

MORNING DEVOTIONS

SHOWING EMPATHY TO OTHERS

One of the great novels to come out in 1960 was Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. You may have heard of it. It's still loved by many people .. Been translated into 40 languages and sold over 30 million copies, and made into an academy award winning movie in 1961. It's about racism and prejudice in the American south. In one scene, Atticus Finch was talking to his daughter Scout.

"If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it."

I think that is a fantastic quote and reminds me of the importance of care, love, and showing empathy to others. But I think it's important to try and define this word. What actually is empathy? *It's the art of stepping inside another person's shoes to understand their feelings and perspectives, and using that understanding to guide your action.* It's quite different to sympathy. Sympathy means feeling sorry for somebody else, and that's about all.

Nearly everyone has the ability to show empathy to another human being. Numerous studies have been done that confirms this. "Looking after no.1" as it used to be known is no longer the main thinking. Media stories about with examples of care and empathy being shown. Even 3 year old children have the in- built ability to show this trait. We all have the power to truly feel another person's struggles, if we only take the time and thought to do so. Sometimes we are too lazy to make the effort. We are born to empathize and connect with our fellow humans in some form of social connection. You show this trait every day. Your favourite aunt is celebrating her birthday. You take time out to consider what she likes, and you buy accordingly. That's showing empathy, even if it's a simple illustration. It's not what you want or need – you take into account her age and tastes. Do we really live in a world of heartless indifference where people don't care for or about others? No I don't believe so. Yes, there are some occasions when selfishness takes priority, but not always.

Too often, we don't truly listen to one another, possibly because of preconceptions or simply being too distracted and stressed. Empathic listening means asking questions that help people express what's really going on and listening without judgment .Empathy is the ability to connect with people based on understanding the perspective and emotions of others without judging or trying to fix them. It's a choice I make in order to connect with you. It means connecting with myself first.

The Christian faith has much to say about love, empathy, and compassion. It's a strong message that we are to follow the example of Jesus and exercise care towards another – even if they don't deserve my act of reaching out. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. . It means to have affinity with, rapport with, sympathy with, understanding of, sensitivity toward, identification with, and awareness of others and their feelings and experiences. Do you make an effort to show these qualities to others? Maybe you find it almost

impossible to step outside yourself and tune in to what other people experience, especially those who feel, think, and believe differently from yourself. That can be tough.

In the NT 1 Peter 3 Peter has these life changing words: *Be like-minded and show sympathy, love, compassion, and humility to and for each other – not paying back evil for evil or insult with insult, but repaying the bad with a blessing.*”

Many have traded empathy for apathy and truly have developed an **empathy deficit disorder**. And that is not what our Lord wants for us as we try to serve Him each day ...It means actively showing understanding and compassion when you're upset with someone. trying to understand why they verbally attacked you, and made you upset.

In Erich Remarque's book, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, he tells of a remarkable encounter between two enemy soldiers during the Second World War.. During one battle a German soldier took shelter in a crater made by artillery shells .Looking around he saw a man wounded, an enemy soldier, and he was dying. The German soldier's heart went out to him.He gave him water from his canteen and listened as the dying man spoke of his wife and children.

The German helped him find his wallet and take out pictures of his family to look at one last time. In that encounter these two men ceased to be enemies. The German had seen the wounded soldier in a new way - not as an enemy combatant but as a father, a husband, someone who loves and is loved - someone just like him.

Jesus has shown us the way, and all we need to do is follow in His steps. He died for all people, the whole world. While he lived He showed love and compassion for all people.

Whether it was a leper who needed to be touched, or sinful outcasts who needed forgiveness, like Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, or the woman caught in adultery, or the selfish, self-absorbed rich young ruler who needed to be challenged to live a better way, Jesus cared for all people.

Jesus felt the pain and suffering of Mary and Martha when Lazarus died, and the widow who was about to bury her only son, or the centurion whose daughter had died, and Jesus did what he could to help them. . We are called to love and serve like Jesus did, to wash the feet of others, even the feet of those who hurt us, those who are considered our enemies.

Jesus said that all people will know that we are His disciples if we love one another (Jn. 13:35).

The apostle John wrote:

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love...Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 Jn. 4:7-8, 11-12).