Compassion is a fundamental virtue that every believer who has received Christ into their life must embody. It reflects the very nature of God Himself, who is rich in mercy and compassion (Psalm 103:8).

Why must we be compassionate? Because our Heavenly Father is compassionate (Luke 6:36, NIV: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”). As children of God, we are called to imitate His character (Ephesians 5:1-2). Compassion is not just a feeling but an active response to human suffering and need, rooted in God’s unconditional love (1 John 4:7-8).

Distinguishing Compassion and Mercy

The Bible uses both *compassion* and *mercy*, which are closely related but have nuanced differences:

- Mercy (Greek: *eleos*) broadly means withholding punishment or granting forgiveness to someone who deserves judgment. It is a foundational attribute of God, who withholds deserved wrath and offers grace (Titus 3:5).
- Compassion (Greek: *splagchnizomai*) refers to a deep, visceral empathy leading to action literally, being moved “in the inward parts” (bowels, or gut). It’s a compassion that moves one to alleviate suffering (Matthew 9:36; Mark 1:41).

For example, a soldier sparing a surrendering enemy out of

empathy and understanding is showing *compassion*. Simply sparing the enemy out of duty or obligation is an act of *mercy*.

Biblical Examples of Compassion

1) Compassion for the Sick

Jesus' healing ministry was driven by compassion, not just power or obligation. Mark 1:40-42 (NIV) describes a man with leprosy pleading for healing. Jesus, "moved with compassion," touched and healed him. This reveals that compassion involves entering into another's suffering and responding personally (Hebrews 4:15).

When we witness illness and suffering, our response should mirror Christ's. Compassion calls us to stand with the afflicted and pray, support, and care.

2) Compassion for the Needy

True compassion extends beyond feelings into tangible help for those in material need. 1 John 3:17-18 (NIV) challenges believers:

“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? … let us love not with words but with actions and in truth.”

God’s compassion manifests through generosity and sharing, reflecting His heart for the poor and marginalized (Proverbs 19:17).

3) Compassion for Those in Crisis

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37, NIV) vividly portrays compassion as action: a Samaritan risks time and resources to care for a stranger beaten and left for dead. Jesus contrasts the Samaritan’s compassion with the indifference of the priest and Levite, challenging us to love beyond social or religious boundaries.

Compassion here is sacrificial and practical, breaking through barriers to restore life and dignity.

4) Compassion for Backsliders

The prodigal son's story (Luke 15:11-32, NIV) beautifully illustrates God's compassionate heart toward repentant sinners. The father's running to embrace his lost son symbolizes divine grace welcoming the repentant without condemnation.

As believers, we must reflect this compassion, encouraging and restoring those who have strayed (Galatians 6:1).

5) Compassion Within the Body of Christ

The church is called to live out compassion internally. Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) exhorts: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." This mutual compassion sustains unity and reflects God's mercy.

Compassion in Scripture is more than emotional sympathy; it is a *divine attribute* and a *commanded lifestyle* for believers. It flows from God's own nature (Exodus 34:6), demonstrated supremely in Christ's incarnation God entering human suffering (John 1:14). Believers are called to be *imitators of God* (Ephesians 5:1), who express compassion tangibly.

Moreover, compassion is intrinsically linked to agape love the

selfless, sacrificial love God commands (1 Corinthians 13). It is both a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and a mark of authentic discipleship (John 13:34-35).

May we, empowered by the Holy Spirit, embody God’s compassion responding actively to the suffering and needs around us, reflecting the heart of our merciful Father. As Jesus commands us in Luke 6:36, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Shalom

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