

Everyone Has a Story

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Recently during our Wednesday evening Bible study, we read a reflection by Diana Butler Bass about the Good Samaritan parable (Luke 10:25-37). She recalled a childhood Sunday School class where the teacher used flannel board figures (anyone remember those?) to tell the story—the priest who passed by, the temple official who looked away, and the despised Samaritan who stopped to help the wounded man in the ditch.

The teacher asked the question I've often asked in Bible Studies: "Who are you in this story?" Let's be honest—none of us want to be the priest or the temple official. We all hope to be the Samaritan, the one who did the right thing, no matter how despised he was by the culture of the man he rescued.

Bass then shared two contrasting stories from her own life. In the first, she witnessed a man who had fallen down an escalator at the Metro in Washington D.C. and was bleeding. She and others immediately jumped into action, helping him get the care he needed.

But the second story was different. A woman got her heel caught and fell in the middle of the street, in Arlington, VA, losing her glasses and the contents of her purse, skinning her knees and hands, lying face down on the pavement. She struggled to get up. A car pulled up to the intersection, and instead of helping, the driver honked—demanding she move. The driver got out, yelling at the woman to get up, throwing in expletives about her mental capability, then got back in and kept honking.

The woman lying in the street later reflected that she crawled to the curb while people walked by, eyes down. Not one person stopped to help. She sat there and cried as the woman who had berated her drove away, window down, yelling "idiot" at her one last time.

It was in that moment, sitting bruised and humiliated on the curb, that she began to think about Jesus's Good Samaritan parable. If we are all made in the image of God, then both the man in the ditch—robbed, beaten, and left to die—and she herself were Christ. How often, she wondered, do we leave Christ lying in a ditch? How often do we walk to the other side of the street, hoping we don't have to deal with him or her?

But it doesn't have to be that way. A few months ago, a local business owner witnessed someone walk into his store looking lost and defeated. Without hesitation, he held up a \$100 bill and asked, "Would this help?" No questions about worthiness. No judgment. Just presence and provision in a moment of need.

That's the real story of the Good Samaritan, isn't it? In community, we are called to be aware of every brother and sister. We are called to walk life's pathways with eyes wide open—looking for those in need and those to celebrate with. We are called to treat every person with kindness and compassion, not to pass by.

We are never too busy. Never too tired. Never too occupied with self-absorption to help our neighbor in need. For what we have done to the least of these we have done unto Jesus. (Matt. 25:40)

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The message is clear: we are not to create divisions. We are to offer care and compassion. Because every person we meet—especially the one lying in the street—might just be Christ. When we truly see this, when our eyes are finally open, we cannot help but respond with the grace and love Christ showed us.

Thanks be to God for all the ways we get to serve one another.