COMPASSION & FRIENDSHIP

We are talking all about friendship and compassion this week. There is a lot of overlap between these two topics so I thought it best to include both of them this week. This is actually a topic that my husband encouraged me to include. Making friends as an adult can be challenging, but I think it's a little more challenging for men.

I don't know when it started, but I feel like men are born with this instinctual, self-preservation tactic of being tough. I know not all men are like this, but I think this is pretty common across the board. Specifically, we can look at the baby boomer generation and see how they grew up, believing that they had to keep everything inside, they weren't allowed to show emotions for fear of looking weak, and they had to give off the sense of physical invincibility. Now that I am raising a young man, I'm concluding that this is a trait that must be built into their DNA.

As I was choosing scriptures to include in the *Scripture Book Vol 3*, it became pretty apparent that this hard outer shell of toughness might be helpful in some areas, but the Bible makes it pretty clear that it is not to be used in all areas. This is the part that I want to encourage my husband in: showing compassion and emotion while comforting someone in need does not show weakness. Vulnerability creates a safe place for people to share their burdens. And we know that we're supposed to help carry each other's burdens, and we can't do that if we aren't sharing them with one another.

Let's first look at some examples of people of the Bible showing Compassion. I am on page 22 of the *Scripture Book Vol 3* if you're following along.

EXAMPLES

In **Genesis 50:21**, Joseph has just told his brothers who he is and his brothers are nervous that Joseph is going to kick them to the curb because they treated him terribly when he was a kid. But Joseph says that he will provide for all of them and their children. Then the Bible says *"thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."*

Joseph had a million reasons to give his brothers a hard time. They threw him in a pit and faked his death! But the kind of compassion and loyalty that Joseph shows his family is admirable.

Another sweet example of undue compassion is in **Ruth 2**. Ruth has gone to the field to gather leftover grain to feed herself and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Boaz, the wealthy relative and land owner, saw her and instructs the workers to leave her alone and let her take what she wants. I love Boaz's soft heart towards this person whom he has never met before.

EMOTIONS

In **Job 2**, Job has just lost his whole world. It says that he has three friends that heard of all of the terrible things that have happened to him and they came *"to show him sympathy and comfort him"*. It says that they sat with him for a whole week to mourn with him. This is such a great example of men comforting other men.

I compare this image of soft hearted grieving men who are sharing in the sorrows of Job's grief to the machismo, tough guy that we see in today's age. God wants there to be a balance between being a bold hardman and a man that is not afraid to go down into the pit and "*weep with those who weep"* (**Romans 12:15**). In **John 11:35** even Jesus wept out of his love for his friend.

If I were writing a prayer for my husband, it might sound something like: Thank you for making my husband, compassionate and soft hearted. I pray that he is discerning when choosing how to go about comforting other men. I pray that other men see him as a safe place to share their burdens, knowing that he will always respond in love and kindness."

John 11:35 shows that Jesus was not too tough to cry. He did not see showing emotion as a weakness. **Psalm 35:4** shows David also allowing his mind and heart to process through hard emotions. It says he "*grieved*", lamented, and even "*bowed down in mourning*."

Job also showed physical displays of heavy emotions.

> **Job 30:25** -*"Did not I weep for him whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy?"*

I pray that my husband never feels like he needs to always keep it together. I pray that he expresses his sorrow in a healthy way like Jesus and Job.

FEAR OF GOD

Job is such a great example of compassion so let's look at another verse from his book. In **Job 29:12–13**, he explains how he acted in righteousness and how he allowed his empathy for others to move him into action on behalf of the poor and needy. If we look back at **Job 6:14,** he explains that it's actually the fear of God that provokes someone to move in kindness towards another.

Psalm 103:13 confirms that "*the Lord shows compassion on those who fear him*." It also states that a father is to "*show compassion to his children*." There are many opportunities for a father to discipline his children, but this verse is a great reminder that the Lord is not calling our husbands to be a dictator, but he is also to sit and listen with a sympathetic ear.

Have you experienced the Lord's compassion in your life? Did His compassion bring you closer into relationship with Him? If all we ever got from God was the rod of discipline, we might not be so eager to return to Him. But because he is loving, merciful, and compassionate more often than He is a disciplinarian, we are much more inclined to trust and walk with Him. The same thing is true for our husbands and their relationships with their children and other people.

So I'm praying that my husband maintains a godly balance between knowing when to discipline our kids and went to show them his loving heart.

This is so timely because yesterday my husband was getting onto my son about cleaning the kitchen and mowing the lawn. My son was not in a very good mood and when he's like this he says no to everything. It's almost like he's stuck in the mud of pride and it's physically impossible for him to agree to anything. Well, my husband was super patient with him in the beginning. But at one point, my husband had had enough, and he grabs my son picking him up out of the chair and puts him on his feet in the kitchen and tells him to start cleaning and when he's done with that, he has to do the lawn. Prior to this, my son had a

choice if he wanted to do the yard that evening or the next, but his poor attitude resulted in my husband making that decision for him. After my son was finished with the yard, my husband went outside to talk to him and explain to him that he really doesn't want to be a mean dad. He wants him to have options to decide how he wants to tackle chores, but his poor attitude forced my husband's hand. I don't know what happened in my son's little head while his dad was explaining this to him, but my husband said that he forcefully ran at him (like a defensive lineman) but he jumped into his arms to be hugged. And I think that's such a beautiful illustration of the balance of discipline and compassion that the Lord has for us and desires for us to have towards others.

SELFLESSNESS

In chapter 58 of Isaiah, the people have been choosing their own fasts and God calls them out in verse 7 and tells them the real fast that he wants them to follow:

> **Isaiah 58:7** - *"Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"*

It reminds me when it's lent or during a corporate church fast and you hear people say "I'm going to fast hot Cheetos because I'm, like, really addicted". God is correcting the motivation of the Israelites in regards to their fast and telling them what they should really be focused on. He wants their hearts to be moved from selfishness to selflessness.

Which brings me to the good Samaritan in **Luke 10:33-35.** A man was beaten, lying on the side of the road when a Samaritan walked by and saw him, and his heart was filled with compassion for the man. The Greek word for compassion here means "to have the bowels yearn", which illustrates a pretty visceral bodily response. Some men might have seen this man and judged him or maybe they didn't want to get their clothes bloody, or maybe they thought somebody else would stop for him. Maybe we can have similar thoughts when we pass somebody who is pulled over on the side of the road with a flat tire. I remember a storm blew through our city very quickly and unexpectedly. My husband was out of town and a giant branch from our oak tree blew into somebody else's yard. After a storm like this, everybody's natural reaction is to walk down the streets rubbernecking at all the damage. Well, my driveway was blocked with tree branches, so I started cleaning up. I was dragging a giant limb from our tree that fell onto somebody

else's property at the same time those property owners were walking past me. Could I have used some help from a full grown man who has 100lbs on me? Absolutely! But they were dressed to go to dinner so the offer never came up, so I struggled and dug my heels in and cleared their property. Compassion should look beyond convenience. It was likely not convenient for the Samaritan to stumble upon a bloodied man.

But what really gets me with this good Samaritan is that he didn't just give the beaten man a hand. He put him on his own horse, took him to an inn and took care of him throughout the night. When he had to leave the next day, he gave the inn keeper some money and asked him to take care of him until he got back with the instruction to do whatever it takes to keep him stable and that if the inn keeper spent more money than he just gave him, the good Samaritan would repay him upon his return.

This reminds me of a verse we covered in a previous week where Paul went out of his way to be totally transparent with his financial dealings. He went above and beyond what was expected. In the same way, the good Samaritan was moved with compassion towards this stranger and went above and beyond what was expected for finding a beaten man on the side of the road.

I am super fortunate that I have a husband who has an extremely compassionate heart so my prayer in regards to this verse may be a prayer of edification and thanking God for giving him a heart that reflects His heart so well when it comes to serving other people. It would be more of a prayer that speaks words of life to him in an area where he's already blessed.

> **Romans 15:1–2** - *We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.*

Paul doesn't say that it's a good idea to help other people, he says that we have an obligation to it. We also have an obligation to be selfless and to build each other up. This reminds me of the verse **John 15:13** that says *"greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."* Both of these verses speak on selflessness.

I don't think you can hold selfishness in one hand and compassion in the other, in the same way that it's hard to have true friends if you don't ever show compassion. Acquaintances, sure. But I want to pray for

my husband's tribe; the men who are gonna be there for him when unexpected circumstances arise. Or if we move again… They say you know who your true friends are on moving day.

This verse about being obligated to help the weak is very similar to **1 Thessalonians 5:14**. Here, Paul is urging the people to express compassionate hearts and patience with the needy and to comfort them.

Colossians 3:12 is Paul reminding them they are "*God's chosen ones*", and because of that, they should "*put on*" hearts that are filled with compassion, kindness, humility, and patience.

A prayer for my husband that's reflective of these verses could sound like: "As my husband goes through his day, I pray that a heart of compassion and selflessness would guide his words and actions and that he may encourage others watching and receiving to spread love and kindness in their lives."

I spoke a little bit last week on this "every man for himself" culture that we live in and that is so the opposite of what Jesus tells us to do. **Galatians 5:13–14** reminds us that we were called to freedom, but we're not supposed to use that freedom to do whatever we want. We're supposed to use it to "*love and serve one another*".

Echoing that same point, **Philippians 2:4** says that we are not only to look to our own interests, "*but also to the interest of others*".

When my daughter was younger, one of the conversations I would have with her regularly would be that when she hangs out with her friends she needs to be flexible, doing what they want to do sometimes and not expecting them to do what she wants to do every time. It blows my mind how many grown adults do not understand this concept. I see married couples who have a very one-sided relationship. Either the husband always does what he wants to do and never compromises with what the wife wants to do or vice versa. This is also common in friendships. Maybe you have a family member that you always have to conform to or a friend who acts as if the roads between your house are one-way, and you're always expected to go to them or they're always expected to come to you. Part of making healthy friendships and being a good friend is going out of our way, doing things they love, and being there for them even when it's inconvenient or uncomfortable.

1 Peter 4:8–10 says we are to *"keep loving one another earnestly"* and showing *"hospitality to one another without grumbling"*. Emphasis on the "*without*". God has given us gifts and those gifts are not for ourselves. They are to be used to serve each other.

The whole reason we are on this earth is to make heaven crowded and we do that through relationships with other people so it only makes sense that how we treat other people is really important to God. The way that we woo people from the dark side into the light of Christ is through love, and this love is often expressed through genuine friendship and compassion for one another. A spirit of selfishness is contrary to our mission.

So I'm praying that my husband does not allow the enemy to weasel himself in between him, his friends, and the people around him. I pray that he is watchful, and he stands firm in walking out the characteristics that God has laid out regarding a soft and patient heart towards others and that he is not only strong and manly but also does everything in love. (**1 Corinthians 16: 13–14**)

FRIENDSHIP

All right, we have talked about compassion and mixed in a little bit of friendship along the way so let's talk about friendship specifically. Let's start with an example and head to **1 Samuel 20:17**. David and Johnathan were the ultimate broromance. They were best friends and Johnathan even betrayed his own father to protect David. It was a friendship filled with brotherly love and loyalty.

It would be really amazing for my husband to have a friend like this. Somebody who is on the level that he is on and is able to encourage him and can also be a shoulder when he needs it. So I will definitely be writing a prayer in my husband's Bible for a friendship that reflects "Davithan".

There is also an amazing example of rockstar friends in the New Testament. Head to **Mark 2:3–5**. A group of men carried their paralyzed friend all the way to where Jesus was teaching. These men were radical! They saw the crowded house and they didn't get discouraged or give up. They got creative. I imagine one of the men being the wild and crazy type who comes up with equally wild and crazy ideas. My husband has a friend from high school like this. He would always do the craziest stunts and it made for some really awesome, albeit stupid, memories. But back to the story. I imagine these guys are brainstorming ways to get in and one guy screams out, "tear through the roof!" I have questions in the story. How did they get up

there? Where did they find all the rope they needed to lower him in? Did they even use rope? Maybe it was a fishing net. If the roof was so easy to tear through, how did it hold the weight of the men? I digress, that's not the point. The point is, this paralyzed guy knew how to pick his friend group! It was through none of his own efforts that Jesus healed him. He couldn't get himself up there. He couldn't lower himself down. And ultimately, he wasn't saved and healed by his own faith.

This is the friend group that I pray my husband finds. People that go out of their way to interrupt his paralysis and do what it takes to get him to The Person he needs to get to.

I pray that my husband becomes *"a companion of all who fear God"* and *"of those who keep His precepts"* as the psalmist wrote, in **Psalm 119:63**.

I pray that he *"walks with the wise"* so that he becomes wise like **Proverbs 13:20** promises.

I pray that his friend group is one where *"iron sharpens iron and, one man sharpens another"* as described in **Proverbs 27:17.**

I pray that he finds a group where he can fellowship and commune among peers, and pray for one another like the men in **Acts 2:42.**

I pray that he finds God-fearing men who are mutually encouraged by each other's faith, like Paul desired in **Romans 1:12**.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Spurring each other on is a wonderful benefit of having good friends, but there are also times when we need our feet held to the fire to help us stay on this narrow path. **Ecclesiastes 4:9–10** says that *"two are better than one because if they fall, one will lift up his fellow but woe to him who is alone when he falls, and has not another to lift him up!"* Accountability is important as a Christian. The enemy has studied us for so long and so closely that he knows everything that we are susceptible to, and he will not hesitate to jump at any opportunity that he sees to lure us away from God. It's the people that surround us that have a better vantage point for these attacks.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says *"and though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him – a threefold cord is not quickly broken".* The enemy targets those who are isolated. He goes after the weak and alone. These Ecclesiastes verses warn us that when we are away from the herd, we are like sitting ducks, but it is through the support of the herd that we can walk through enemy territory and not get devoured.

Jesus knew this also and in **Mark 6:7** when he instructed the 12 disciples to go out two by two. We are not safe on our own. We have an enemy who prowls around like a lion seeking to steal, kill and destroy the ones who are left alone. Like I said in a previous video, his goal is not to simply make us miserable; he wants to utterly demolish and unalive us.

I pray that the Lord brings one God-fearing, equally yoked man into my husband's life. A peer. Someone he can do life with. Somebody who encourages him to be better and my husband can do the same for him.

I fill a lot of these roles in my husband's life as "best friend", and it has worked pretty well, but there are some topics and conversations that he should be having with a man-friend. When he starts talking about work, all I can do is smile and nod. I can tell you his job title, but I have no idea what he actually does. He also needs somebody who can hold him accountable. As the wife, I am poorly positioned to hold my husband's feet to the fire.

LOYALTY

There's a verse in Romans it's **Romans 16:4**. Paul writes about how his friends, Prisca and Aquila, risked their necks for his life. Another verse that's reminiscent of this is **John 15:13** – "*that someone lay down his life for his friends.*" This shows a deep loyalty that his friends had for him.

Paul also writes in **2 Timothy 1:16** that his friend Onesiphorus came to refresh him, regardless of the fact that he was in chains and imprisoned. Paul writes this as if his chains would have normally offended somebody, but with this friend it wasn't an issue. He was a loyal comforter to Paul.

My husband has some friends that are pretty loyal simply based on the number of years, they have been friends. These friends don't hold the same foundational values that my husband does, though, so while I am very appreciative of their loyalty to one another, I'm still praying that he can find someone who shares his faith and is unified in mind.

KINDNESS & GENTLENESS

Finally, kindness and gentleness are words that are routinely used to describe the kinds of people we should be to others.

Ephesians 4:32 says to *"be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you"* and **James 3:17** says that *"wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere."*

These are all characteristics that good and true friends show one another. They are not embarrassed nor too proud to openly show compassion or sympathy and times of need. Good friends stick closer than a brother (**Proverbs 18:24**) and they are united in mind, always wanting what is best for the other, and don't hesitate to hold each other accountable when necessary. Their actions and words are always rooted in love and kindness, and they are eager to build one another up.

If I'm being completely honest, this friend feels like a unicorn. I know that my husband can be this friend for somebody else, but what are the odds that one unicorn finds another? I don't know the answer to that, but I do know that our God is the God of the impossible and I know that He hears my prayers. I also know that if my husband is in need of a true friend, God is faithful to supply it. So I will pray in faith, knowing that God will do more than I can ever ask or imagine.

I know a prayer Bible can seem daunting at first, but we have come so close to the end! I'm so glad you have made it this far. Keep going and writing **2-3 prayers** a day (use your Polite house 20 minute candle to help you stay focused!), the Bible will practically build itself in the form of a Prayer Bible with 140-180 handwritten prayers.

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CLEAN YOUR HEART

Use this on days that feel hard or create a daily rhythm of surrender and begin every prayer session with it.

This is not a moment to perform, produce, or prove anything. Quiet yourself before God and intentionally lay down pride, distraction, control, and any known sin. Confess what Holy Spirit brings to mind. Release your own agendas, assumptions, and expectations. Choose humility. Choose obedience. Ask God to empty you of self so He can fill you with His Spirit. Do not move forward until your heart is surrendered and your spirit is yielded.

Lord, thank your calling me to draw near to You in this way.[1] Your Word says the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working[2] and You hear the prayer of the righteous.[3] I know my sins have made a separation between You and I.[4] If I cherish sin in my heart, You, Lord, will not listen.[5] Therefore, let me test and examine my ways.[6] Lord, weigh my spirit,[7] for even a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.[8] Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting![9] Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.[10]

[Selah - pause, listen, repent, forgive, receive grace]

Thank you for cleansing me from what is dishonorable, that I am a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to You, and ready for every good work.[11]

[1] James 4:8; [2] James 5:16; [3] Proverbs 15:29; [4] Isaiah 59:2; [5] Psalm 66:18; [6] Lamentations 3:40; [7] Proverbs 16:2; [8] 1 Corinthians 5:6; [9] Psalm 139:23-24; [10] Psalm 51:10; [11] 2 Timothy 2:21

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