

## Compassion

I remember some time ago, preaching a sermon that included in it a discussion of the Greek word *pathos*. I guess the best meaning for *pathos* is “feeling.” If you are empathetic, you truly feel the pain they are going through. If you are sympathetic, you feel sorry for them, although you really have not gone through what they have experienced. Of course, apathy means you have no feeling at all.

Both empathy and sympathy are at the core of one of the traits all of us Christians should have: compassion. There are numerous examples in Christ's life that showed his compassion for mankind, and additional passages that instruct us to be compassionate. In **Matthew 9**, we're told that Jesus was touched by the condition of the people around him. **Matthew 9:36** states that **“when He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”** He saw their condition and addressed it. In **Mark 6:34**, in Mark's record of the same event, it is said that because of their condition, He “began teaching them many things.” He gave them the peace and direction they so desperately needed. In **Matthew 14:14**, Jesus' compassion caused Him to heal their sick. In **Matthew 15:32**, Jesus was sympathetic to those who had followed him for several days and had nothing to eat. So he fed them with seven loaves and a few small fish. We know that story, but it all began with Jesus' compassion. In the story of the prodigal son, **Luke 15:20** says that the reason the father treated his wasteful son the way he did was because of his compassion for him.

Paul told the people of Colossae in **Colossians 3:12** that they were to “clothe” themselves with compassion. The people of Ephesus were instructed to “be kind and compassionate to one another.” (**Ephesians 4:32**) This is the final verse in a chapter that speaks of all of us being humble, gentle, patient, loving, and truthful to one another. All elements of compassion. Peter says in **I Peter 3:8**:

**“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.”**

The best example of compassion, of course, is God. And the best passage to describe God's compassion (the gist of which is repeated over and over in the Old Testament) is **Psalms 103:8-13**:

**The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever. He**

**does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him;...”**

We know people who are in situations where they need our compassion. Someone who has sinned against us in some way. Someone who has lost a person close to them. Someone who has just been given terrible news. We meet people everyday who deserve to be treated with empathy and sympathy. We certainly cannot remain apathetic. Reach out and show the Lord's compassion in your life. You will be rewarded.