

# Christadelphian Caring Network of Canada



Fall 2011

## The Character of our Heavenly Father

And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

**Ex 33:19**

But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. **Ps 86:15**

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. **Ps 103:8**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. **Ps 51:1**

But *you*, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. **Ps 86:15**

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. **Ps 103:8**

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; **Ps 103:13**

The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. **Ps 116:5**

The LORD is gracious and compassionate; slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. **Ps 145:8,9**

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! **Isaiah 30:18**

Our Care Line is open for calls. Caring brothers and sisters are ready for your call. Our toll-free support line is **866-823-1039**

## Compassion Fatigue

### *But First, What is Compassion?*

...to pity, spare, mercy, love, tender affection, kindness, tender hearted, desire to help... There are at least five Hebrew words and eight Greek words used to express our English word, compassion. Today's dictionaries define compassion as, a sympathetic consciousness of another's distress together with a desire to alleviate it. Scripturally, the concept of compassion includes the desire to alleviate the suffering of those in distress, but it goes beyond that; it's more than a feeling and more enduring than a temporal relief from suffering. To better understand just what compassion encompasses we need look no further than to our Heavenly Father for He is Compassion.

The verses in the side bar to the left are just a sampling of verses that express God's character. What words do we see repeated throughout the verses? Compassionate of course, but also Love, Grace and Mercy. Implicit in Compassion is the idea of forgiveness. God desires to alleviate our suffering and it has been accomplished through forgiveness and was worked out through the obedience of His son.

"Like Father, like son. This overwhelming pity of Jesus for men in need was not to be excluded from his parables, when in two instances out of three it is the dominant characteristic of Almighty God forgiving helpless men their sin and bringing them freely and graciously into His favour." "The spring and motive power of it all was this surge of compassion for one in dire need. Thus the key phrase sums up all that Jesus, the Samaritan Saviour, did throughout his ministry and in the climactic suffering to which it led. All his preaching and teaching, all his works of healing, all his patience and personal example, and all that he endured in pain, torment and shame at Golgotha sprang from a deep dominant feeling of pity for helpless men who must be helped."

**Quote by Harry Whittaker Studies in the Gospels pg 301**

### **Grace and Mercy**

**Grace** is what God gives that we don't deserve.

**Mercy** is what God spares us from that we **do** deserve.

**Grace** is God showering us with blessings and kindness and love.

**Mercy** is God sparing us from the consequence of sin which is death.

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## Stories of Compassion from Scripture

**What do they tell us?** *They give us a sense of what is behind compassion; what kind of thinking might generate compassion; what we can meditate on to help cultivate compassion.*

- The Lost Son Luke 15:11-32
- The Unmerciful Servant Matt 18:21-35
- Jonah
- The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37
- The Lost Sheep
- History of Israel as told in Nehemiah 9

## Christ showing Compassion

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." **Matthew 9:36-38**

<sup>14</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. **Matthew 14:14**

<sup>30</sup> Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" <sup>31</sup> The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" <sup>32</sup> Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. <sup>33</sup> "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." <sup>34</sup> Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. **Matthew 20:30-34**

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. **Mark 6:34**

<sup>11</sup> Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. <sup>12</sup> As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. <sup>13</sup> When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." <sup>14</sup> Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" <sup>15</sup> The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. **Luke 7:13**

## What is Compassion? cont.

And compassion isn't a onetime thing as we see in Nehemiah 9. Throughout history God's people were arrogant, stiff-necked, disobedient, idolaters, blasphemers, rebellious & murderers, BUT in His compassion, the God of Israel spared them. He didn't desert them or abandon them, but rather He delivered them and rescued them and did not put an end to them. And He did this for them over and over and over again. The lengths our Heavenly Father went to spare and deliver His people! Do we realize He does this for us also and for each and every one of our brethren. God's compassion is so much more than a sympathetic consciousness of another person's distress and a desire to alleviate it.... it is a tireless crusade to show us grace and mercy. Are we on a tireless crusade to show compassion to our brethren and sisters? Finally, if we look at the examples of Christ showing compassion as listed in the side bar to the left, we see that Compassion catapults Christ into action. It's almost like an involuntary response and changes the word from a noun into a verb. This distinguishes compassion from sympathy. One who sympathizes, sees and feels, but does nothing, whereas the one who has compassion, sees feels and then does something about it. This too, is our ministry,

<sup>9</sup> *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* <sup>10</sup> *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.* **Galatians 6:9**

## Compassion Fatigue

We have ample opportunities to show compassion and provide care and the care provided will differ in intensity and duration of time committed. For some it is day in and day out and is physically, mentally and emotionally taxing and this can take its toll on the caregiver.

**WHO** In the 80's and 90's the term "compassion fatigue" was coined and the term referred to a syndrome observed in a community of caring professionals, specifically nurses. As people became more aware of it, it was observed that anyone close to or dealing with an individual suffering from a chronic or intense illness, trauma and pain were also at risk for Compassion fatigue. This included doctors, child protection workers, counselors, prison guards and caregivers. Anyone who is highly motivated to bring about change in the lives of those who are suffering may be at highest risk for compassion fatigue. Current life circumstances or history, coping styles and personality types may all influence the extent to which someone may experience compassion fatigue.

**IMPACT** In the clinical sense, compassion fatigue has been described as the "cost of caring" for others in emotional and physical pain. (Figley, 1982) It's characterized by deep physical and emotional exhaustion and a pronounced change in the caregiver's ability to feel empathy for the care recipient, for loved ones and for other significant people in their lives. It is marked by increased cynicism & a loss of joy in caring. The caregiver may experience disruptions in personal relationships, deterioration in home life, or a change in personality. Eventually, if left unattended, compassion fatigue can transform into depression, secondary traumatic stress, and to stress-related illnesses.

## Compassion Fatigue cont...

### We are Called to a Ministry of Compassion

<sup>17</sup>If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them (or shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him), how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. **1John 3:17,18**

And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.  
2Thessalonians 3:13

### In order to not grow weary in our calling we need to:<sup>3</sup>

recognize our humanity & our need for forgiveness  
recognize that **we need** God's help & **we need** His compassion  
ask our Father to breathe into us that spirit of compassion  
Remember, we are not in control.  
We are tools that God is using  
We are His hands to those around us  
We don't fix things; God does

### References for material on Compassion Fatigue

1 & 2

Newsletter put out by ALS Society of Canada,  
[http://www.als.ca/\\_media/docs/Compassion%20Fatigue.pdf](http://www.als.ca/_media/docs/Compassion%20Fatigue.pdf)

Much of the material used is based on work done by Françoise Mathieu ,  
[www.workshopsforthehelpingprofessions.ca](http://www.workshopsforthehelpingprofessions.ca)

3 & 4

Sister Mary Styles

### **SIGNS<sup>1</sup>**

A feeling of tension and preoccupation with the individual suffering and the cause of their suffering.

- Avoidance or numbing of one's feelings
- Avoidance of certain thoughts or situations
- Memory gaps
- Pattern of tiredness even with a good night's sleep
- Difficulty sleeping or experiencing bad dreams
- Increased absenteeism or use of "sick days"
- Emotional depletion from too much caring
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Difficulty making decisions
- Loss of self esteem
- Anger, irritability, or depression
- Trouble finding hope or happiness
- Lack of time for self
- Multi-tasking to save time
- Decreased productivity at work and at home
- Compromised self-care

### **Four phases of Compassion Fatigue<sup>2</sup>**

1. **The zealot phase:** The caregiver is committed, involved, and available, putting in extra hours and volunteering to help.
2. **The irritability phase:** The caregiver begins to cut corners or avoids contact with the person they're caring for. They may daydream or become distracted and distant.
3. **The withdrawal phase:** Caregiver experiences a loss of enthusiasm; they develop a "thick skin" and may complain of stress or fatigue.
4. **The zombie phase:** Hopelessness turns to rage, others seem "incompetent". Distain for the suffering person and other loved ones develops and the individual becomes distant and impatient. Activities that the individual once enjoyed are no longer enjoyable.

### **How to avoid or alleviate Compassion Fatigue<sup>4</sup>**

How can compassion fatigue be alleviated?

A plan of self-care is essential to avoid the complications that occur as a result of compassion fatigue. A self-care plan can include the following:

- Self-reflection
- Bring life into balance by acknowledging that any effort, no matter how small, is always good enough
- Spend time with loved ones
- Practice good nutrition
- Take time each day to recharge and relax
- Make use of humor to lighten up a stressful situation

## ***How to avoid or alleviate Compassion Fatigue cont...***

- Spend quiet time for prayer or meditation
- Exercise to help manage stress and anxiety
- Maintain connections with family and friends
- Share information with a peer group
- Refill and renew by making a plan of what's most important
- Take part in activities outside of care giving or the profession
- Join a support group - share your feelings with someone you trust to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **Ask for help**

Design a prevention toolkit that will reflect your own reality and that will integrate your life circumstances and work challenges. This is a very individual process; your self care strategies may not work for your neighbour and vice versa. Here are some key questions to ask yourself to start the process of building your toolkit:

What are my warning signs showing that my "tank" is empty?

Perhaps develop a scale of 1 to 10 - what is a 4 for me, what is a 9?

Schedule a regular check in, every week – how am I doing?

What things do I have control over?

What things do I not have control over?

What stress relief strategies do I enjoy?

(taking a bath, sleeping well or going for a walk)

## ***Self care strategies to apply in an ecclesial context:***

Surround yourself with positive influences

Take necessary breaks to recharge spiritual batteries following our Lord's example

Recognize limitations and ask for help

## ***Self care strategies to apply in an ecclesial context cont...***

Expand the circle of care to involve others. The following metaphor from our Sis Mary Styles illustrates this ...

We are oil lamps giving light. The lamp has a reservoir for oil which it draws up through the wick. Once the reservoir is empty the lamp is "burned out." However, if larger reservoirs are available and tapped into, the lamp can burn indefinitely. Somewhat similarly to the parable of the 10 virgins, if we can tap into the reservoirs of compassion provided by our Heavenly Father through His Son, His Word and our brothers and sisters, we can be like the Energizer Bunny in showing compassion to others and not "burning out."

### **Isaiah 40:28-31**

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. <sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. <sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; <sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

### **An Appeal**

The Caring Network has been blessed each year with sufficient funds to meet its needs through the generous donations made by those in our community. These donations help defray the cost of operating the Care Line, the Annual Seminar, insurance and the printing of the bulletin. We would welcome any donations and with our charitable status you would receive a tax receipt. Please send your donations to, **Bro. Robert Chisholm, 2206 Donald Road, Burlington, ON L7N 3R9**



## **RESOURCES**

### ➤ **God's Word**

### **CARING NETWORK RESOURCES**

#### ➤ **866-823-1039** toll free support line

➤ **[www.caringnetwork.ca](http://www.caringnetwork.ca)**  
*Our Website is currently under construction but we hope to have it up and running soon and will keep you posted!*

### **OTHER RESOURCES**

➤ <http://compassionfatigue.ca/>

➤ University of Massachusetts  
Medical School, Center for  
Mindfulness  
<http://www.umassmed.edu/Content.aspx?id=41254&LinkIdentifier=id>

➤ [http://www.proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL\\_5\\_English\\_Self-Score\\_11-2010.pdf](http://www.proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_11-2010.pdf)



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