

## Art of Compassion

As part of our Love in Action series we wanted to talk about Compassion. For many of you this will be something which you've heard about before, maybe you're involved in demonstrating compassion to those around you. For others this may be a difficult topic – maybe you feel let down where others haven't shown compassion to you or you carry guilt that you 'should' do more. Whatever perspective you come from, my hope is that this morning God will speak to you about compassion as myself and others share their understanding of compassion.

If you've been around for a little while you may have seen this image before – something we call the Vineyard Person. For the family of Vineyard churches it's a simple reminder of our family history and values and then things that we seek to do as a church. You'll notice that Compassion is written on one of the legs – a point of strength and stability and key in helping us to keep pressing into what God has for us to do.

I wanted to look again at what the word compassion means and an online dictionary gave me this definition:

*a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.*

Does this line up with your understanding of what compassion means?

I asked some friends what compassion means to them and here are some of their definitions:

- A complete, genuine and sincere, no strings attached, care and sympathy for another individual and their situation/circumstances.
- A feeling which leads to selfless giving
- Putting yourself in someone else's shoes non judgementally and understanding how they feel, then genuinely supporting them
- When your heart absolutely melts for the suffering or hardship of another person, and your first instinct is to act. No holds barred, no conditions, epic heart love

This is a subject which to me speaks of energy, of something deep within us wanting to see something change – to do something, to help in some way.

Let's look at what the bible has to say:

'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:40

'When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them' Matthew 9:3b

I love these verses as a challenge and an example of how to respond to those around us.

Matthew 25: 40 says 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

In Matthew 9:3 we read these words describing Jesus: 'When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them' Matthew 9:3b

Not an easy example to follow, but I wanted to introduce you to some friends of mine who have managed to find their own ways of expressing compassion and have agreed to share with us this morning.

### **Testimonies:**

Rob Marshall is off to LIV village, South Africa from Jan - June 2016, he says:

*"The village consists of children between the age of 4-18. All of whom have become orphans for various reasons therefore don't have parents around in their lives.*

*Now not that I could ever compare my life experiences to theirs but I in some ways understand the feeling of not having your parents around. Don't get me wrong I love my mum and dad to bits but they both lead very busy lifestyles that forced me and my siblings to very quickly mature and learn to as you say "fend for ourselves". Yes my parents put a roof over our heads and food in the cupboards and I'm not complaining but by year 4 I was walking to and from school by myself and starting to become very mature. So on a very small scale I feel as though I can somewhat sympathise to those who haven't had their parents around for whatever reason!*

*If I can use the ache in my heart to help fill the gap in one child's heart then I know I've done my best because I went through the painful stage and through going to soul survivor and amazing people the gap in my heart was filled by God and now it's my turn to do my best being one of those amazing people."*

Isn't that wonderful. Rob has compassion for people who are going through challenging times that he can relate to. If you get the chance – do talk to Rob before he goes to find out more!

Anne Button