



A JERICHO ROAD IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION:

**THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD
SAMARITAN AS A CALL TO
CHRISTIAN ADVOCACY**

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I first fell in love with advocacy as a college student volunteer with a ministry at my church, TruLife Urban Ministries. Through TruLife, I mentored a high school girl named, leyshia. She wanted to go to college, and I was determined to help her. We began meeting together to do SAT prep. I soon discovered that despite her hard work and my diligence, she had not received the same quality public school education that I had simply by growing up in the suburbs of Dallas. leyshia joined the Air Force, but my life changed, too. Before I encountered leyshia, I was like a lot of Christians who serve in ministries that care for the children, the poor, the mentally ill, former drug addicts—content to deal with the symptoms, but never really giving thought to the disease. leyshia needed to be tutored, but she also needed a quality public education that prepared her to pursue her dream of going to college.

To be sure, serving folks and teaching them about Jesus is important, but I can't help thinking about the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 11:25-37). In this story, a Samaritan man goes out of his way to make a beaten man whole. He

dresses his wounds, he takes him to a hotel, and he covers all of the expenses of his stay. He steps in to address not just the man's immediate needs—his wounds, but his future needs so that he ended up in a much better place than he started.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said the Levite and the priest who walked around the beaten man asked the wrong question. "The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But... the Good Samaritan reversed the question, 'if I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'" Christian advocacy first seeks to ask the question, if I do not stop and do something about human trafficking, payday lending, hunger, poverty, racism what will happen to others?

But it also seeks to address the structural problems. In another sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan, Dr. King pointed out that there was also a structural problem with the Jericho Road. It was a place where lawlessness prevailed; it made persons more likely than not to be robbed along their journey. Dr. King observed that,

"On the one hand **we are called to play the good Samaritan** on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that **the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed.**"

Christian advocacy addresses individual problems, but it goes one step further and attempts to address

the structural problems that leave whole communities trapped in cycles of poverty, violence, broken homes, and unemployment. Advocacy allows us to aid those crushed under the weight of injustice, but also to remove the weight itself.

As Christians, we are called to be good Samaritans, to step in to address the suffering of others—neighbors who look like us and those who don't, those whom we know and those whom we may never meet. After all, in Luke 4, Jesus declared that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to “preach good news to the poor,” “proclaim freedom for the prisoners,” “recover sight for the blind,” and “release the oppressed.” Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, and Jesus’ pursuit of justice continues through us—his hands and feet. Sometimes we use our hands to help lift up those who have fallen along life’s way and other times we use our hands to sign up for the Jericho Road Improvement Association to keep them from falling in the first place.