

COMPASSION



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Compassion

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word compassion as; "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it".

We've all seen or heard stories in the news lately about the coal mine incident in West Virginia, the mine incident in China, the devastation in Haiti, and the difficulties people are facing around the world. And many times these stories move us to compassion and make us want to help, so we send a donation to a group like the Red Cross or others who are over there to help these people and their families. And that is good. We should do all we can to help those who need help. Without compassion, many people in this world would have no hope of survival.

However, I feel while many people are quite compassionate for a brief period of time about events such as those mentioned above, at the same time - they are not as compassionate to the needs of those whom they come in contact with each day and those who are immediately around them on a constant basis or semi-constant basis.

I think one of the best ways to illustrate compassion is to relay a true story found in the Bible. The story is found in the Book of Mark, chapter 2 if you're interested in actually reading it, but let me paraphrase it here.

Jesus was teaching and the crowd of people who had gathered to hear him was quite large. There was no way for any more people to get into the house where he was teaching.

There was in the same town a man who was paralyzed and wanting to get to Jesus, but of course had no way to even get to the house let alone get inside of it.

So, four men picked up the mattress on which he lay and carried the mattress and man to the house.

When they got to the house and saw that there were way too many people to even try getting the man inside, they went up on the roof of the house and tore a hole in the roof and tying ropes to the 4 corners of the mattress, lowered the man in to the room directly in front of Jesus.

Now, to fully understand the story, we must understand the customs and the times in which this story took place.

During this time period, and sadly even today, people really looked down on those who were disabled, paralyzed, or in other ways different from the norm. People often were taught that if someone was born with these problems or developed them in life it was a punishment for something they or their parents had done in the past.

In fact, Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, is even quoted as saying; "let there be a law that no deformed child shall live."

Many times, people who were deformed, paralyzed, etc., were simply thrown outside the city and left to die or become beggars. And most people would certainly NOT go out of their way to help someone like this man.

So...the fact that these 4 guys were willing to carry this paralyzed man all the way to this house was in itself an act of compassion.

But, then when they got there and found that the house was too jam packed with people for them to get inside, they didn't quit.

Many people would have said; "Oh, well. Sorry man. We tried." But no...they went so far as to carry this guy - mattress and all - up onto the roof, and tearing a hole in the roof, they made sure he got the help he needed. THAT IS COMPASSION!

Being a paralyzed man, this guy had no means to pay or reward these 4 men for their help. In fact, these 4 men probably had to pay for the roof they tore up. So it certainly wasn't to their personal "advantage" to do what they did. But, although it isn't mentioned in the story, I can just see the joy on their faces when this paralyzed man was suddenly laying in front of the only person in the world who could really help him.

They certainly weren't doing it to get something in return. The story doesn't go into detail about how they found this man. But more than likely, they just came upon him and saw he needed help getting to Jesus - and they decided to

help no matter what it cost them.

We are often quick to send off some money, clothing, etc., to those who need help around the world. And that is right. We should do all we can to help them. But we should also do all we can to help those in our corner of life as well. And especially when it comes to those we work with on a daily basis.

It seems a lot of people live 2 seperate lives (or more). They're like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. They are one way at work and another way when not at work.

Several years ago at a different company, I was in a meeting. One guy in the meeting didn't like the way I had done a project and proceeded to say so very unkindly in front of all who were listening. Well, the next day, this same guy came by my desk and asked me if I wanted to go to lunch. I was quite dumbfounded and mentioned to him that I was surprised since he had just chewed me out. His reply; "Oh...that was just work."

There should be no "that was just work". We should be just as compassionate and kind to others in our work place as we are out in our daily lives.

Someone once said; "If you want OTHERS to be happy, practice compassion. If YOU want to be happy, practice compassion!" And that goes in the workplace, in the home and family, and out in society in general.

There are ALWAYS opportunities abounding for those who need compassion. It should be the other way around. There should be so many of us looking to be compassionate that we find it hard to find someone who needs our compassion.

The true story is told of a lawyer who was driving home, and he saw a blind man whom he recognized as a man who attended his church. The blind man was standing on the sidewalk in the cold and waiting. So, the lawyer pulled up and asked him what he was doing. The blind man said he was waiting for a taxi. He said there was a certain taxi company that gave discounts to blind or hearing impaired, and he was just waiting. So, the lawyer asked him how long he would have to wait. "Oh, just 2 more hours" said the blind man.

The lawyer told the blind man to hop in and he would give him a ride home. To which the blind man replied; "Oh no, you're a lawyer. You don't have time to waste on someone like me." And then he slowly and quietly said; "No one has time for me."

Of course, the lawyer gave him a ride. But, just like that blind man. There are people all over this world, people all around us on a daily basis. Even people we work with who need to feel that joy and happiness that we can bring into their lives when we simply have compassion.

How much compassion do you show to those who work around you and to those who you come in contact with who are hurting each day?

It won't always be someone who is paralyzed or blind who needs our compassion. It may be just someone who is having a rough day, someone who is going through some other pain in their life, or someone who just needs some encouragement.

You ask; "But, how do I know who needs my compassion?"

It's simple really. When you start looking for people to help, people to be kind to, and people to share compassion with - you'll find them. The problem is, most of us aren't looking.