

Take a  
Moment to  
Pray for  
Peace!



## The Importance of Empathy

One of the gifts that followers of Jesus need to share, particularly in this time, is empathy. It is the ability to understand and share what another person is going through. Empathy means striving to feel what another feels, be it great joy or great pain; crushing frustration and powerlessness or an exhilarating sense of empowerment. Empathy is working to understand the situation other people find themselves in, how it came to be, and how that situation is affecting their lives. It is the ability

to show sympathy and compassion for another person, particularly if you disagree with them. It is walking in another person's shoes. Empathy means setting aside your own biases and opinions so that you can see things from another's perspective, even if it is very different from your own.

The reality is that showing empathy is no easy task. People whose up-bringing, experiences, and world view are very different from each other may struggle the most to be empathetic. Even people in the same family or community cannot fully understand what it is like for someone close to them to face or experience something they have not been through themselves, since no two people deal with the same circumstances in exactly the same way. To say, "I know what you are going through," to someone facing a crisis can be a very hurtful thing, especially if you have not walked with them over time or spent time listening to them share about their situation.

Learning to show empathy to the best of one's ability is critical to building community, dealing with conflict, and problem solving. Learning to show empathy should begin in childhood, and the ability to do so is an important sign of maturity. The lack of empathy is a major contributor to bullying among children, and if this critical skill is not learned and nurtured when young, or acquired in adulthood, bullying and other destructive behavior can carry on throughout life. Destructive and bullying behavior is currently an epidemic problem in large part because of the bullying behavior being exhibited daily by certain national leaders. Unfortunately, children and adults can 'unlearn' empathy when they do not regularly see the people around them showing and encouraging it.

Most important is remembering all people are lovingly made in the image of God and that we are to love others as we love ourselves. Honestly think about how you would feel if you were facing their situation. What would you do, and what would you want others to do? Again, remember, we are to treat others as we would want to be treated. While anger and hurt may make an eye for an eye and a tooth sound good, Jesus said no! Forgive! Respond to evil with good. Forgiving is harder, but far more powerful and creative than hate. Hate only destroys. Forgiveness brings with it wonderful possibilities! Empathy opens the way so the power of God's love can flow through us into the lives of others and into our own. Freedom from the draining power of self-centeredness and hate is a tremendous gift. Teach empathy and the loving ways of Jesus so we and our children can escape the hate and self-centeredness trap!

***This week, in your prayer time remember:***

- Those facing persecution for their moral stands, defense of the rule of law, or defense of the common good.
- Those facing the coronavirus – those suffering from the virus and those trying to stop it
- The people and Wildlife of Australia where an unprecedented fire season continues, though some rain has helped. More than 12 million acres have burned; 100 fires are still burning, and land, people and endangered animals continue to be at risk.
- The continuing struggles of refugees and emigrants.
- People Facing Religious or Ethnic Discrimination & Persecution around the world. Native and indigenous people, religious minorities, ethnic minorities and also the poor among us.

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