

The Power of Care, The Privilege of Connection

BY CECILIA AMOROCHO HICKERSON

All deeds are right in the sight of the doer, but the LORD weighs the heart.

—Proverbs 21:2

Question: Why did the chicken cross the road?

Answer: To get to the other side.

Question: But *why*? Was the chicken in danger? Did the chicken feel threatened by a more powerful entity, like an aggressive rooster or a hatchet-wielding farmer? Was the chicken starving and trying to access the only available food source, or trying to rescue one of its chicks? Or was the chicken safe but trying to avoid getting involved in another chicken's trouble? If you were there, would you ignore the situation? Would you observe from a distance? Help? Make guesses or assumptions about the chicken's actions or the chicken? Do your answers change, depending on what side of the road you're on?

Question: Which came first—the chicken or the egg?

Okay, you're tired of this chicken-themed line of questioning. I'll rephrase the question: Which came first—privilege or power? S. Leigh Thompson, a diversity, inclusion and equity consultant and workshop facilitator, defines power as, "the ability to influence and/or act," and suggests that some types of power—including the power of history, laws,



The Good Samaritan, Olga Bakhtina

ideas, money—affect the amount and type of power that some individuals have, including the ability to exercise free will and to make decisions.¹ Explaining privilege as, "unearned benefits given to members of one social group as a result of the systematic targeting or marginalization of another social group," Thompson points out that while *earning* money enables a person to buy things, others' perception of a person as wealthy gives that person the *unearned* benefit of better treatment by society.²

Think about the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30–37). A man was attacked, robbed and left to die by the side of the road. A priest travelling down the same road saw the beaten man and, not wanting to defile his ritually-cleansed state, crossed to the other side. Membership in the priestly class had its privileges, including leaving messes for

less holy people to clean up. Then a Levite, a legal expert and therefore highly regarded, saw the unfortunate victim and did the same thing. How would it look to be seen in the vicinity of a crime? One couldn't risk the possibility of scandal. "But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity" (v. 33). An out-cast with no prestige or social standing came near the wounded man and stayed. He could have crossed the road, but

unburdened by the demands of status or position, he didn't. He could have turned away, but instead he turned convention on its head. Empowered by compassion, he accepted the privilege of caring for a fellow child of God.

Each of us has power. We have the ability to look around us and see who is struggling, who is in need and start with our presence, our willingness to help.

Jesus said, "Go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37). Let's go.

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Notes

1. S. Leigh Thompson, leigh@gobeyonddiversity.com; "Thoughts: Here are some definitions about POWER, PRIVILEGE and OPPRESSION."
2. Ibid.