



# COMPASSION

**The meaning of compassion is to recognise the suffering of others and then take action to help. Compassion embodies a tangible expression of love for those who are suffering.**

## COMPASSION VS. EMPATHY

The Latin root for the word compassion is *pati*, which means to suffer, and the prefix *com-* means with. Compassion, originating from *compati*, literally means to suffer with. The connection of suffering with another person brings compassion beyond sympathy into the realm of empathy. However, compassion is much more than empathy.

Empathy is an ability to relate to another person's pain as if it's your own. Empathy, like sympathy, is grounded in emotion and feeling, but empathy doesn't have an active component to it.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE COMPASSION?

The component of action is what separates compassion from empathy, sympathy, pity, concern, condolence, sensitivity, tenderness, commiseration or any other compassion synonym.

Compassion gets involved. When others keep their distance from those who are suffering, compassion prompts us to act on their behalf.

**"We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer." -**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

To have compassion means to empathise with someone who is suffering and to feel compelled to reduce the suffering. It's a fuller, truer definition than feelings alone, and it's a very biblical understanding.

## WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF COMPASSION?

The Bible doesn't explain compassion like a dictionary does, simply telling us what the word means. Instead, the Bible defines compassion by showing us what compassion looks like and what is involved with being compassionate.

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." – Proverbs 31:8-9

"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." – 1 John 3:18,

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." – 1 Peter 4:10,

"This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'"

– Zechariah 7:9-10,

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind." – Philippians 2:1-2,

