

Compassion: sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it

## Awareness and Action

We are made aware of distress constantly. Superman had moments of chaos when he actually listened to all of the distress calls in the world at one time. Bruce or Jim Carey on Bruce Almighty was inundated with prayer requests via email when God gave him his powers for a trial run. Distress is a common occurrence and an inevitability in this world. Some of us even live in the hope that we will be free from distress long enough to enjoy ourselves. But how do you become truly compassionate?

Read James 1:19-2:13

## Listening and Doing

<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup> because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. <sup>21</sup> Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

<sup>26</sup> Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

To Be Compassionate *YOU* must:

1. Listen to God's word without anger
  - a. For righteousness
  - b. Rid moral filth and evil
2. Do what God's word says
3. Finish with action and not words

Illustration: *Courageous* - movie about our responsibility as Godly parents to teach our children about God and demonstrate God's love to them, as well as our responsibility to help other children who don't have fathers so they can know God's love too.

## Favoritism Forbidden

<sup>2</sup> My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. <sup>2</sup> Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. <sup>3</sup> If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," <sup>4</sup> have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

<sup>5</sup> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

<sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? <sup>7</sup> Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

<sup>8</sup> If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself,"<sup>[a]</sup> you are doing right. <sup>9</sup> But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. <sup>11</sup> For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery,"<sup>[b]</sup> also said, "You shall not murder."<sup>[c]</sup> If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

<sup>12</sup> Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, <sup>13</sup> because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

To be a compassionate Church **WE** must:

1. Be aware of clothing
2. Read between the lines
  - a. No directive about what to do with the poor
  - b. "Love your neighbor as yourself"

To be compassionate, we have to look at ourselves and not judge others concerning compassion—that's a problem in the church. We think that we can compare compassion levels in the Church.

We also have to listen to those outside the Church—not for the truth about our compassion as a Church, but to give us a new perspective concerning our compassion. We need to question our compassion when everyone is questioning it.

Illustration: Meredith and volleyball.

Transition: How can you be compassionate for those who don't know they need it?

In my time in North Carolina, I came across an interesting driving phenomenon. On the roadside, cars would be stopped and unmanned with a piece of white material or a white flag hanging from its side, visible to traffic in both directions. I thought this was weird, but I thought a lot of things were weird in the South so I didn't think much about it. That is, until I took my NC driver's test to obtain my license. One of

the items, particular to that state was a notice about a distress signal for motorists stranded on the side of the road. If you are unable to move the vehicle on the highway you were to stick a white piece of fabric on the side of the car to alert other motorists, law enforcement, and tow trucks that the vehicle was in fact stranded. This was a notice of distress. We are excited as a Church when people come into the Church and hold up their white flag—notice of distress. This has been the modus operandi of the Church for a long time, but it has not always been for every church everywhere from the beginning of the Church. The white flag is great, but not every state has this law for their motorists and not every person in the world would adhere to this procedure because it is unknown outside of the Church. How do we answer distress signals if they aren't visible or audible to us?

Approaches:

1. Show them their darkness
2. Demonstrate light

Conclusion: Understand that we are a Church by name and not location.