

We Need Compassion

What is the greatest need of The Bahamas? Is it more local agriculture, tourists, lower food and gas prices? It seems not so obvious to many that our greatest need right now is compassion. The Cambridge Dictionary defines compassion this way: “Compassion means noticing when someone is hurting, caring about their pain, and wanting to help make it better. It comes from old words that means “to suffer together.”

To further expound, Greater Good Magazine states in the article “What is Compassion?” the following: “Psychologists define compassion as the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering. Compassion is not the same as empathy or altruism, though the concepts are related.” The more compassion there is in society, there will be less crime, family violence, abuse in all its forms, corruption, abuse of power, etc.

Compassion in marriage is the shared choice to notice your partner's pain, feel with them, and respond with kindness instead of judgment. It replaces daily resentment with emotional safety, deep trust, and lasting connection. I also present compassion as a basic preservation tool to keep romantic relationships healthy. Here is how I define compassion in this context. “Compassion in marriage is the spirit of kindness, gentleness, understanding, graciousness, and a non-judgmental attitude. It is also the ability to look beyond the pain and confusion by extending a measure of respect, honor, and wanting-to-understand-you-better attitude.” This kind of compassion produced passion. Passion is the emotional, intellectual, and physical intimacy in a romantic relationship.

In this article, I am focusing on compassion in the family and society. On the fourth Saturday in August each year, the Seventh-day Adventist Churches around the world conduct **enditnow day**, a day to focus on ending family violence. This year it is on Saturday, August 22nd. This is an annual event to share about family and couple violence and to help members bring an end to family violence and how to prevent it.

This year the theme is “Compassion.” Here is what Galina Steele, Women’s Ministries world director of the Adventist Church, states about this year’s theme: “Compassion helps us see people in a different way. We see them as valuable, though they might be hurt or suffering. We see in them people who deserve to be hugged, loved, understood, helped, and cherished.”

Keren Holford, the Adventist Trans-European Director of Family, Children’s, and Health Ministries, expands further: “Compassion happens when we respond to someone else’s suffering by relieving their distress and bringing comfort, joy, peace, and gratitude. Compassion is the opposite of abuse. When abuse happens, an abuser chooses to make a vulnerable person feel even more helpless, sad, afraid, and distressed. Whenever Christ’s followers choose to show compassion to others and to bless them, they demonstrate that God is loving and kind too. It is very important to fight abuse and reduce domestic violence. To reduce abuse now, and in the

future, it is vital to cultivate Christlike compassion in our hearts and to teach others how to show compassion too.”

Sadly, compassion is a missing component in far too many families and romantic relationships today. One very common way of knowing this is the number of children running away from home. In a previous article, I stated that the majority of runaways are not really running to something or someone. They are really from a dysfunctional, painful, cold, and violent home. This is because the adults/guardians/parents in the home very seldom, if at all, demonstrate compassion. They call their children demeaning names and give more criticism than praise. They actually treat them like slaves and people who do not have feelings and intellect. This kind of treatment will produce violence. The violence could be verbal or emotional, and in many cases, physical violent behavior—violent fights, murder, rape, sexual molestation, etc.

A key thought that will be shared on Saturday, August 22nd in Adventist Churches worldwide is this: “When people have experienced abuse, violence, trauma, loss, and other deeply painful experiences, they often have many complex needs. Sometimes we feel that their needs are more than we can manage. But compassion does not have to solve all their problems. Research shows that noticing people, listening to them, understanding their feelings, and doing at least one thing to let them know that someone else cares can make a huge difference for a person’s well-being.

Dear readers, is there compassion in your home? Parents, are you truly listening to your children? Not just their laughter, but also their tears, pain, frustrations, disappointments, and dreams? Spouses, are you compassionate towards each other? Do you talk so your partner will listen and listen so they will talk? Or are you often the cause of the pain? Simply put, are you compassionate? If not, I counsel you to begin practicing compassion today.

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