both Harry and Marie got off their bikes, and Jackson was already completely occupied with the two girls. They sat down at the bistro table the Ross' had on their front porch as Suzanne brought out two fresh cups of coffee.

"Yesterday was good for me" Malcolm started in. *"Golfing, and our conversations. It was really good for me"* he stated as he took a sip of his coffee. Malcolm was just starting to unpack the conversations and the Jungle with Suzanne before the Collins showed up. The last thing she said to Malcolm before they arrived was *"I just thought you guys were going golfing, I didn't know it was going to be a field trip to the homeless encampments?"* Suzanne said.

“It was a good day,” Harry said. “I loved how open you were to learning how the rest of the world lives.”

Marie looked at the outside and said to Suzanne, *“I love your house. Are you adjusting to living here?”* she asked. *“I love it”* Suzanne said, *“Do you want to see the inside?”* The two women head off to tour the house, while the girls played with Jackson out front, and Harry and Malcolm sat out front and continued talking.

“I’m hosting an event for the University at the house this Friday. I’d love for you and Suzanne to join us if you’re up for it?” Harry asked. *“What’s it all about?”* Malcolm questioned inquisitively. He and Suzanne had hosted events for the University of Denver at their nice house back in Cherry Creek, and enjoyed being around the University students and faculty. *“I host a Think Tank for the top humanities students and their advisors at Santa Clara University, through a program I started a few years back called Salon.”*

“OK” Malcolm thought. It sounded a lot like something he did with his top business students who he would pair up with large corporations for internships. *“Sounds fun”* Malcolm said to Harry. *“Who’s all coming?”* Malcolm asked.

“Mostly the top students from the department, you know, the ones with the GPA, references, and have gone through the application process. These are top kids that will eventually graduate from our program and lead major non-profits and become world

changers. We work alongside them and their advisors to identify the top three issues that face the city, and they work to create possible solutions through the summer internship."

Harry explained.

"Wow, sounds intense" Malcolm said.

"It's a great connection with the city, and partnership with the school" Harry said, *"and it addresses real needs."*

"We don't have anything going" Malcolm offered. *"I'll check with Suzanne, but I think it'll be fine. Plus, Taylor can watch the other two girls ... and you're just a block away."*

Malcolm resolved out loud.

"Friday night then" Harry said.

"Yes, Friday night" Malcolm agreed.

PLUMBING ISSUES

The rest of the week was pretty uneventful for the Ross family. They went up to San Francisco for a day, and walked to downtown Willow Glen to shop and see what was there. The vacation was pretty relaxing and refueling for the family. They had seen the Collins a few times riding by with Jackson, and they had met a few neighbors on Dry Creek. Lauren was a lot like her dad, and could remember everyone's name, and yelled personal greetings every time she saw someone.

It was about 2pm and Thursday, when Malcolm got a call from Harry. The Ross family was sitting in the backyard enjoying the summer day, when his cell phone rang ... *"Hey Harry, how's it going?"* Malcolm answered his phone. *"Hey buddy, I've got a bit of a problem"* Harry started. *"We just had a huge plumbing-main break at our house."* Malcolm stood and listened intently, tipping off Suzanne that something serious was up. *"What is it?"* Suzanne asked. Malcolm waved her off and started walking away so he could focus in on that call. *"Yikes, do you have flooding?"* Malcolm asked. *"Yeah, its pretty bad, almost flooded the first floor of the house. Carpet, and some furniture, all ruined"* Harry said with some frustration in his voice.

"Oh no, and you have that event tomorrow night too!" Malcolm just remembered. *"Well, that's why I'm calling"* Harry started. *"I'd like to know if you and Suzanne would consider hosting it at your house. The catering is all taken care of, and we could simply direct people from my house to yours, since we live so close"* Harry asked. Malcolm thought for just a moment, and like any wise husband said, *"Let me just run this by Suzanne, see what she thinks, but I'm sure it's not a problem."*

"Wise man" Harry thought as he said, *"Perfect, why don't you call me back."*

Malcolm got off the phone and explained the broken plumbing situation to Suzanne, and before he even threw out the suggest of hosting for Harry, Suzanne said, *"Oh no, they have that event at their house tomorrow! Tell Harry and Marie we could host it here if they need it. We're available to them,"* she said confidently.

“That’s a great idea,” Malcolm told his wife, as he turned to redial. *“I’ll call him now and suggest it”* he said as he turned to not show Suzanne the smirk on his face.

“Hey Harry” Malcolm said into the phone as his friend answered. *“We’re all set,”* he said with a smile. *“In fact, all I told her was that you guys had a major plumbing issue and she suggested we have your event at our house”* he laughed.

Harry and Marie were incredibly grateful for their new friends opening up their home.

“It’s a catered deal,” Harry told Malcolm, *“so if you have anybody you’d like to invite to dinner, please invite them”* he said with a feeling of relief.

During dinner that evening, the Ross family talked about the situation the Collins were in with their dinner party and all the plumbing issues. Lauren asked if Jackson could come over and stay with them forever. She clearly was in love with the Collins dog. As their conversation went on, Malcolm remembered something that Harry said on the phone and shared it with the whole family. *“It’s too bad we don’t have some of our friends here from Denver,”* he started. *“Why’s that?”* Suzanne wondered. Malcolm continued, *“because Harry offered for us to invite a few friends over for the dinner event, and we don’t know anyone here,”* he said to the family.

Lauren actually waited, which was completely unlike her to wait to speak. But when she did, she shocked the whole table. *“Daddy, why don’t we invite the three nice men we met*

at Safeway? Remember, them?” she stopped to think. “Marcus, and the two other nice guys, I forget ...” she paused.

Malcolm finished her sentence, *“Marcus, Daniel, and Andy”* he said as the table became silent. *“Yeah, those guys”* Lauren said. *“Daddy and I talked to them yesterday and I invited them to dinner”* Lauren said confidently to the whole family as if it was no problem.

“Malcolm, who’s she talking about?” Suzanne said, as the whole table followed the intensity of each person talking. *“Three homeless men I met the night I met Harry and Marie”* Malcolm said hesitantly. *“Are those the guys you thought were going to mug the Collins?”* Suzanne said with more passion in her voice. *“Yep”* he concluded, *“same ones.”*

“I met them at the store, and they were super nice so I invited them over for dinner” Lauren said with a smile, confident she was doing the right thing. *“Mommy, what does mugging mean?”* Lauren asked. Kayleigh jumped in, *“It’s when someone attacks you and takes all your ...”*

“STOP ... stop talking!” Suzanne said sternly as she looked at all her girls. *“I didn’t say anything about Dad’s mugger – friends”* Taylor quipped. *“I said STOP!”* Suzanne raised her voice to command the attention of her daughters.

“Malcolm, did you invite three homeless men to our house for dinner?” she asked slow and methodically.

“Honey, Lauren asked them first, and they declined, but I DID say maybe another time. I did say that... yes. So technically, I did invite them.” Malcolm carefully admitted.

Suzanne wasn't angry, she just wanted to get her mind around the possible situation that unfolded. Later that evening and she and Malcolm unpacked everything in detail, the message from Father Samuels, the note, *The Jungle*, and the deep challenges to Malcolm's convictions, she understood more.

As they lay in bed that evening, Suzanne looked at Malcolm and said, *“I think I get what's happening, and the journey you've been on”* she looked over his way. *“The journey WE'VE been on”* Malcolm corrected her. *“You're right”* she added, *“We are on this journey together,”* she continued. *“All I ask, is that you run this by Harry and Marie. It's their party, and I don't want to spoil anything for them”* she said with a smile.

“I will follow Harry's lead” Malcolm assured her. But Malcolm knew what Harry would say. It was part of his own journey with Harry, to learn and acknowledge the presence of others, and to live intentionally different.

“I'll call him in the morning” Malcolm said as he turned off the lights. *“This is going to be an interesting weekend,”* he thought to himself. *“Interesting indeed”*

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