

# Session 4 : Intro

HOW TO HAVE COMPASSION DURING TOUGH TIMES



## OPENING REFLECTION

- How do we offer godly compassion in our small groups / discipleship relationship?
- Do you see godly compassion happening in your group / relationships?



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'Step by Step' by Ed Welch

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## WHY IS COMPASSION SOMETHING THAT IS REQUIRED OF US?

We are told in the Bible that our God is kind, and one of the fruit of the Spirit is **kindness**, so we can be in no doubt that it is a characteristic that Christians should strive for.

But the word we are looking at here is **'compassion'** - a word we may say has greater meaning and empathy than kindness - a word that is a characteristic of a group of Spirit-filled believers.

The word used for the **compassion** that we see in the Bible is a word going right to our heart - a word meaning a deep sympathy born out of understanding someone else's story.

**We may be thinking that this is just an *optional extra*  
- the salad dressing we can leave on the side**

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We have already looked at the **'one anothers'** in Scripture - the many verses that remind us that we are called to walk alongside each other. More than this, we are called to be **'imitators of God'** and our God is a **God of compassion.**

When we study the life of Jesus we are struck by the many situations in which he shows **compassion.** It is a picture that Jesus gave us of God as our Father in the story of the Prodigal Son.



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**Let's think about what we have talked about in previous sessions when it comes to leading our groups.**

- **We get to know people in a deeper way. By listening to their hearts, we gradually find out what matters to them.**
- **We offer to pray for them.**
- **We see the good in them - and we begin to like and enjoy being with them.**
- **As our conversations go deeper, we continue to pray for them with more wisdom and now with the beginnings of compassion, because we know what goes on behind the scenes.**



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We all go through times that are beyond our control and at those times, the strength of a small group is that we do not have an impersonal experience of God's compassion as something theological being explained from the front, but we find the richness of fellowship as we walk authentically alongside each other, knowing that this is how God wants us to show his love as the body of Christ.

And the beauty is that we don't do it on our own - we do it with God's Spirit giving us what we need as we turn to him and ask for it.

***As followers of a  
compassionate  
God, we are  
motivated in our  
actions by  
seeking to  
imitate him.***

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IN WHAT WAYS DO WE SEE COMPASSION AS A CHARACTERISTIC  
OF THE TRINITY IN THESE PASSAGES?

COMPASSION OF JESUS

John : 17-43

COMPASSION OF THE FATHER

Psalm 103 : 1-18

COMPASSION OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 8 : 26

*What can we take away from these (or other) Biblical passages as we seek to show compassion as leaders?*

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## HOW DO WE OFFER COMPASSION?

**Think of a time when you have been shown compassion in suffering.**

**What stands out to you about the way you were cared for?**



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## WATCH OUR THEOLOGY

How we love people through hardship depends on our theology.

Our beliefs may facilitate compassion, or they may get in the way.

### 1. Blame – it's your fault

Of course suffering and sin can be related because sin can break things directly (e.g. a bad temper can cause difficult relationships) - but the Bible does not place suffering as retribution for sin (as in the story of the tower of Siloam).

### 2. Wrong Expectations

God will give you the ability to bear it – it won't feel too bad

### 3. Wrong solution – praise your way through it!

### 4. Relativise – it could be worse!

### 5. Minimise cost – Christians don't feel suffering as badly as other people.

**Suffering is actually part of everything not being quite right**

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## WATCH OUR WORDS

### What to say

When someone is going through something that is deeply traumatic and painful, we need to remember that compassion grieves with those who grieve. We choose to speak words which may seem simple but will be powerful.

We want to show that we have heard, and silence can seem as if we haven't. So expressing that we are sorry is good.

Also - compassion remembers. It's important to remember significant events, dates, anniversaries, because for the person suffering, they will be going through their journey long after we have left.

### What not to say

Of course - we need to be careful not to say some things. Sometimes people say 'it could be worse'. Of course it could - but to seek to show compassion in that way doesn't work. God doesn't say this - he allows us to pour our hearts out - he doesn't tell us to pull ourselves together.

It's also important not to come out with a generalisation about God teaching them something or 'all things working together for good'. Suffering is not something that needs intellectual answers; it is personal and not something we can find answers for.

**Remember - we are seeking to speak to others in the way we would like to be spoken to.**

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## WATCH OUR RELATIONSHIPS

### Short stories vs long stories

We touched on this earlier and will continue to explore it in more depth on our discipleship journey. We each have a story, and as we walk alongside each other, we want to hear each other's stories so that we can understand each other.

We have looked tonight at compassion and this is a result of moving from someone's short story to someone's long story. It is a privilege of a growing friendship to hear our friend's story - as we ask them questions, we hear their heart, and their heart reveals what is behind their stories.

**Remember - we do not seek to swap or compare stories of suffering - that's not helpful when we are showing compassion**



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## FURTHER RESOURCES

Prayer ministry training manual	Sandy Millar (HTB)
May I walk you home	Joyce Rupp (walking with the dying)
May you find comfort	Joyce Rupp (a blessing for grieving)
The way of the heart	Henri Nouwen
The wounded healer	Henri Nouwen
Seeing in the dark	Christopher Chapman



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## What if the situation gets too much for me as a leader?

### Don't hesitate to contact:

- Cluster leaders
- Care team
- Other ministry team leaders



**Remember – we are in a spiritual battle**

**'Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.'** Ephesians 6 : 18

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