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[#compassion](#)

Act 36: Compassion

by Paula Pridham

The word 'compassion' simply means coming alongside suffering – co-suffering with someone. That can sound a bit daunting, but when you think about it, what a gift to be able to offer someone your presence and the feeling that you're with them. Think of areas where you've suffered in the past, and find a way to share time with someone who's suffering similarly today.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

(Colossians 3:12 NIV)

Have you ever crossed the road to avoid facing someone who was struggling? I'm ashamed to say I have, even though I can think of good reasons why I did it – reasons like I didn't know what to say, I didn't want to upset them, I felt inadequate. At some point, we all need compassion, so why is it that when we turn to others, we struggle so much to give it out?

A few years ago, 'What Would Jesus Do?' bracelets were popular. The problem with WWJD is that it's often at odds with our natural inclination. Being compassionate is one Christ-like characteristic we might find difficult. Why? Perhaps because it can make us feel vulnerable, hurt or anguished ourselves. We need to put ourselves out, or, truthfully, we just don't know what to do and are fearful of making things worse.

A bereaved dad supported by Care for the Family said, 'Visitors and family came, some from a long way. It's strange that we seemed to be comforting them.' In that instance the person hurting ended up having to be compassionate to others, rather than being comforted themselves. It doesn't have to be like that. At Care for the Family, we work to promote strong family life and to come alongside those facing family difficulties.

It says in 2 Corinthians 1:3–4: 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.'

The truth is, showing compassion is daunting. It is costly – but immensely valuable to those who receive it. Not only that, but it can be a beautiful and fulfilling expression of God's love flowing through us. Fear or embarrassment about doing the wrong thing shouldn't stop us from doing what God is calling us to do. We are designed to show compassion and to be blessed in blessing others... and there is no shortage of opportunities.



Paula Pridham is Executive Director of national charity Care for the Family. She has worked in the not-for-profit sector for 30 years and is also a counsellor and church leader.

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Choose how to complete this act...



GREEN OPTION:

Note down two or three people you know who are struggling at the moment and commit to pray for them daily.



YELLOW OPTION:

Talk to someone, even if you don't know what to say. Knowing you are sorry for, and care about, their situation is a good start.



RED OPTION:

Volunteer with an organisation that comes alongside those who are struggling.

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