

Di121 Effective Communication

Lesson Di121-19 Attitude: Compassion

Compassion is the second attitude God's people need as they communicate the gospel to others. Compassion is not just a feeling or emotion. The meaning of this word is a "deep awareness of the suffering of another, with a wish to relieve it." We all have experienced the suffering caused by the death of a family member or a friend. This type of loss is very difficult. It can leave a person not sure of what to say or do next. In this story Jesus gives guidelines to comfort others. He models true compassion. Receiving true compassion from a believer can help hurting people experience God's love in a new way.

The sisters of Lazarus sent word to Jesus that his friend was sick. When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he already knew that Lazarus had died. Many people had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

Martha believed that she would see her brother again in the distant future. She also thought Jesus could have saved him, if he had come sooner. Jesus used this opportunity to reveal more of God's truth. In fact, Martha was the first to hear this profound truth, that whoever believes in Jesus will live even after death. The message was that he would give eternal life to all who believed on him. He wanted Martha to get her eyes off her present sorrow and onto him. At times of death, we communicate well when we help people look to the future and to what it holds for those who know Christ.

After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

On hearing of Jesus' arrival, Mary did not hide in her sorrow. She went to him for the comfort she knew he could give her. When Mary approached Jesus she made the same statement

Martha had made. They both knew Jesus would have the words of compassion for both of them. In that society their futures were now very uncertain, with no man to provide for them.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied. Then Jesus wept.

The people said, "See how he loved him!"

The reason Jesus wept has been questioned by Bible teachers. Did he not already know that he would bring Lazarus back to life? John tells us the message the onlookers received was that Jesus had loved Lazarus. Certainly this was true, but he also deeply loved these two women who now felt very alone. Jesus felt compassion for this family. He experienced human emotions. Their loss gave Jesus the opening to demonstrate his power over death. He was aware of their suffering, with a wish to relieve it. His response also revealed his relationship with a loving heavenly Father who also delights to relieve the suffering of his children.

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." Then Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go" (John 11:18-44).

Jesus demonstrated his compassionate love for this family. He was not only aware of their suffering, but willing and able to relieve it. By raising Lazarus to life again, he reunited them. This is a picture of a future event. Lazarus was raised again in his mortal body. He would die again. In the end time, when Jesus comes back, all believers will be reunited with each other and with Jesus. We will all have immortal bodies like his and will live forever. Jesus, by conquering death, has made it possible for all who believe to have eternal life.

From this story you see the deep feelings Jesus had for suffering people. It is not enough to feel pity or compassion if you do nothing about their suffering, however. James, the brother of Jesus, said this, "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:15-17, 26).

This story is **important** because it demonstrates how Jesus showed compassion to those who placed their trust in him. He weeps with those who weep and then extends his hand to help. He wants us to follow his example.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that communicating the compassion of Jesus to all people is part of our responsibility as believers. The second part is doing whatever we can to relieve their suffering.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What is the meaning of the word “compassion” as defined in this lesson? [Pause]
A. If you said, “Compassion is a deep awareness of the suffering of another, with a wish to relieve it,” you are correct.
2. Why did Jesus say that he prayed, before he commanded Lazarus to live again? [Pause]
A. If you said that Jesus prayed, “Father...I said this for the benefit of the people listening so that they may believe that you sent me,” you are right.
3. How can we show the compassion of Jesus to those who have lost loved ones through death? [Pause]
A. If you said we can direct their attention to Jesus, who by conquering death has made it possible for all who believe to have eternal life, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to memorize the story and tell it to someone who has not heard it before. Then ask them this question, “Why do you think Jesus wept at the grave, since he already knew he would bring Lazarus back to life? Answer: He wept because he felt compassion for this family in the middle of their loss. He wept to show he understood and was moved by their sorrow and suffering. Jesus experienced human emotions and he moved to relieve human suffering.

Talk with your fellow Christians about those who are suffering in your town or village. How can you show the compassion of Jesus to them in a tangible way?