

GOD'S COMPASSION

When you're not doing well emotionally, what kind of support is it that you most crave from your family and friends? A caring, loving spirit? Acceptance? Most of all, I think it must be compassion.

- What are your feelings on this? What attitude do you most value from your friends when you're having a hard time emotionally?

According to Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology:

"Compassion is that (human) disposition that fuels Acts of kindness and mercy. Compassion, a form of love, is aroused within us when we are confronted with those who suffer or are vulnerable. Compassion often produces action to alleviate the suffering..."

I think that compassion is aroused when we're able to put ourselves in another's shoes. It's the ability to feel with the other person what he/she is going through.

- People often say that those who have experienced depression are better able to have compassion for those who suffer similarly. Is that true for you?
- How would you like to be shown compassion?
- How do you show compassion to others?

A compassionate person might say that what really counts is that in moments of pain and suffering someone stays with us. More important than any particular action or word of advice is the simple presence of someone who cares. When someone says to us in the midst of a crisis, "I do not know what to say or what to do, but I want you to realize that I am with you, that I will not leave you alone," we have a friend through whom we can find consolation and comfort. (from *Compassion: a Reflection on the Christian Life* by Henri Nouwen (Author), Donald P. McNeill (Author), Douglas A. Morrison (Author))

Now...What about God's compassion? We need his compassion when human compassion fails us. God totally understands the pain we go through. In fact, He comes alongside us and feels it with us. When Jesus is real to us, as real as He was to the people He healed during His ministry, we too can have peace, being sure that He has that kind of compassion for us too.

A wonderful passage of Scripture is in the Bible's Lamentations 3:19-23:

*I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.*

*Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:*

*Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*