

6. Attitudes of the Heart – Compassion

4. How will "considering thyself" (Gal 6:1), help you to show compassion?


5. Some people are not naturally emotional. How can these people increase in their compassion for others?

6. How might someone's past failures keep us from showing them compassion? What attitude might we be tempted to have towards them?


7. How should Matthew 5:43-48 affect how and to whom we show compassion?


In this lesson we are going to consider an attitude of the heart which is closely related to *love*. Compassion is inseparable from genuine love. True love always results in loving *action* (1 Cor 13). For this reason we often see the phrase "*moved* with compassion" in scripture (Matt 9:36; Matt 4:14; Matt 18:27). Compassion begins in the heart, but it doesn't stay there. It overflows into loving action.

Compassion involves love, sympathy, pity, and even sorrow. To be compassionate is to share in the emotions of others. To be moved by their troubled condition and to seek ways to help. Compassion drives us to offer ourselves and our resources to alleviate the suffering of others.


 **Discuss.** Considering the above definition, how has God shown compassion to us? Why is *compassion* the appropriate emotion to be shown?

Our God is a God of Compassion

 Psalm 86:15. **Q.** How did the psalmist describe God?

 Psalm 78:38-39. **Q.** What did God's compassion lead him to do (or not do) for Israel? (4 Things)


Q. v39. What about man lead God to show compassion?


 Lamentations 3:22. **Q.** For what reason are we *not consumed*?

We are all the beneficiaries of God’s compassion. If it were not for God’s compassion upon our sinful state we would all be consumed by His wrath (John 3:36).

As the the perfect Son of God, Jesus Christ was the embodiment of this divine compassion:

 Matt 9:36. **Q.** Why was Jesus *moved* with compassion?

 Matt 14:14. **Q.** What did Jesus’ compassion lead him to do?


 Matt 20:30-34. **Q.** In this passage some blind men heard Jesus passing by. According to verse 30, what did they ask Jesus for?


Q. v31. How did the crowd react? _____

Q. v32-34. What did Jesus do for them? _____


Q. How would you describe the attitude of this crowd toward the blind men?

These blind men did not have a sense of etiquette when it came to appealing to Jesus for healing. The men and women around the blind men would have denied them access to Jesus just to spare embarrassment. They were more concerned with proper decorum than the severe needs of the blind beggars. Now, turn to Luke 7.

 Luke 7:11-15. **Q.** What lead Jesus to show compassion to this woman?

 **Discuss.** What do Jesus’ words *weep not* reveal about His care for others?

Compassion Feels

 Eph 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, _____, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

The word *tenderhearted* means “pitiful, sympathetic, and well compassioned”. If we are to show compassion we must be sensitive and toward others. The calloused, detached, self-focused Christian shows himself to be unloving and consequently, uncompassionate. Compassion requires a purposeful effort to consider the needs and hurts of others and then to come along side with help, comfort and the encouragement that they need (1 Tim 5:14; Php 2:4).

Review

1. What might prevent us from showing compassion to others?

2. What can we do to overcome those hindrances?

3. If we have compassion toward someone, how will we *not* respond to them?

slavery. The servant bowed down and begged the king for patience so that he might find the means to pay his insurmountable debt.


Q. v27. How did the king respond to the servant's humble plea? What attitude motivated the king?

After the servant's debt was forgiven he went out to find a fellow servant who owed *him* money (which amounted to pennies). The servant took his debtor by the neck demanding payment. Despite his fellow servant's pleas for mercy he had him cast into prison until the debt was paid.

Q. v32-34. When the king heard of how the servant whom he had forgiven treated his fellow servant what question did he ask him? What did the king have done to his servant?

Q. Remember, this parable was Jesus' answer to Peter's question regarding forgiveness. The king in the parable is a picture of God the Father, the servant is the sinner. In your own words, how does this parable apply to our own forgiveness and the way in which we should treat each other?

God looked upon our plight as helpless sinners and was moved with compassion to forgive us (Col 2:13). Likewise, God expects us to show compassionate forgiveness toward one another (Eph 4:32).

 Galatians 6:1. **Q.** In what spirit are we to restore a brother who is *overtaken in a fault*?

Q. Why should spiritual men in the church restore a brother with *meekness*?

The unforgiving Christian is a person who lacks compassion. He fails to recall how much God has forgiven him and fails to recognize his own propensity to sin (1 Cor 10:12).


Compassion loves, sacrifices, overlooks, forgives, and lastly and in summary:

It is interesting that no one in this passage asked Jesus to heal the widow's son. He came upon the funeral procession, saw the weeping widow and had compassion upon her. He felt her pain, had pity upon her and healed her son.

Jesus looked upon the plight of the crowd in Matthew 9 and was moved with compassion. He was sympathetic toward their sinful state and their need for a saviour. In Matt 14 and 20 he had compassion upon the sick. His compassion led him to heal the multitudes and ultimately to die for all men so that they could be freed from the bondage of sin (Rom 6:17-22). Jesus Christ is the perfect example of God's compassion. Jesus not only exercised compassion through physical healings and by dying on the cross, but he continues to show us compassion day-by-day as he forgives our sin and provides us the power to live a successful Christian life (Heb 5:1-2; Heb 2:17-18).

Spiritual growth is a matter of becoming more and more like Christ. This means that as a Christian matures spiritually he will grow in his compassion toward others (2 Peter 1:5-7).

The Character of Compassion


 1 Peter 3:8-9. **Q.** Who did Peter encourage us to have compassion on?

Paul used a similar phrase in Philippians and Colossians when he exhorted those churches to "put on bowels of mercies" (Col 3:12; Php 2:1-4). That is a strange phrase which we do not use but it literally means to have an inward affection of compassion or pity toward others. In this case he was telling the church to be compassionate toward one another. Let's look at the character of this compassion:

Compassion Loves

At its most basic level, compassion is simply an expression of love. Compassion is love rising to the surface when we perceive the needs or hurts of others. The word itself simply means to "suffer (passion) together (com)".

Compassion Sacrifices

 1 John 3:14-18. **Q.** What is proof that we've *passed from death unto life*?

Q. v16. What should Christ's loving sacrificial death motivate us to do?


Q. Laying down our lives for one another seems like a lofty ideal but John goes on in the next verse to give us a very practical example of this sacrificial love. According to v17 how can a Christian show sacrificial love toward a brother in Christ?

Q. John uses a phrase to describe withholding "this world's good" from those who are in need. What is it?

Q. v18. How does John describe the compassionate love that sacrifices its personal goods for the sake of others?

A compassionate Christian will look for opportunities to come to the aid of those who are hurting and in need. He is moved emotionally and shares in the pain that others are feeling. His compassion motivates him to *act* in some way that will alleviate his brother's pain (Rom 15:25-28; Cor 8:7-15).


In Luke chapter 10 a lawyer sought to "justify himself" by asking Jesus a trick question, "Who is my neighbour?". In answer to this question, Jesus told a parable about sacrificial compassion. In his parable there is a man who was stripped, beaten and robbed. A priest and a Levite passed by without an ounce of sympathy toward him. A Samaritan came along and according to verse 33 of the passage "when he saw him, he had compassion on him". The Samaritan's compassion lead him to treat the man's wounds, pay for a hotel and any other expenses that he might incur while recovering. Jesus then encouraged the lawyer to go and show the same sacrificial compassion to others (Luke 10:37).

 **Discuss.** Practically speaking, what are some areas where we might be called on to show compassion in the church? How might we be tempted to withhold compassion?


There is another characteristic of compassion that we can learn from this parable. That is:

Compassion Overlooks


Genuine compassion is not hindered by social, ethnic or religious boundaries. Nor is it withheld because of ones failures.

 1 Peter 4:8. **Q.** What does charity (love) do?

Compassion is moved by the hurts, needs and plights of men in general. It comes to the aid of people because they need help, regardless of who they are. Remember, Jesus had compassion on us *while we were yet sinners* (Rom 5:8).

 **Discuss.** What should we think of a Christian who is calloused toward the needs of others and fails to show compassion?

Compassion Forgives

 Matt 18:21-35. **Q.** What question did Peter ask Jesus?

Jesus took the opportunity of Peter's question to tell a parable about forgiveness. In it, there is a king who asks for all of his servants to come before him that he might assess how much money he is owed.

Q. v24. How much did this servant owe? _____.

The king's servant did not have the money to pay his debt. The king ordered his servant, his servant's wife and his children to all be sold into