



WOW: Word Of the Week

Empathy

June 3, 2020

Researchers **define empathy** as the ability to sense other people's emotions, plus the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling; to identify, understand, and share other people's emotions. Empathy – enter the feelings; sympathy – feel with.

Brené Brown, "Empathy is communicating that incredible healing message of 'You are not alone.'"

Psychologists define three types of empathy: Cognitive, Emotional, and Compassionate.

Cognitive empathy: Knowing how the other person feels and what they might be thinking. Can you understand mentally the thoughts, feelings, experiences of others? This empathy is mental.

Emotional empathy: Feeling with another person, as though emotions were contagious. Can you feel with, share emotions, cry with another person? This empathy is feeling-based.

Compassionate Empathy: By combining thinking and feeling, one enters the experiences of another, experiencing what another is experiencing. This is the kind of empathy most people want and need.

The current conflict in our country says that this is a time for empathy. Put ourselves in another's shoes and feel the distress. Seek to understand, listen with an open heart. "Catch" the emotions of others. Share the experience.

Jesus Christ is God's expression, God's example of empathy. Jesus shares our thinking, our feelings, our experiences. He is compassionate with the crowds (Matt. 9:35-38). He sympathizes with our weaknesses because he shared our experience (Heb. 4:15).

The kingdom of King Jesus knows no injustice, no racism, no inequality, no cruelty. The gospel of this kingdom produces a community of people who live out what it looks like when God is in charge. Kingdom people live in a contrast kingdom, citizens of an alternative kingdom, a counter-cultural community. In this world is tribulation, but the King comes to give peace. Kingdom people imitate the king.

Many are hurting—

- My ministry heart thinks first of the family who lost a loved one in a terrible, needless death.
- Brothers and sisters who understand mistreatment and prejudice, who struggle to control their anger
- Brothers and sisters who genuinely desire kingdom justice and equality, peaceful and accepting kingdom people who in this moment feel falsely accused
- Peace officers who care about others and are being judged by the actions of a few, mistreated as they try to help, even killed
- Those who feel the need to protest – seeking justice, seeking revenge, seeking to right wrongs, some destroying everything in their path, protesters with many causes being drawn together in this moment
- Those who have been injured, people of many different ethnicities who have lost businesses.
- Those whose hearts are touched but who struggle to know exactly how to respond and help
- All who seek a cause that is bigger than the human experience of life in this world.
- All who are without Jesus.

If you are still with me, you are likely either in one of these groups or have someone close and important to you in one of those groups.

Even when I cannot fully understand, feel, and experience, here is something I can do --

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." --Romans 12:15