



Peace Advocate News

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Matthew 5:9

Peace begins when you make your peace with Jesus, accept Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord.

Volume 13:2

Spring 2020

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. 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 for 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!



Remember Nigeria!

Update

Boko Haram attacks continue. Lawan Andimi, an ordained minister in EYN (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), the EYN district secretary for the Michika area, and chair of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) for the Michika area, was abducted (Jan. 2nd) and executed by Boko Haram in January (Jan. 20th). His home village was also attacked. The video statement his captives released, which they intended as his desperate plea for his life, was in fact Pastor Andimi's clear and calm affirmation of his faith in Jesus. It has been a powerful witness to the Christian community. (see <http://www.brethren.org/news/2020/nigerian-brethren-leader-executed.html> for more) This is yet another despicable act committed by this radical group against Christians and Muslims. While the rest of the world has largely forgotten about the violence Boko Haram fosters, the

people of Nigeria continue to live with the threat, fear, and loses every day. In December, 11 Christian captives were beheaded on Christmas Eve. 4 aid workers, trying to alleviate hunger, were also killed in December. More than 2 million people have had to flee their homes, 250,000 people have fled the country, and thousands have been killed since 2013. 6,600 people were killed in 2014 alone. Nigeria is second only to Pakistan as the most violent country for persecuted Christians. (2020WorldWatchList).

In early February (on the 9th) 30 people were killed in one attack. The town of Garkida, considered the birthplace of EYN, was attacked February 21-22. (The Church of the Brethren started work in Nigeria in 1923.) Three government soldiers (who attended the EYN church in Garkida) were killed, three civilians were injured, and one EYN staff person is missing. The Garkida area EYN women’s fellowship was having their annual conference in Garkida at the time, but no one was hurt when the church was burned. Two other Christian churches in Garkida were also burned along with the EYN Rural Health Training Center, the police station, some shops and some homes. Vehicles and medical supplies from the Training center were burned or stolen. Boko Haram continues to target churches, healthcare facilities, and government facilities, but also destroy businesses and homes. Other attacks in recent weeks have caused more families to flee their homes seeking safety.

In addition, Boko Haram is seizing and burning relief supplies meant for the city of Maiduguri where many Brethren are among the people trying to survive. (see Brethren Newslines, Feb. 28, 2020.)



This continuing humanitarian crisis in Nigeria is affecting the entire Lake Chad region (which includes parts of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger). 2.6 million people, more than half of them children,

have been displaced by Boko Haram in the region, and UNICEF reports that 50,000 Nigerian Children may die of malnutrition if they do not receive aid. (One way to help is contributing to the Church’s Nigerian Crisis Fund. See <http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis/> for details.)

Only adding to the suffering, is the fact that COVID-19 has arrived in Nigeria. The government began restrictions when there were only 5 cases to try to get ahead of the spread. All travel is restricted and Nigeria’s borders are closed to foreigners – especially those from countries where the virus is hitting the hardest (including the U.S., the country with the largest number of cases in the world). For African countries, controlling the spread of COVID-19 will be harder since the resources needed for frequent hand washing, and the like are simply not widely available. Many African countries know what measures they need to take during a pandemic because of their experience with Ebola. Even so, COVID-19 is easier to spread than Ebola and may be a bigger threat, though Ebola is more deadly. Remember them in prayer!

Do Not Forget Syria



The war in Syria is now 9 years old. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, and this is the largest refugee and displacement crises of our time. About 5.6 million Syrians are refugees, and another 6.2 million people are displaced within Syria. Nearly 12 million people in Syria need humanitarian assistance. At least half of the people affected by this crisis are children. Since December 2019, 900,000 people, mostly women and children, have fled their homes in freezing conditions. Some are living in flooded tent

camp. Some children have frozen to death. The Syrian government, with Russia's help, is bombing civilians relentlessly. Neighboring countries are refusing to take in more refugees so the people are homeless with nowhere to go. . .

Be Safe and Get Creative!

Both Italy and Spain are hard hit by COVID-19. People are staying home to help stop the spread of the virus. The way their towns are built and their societies are structured gives them a means of staying connected even when they must be physically apart, and they are taking advantage of it. Italians are visiting and singing together with their neighbors across and down the street from their windows and balconies! Spanish people can do the same and some have used social media to arrange a time for everyone to stand at windows and on balconies to show their appreciation for their health workers with applause and cheers. They have filled the streets with the sound of it! In Japan, some currently closed restaurants have made arrangements with grocery stores. The restaurant workers now work in the stores helping fill grocery orders and get the food to people who are wisely staying home. It is a win, win for everyone. Restaurant workers keep getting paid, stores get desperately needed help, and people get their groceries! Some breweries, where production of spirits has been suspended, are using their ability to produce alcohol to make hand sanitizer instead. One Pennsylvania brewery is providing its hand sanitizer to hospitals and people in need in their community free of charge. An American circus performer is putting on his show in the street for neighbors watching, each from their own front yard. Some restaurants are keeping their people employed by providing food to hospital workers – one restaurant owner took out a loan so he could pay his staff and feed hospital workers free. In China, and elsewhere, the need to close factories has also had unintended but welcome consequences. Some Chinese cities have the cleanest air they have had in years because pollution sources are shuttered! In some places in the world, waterways are markedly cleaner because the sources of pollution are shut down! Would that these consequences could last!

This is not a time for fear and panic, but for prudence and creativity. Many more people will get the virus than will actually get sick from it. The

experts are now saying COVID-19 is not a 'piece of cake' for anyone. It was first thought that the elderly and those who are already sick are the ones who are at risk. The realization that younger people are also getting very, very sick from COVID-19 is sinking in. Everyone must take the situation seriously and take care not to put others or themselves at risk. Exposure that does not result in your own illness may spread it to someone else who will get sick. Working together is critical! Doing it safely and creatively is just as critical! So is taking the time to stay in touch, if not from balcony to balcony then by phone, or mail, or internet, or. . . *Find other ways!* Fear and isolation can also be deadly, but we have a treatment for that! God's love shared! Do not forget, the love of God can spread far and wide too, and it is something we want to and are called to share!

World Water Day March 22

Did you know:

- By 2050, up to 5.7 billion people could be living in areas where water is scarce for at least one month a year.
- A climate-resilient water supply & good sanitation could save the lives of more than 360,000 infants every year.
- If we limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, we could cut climate-induced water stress by up to 50%.
- Extreme weather has caused more than 90% of major disasters over the last decade.
- By 2040, global energy demand is projected to increase by over 25% & water demand is expected to increase more than 50%. UN World Water Day, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day>

Worship Resources

Make Praying for Peace Part of Your Worship Remember in prayer:

1. **Those facing the coronavirus** – That is, all of us. Support those who are sick and those caring for them; scientists looking for a treatment and a vaccine; leaders responsible for public policy during this pandemic. Help all of us do our part to work together for the good of everyone in this time of pandemic.
2. **The people of Honduras** – because of COVID-19, the government has shut down everything. Securing food and water will be an issue for many. Some communities have no water source so trucks must deliver it. Farmers, including those the Brethren are working with, will lose all income from the crops they have already harvested because they cannot get them to market. (See *Newsline March 20, 2020* <http://www.brethren.org/news/2020/newsline-for-march-202020.html>)
3. **Remember Yemen**, the country with the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The UN says: more than 80% of the

population needs some form of assistance; 20 million face food insecurity; 14 million require urgent humanitarian intervention. As of December 2019, some 4 million were internally displaced people (IDPs) and another 1.2 million IDPs may have returned to their areas of origin. At the same time, Yemen is the only refuge for at least 276,000 refugees and asylum-seekers (the majority are from neighboring Ethiopia & Somalia) who cannot return home because of conditions there. Most continue to live in precarious situations (UN statistics).

4. The **people and Wildlife of Australia** recovering from a record fire season. The loss of homes has been devastating. The damage to the animal population has been and will be an enduring tragedy.
5. **Pray for our brothers and sisters in Nigeria.** (See the article above.) The violence continues and people continue to live with fear and violence.
6. **People who are trapped in poverty**
7. **The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and surrounding countries** – As of January 1st in DRC, there have been **3,382 cases of Ebola**, including **2,232 deaths**, **1,114 survivors**, and patients still under care. More than 30 new cases were reported in December. This health crisis also continues.
8. **The victims of gun violence and for those willing to commit such senseless acts.**
9. **All people in this world who continue to live with war.**
10. **Girls & Women** facing abuse & violence every day
11. **Those in prison for their beliefs or persecuted for reporting** genocide & other human rights abuses including: reporters in Myanmar, opposition leaders in Cambodia & Russia, those working for change in Central America.

A Litany for These Times

The Lord has promised to be with us. He has also promised to love us no matter what. The Lord has given us gifts to use in his name to further his kingdom, to serve our neighbors, and to remain steadfast when we face adversity. He has promised to always listen when we call on his name. Hold on to these promises, seek ways to use your gifts as God leads, and be always in prayer, lifting those in need to the Lord:

- Remember the sick.
- Pray for those who are alone.
- Lift up the dying.
- Comfort those who want desperately to be with the sick and the dying but cannot be.

Lord, hear our prayers.

- Empower caregivers with the strength they need.

- Give them peace of mind and of spirit as they face the suffering around them.
- Protect them from harm.
- Protect their families.

Lord, hear our prayers.

- Be with those who are working to find a treatment for this virus.
- Give those who look for a vaccine the wisdom and insight they need.
- Speed recovery efforts.
- Help researchers draw on their years of training and experience and be open to new ideas and possibilities their efforts reveal.

Lord, hear our prayers.

- Be with the innovative and creative people among us who are seeking ways to help in this time of shortages of crucial medical supplies.
- Be with those who are charged with the task of making decisions on behalf of the community – be it a neighborhood, town, state, country, or the world, that they will act wisely in the best interest of everyone.
- Let them not lose sight of the fact that they serve all the people, and that every life is important.
- Do not let us forget the other needs in the world. Violence, hunger, homelessness, racism, ageism, and sexism have not gone away.

Lord, hear our prayers.

- Support those who are seeking ways to maintain community when we must be physically apart.
- Help all of us hold on to joy and not lose sight of the blessings you have given us.
- Remind us to be thankful for our blessings.
- Help us to hold on to the hope of a future day when we can be together again in body as well as in spirit.

Lord, hear our prayers and fill us with your presence. Help us to rejoice in you, listen for your voice, and follow your leading in these days. Amen

Look for Peace & Reconciliation Resources on the Northern Ohio District Website.
For access go to: www.nohcob.org



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