

CROSS-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

Week #4

“Compassion”

To this point we have looked at the Trustworthiness of a Biblically Excellent person. How they are known for honoring their word, and also devotion and diligence to tasks before them. Additionally, we looked at their work being done with delight. How a person that is mindful of where God has put them and how their work is purpose-filled in God’s kingdom and the family. Then we looked at contentment. One of the biggest issues in our American church culture today is contentment with what God gives. Unless a person learns to be content with what God gives, they will never be satisfied in life. Being dissatisfied is one of the quickest ways to quietly destroy relationships at home, work, school, or with friends.

When a person learns the foundation of the first 3 qualities of a Biblically Excellent person, then there is typically a natural overflow into the 4th quality. And that quality is “Compassion”. As we saw in our message, compassion is a sensation of sorrow causing a suffering with or alongside another person. However, it is also distinguished differently from commiseration in that compassion joins in the suffering of another, or carrying the weight of another, in order to bring that person out of their trial or trouble. In other words, there is a motivation or purpose behind the actions of someone operating in compassion. This is why compassion requires both thought and an action as a result. We see this on display with the father of the prodigal son. The father sees his son while he is still far off, perceiving the need of the son, he runs, embraces, receives and restores him all out of compassion (Luke 15:20).

When we look at the display of compassion from Christ, Ruth, Boaz, and the father of the prodigal son, we can see 3 basic parts that are present in the person of Biblical compassion:

- 1) Perception - They see and understand the needs of those around them*
- 2) Provision - They are moved, body and soul, to act toward a need of another (AKA: Willingness)*
- 3) Presumption - They have no assumption that they will be repaid*

As you take time to work through the next portion of this short devotional, recall that compassion is an action that shows God’s saving grace in your life. Romans 1 reminds us that when God saved us, He saved us to Himself from our own selves. So, remember that compassion is the displayed effect of God opening up your eyes from being on yourself to see Him and His heart for people around you. Knowing this truth causes spouses to see the needs of one another, co-workers to care for the duties of one another, and friends to be truthfully “closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24b).

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MEN:

Guys, if we are honest, the word “compassion” comes with a certain thought of weakness that men don’t seem to want to display. However, this cannot be further from the truth. Matter of fact, Biblical compassion takes a certain resilience of strength in mind and heart. As an example of this we can turn to the life of Boaz, as we often have in this series.

Boaz was a man of prestige in the land of Bethlehem in the tribal region of Judah (Ruth 1&2). But some markers of his character are seen in that he is out alongside the workers in his fields. He takes notice of those gleaning behind his servants. He holds conversation regarding the aid of those in need in his fields. Really, a study of the conversations with his servants shows an immense amount of trust from both the workers toward Boaz, and Boaz toward his workers. This operation earned him a good name among all the people of the land. This is even why he is respected at the city gates in Ruth 4 when the men gather to discuss the redemption of Ruth and Naomi. In other words, Boaz had a great Biblical strength, but that strength was gained through living an excellent (or Godly) life. One of the parts of his strength came from compassion and care for those God put around him.

To understand how compassion breeds strength in relationships lets consider the salvation work of God in the life of the psalmist of Psalm 116. The psalmist begins by recognizing the fact that God listens to his prayer (v.1-2). Then add the fact that the psalmist knows he is in great need of salvation (v.3-4). In other words, the psalmist knew God was present in his need, and ready to listen and care for that need. The end result is the psalmist desiring to return praise to the LORD (v.12-19).

READ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (love never fails)...

Compassion and agape love are very synonymous with each other. Both desire to see and care for those near them, both look beyond self, and both do not expect repayment. Many of us men have seen texts like 1 Corinthians 13 in pre-marriage counseling. Why do you think God desires a compassionate sort of love to be on display in our marriages, and what are the benefits of compassion between spouses in a marriage?

READ 1 John 4:7-21...

Verse 19 of this text reminds us that we can only show acts of compassion out of what God has shown us. This point also shows a truth of compassion, that there must be an initiator. God loved us, teaching us how to love. Men, it is our job to be the demonstrators in the house according to Biblical mandate of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. With this in mind, how are you displaying compassion toward your spouse no matter their current disposition toward you at the moment? Is there anything that can change to better show compassion to them?

(Also consider Romans 5:8 & 1 Peter 3:7-12)

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WOMEN:

“Compassion” is often thought of as a womanly trait, and certainly the softness of women by design can appear more compassionate. However, the truth is that compassion is not strictly an emotion. In fact, compassion requires a sober mind toward a situation so that a proper response can be made. Often, we treat compassion as a form of emotion, and yet Biblical compassion shows much more depth than that. As a matter of fact, we can’t say that it comes at ‘loss’ of something you possess, but rather a ‘calculated sacrifice’.

Ruth displayed this in Ruth 1 & 2 when she saw the needs of her mother-in-law, Naomi. She had even been given instruction that she could go back to her family and finances back in Moab. However, Ruth, being a woman of excellence, showed compassion toward Naomi and stayed alongside her in a time of trouble, giving up a life she could have had returning home. In addition to that, she served Naomi by going out to work in the fields. Really, Ruth showed Naomi she would be a companion to walk through the trials of life with her.

In Genesis 2 we see the build of the woman’s function in compassion within marriage toward her spouse. First, they were created by God because God saw the need of the man (Adam). Second, the woman was designed as a ‘help’-mate. The term God used was “helper”, or ‘ezer’ in Hebrew. Which means “to help meet or to aid”. God, looking at man, knew that it was good for man to walk with someone through the tasks ahead. Someone that would come alongside the man, encourage him, aid him in tasks, and help take steps through life. In seeing that need of man, God made woman (Eve). In other words, a beautiful and wonderful aid to an ailing and failing man. It is for this reason that God said, “the two shall be joined, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Perhaps you can see in all of this where compassion enters regarding marriage. Essentially, the woman is not behind the man, below the man, above the man... Rather, a woman of excellence is known for walking alongside the man step in step through the trials and troubles of life.

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YOUNG PEOPLE:

Compassion is not normally a term used of young people, but why can't it be?! As we have already seen, "even a child is known by their actions" (Prov. 20:11). The real reason it is often not on display in young people is because compassion is an overflow of God's grace in your life to those around you. Often times young people are still learning what it is to have received the grace of God, or are even working through receiving the grace of God in their lives. But this is even true in adults of all ages, too. So, don't be discouraged, but encouraged.

Over 30 times in the book of Proverbs we see a call to young people to listen and learn from Wisdom, their fathers, and mothers. In Proverbs 4:5-9 we see a reminder to young people to acquire Godly wisdom, as much as you can, and it will provide a victory in life. Part of that is understanding qualities God wants in you as a young Christian. The more you seek wisdom you will begin to understand the value of your salvation. This growth will teach you just how perfectly trustworthy God is. You will see the tasks He calls you to do (work out) as He works them in you (Phil. 2:13). You'll see how He provides for all of these things (Phil 4:19). Sometimes with a lot and sometimes with a little, but always enough. And when you understand and see the wonderful gift we have in God, it will begin to overflow in your life to those around you. That overflow of what God does in your life that now pours into the people around you is what we could call "compassion".

Really, compassion is seeing the needs of others before yourself and acting to serve those needs because God loves them just as He loves you. This is where you can show your desire to be a "friend that sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24b). Also, when you see another person living a life of compassion then you may be seeing someone worth building friendship or other relationships with. A person lacking compassion is a sign of what to stay away from (1 Corinthians 5:11 & 15:33).

READ 2 Timothy 3:1-7...

Young people, no matter if you are a child in the home, teen, or young adult, you need to realize the impact of relationships around you. Paul wrote this note to young Timothy to remind him that compassion is one of the best tests to look at in the lives of those around you. As we mentioned, it is the overflow of Godliness in the heart of the person. What do these verses say about a person that shows no compassion? Why?

READ Colossians 3:12-17...

Paul is writing to remind the Colossae church what type of life they should lead, and also the type of people they should surround themselves with in praise. What are some of the things he says are good to live out? Who all benefits from this type of lifestyle? Is there an area God is showing you that needs improvement?