

# Compassion



*"There is always something we're ignorant of about another person. And often it turns out that the one thing we're ignorant of about another person was the most important."*

– T.S. Elliot

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## 1<sup>st</sup> break:

How would you describe the call to compassion as a "Summons?"

Compare the two kinds of compassion that Carcaño describes.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> break:

What is the secret name of God?

When Brueggemann says, "When that kind of body and that kind of presence walks into pain, it has transformative power," what are the implications for us?

## 3<sup>rd</sup> break:

Jesus a law-breaker?! Explain.

What does the story of the woman with the flow of blood and the power “going out of” Jesus say about our call to compassion?

Spong says that, according to Jesus, the Sabbath was created for a particular purpose. Explain.

**4<sup>th</sup> break:**

What are some of the ways in which a society is put together that might “profoundly affect the lives of people”?

How might Jesus’ “Family Values” be an expression of compassion?

How do you expand “the circle of compassion”?

**General Reflection:**

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

## Spirit Practice

### Breath Prayer

A breath prayer is a short prayer that can form a person and their actions. Often one phrase is said (silently and slowly) during inhalation. The second phrase is said (silently and slowly) during exhalation.

*God of Love*  
*Fill me with compassion*

*Living Bread*  
*Teach me to share*

*Prince of Peace*  
*Help me live your shalom*

Choose one breath prayer and pray it for a month. You can practice it at stoplights, in a check out line, at the doctor's office, in the early morning stillness or at the copy machine at work. Pray it at least three times a day for one minute each time. Increase the length to five minutes and the number of times per day as you feel inspired to do.

Do not be surprised if your breath prayer begins to come to you. You may find yourself beginning to pray it in between your scheduled times.

## Words of Wisdom

To understand Jesus' commitment to the practice of compassion, it helps to know a little about the world into which he was born. Roman annexation of Palestine in 63 B.C.E. created an unsettling mix of religious, political, and economic conflict. With the Roman presence affecting almost every aspect of life, the task of remaining a faithful Jew became increasingly challenging. The response of some Jews in Jesus' time was to commit themselves to a strict interpretation of the Torah's holiness code.

***Read Leviticus 19.2***

On a certain Sabbath Jesus and his disciples were hungry. Since they happened to be passing through grain fields at the time, they plucked some heads of grain to eat along the way. Evidently, some Pharisees saw this and accused them of breaking the Sabbath. Although work on the Sabbath was strictly prohibited by the holiness code, Jesus appealed to a familiar story in Jewish history, illustrating how even David did what was unlawful when he and his companions were hungry. "You just don't get it, do you?" Jesus continued. "God wants compassion, (*eleos* in Greek), not sacrifice. If you understood that you wouldn't be condemning the guiltless."

***Read 1 Samuel 21 & Matthew 12***

Jesus called the disciples to see beyond the conventional attitudes of his day, not primarily a teacher of correct beliefs or right morals but of authentic human relationships. Instead, Jesus demonstrated a way or path that lead to the transformation of those whom he encountered.

**Read Luke 6.27-36**

Perhaps voicing Ezekiel's sentiments is an apt reminder to go beyond being open *even* to those who seem unlovable to being open *especially* to those who seem unlovable, needful, or who are excluded for whatever reason.

**Read Ezekiel 36:26**

## Try it

Make the John Bell/Graham Maule song "The Summons" part of your devotional and worship repertoire:

1. Will you come and follow me  
If I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
And never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
Will you let my name be known,  
Will you let my life be grown In you  
and you in me?
2. Will you leave yourself behind  
If I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
And never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
Should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer In you  
and you in me?
3. Will you let the blinded see  
If I but call your name?  
Will you set the pris'ners free  
And never be the same?

- Will you kiss the leper clean,  
And do such as this unseen,  
And admit to what I mean In you  
and you in me?
4. Will you love the 'you' you hide  
If I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
And never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
To reshape the world around,  
Through my sight and touch and  
sound In you  
and you in me?
  5. Lord, your summons echoes true  
When you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
And never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
Where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you  
and you in me.

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