

THE CHARACTER OF COMPASSION

<http://www.discipleshiptools.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=37110>

Is the Character of Compassion working in you?

Here is how you can find out. Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Compassion from God's most precious Word by examining the passages below. Now ask yourself:

1. How do I exhibit Compassion in my daily life?
2. What can I do to develop a better attitude of Compassion?
3. What blocks Compassion from working and being exhibited in me?
4. How can I make Compassion function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

Compassion (Job 29:13; Isa. 40:11; Mark 1:41; Luke 10:25-37; 19:4; 1 Peter 3:8) will allow us to feel the pain and plight of others, to see from their perspective and situation in life. It will enable us to convey a deep feeling of love and concern that moves us to meet their distresses, struggles, and needs. This all flows from our understanding of who God is, and our obedience, trust in, and gratitude for what He has done for us. (Luke 10:36-37; Eph. 4:23). Our lives must be motivated by who we are in Christ, and nothing else!

Lack of sympathy, Coldness and Thoughtlessness are the opposites. *Unmerciful*, in Scripture, usually refers to those who are unmerciful to the poor. However, it also means people who are without compassion, who do not feel for the distresses of others, and those who cause these distresses. These are all opposites of what God does with us, and how He calls us to respond to others.

· Here are positive examples from Scripture (2 Sam. 9:1-13; Luke 10:25-37; 15:18-24; 18:35-43; 1 Cor. 13; 1 John 4:7-21)

· Here are negative examples from Scripture (1 Kings 12:12-15; 21:5-15; Matt. 18:23-35; John 19:1-16)

1. How would you define Compassion? Is it a duty, or does it flow naturally?
2. What are the things that cause you to be unsympathetic with others?
3. What happens to our relationships with God and others when we are cold and uncaring?
4. When have you been filled with Compassion the most?
5. In what situation did you fail to be Compassionate when you should have been?
6. What issue is in your life that would improve with more Compassion?
7. Think through the steps you need to take to put Compassion into action in a specific instance, such as going to someone who has been hurt, seeking resolution and healing. Ask yourself, how can I develop this character further so God can better use me in the lives of others?

True Compassion is a result of the poured-out life that has been devoted to God and attached to His interests. The trials and tribulations we endure give us the strength and character to be of better use in the lives of others. Because we have been through it, we can help lead them through it, too. It will also make us more confident of our Lord and His working within and through us.

Compassion is not bringing our own needs, ideas, sympathies, or agendas--no matter how needed and good-to a situation. Rather, it is identifying with others, allowing God's ideas and interests to take us beyond ourselves to the situations of others, and helping to bring them closer to Christ. We are to seek His intervention, but not demand that God fulfill that need. We are to bring ourselves closer to Him and experience His presence and preeminence.

Compassion also gives us the ability to feel genuine empathy and concern for those who suffer distressing physical, mental, or emotional problems, to tolerate it, and even serve them cheerfully. We are to reflect Christ's love, seeking to alleviate their sufferings as well as motivate others to help. This is a prime aspect of the Spiritual Gift of Mercy; however, not having that gift is no reason or excuse to not act on it (Matthew 9:35,36 Mark 9:41; Romans 12:1; 1 Thess. 5:14)!

A true test of our election is the amount of love and sympathy we have for one another and the lost. This is what leads us to intercessory prayer, even for those we do not like. So, how much time do you devote to intercession? If you feel stale, and dry of love and companionship in your life, especially with God, you have a big problem! Drop to your knees in surrendered prayer and seek His face! (Keep in mind emotional levels differ with each person's personality. God does not care about our emotional level. Rather, He is interested in our faith, trust, and response for what He has done.)

Kindness is the proof text to authenticity that is a result of God working in us. Grace means an undeserving act of kindness. Compassion is exercising that kindness!

In Romans 2:4, the word for *despise* (NKJV)/*contempt* (NIV) refers to the refusal to yield to the knowledge and trust of God's goodness and His right of judgment. That means we refuse to use His goodness as a guide so we can experience sorrow for our own miss-actions and develop compassion towards others for theirs (within reason--there is no license to keep sinning) (Psalm 136). God is generous with His grace, so we should be generous toward one another, and be thankful. If we refuse to see His goodness and turn from sin, we will be exhibiting the ultimate contempt for our loving Lord!

Real character will not cave in under pressure and will resist the temptation to compromise!