

Compassion - Questions for Reflection

The Greek expression for having compassion is *splagchnizomai* which means to be 'moved in the guts' [literally 'entrails']. The gut was the seat of being for Greek culture (not heart as it is for us).

Hebrew for compassion is *rachamin*, linked to *rechem*: womb.

Let the physicality of *womb* or *guts* sit with you. What sort of God do you feel in this place? What would your life look like if you lived (more?) out of *womb* or *guts*?

You can be compassionate without being nice.

Is this true? What does it stir up for you? Would you like to be more or less nice as you follow Jesus?

Who are the people in my life going 'down' rather than 'up'? Are they doing so by choice? Am I going with them, or competing with them?

Where do I experience displacement?

What causes me pain, embarrassment, shame, discomfort?

How can these spaces in me be opportunities for compassion?

Consider aspects of living a compassionate life:

Patience	Obedience/ Listening for God	Un-success
Spiritual Discipline	Displacement	Downward Mobility
Community/ Body of Christ	Presence	Prayer
Non-violence	Creativity	

Which do you find most challenging? Where do you feel at home? Does something from this collection give you a way to take the Easter Story home into your everyday life?

'The poor' 'the oppressed' 'the marginalised' are all abstractions – categories of people who are far away, and we would have to go searching to get near to. But we probably know [and may ourselves be] people who:

- Are in an abusive or dysfunctional relationship
- Are mentally unwell
- Are on a pension
- Don't speak, read or write English confidently
- Are unemployed, underpaid or in insecure work
- Have been over-ruled, ignored, overlooked, not promoted, not heard, perhaps because of something they have no control over [gender, ability, health, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc]
- Do not have secure or long-term housing
- Live with addiction
- Choose violence, or find violence chooses them
- Are grieving
- Have inherited intergenerational trauma
- Are single parents
- Require assistance for daily tasks
- Have no-one to talk to
- Have been displaced from their homeland
- Live with disability or diagnosed difference
- Have experienced abuse in one of its many forms
- Identify with a minority group
- Are physically ill or frail
- Live in institutions including prisons, psychiatric hospitals, aged care, group homes, immigration detention
- Have been targeted by political, media or religious bigotry
- Are traditional owners of land that was stolen by colonists

Think of actual individuals you know who these may describe. How are you already united with them? How can you better enter into their experience and both suffer and celebrate with them?

Are there others whose suffering you share in, or would like to be present to, who are not noted here?

When we put names of people we love to categories like these, it is easy to see that these categories are not 'all they are'. Reflect on the 'more than' of the people you have named, and also of those who remain abstract to you.

Waste time with God.

God empties godself to be with us. That means YOU. God wants to be embedded with you in your pain and joy and indifferent in-between.

Chuck away the discussion questions and go spend time with God who is longing to spend time with you.