

May15, 2017



Thick Skin but not a Thick Heart

Almost every leader can identify with an aspect of what Jesus went through in His last week. When He came into Jerusalem people celebrated His coming by waving Palm branches and shouting, "*Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!*" (Matthew 21:8-10).

About a week later many of those same people were shouting something less celebratory, "*Crucify Him, Crucify Him*" (Mt 27:22-23). Our life, counsel, and care for people can be celebrated one day and despised the next, by the same people. It is challenging when we consider Jesus' posture afterwards as He hung on the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

As I was mulling over some difficult pastoral issues the Spirit sharply spoke a phrase to me. "Leaders must have thick skin but never a thick heart!" Ouch, I

"To be a good shepherd is to shear the flock not skin them." Tiberius

immediately knew the not so subtle rebuke and encouragement towards His design.

Shepherding God's people can be very challenging because sheep often get caught up in a multitude of destructive places that causes them injury. When the shepherd attempts to try to untangle them and bring oil to their wounds those same sheep can often bite at them! They can equate the delivering hand with the pain they are in, causing them to misplace their reactions towards the one trying to help.

C2C "Family on Mission" in other Nations in May

Please Pray

Tom and Andrea Bedford:
France and Denmark Equipping in the Prophetic.

Glenn Middleton: In Nigeria equipping and working with some of the Kings.

Sometimes it seems that shepherds find themselves in no win situations. It is hard for them to stand by and do nothing when sheep are caught up in bondage. Yet when they reach out to help, they know it will probably be resisted or resented. What is a leader to do when they find themselves in those situations?

Something That is Always Right

**"In most churches when they have images of the good shepherd, they show Jesus carrying a nice fluffy lamb. Now fluffy little lambs don't stray away from their mommy's. The sheep that will stray is the most obstreperous, trroublesome one."
Desmond Tutu**

One thing we must always do is avoid our heart getting hardened towards God's people! We need thick skin but we must never allow ourselves to have a thick heart.

I remember a classic statement from a leader's wife that revealed this tendency towards our hearts becoming thick. They were trying to help a troubled marriage that they had spent many hours on over the years. While expressing the pain they were feeling over the situation and a recent event that indicated the couple was not heeding their loving counsel, the leader's wife exploded, "I am never going to help any marriages again!"

When she made the statement it was as if a large amount of air was sucked out of the room. We all paused and realized the absurdity of the statement. Sometimes it seems we need those kinds of lapses

to jolt us back into reality. It is like a person having their heart shocked when it is pumping in an uncoordinated fashion. It often needs an electrical shock to get it back on track.

We have all either felt or expressed that same type of frustration. We have all felt like giving up with thoughts like "it doesn't do any good to try to help people, they won't listen and will end up hating us for trying to help." In those times, we may not be able to do anything directly to change them, but we can do something to keep our heart from becoming thick and hard.

We are not "fighting against flesh and blood." It isn't the person who bites at us that is our biggest problem. It is the demonic deception in them and the demonic influence upon us trying to get us to react out of a hard heart.

A hard heart is deadly for leaders. It will cause us to become callous, impatient, and frustrated. If it goes on we will become aloof, religious, and our heart will not be in it. It is the opposite of the incarnational nature of God moving in gentleness and patience. The Bible warns all believers, and especially leaders, against this tendency.

- *Colossians 3:12-13 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** (13) **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.***

He speaks it strongly to leaders knowing our great temptation to become hard hearted.

- *2 Timothy 2:24-26 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be **kind to all**, able to teach, **patient** when wronged, **25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition**, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*
- *2 Timothy 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, **with great patience and instruction.***

We need to regularly examine our hearts in the light of His presence. It is in His presence that our heart stays tender. Remember that God is working on us as we are serving His people. A tender heart of gentleness is what He is always working in us as good shepherds.

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