

## Sympathy, Empathy or Compassion?

When people we love have troubles or sadness thrust on them, we tend to have a variety of feelings. We often are sympathetic or empathic and express that in a variety of ways. We call, send cards, or post on Facebook in support of loved ones. These expressions show that we care about someone, but are they enough? Should we not go a step further and show the compassion that Christ modeled for us?

Sympathy-(from the Greek words *syn* "together" and *pathos* "feeling" which means "fellow-feeling") is the perception, understanding, and reaction to the distress or need of another human being. Empathy is derived from the Ancient Greek word *empathia*, and generally means to put yourself in another's place.

Compassion is from the Latin *com* (with) and *passus* (suffer) and is the emotion we feel in response to the suffering of others that motivates a desire to help. A common theme in the Bible shows that compassion is sacrificial in nature and demands action to relieve suffering.

We learn in Matthew 9:35-36 that "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus felt compassion for the multitudes and this drove him to action.

Colossians 3:12-13 tells us, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

These examples and many more show us that it is not enough to feel sympathy or just put ourselves in another's shoes. James 2 spells it out clearly in verses 15-16: "If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"

So, if someone among us suffers, show the sacrificial and loving compassion of Jesus and take action to relieve the suffering.

For the elders,  
Tony Turner