

Compassion

The graphic scenes we're seeing from the Russian invasion of Ukraine remind us of the problem of human suffering in this sinful world.

Suffering, however, isn't confined to faraway places. Nor is it always the result of the intentions of evil men. Or the impact of something as overt as war. You don't have to look very far to see hurting people.

Hurting people are everywhere. In your community. Your church. Maybe in your home.

People are hurting because of sickness. Pain. And physical infirmities.

People are hurting because of loneliness. Rejection. And the loss of love.

People are hurting because the sorrow of death has invaded their homes. Pierced their heart. And left their head spinning with bewilderment on how to move forward.

People are hurting because of sin. Maybe the consequences of their own sins. Or the heartache and agony of those who've wronged them.

People are hurting because of insolation. Social inequities. And even the aloofness of those who should care, but don't.

And some people are hurting due to the callous, hard-heartedness of people who seem to delight in hurting other people.

Hurting people are not limited to a specific race, social status, or economic condition. Hurting hearts are shared by the rich and poor alike. Young people. And older people. Mothers and fathers. Husbands and wives. Black and white.

The immensity and pervasiveness of hurting people ought to touch our hearts. And as Christ-followers motivate us to offer help, healing, and hope.

In a hard, cold, and even cruel world, compassion is a quality that needs renewal.

One of the qualities of Jesus often recorded by Bible writers was His compassion for hurting people.

When Jesus saw the weary, scattered multitudes of people who were like sheep with no shepherd, he was "moved with compassion" (Mt. 9:36).

When a leper came to Jesus seeking healing for this ugly, ravaging disease, He was "moved with compassion." He touched him and cleansed him (Mk. Mk. 1:41).

When a widow's only son died and they were carrying out his coffin to the cemetery, Jesus felt her sorrow. He "had compassion on her." And raised her son up to life again.

Compassion" is a middle English word that has Latin roots. It means to bear with. Suffer with. Sympathize with. By definition compassion means "a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering."

The Greek word means "to suffer with another." Vincent says it is not limited to sorrow, but is the interchange of feelings for a fellow human being, whether of joy or sorrow. It is the application behind Paul's command, "Rejoice with those that rejoice; and weep with those that weep."

Compassion involves sympathy. Empathy. Understanding. It really does feel the pain of another.

Compassion gives of its time. Expend energy. Prays fervently. Gets involved. Rolls up its sleeves. Gets its hands dirty. That's why Peter Ustinov quipped, "Charity is more common than compassion. Charity is tax-deductible. Compassion is time-consuming."

However, compassion can also be demonstrated by being generous financially. Compassion is not tight-fisted. Stingy. Greedy. Or miserly. Compassion prompts us to share our material blessings with others who are in need.

May our eyes be open, our ears alert and our hearts receptive to hurting people. And may we respond with compassion.

As the prolific author anonymous expressed it, "The measure of love is compassion; the measure of compassion is kindness."

—Ken Weliever, The Preacherman

(Editor's Note: A few weeks ago, we studied on compassion. Frankly, I wish I had seen this article before the class. This world is full of suffering and one can become callous to those hurting. Let us be thankful for our blessings and mindful of those going through trials and tribulations.)