

11. Learning to Have Compassion for One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to comfort one another through faith in one another. Today, we will look at another way that we show either our physical or spiritual family how to show the love of Christ to one another. 1 Peter 3:8-9 says, “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” In these verses, we see that we are to show our children how to have compassion for one another. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Compassion for others is something that does not come automatically to the life of a person. It is something that only develops as we yield our lives to Christ so that the power of the Holy Spirit is working in us and the love of Christ is flowing through us. In these verses, we see several key principles that make it possible for us to have compassion for one another. We need to teach these principles to our physical and spiritual children by modeling this compassion toward them in our own lives.

First, we show our children how to be of one mind or to be like-minded. To be like-minded involves oneness in doctrine and oneness in love. We see the oneness in doctrine in 1 Corinthians 1:10 where we read, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” We see this oneness in love in Philippians 2:2 which says, “Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” These two thoughts taken together show us how to have compassion when we speak to others needing compassion. Ephesians 4:15 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” We will show compassion when we speak the truth and speak it in love.

Second, we show our children how to love as brethren. Christ modeled this love for His disciples on the morning that He rose from the dead. He told Mary in John 20:17, “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”” Christ knew that the disciples were in sorrow because the last time they had seen Him was as He died on the cross. As a result, Christ wanted His disciples to know His great compassion for them. As a result, Christ sent Mary with a personal message to them that showed the greatness of His love for them.

Third, we show our children how to be tenderhearted. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is Ephesians 4:32 where we read, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” We are kind and tenderhearted when we forgive one another in the same way that God forgave because of the payment of Christ for our sins. Just as the Father was satisfied by the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sins and freely forgave us, we are to freely forgive others for the same reason. This means that we will be able to show compassion to them right at the very moment that they are committing sin. Christ

demonstrated this kind of compassion to Judas. In Matthew 26:50, Christ said to Judas at the very moment Judas was betraying Him, “...Friend, why have you come?’ Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.” That is certainly a real model of compassion for us to model for our children.

Fourth, we show our children how to be “courteous”. This word means *to be friendly or kind*. One of the key things that we want to show our children is how to speak with grace to others and not harshness. Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” In order to speak with grace, we must carefully consider our words before we speak so that we answer with love. James 1:19-20 reminds us, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” We want to show our children how to be good listeners so that they really hear what others are trying to say instead of getting angry with others.

Fifth, we see that we show our children two things to avoid if we want them to have real compassion for others. Our verses in 1 Peter 3:8-9 tell us two things to avoid, “Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling.” Compassion does not get even either by actions or by words. We show our children the importance of avoiding evil actions. We also show our children the importance of avoiding evil words. Christ modeled this for us from the cross when He said in Luke 23:34, “...Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do...” Christ showed His compassion even to the very men that had condemned Him and crucified Him.

Sixth, we show our children how to give a blessing to others instead of doing evil actions or speaking evil words. “Compassion” means that we will *give a blessing to all people regardless of how they treat us*. Luke 6:28 says, “Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.” Here, we see that we are to show our children by our own actions that it is possible to bless a person even when that person is cursing us. In fact, this verse shows us that one of the ways that we can choose to bless that person is by praying for that person.

Christ gave us an example of how to model compassion to our physical and spiritual children by the compassion that He demonstrated to the disciples. Matthew 9:36-38 says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” In these verses, we see that Christ did three things to show the disciples how to develop compassion in their own lives.

First, Christ helped the disciples to begin to view people as He viewed people. Christ really saw the multitudes. Today, many people see crowds of people and all they see is congestion. They do not see the spiritual needs of people. Christ saw the people as people who were weary. Christ saw the people as people who were scattered. Christ saw the people like sheep without a shepherd. In John 4, the disciples went into the city of Samaria and all that they saw was food. In contrast, the Samaritan woman went into the same city and saw people who needed to meet the Savior and

brought them to Christ. While the woman was gone, Christ told His disciples in John 4:35, “Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” People do not see the spiritual needs of others, because they do not look with compassion.

Second, Christ helped the disciples begin to realize that there were few laborers to help these people who needed compassion. Christ said that there is a great harvest to be gathered. Christ said that the problem is that there are few laborers that have the compassion to work in that harvest. Many people will talk about the harvest, but few have the compassion to get involved in the harvest as laborers. Many more people are willing to be supervisors of others, rather than laborers in the harvest fields. Christ wanted His disciples to develop enough compassion that they would become laborers.

Third, Christ helped the disciples to take two action steps once they saw the spiritual needs of the people. In Matthew 9:38, Christ helped the disciples to understand that the first action step that is needed is to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest. Matthew 9:38 says, “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” The first action that is required in order for people to begin to show compassion for others is to begin to pray that the Lord will send laborers into His harvest. Until people begin to pray, they will never take the second action.

The second action step Christ gave the disciples came in the first verses of Matthew 10. Matthew 10:1 and 10:5-6 say, “And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease...These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’” Once people begin to pray with compassion for people the second action step is to send them out to show compassion to people. The disciples had not even seen the spiritual need of the Samaritans. As a result, Christ showed them how to have compassion for people of their own culture first. Only after they had learned to show compassion to people of their own culture did He send them to show compassion to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth.

It is a great privilege to help our children learn to have compassion for others. Once they learn to show compassion to others, the Lord will give them greater and greater opportunities to minister to others. We are to show them by example how to show that compassion to both those who are Christians and also to those who are not yet Christians. This compassion will give them a ministry to all people as they learn from our example how to show compassion to those who are not Christians by sharing the Gospel with them. We show them how to have compassion to other Christians in the six ways we mentioned above. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to have compassion for one another.