



The Role of the Church in the Community Lesson 8 3Q 2016 Jesus Showed Sympathy

I received this email this week:

We are using this book (Could It Be This Simple?) in Folsom Prison Woman's Facility. We just got word we will begin in the men's facility at the end of this month and will need to order more then. I know you have heard this before but this message/book is changing lives. The lives of actual murderers! BTW we finally got the approval to take in The Remedy and it has gone like hot cakes!! We need to send some testimonies in. "Shadow People" seems to be one of the most eye opening chapters next to the first couple of chapters regarding the mind. It's amazing to have the women come in so excited after ready it! It is the highlight of our week--we participate in the most freeing work in the world! It has changed our lives too--the cycle of beneficence in action! Last week we talked about the givers and the takers. How we are changed by what we think and do. May God continue to bless you all!

Susan Kollenberg, California

Before we start the new lesson, there was a point from last week's lesson I wanted to cover, so from **Lesson 7: WEDNESDAY**

Read Mark 8:22-25:

They came to Bethsaida, where some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch him. ²³Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. After spitting on the man's eyes, Jesus placed his hands on him and asked him, "Can you see anything?"

24 The man looked up and said, "Yes, I can see people, but they look like trees walking about."

25 Jesus again placed his hands on the man's eyes. This time the man looked intently, his eyesight returned, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶Jesus then sent him home with the order, "Don't go back into the village." GNT

The top of the lesson asks, "What spiritual lesson can we learn from the fact that Jesus' first healing touch didn't fully heal the blind man?"

Did you notice the lesson interpreted what was stated in Scripture? Did the Scripture state the man was not fully healed on the first touch? No, only that the man didn't see clearly—could there be another explanation—that the man was fully healed the first time, but something else was causing his inability to see clearly?



Here is from *The Remedy*

²²When they came to Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³He led the blind man by the hand outside the village. Then, to avoid introducing doubt, Jesus met the man's expectations for how healing was done and put saliva on the man's eyes and then placed his hands on him. Then Jesus asked, "What do you see?"

²⁴The man looked up and said, "I see people; but its kind of blurry; they look like trees moving about."

²⁵So Jesus touched the man's eyes once more, wiping them clean. Then the man could see everything clearly. ²⁶Jesus sent him home, instructing him, "Don't go back to the village."

To me it sounds like Jesus first healing touch was effective, but the man still had saliva in his eyes that needed to be cleared away.

Or, is it more likely that the first touch wasn't enough and Jesus the Creator had to give it a second go?

The lesson asks what spiritual lesson from this description?

Could it mean that when God does something in our lives to enable, equip, empower us for His service that we sometimes are instead blinded by the miracle, the equipping, the empowering and lose sight of where we are to put our ability to use?

Other applications?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "The universe..." It is true that such a future—a belief that we live a few years, pass from existence and there is nothing more than the few years we live now, can contribute to a sense of meaninglessness, purposelessness and hopelessness?

Yes, I think such a belief system can lead to a sense of why does it matter anyway. But, what was a contributing factor to the rise of Darwinism and a godless worldview?

Satan has ascribed to God all the evils to which flesh is heir. He has represented him as a God who delights in the sufferings of his creatures, who is revengeful and implacable. It was Satan who originated the doctrine of eternal torment as a punishment for sin, because in this way he could lead men into infidelity and rebellion, distract souls, and dethrone the human reason. {CE 73.2}

What has Satan done? Misrepresented God to be like sinful human beings, and what would be the result of this? Leading people to reject God and become unreasonable in their thinking.



Here is a quote from famed atheist Richard Dawkins:

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.” -- Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

Which causes a more hopeless future, to believe there is no God or to believe in the god Richard Dawkins describes?

So, when someone rejects a god like Richard Dawkins describes, are they moving away from God or toward Him?

Do we allow for that, or do we thoughtlessly become antagonistic toward atheists who take the position there is no God?

Is there a place to realize the worst view put forth is not the view of the atheist but the view of the religionist who promotes a view of God similar to what Dawkins described above?

The lesson asks us to read the following verses:

Judges 2:16-18:

Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. ¹⁷ Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the Lord's commands. ¹⁸ Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them.

2Kings 13:22,23:

²² Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. ²³ But the Lord was gracious to them and had compassion and showed concern for them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To this day he has been unwilling to destroy them or banish them from his presence.

Isaiah 54:7-10:



“For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

⁸ In a surge of anger
I hid my face from you for a moment,
but with everlasting kindness
I will have compassion on you,”
says the Lord your Redeemer.

⁹ “To me this is like the days of Noah,
when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth.
So now I have sworn not to be angry with you,
never to rebuke you again.

¹⁰ Though the mountains be shaken
and the hills be removed,
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken
nor my covenant of peace be removed,”
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Read second paragraph, “Contrary to the popular...” Do you find these texts the most helpful texts in the OT to show God is compassionate to *all humanity*?

What texts might be more effective in showing God’s compassion to all humans?

Isaiah 19:18-25:

¹⁸ In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord Almighty. One of them will be called the City of Destruction.

¹⁹ In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the Lord at its border. ²⁰ It will be a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. ²¹ So the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and keep them. ²² The Lord will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the Lord, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.

²³ In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. ²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. ²⁵ The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.”

Or, what about the entire book of Jonah—does it show God to be compassionate to more than just the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?



Isaiah 56:7: “for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

What about:

- The mixed multitude saved at the Exodus
- Rahab
- Ruth
- Naaman
- Nebuchadnezzar
- The widow and her son who housed Elijah

Do we have many places in the OT that demonstrate God’s compassion and mercy to all humanity more effectively than those the lesson emphasizes?

So how do we understand the texts the lesson chose? Do they show compassion to the entire human race? How?

It is all about context, what is the context of what is happening on planet earth and specifically to the human race?

Humanity is infected with a terminal condition. ALL human beings will die without Jesus’ incarnation and successful mission. Thus, God is working to save the entire human race, but God is being opposed by forces who want to obstruct Jesus the Remedy. This is what we see transpiring in the OT.

Hollywood uses the great themes of the conflict between good and evil and recasts them in myth, fantasy and metaphor. Metaphorically this problem in the OT is presented in novels and movies—any examples? One of the classic would be in zombie movies. The typical scenario goes like this:

- A greedy corporation develops a virulent virus that gets loose and infects humanity. It spreads across the world in a matter of weeks. (Metaphor for Satan and his thought virus of lies and selfishness which infects the entire human race)
- Those infected become thoughtless, mindless, zombies who are vicious wild animals seeking to destroy and kill anything they can and who are contagious to any they contact. (Metaphor for those hardened in sin beyond healing)
- A remnant of humanity has not yet been infected and one child has a natural immunity to the virus. That child is the key to saving humanity. (Metaphor for sinners who have not rejected the remedy and been hardened beyond healing, and of Jesus the remedy to our sinful condition)
- The child must be taken to a secure research facility with equipment to create an antidote from his blood. (Metaphor for Jesus must become incarnate and live a perfect sinless life in human flesh and destroy the infection of selfishness through His selfless death)



- The few uninfected humans battle the infected humans as they struggle to get the boy to the laboratory. (Metaphor for God’s patriarchs, prophets, Abraham and God’s faithful through history)

In this movie scenario, do the healthy humans rejoice in their hearts when they kill the infected zombie humans? Or are they trying to save them all by getting a remedy? In the movie scenario, a person on the healthy side is always confronted by a friend or family member who gets infected and has become a zombie and is trying to kill them—what do they do? Why do they do it?

Now, does this metaphor give any insight into what was happening in the Old Testament? Was Satan using human agencies in OT times to try and destroy Israel, the avenue for the Messiah? Was God working to keep that avenue open?

We can add one other piece, that first death is not eternal death and all those who died the first death are not eternally destroyed. So, if we make our movie metaphor more accurate, rather than the healthy people killing the zombies, they would have freeze guns which would put the zombies in cryogenic storage—freeze them—suspend them in time, rather than kill them, and wake them up at a later date.

Now, where do the popular notions of the severe God of the OT come from? From Satan, from accepting Satan’s lie about God’s character, law and methods.

MONDAY

Read paragraphs 2-4, “The word *sympathy* also...” The lesson states, “True compassion will lead you toward comforting and actively helping friends as well as strangers in practical ways.”

What interferes with our ability to do this?

- Selfishness and an uncaring attitude of course—but anything else?
- Is it only lack of sympathy and empathy—or could it be:
 - fatigue?
 - business?
 - limited time/resources?
 - Did Jesus ever take time away from people in order to rest?
 - What about thinking someone else is already helping?
 - What about fear of being presumptuous? Not being intrusive? Could a person who is empathetic and sympathetic stay away because they perceive the person wants time alone?
- How do we know when to intervene and when not to?
- What helps? Really caring about the other person! When we really care about the other person, then much can be done and much can be accomplished.



- But, what if we act based on obligation, to get credits in our ledger in heaven so we can get a bigger mansion, so we can get others to like us, need us, value us, appreciate us, so we can get converts to our cause?

Can people have equal amounts of love and compassion in their hearts yet take different actions?

Does love and compassion ever discipline, say no, or refuse to relieve a burden? Why? When Paul said those who don't work should not eat, was he being hard-hearted or was he being loving and compassionate? How and why?

So, do we think the best of others who don't show compassion the way we would? Do we allow the Holy Spirit to guide each person to use their abilities, talents, gifts, resources as God directs them?

Have you ever been pressured by someone calling on your Christianity, "You claim to be a Christian but...."?

How do you handle this?

What about someone to you, "you claim to be a Christian but you don't visit those in prison?" Is visiting people in prison one of the ministries Jesus specifically mentions? Yes! Yet, are all Christians called to visit people in prison? If 100% of Christians visited those in prison as their ministry, who would preach, who would write, who would heal, who would teach the children, who would feed the hungry?

Are we able to recognize that it is okay for a Christian to follow the path God has called for them and not to be derailed onto *worthwhile* missions that God has called others to fulfill?

Here is an interesting quote from one of the founders of the SDA church:

Every branch of the work of God is to have recognition. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:11, 12. This Scripture shows that there are to be **different workers, different instrumentalities. Each has a different work. No one is required to lay hold of another's work, and, though untrained, try to do it. God has given to each according to his ability. One man may think that his position gives him authority to dictate to other workers, but this is not so.** Ignorant of their work, he would enlarge where he should retrench, and retrench where he should enlarge, because he can see only the part of the vineyard where he is working. {8T 170.2}

Read bottom green section, "While eating..." They use the word "guilty"—do you perceive any wrong done here? If so, what?



Can you personally respond to every disaster, every need, every want in the world?

Does today's modern communications, with TV, internet etc. which broadcasts desperate situations from around the world cause a different experience than people living at the time of Christ when they would have primarily heard only about problems in their local community?

Do you think our modern technology, with telecommunications, causes emotional and empathy burnout in which our finite human ability is paralyzed by the scale of the perceived need? Do we fail to set boundaries and focus only on what we can do, and instead get overwhelmed by focusing on the constant need?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "*Compassion* comes from the Latin..." The first rule of a psych ward is staff safety, not patient safety, because if the staff are not safe, then no one is safe and no care can be provided.

Likewise, we must love others as we love ourselves. If we do not care for ourselves, provide ourselves good rest, nutrition, time with God, healthy recreation etc. we deplete our energy, vitality, and even the love in our hearts and find ourselves incapable of serving others. We end up sick or dead—remember the life history of James White?

Is such a balanced approach, setting boundaries, taking time away to rest an act of selfishness?

One of Satan's tricks to undermine God's agents is to dupe compassionate people into never saying no, to get them to say yes to all requests, to think that any act for self is selfish and thus burning themselves out.

Second paragraph focuses on the story of the Good Samaritan and notes how the Samaritan had compassion and pity and used his resources to help the injured victim.

What do you see as the most significant difference between the Samaritan and the man in the bottom of Monday's lesson who changed the subject being discussed?

Is it not that the Samaritan was actually in proximity to the injured victim and had a real opportunity to intervene and help, while the man in Monday's lesson had no real opportunity to help and only opportunity for personal mental anguish that would benefit no one?

The lesson states, "sometimes being Christian involves risks and can be, potentially, very costly."



How do you know when it is appropriate to put oneself at risk? What criteria do you use? How do you balance the risk, with Jesus' warning not to cast your pearls before swine lest they turn and rend you asunder, in other words in some circumstances we are not to put ourselves at risk—when?

WEDNESDAY

John 11:35, the funeral of Lazarus, “Jesus wept.” The lesson asks, “What does this verse tell us, not just about the humanity of Jesus, but how in that humanity He related to the suffering of others?”

So, one interpretation here is that Jesus was moved by the sadness and grief He felt in others and empathized and sympathized with their sadness and wept along with them.

Is there any other possibility as to why Jesus wept?

Think about it, if you were going to a funeral of a close relative, everyone is crying, but you know with 100% certainty that you are there to raise the dead back to life—what would you do? Would you extend the pain, the suffering, the sadness, and sit down and wallow in the despair by grieving?

If you came upon someone with a broken leg and they were suffering and you knew with 100% certainty you were there to miraculously, instantaneously heal their leg, would you sit down and cry with them and allow them to suffer longer?

Yes, it is possible Jesus was merely shedding tears of empathy—but I think something else entirely was going on. Is it possible that Jesus was crying for their lack of faith, for their failure to understand who stood amongst them, for their overall darkened minds and hardened hearts that left them so hopeless and discouraged, not merely because Lazarus was asleep?

Read third paragraph, “The weight of the grief of the ages...” Was something more going on with Christ than mere empathy to the family of Lazarus?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, “The word *comfort* comes from...” What do you understand comfort to mean? Does comfort include something that makes us stronger? What?

What brings the most comfort, empathy while we die, or deliverance from what is killing us?

Is there pain, suffering, difficult in the healing process?

Once there is brokenness there are no pain free options—but there are options that, while painful, heal, restore and eventually lead to resolution of pain. This is true in our hearts and minds as well.



Thus, 2Cor 1:3-7, from *The Remedy*:

³All thanks, acclaim and recognition be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—for he is the Father of mercy, compassion and healing—⁴who provides Remedy for everything that troubles our minds and warps our characters, so that we can share this Remedy, which has brought peace to our minds, with everyone in any distress.⁵As we emulate Christ—suffering as he did—we, through Christ, experience healing and restoration of godly character.⁶If we suffer, it is to comfort you by our example and to encourage you with evidence that in God’s plan, suffering results in healing. It is our comfort to then comfort you with the assurance that endurance in God’s treatment plan, though at times uncomfortable, results in healing and wellness.⁷Our hope for you is strong because we know that if you participate in God’s treatment plan and suffer as we have, you will, like us, experience the comfort of a transformed character and peace with God.

The lesson gives some suggestions on how to empathize and show sympathy:

- be authentic, listen more than speaking
- show sympathy out of your own unique personality
- be present
- allow people space to grieve in their own way
- be educated on the stages of grief
- be careful about saying, “I know how you feel”
- remember there is a place for professional counseling
- Don’t say “I’ll pray for you” unless you will
- organize support groups

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The God-Shaped Brain is now available in Korean and is available at this website: http://book.naver.com/bookdb/book_detail.nhn?bid=9519886

***The Remedy* – Dr. Jennings’ New Testament Paraphrase**—FREE for ios and android systems.

The Remedy—Is Now Available in Print Version in the US. We have printed 10,000 to give away and will reassess demand for them after those are gone. We are shipping a small number to Canada and Australia. **How to get copies:** In the US email orders@comeandreason.com with a valid US postal address; In Canada email canada@comeandreason.com and in Australia/New Zealand email Australia@comeandreason.com and request the number you want and we will ship them to you. If you are giving them away please give them only to people who want them. In other words, don’t put one at every seat in the church, or place setting at a potluck, or car in a parking lot. Such distribution methods result in vast numbers being thrown away. Let people know they are free and allow them to take one if they want too works best.

The Journal of the Watcher is now available as a HARD COVER book at Amazon as well as a movie in itunes for everyone without ios or android in itunes. It is also available as an APP for Apple and Android devices.

October 14-16: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Drakensville, South Africa Campmeeting.

October 19, 20: Dr. Jennings will be speaking in Ladismith South Africa (venue to be determined)

October 21, 22: Dr. Jennings will be speaking in Cape Town, South Africa