

Compassion

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Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life

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A Reflection of The Christian's Life

Compassion is a feeling among humans that is motivated by another person's emotions when you experience their suffering and are moved to want to relieve them from it. The root word in Latin for compassion is *pati* which means to "suffer" and the prefix *cum* which means "with" and when combined together give us "to suffer with". As Christians we are called upon by God to be as Him who has led us throughout history showing us His compassionate side that has never been unfaithful in suffering with us as His children. We are to follow the example that He has given us so that we can care for the dying and rescue the perishing. Becoming compassionate we enter into somebody else's world and embrace the urge to help them get through their own downfalls. This demands us to be open minded and take on the powerless and vulnerable state that others are in. As long as we are occupying our time here on earth especially as social workers, we are to live our lives marked by compassion.

In "*Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*" the authors are continuous with the finding encouraging us to find placement with the scripture Luke 6:36. Here we find Jesus ministering to a large crowd of people from Judea, Jerusalem, and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon who came to not only hear Him speak, but to be healed of their various diseases. He gives the command to the multitude and his disciples that "You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate" while reminding us to never look for a hand out when doing good for others. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry we are exposed to many days of Him healing and caring for humanity. He continuously points out that our God is a compassionate God and that through

Him, He willingly decided to take on our problems as His own and wants to help us face our biggest setbacks while allowing for Him to fight the battle for us. This is a wonderful

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example of compassion. Not only does Jesus taking on human flesh become our ticket to salvation, but it helps us to relate to God on a higher and more profound relationship with Him. This example should be comforting to us as Christians and social workers because we want others to understand that we too are willing to take on other's sufferings with them and help to find a remedy.

The authors say that competition, not compassion, is the main motivation in life. They believe that "our whole sense of self is dependent upon the way we compare ourselves with others and upon the differences we can identify" (Nouwen, 1982). Our self-esteem has shown to depend on what others think about us and what/who we tend to compare ourselves to which cause the gap in differences to have us subconsciously distance ourselves from others. In doing this we find that it is harder to show compassion to our neighbors because we have trained ourselves to become so focused on the divided lines that we created. It should not be that our value is found in pointing to attributes that set us apart from others. Compassion removes the separation gap between people and connects us all in deeper ways that again, allow us to take on each other's sufferings unlike where competition has us as terrible listeners without really helping the other party. Competition will more than likely allow for one person to suffer alone instead of it being helpful to both parties. In taking on the character of God we are able to escape the spirit of competitiveness with one another and enter into bolder compassionate relationships with each other that allow us to grow and not live in fear of each other.

The New Testament message is that the compassionate life is a life together and encourages us to take on discipleship within our communities. This part of compassion is based on how we live with each other in our daily interactions and how we treat each other.

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From the time that Jesus begins his ministry and until the time that Paul is on his missionary journey, we are shown in the New Testament that our discipleship not only has us taking on another person's suffering, but also living as a united front. In the New Testament you find the community of Christ growing because of the team work presented due to working together for His sake. In the book of Philippians, Paul encourages the city to live out a compassionate life so that they can be a light to the world. He asks in vs.1-4 that their community exercise discipleship by not being selfish, but instead humble while looking out for others best interests as well, because that is what discipleship is within our social work and Christian community. Walking together as a unified body where compassion always draws us back to knowing that a relationship with Christ is relationship with our brothers and sisters (page 49). We can serve the world more effectively when we pray and work together for the greater good. Discipleship is about relationships and is empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit creating fresh opportunities to share the gospel. It takes away the fear of those who feel like they are alone and have no where to turn to or anyone to share their pain with. "*Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian's Life*" mentions that people who are apart of the community and feel alone are in grave danger in the case of their spirituality. It is not that the work is too much, but they do not feel the sense that anybody among them cares about their personal issues. When we feel as if though we are not good enough, we lose faith and that leads to a short-lived compassionate lifestyle and leave us empty. We can't be effective when we are empty and we can not experience God the way He intended for us too.

The togetherness of the Christian community and effective discipleship brings out the beauty in seeing others within the community who have unique and needed gifts. Through displacement, compassionate togetherness calls forth unique talents into a type of fruitfulness

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because we now give up our desire to want to be different when as a body of Christ so we aim to be alike. Our unique gifts build, and encourage, and comfort the community which keeps us remain glued together making sure no one feels like an island and we are never divided because competition does not come up as an option. We now can discover the hidden gifts or talents that make us aware of our own contributions that will help bring others closer in our community and draw those who are not yet apart as well. When we pay attention to the other person's gifts and their contribution, we learn to empty ourselves by paying attention to others which cause them to see their own value. This causes us to move away from being the center of attention and allowing others to connect into that particular zone. This is where true compassion lies. Togetherness that allow people of the community to let go of self and put others first.

Patience, prayer, and action are the keys into leading us as social workers and Christians who apart of the community to live a compassionate filled lifestyle. Patience is the ability to be faced with a hardship and not allowing your anger to get the best of you in that situation. This form of discipline is important because "in the Christian life, discipline is the human effort to unveil what has been covered...[which] enables the revelation of God's divine Spirit in us (page 88). Having discipline is never easy but it allows others to see how God works within us and that He indeed wins battles for us. Compassion as a divine gift shows us that discipleship and discipline work hand in had with each other. Without discipline we go back into our old habits and ways that are not like Christ's own which eventually lead to our discipleship to become

distant and in vain. You can not be truly compassionate without being patient as a social worker and a Christian because it takes away from the listening factor that is needed in order to experience the suffering and experience empathy with another person. Being impatient leads

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people to distrust the other party and makes them feel as if their issues are not as important as the community promotes itself as. Instead of taking having patience as a way of being powerless or known as somebody who allows things to slide when they happen, we should encourage the point that patience allows us to fully take on the sufferings of others around us. It shows us strength and allows us to be lifted on a higher level in how we interact on a daily basis. In order to achieve patience, we must be in exclusive prayer and take action as it comes. Prayer requires us to become vulnerable in the sight of God and to reaffirm that without God all things are impossible and that our compassion glorifies Him. I strongly believe that prayer enters into a deep, inner solidarity with all human beings so that in and through us they can be touched by the healing power of God's spirit. God's spirit is open to everyone and is the driving force behind what acts as our comforter, and leads us in our compassionate state of mind. This is the same spirit that embraces our community in bringing us closer and unifying us as well. As stated in the reading, the ultimate test in praying is praying for our enemies. Those who we lack respect for should be the uttered in constant prayer even though it is hard to do so This practice helps us build as a community because we begin to make this concept a habit and our impression of those we don't receive well, begins to wear off the negative. It takes a lot of courage but it shapes us to be ready for our personal ministry in helping others. We can not be effective and will be as clashing cymbals if we say we are of Christ but do not carry out the act of caring for our enemies. As we pray, we must not forget to take action. Our acts of service will never be in vain once our prayer life is sustained and that leads to solidarity with those who are suffering. "Our

actions, like our prayers, must be a manifestation of God's compassionate presence in the midst of our world" (page 115). In promoting action, we must also remember that whatever moves us and however we act on things it should always glorify God in some form. Just as the disciples

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did not perform any miracles and took the full credit for them, as should we be careful to make sure that God gets glorified in our endeavors as we work to fight for others. We should never be scared to speak up and should show our support for causes in our world while at the same time being mindful of how we execute our delivery. We should allow the Spirit to lead us in such a way that those who have not received Christ are able to ask about His love. There should always be a motivation in allowing our actions in standing up and suffering with others to speak in a compassionate way leaving out unrighteousness and offensiveness. Honest and direct confrontation is a true declaration of what compassion is. Only when it is presented prayerfully is when it becomes an expression of humbleness.

Overall, in living a meaningful and compassionate life as a Christian and social worker, we should remember that because we serve a God who was loving enough to come from his beautiful home in order to and teach us how to be better servants, we should build our communities putting away pride. In doing so we should always pray and ask for guidance on how to take in the commands that Paul gave Philippi in taking to live among ourselves in unity for the betterment of saving souls. Suffering with others adds more members to the body of Christ and enhances our lives by living a powerful prayerful life. God has called us to live a life that pleasing which includes us suffering with others with the end goal of wanting to live eternally.

Nouwen, Henri McNeil, Donald Morrison, Douglas (1982) Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian's Life ISBN: 0385517521. Image