

Central Study Hour – Lesson 8 “Jesus Showed Sympathy”

*SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read the memory text (Matt. 14:14). Highlight the story of the pastor sobbing with the couple whose 17 year old daughter committed suicide. Read the final paragraph. The point: True sympathy means being a comforting presence (and sometimes no words can help a situation).

*SUNDAY: HEARING THE GROANS

Many people in our world are tired, lonely, worried and discouraged. Our universe is so vast and beyond what our imaginations can grasp. With the influence of Darwinism dismissing the idea of a caring creator, it's no wonder that so many people struggle with a sense of hopelessness as though we are but dust in a seemingly infinite cosmos. Of course, the Bible gives a different and hopeful account of our place in creation. We who know God is love are to lift up those who are down – like Jesus did.

Read the question and briefly discuss how each of the verses (**Judges 2:16-18, 2 Kings 13:22-23, Is. 54:7, 8, 10**) shows God's compassion. (To save time the teacher could just give the point about one or two of the verses). Read the paragraph that follows. *What does **Exodus 2:23-25** teach us about how God deals with suffering? What did God do about it?* He sent Moses and delivered them from slavery. It's called the Exodus. Read the bottom section of the narrative (**SC 100**) and the questions in the box.

*MONDAY: OUR SYMPATHETIC SAVIOR

Read Matthew 9:35-36. *What does this verse teach us about how true sympathy and compassion are made manifest?* Didn't it lead Jesus to action to relieve pain and suffering as well as to give truth and guidance?

Read Luke 7:11-16. *How does this event show true sympathy and compassion?* Jesus really felt the loss of this woman and He did something about it. His compassion was proved real by action.

Four words are defined here: sympathy, compassion, pity, and empathy. *Which of these words best describes what you want when you face a crisis in your life? Why?* Discuss briefly. Read thoughtfully the larger paragraph about how we may react to sad news. Then read the following paragraph that contrasts all the attention big disasters get compared to smaller misfortunes. *Is it true? What if it is a case where someone brought trouble upon themselves? Do we lack compassion then? What can we do when we know someone is in need but find it difficult to feel sympathetic because of his or her behavior?* Read the last paragraph of the narrative. Then ask them if they considered the box at the bottom. Read the box. *In what ways are we all somewhat guilty of the same thing? In what ways do you think the church may sometimes appear to non-church members as unsympathetic? What, if anything can we do about it?* First, prayerfully ask yourself if there is anyone to whom you may have been unkind or unsympathetic. Ask God to give you the strength to apologize and make restitution. You see, lack of sympathy can really hurt someone. To illustrate, share the following story.

“The phone rang in a high society Boston home. On the other end of the line was a son who had just returned from Viet Nam and was calling from California. His folks were the cocktail-circuit, party kind—drinking, wife-swapping, gambling, all the other things that go with it. The boy said to his mother, ‘I just called to tell you that I wanted to bring a buddy home with me.’ His mother said, ‘Sure, bring him along for a few days.’ ‘But, mother, there is something you need to know about this boy. One leg is gone, one arm's gone, one eye's gone, and his face is quite disfigured. Is it all right if I bring him home?’

His mother said, ‘Bring him home for a few days.’ The son said, ‘You didn't understand me, mother. I want to bring him home to live with us.’ The mother began to make all kinds of excuses about embarrassment and what people would think....and the phone clicked.

A few hours later the police called from California to Boston. The mother picked up the phone again. The police sergeant at the other end said, "We just found a boy with one arm, one leg, one eye and a mangled face, who has just killed himself with a shot in the head. The identification papers on the body say he is your son." *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart* by Charles Swindol, p. 109.

In the above case there was no opportunity to apologize and ask for forgiveness. But, if the opportunity is there, we should make it right while we can. The opportunity may not be there in the future. You see, lack of sympathy can really hurt someone! We shouldn't take it lightly.

This might be a good time to share from the Teacher's Comments (opening discussion, p. 107-108) about Facebook considering having a sympathy button. The two thought questions on 108 are good. For question #2 on the downside of telling someone, "I'll be praying for you," share the following writing.

I was hungry

and you formed a humanities club
and you discussed my hunger.
Thank you.

I was imprisoned

and you crept off quietly
to your chapel in the cellar
to pray for my release.

I was naked

and in your mind
you debated the morality of my
appearance.

I was sick

and you knelt and thanked God
for your health.

I was homeless

and you preached to me
of the spiritual shelter of the
love of God.

I was lonely

and you left me alone
to pray for me.

You seem so holy;

so close to God.

But I'm still very hungry

and lonely
and cold.

So where have your prayers gone?

What have they done?

What does it profit a man to page through his
book of prayers when the rest of the world is
crying for help?

Ibid, p. 112-113.

Praying for people is always the right thing to do, but never as a substitute for actually helping them when you are able to do so.

*TUESDAY: WALKING IN THEIR SHOES

Read or share the main points of **Col. 3:12** and **1 Peter 3:8**. **Read 1 John 3:17**. *What is the implied answer to the question in this verse?* If you are able to help someone and you don't, you don't have the love of God in your heart!!!!

*"Compassion comes from the Latin word *compati*, which means to 'suffer with.'" The Good Samaritan shows this. Share from the 2nd paragraph to show the Samaritan's thinking and risks. The father in the parable of the prodigal son also risked something. Share from the 3rd paragraph to see what the father risked. Read the last paragraph. Often, helping someone can use up a lot of time or energy and sometimes money or reputation. Other people may not approve, or they may even get mad at you.*

*WEDNESDAY: JESUS WEPT

*What does **John 11:35** tell us about the humanity of Jesus? **Quote Romans 12:15**. He really felt true human feelings! Read the first short paragraph. *Did Jesus feel their pain deeply within Himself?* Read the second short paragraph. Have a good reader read the quotation from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 534. Highlight the rest of Wednesday's page as desired, but definitely share the William Booth quotation from the box and the ending question.*

*THURSDAY: ANOTHER KIND OF COMFORTER

Read 2 Cor. 1:3-4. Read the two questions that follow the verse and discuss them. The point: when we have suffered, it makes us more able to understand and have compassion when we see another going through what we went through. "As Christ strengthens us in our suffering, we can pass this strength to others. As we have learned from our sorrows, we can more effectively minister to others in theirs." Churches should be a "city of refuge."

Highlight points from suggested list for making sympathy and comfort an art. Regarding the point about praying for people, keep in mind that when you tell someone that you are praying for them, they may open up to you (like the story of the 1st graders told on the SacCentral recording). *What other ways can we show sympathy to people?* See Teacher's Comments, p. 110, Step 4, Just for Teachers.

*FRIDAY:

Share highlights from the story in the first paragraph. Read the long 2nd paragraph dealing with how impossible it is to help everyone that needs help. At the end of the narrative tell the starfish story (it's also on the recording).

Setting: In the morning after a nighttime storm, a man noticed thousands of starfish were stranded on the beach left to die in the hot sun later in the day. The man saw a boy walking the beach throwing starfish into the water.

The Big Question: "Why are you doing that?" the man asked the lad as he got close enough to be heard. "Can't you see that one person will never make a difference—you'll never be able to get all those starfish back into the water. There are just too many."

The Answer: "Yes, that is true," the boy sighed as he bent over and picked up another and tossed it back into the water. Then as he watched it sink, he looked at the man, and smiled, and said, "But it sure made a difference to that one." Ibid, p. 112.

It's always good to make a difference even when just for one person. And it also helps us develop noble character. Doing nothing allows us to become narrow, self-centered and warped.

Conclude with Discussion Question #2 and the quotation from 9T, p. 30, in #3.