

Compassion Unpacked



Can you remember a time when you've felt compassion?

Perhaps you feel compassion as hopeful X Factor contestants enter the stage to sing their hearts out, only to be cut down by the sharp tongue of Simon Cowell. Maybe you feel it when you've watched your child's sports team play against a much stronger opponent, helplessly watching while they struggle to put up a fight. Or maybe you were moved by images of desperate refugees going to extraordinary lengths to flee conflict in their countries and build a better life for their families.

SO WHAT DOES COMPASSION MEAN?

According to The Cambridge dictionary, "Compassion is a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering of others and a desire to help them." In short, it's an emotional reaction to pain or suffering that inspires us to respond.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT COMPASSION?

If we take a look at the Bible, the Greek word for 'compassion' is used only 12

times in the New Testament and nine of those are by Jesus. The literal translation means 'to be moved to one's bowels', which does sound rather old fashioned and even a little painful. But the 'bowels' were thought to be the very core of your being; the place where all love and pity comes from. Those listening to Jesus would have understood compassion to be a deep and powerful state of being, rather than a fleeting feeling.

To demonstrate compassion in action, I'd like to take a moment to read the story of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:25-37.

[\[Read Luke 10:25-37\]](#)

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Luke 10:33 describes the Samaritan as having 'pity' when he saw the injured man; in the New King James translation it describes him as having 'compassion.' What I think is clear is that pity, or compassion, is not something that momentarily crosses our mind. It doesn't inspire a few words of sympathy or an empathetic nod. Compassion means action. The Samaritan didn't just stop. He got physically involved in dressing the man's wounds, he offered friendship, transport and he provided

ongoing financial support so that the injured man could be properly looked after.

The Samaritan got well and truly involved in the life of the injured man. He risked his safety, delayed his schedule and got dirty and bloody by coming alongside a person in need. Let's not forget that these were times of social and racial tension and by helping a Jew, he was also putting himself at risk, all for a complete stranger.

JESUS' NATURE

This is just one example Jesus gave of compassion in action. But if you look at Jesus' own ministry, He repeatedly preaches about sharing what we have with those in need.

In Matthew 9:35-38, we hear that, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his field.'"

Jesus was a man filled with compassion. When Jesus sees those in need, he never turns his back. In fact, there are more than 2,000 verses in the Bible that refer to issues of injustice and taking care of the poor. It's so integral to our faith that if you were to cut all those verses out of your Bible, it would fall apart completely. **It's that important.**

As Christians, we can spend a lot of time debating the way we do things, but caring for the poor is something that should unite us completely, without debate. Perhaps the verse in James 2:18 sums it up best: "...But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds. Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.'"

THE BODY OF CHRIST

If we know we should be helping the poor, then perhaps the greatest challenge is how we go about doing it. Thankfully, God has an answer for that too - the Church. With 2.3 billion Christians in the world, nearly one third of the global population believes in Christ. There are Christians in some of the world's most remote, dangerous and hardest to reach corners of the earth.

What's more, within the church we have a wide range of skills. We have people who can do everything from build houses and fly planes to counselling and managing finances. Together we're well equipped to meet the challenges of our time.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4, we're told, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."

Verse 12 goes on to say: "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many."

It doesn't matter that we're not all called to be overseas missionaries. It doesn't matter what your job is or where you live. We can all help. We can all disciple people of all nations.

If you think again about the Good Samaritan, he wasn't a doctor or a physician, he was just a regular guy who stopped to take an injured man to a place where he knew he'd be well looked after. He used the resources at his disposal to ensure the man was taken care of. The same thing is happening today. Across the

world there are churches based in some of the world's poorest communities, doing what they can to help those in need. They are positioned to be the hands and feet of Jesus right where they are. What they so often lack is finance and support, which is where the global Church can rally behind them.

Together we can make each other stronger. But how?

COMPASSION

Compassion is a leading child development charity that equips churches in some of the world's poorest countries with the skills, resources and finances to reach out to the poor, the sick and the vulnerable within their communities. And the most vulnerable are so often children.

Children account for nearly half of all those who live in extreme poverty. They bear the brunt of war, disease and often have no voice to speak up against the injustice they endure. The good news is that there is something we can personally do for them.

Compassion partners with 7,000 Christian churches in 25 countries across the world. They work together with these churches to support nearly two million children in poverty, providing the children with all the benefits of sponsorship. As a Christ-centred, church-based charity, Compassion is inspired to respond as Jesus did – focusing on individuals,

recognising their individuality and showing them how precious and unique they are.

Not only are these children being given practical benefits like food, clothing and education, but loving Christian staff know them personally. They ensure the children are given a chance to learn about Jesus and His love for them, that they have a place where they can just be children and enjoy the freedom of playing with their friends.

SO WHERE DO WE COME IN?

The great thing about Compassion is that, just as Jesus did, we make it personal. When you sponsor a child you are committing not only financially, but also relationally by praying for a child and sending letters to encourage them and their family.

It's amazing how a child can bridge the global divide and unite us as the Body of Christ. Perhaps it's no surprise when Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:40 "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

To really show you Compassion in action, I'd like to play you a short film. I think it demonstrates far better than I could articulate how responding to Jesus' call to help the poor is actually a highly effective tool to fight global poverty and reach the world's most vulnerable children.



[Show your chosen film e.g. Richmond's story which can be found on your USB stick]

ISN'T THAT INCREDIBLE?

To think that one person's step of faith can start a chain of events that results in lives being transformed for the better. We can all be part of this important work. For just £25 a month, or 83p a day, you can personally give a child in the grip of poverty access to education, food, medical check-ups and the opportunity to hear about the love of Jesus.

Through sponsorship, you can transform the future of a child and help them step out of poverty into a future of new hope and purpose.

We know we're called to respond and through Compassion we have a real and highly effective way to make a difference. Can I ask you today to become a Good Samaritan and sponsor a child? Come find me after the service at *[where you will be located]*.

To close, share God's heart and your heart for the children in the prayer.