

# Jesus the Compassionate

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Have you ever been very sick? Have you lain in bed, unable to move and wondered if you would live or die? If you have, who cared for you? Perhaps your mother or your wife bathed your fevered head, brought you water to drink, cooked some porridge and spoon-fed you.

Didn't it feel good to have someone care for you when you could do nothing for yourself? Didn't you love that person all the more because of what she did for you?

## A Frightening Sickness

Years ago, when Jesus walked from village to village, Jesus cared for many sick people with this same kind of compassion. Many were healed through His help. They deeply loved and respected Him for His kindness and helpfulness during their times of illness and great need.

However, there was one disease that the people were sure Jesus would not cure. It was the disease they feared the most—leprosy. This skin disease slowly destroyed the nerves, and made the skin ugly and the body disfigured. The people believed that whoever had this disease was cursed. They were sure Jesus wouldn't help such people.

One day a certain man saw something on his skin that made him very frightened. He did not want anyone to see. By law he was required to go to the temple and show the religious leaders. When he did, he heard the horrible news that he had leprosy and must leave his family and the community to live by himself or with other lepers.

The people always made the lepers leave. They were afraid they'd catch the disease from the leper. They did not want to

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be near someone who they were sure was under a curse for bad things he had done. They made a law that lepers must cry out, "Unclean. I'm unclean" whenever they came near people.

How sad the man must have been as he left his home, his wife and his children. How they must have cried as he walked away, unable to live with them anymore. The shame and the loneliness flooded his heart.

For months he wandered, without hope or a spark of joy. Then one day he heard about Jesus. Jesus' teaching was very popular. The news was spreading that He had healed people from all kinds of diseases. He had cured those with fevers, made the lame walk and even made the blind to see again. As the leper heard more and more stories, hope grew in his heart that it must be true—Jesus was deeply compassionate and also very powerful.

Still he wondered if Jesus would help him. Would Jesus be afraid of his disease? Would Jesus care enough to help someone under a curse?

## A Surprising Healing

The leper decided he must find out for himself. There was no other place to turn. Doctors couldn't help him. The religious leaders had turned him away. It was difficult to travel, but he pressed on until he saw a crowd of people. Gathering his courage he moved in closer.

The people fell away, disgusted and frightened by his ugly appearance and smell. To his great joy, the leper saw that Jesus did not turn away. Jesus was looking at him with kindness and compassion. The ancient scrip-

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tures tell the rest of the story like this, “He fell on his face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately the leprosy left him” Luke 5:12-13.

What great joy flooded through the man’s heart! The sores were gone. He could feel once again and move freely. He was well! How grateful he was to Jesus. Never had he felt such compassion. For so long the leper had only seen fear and contempt. Jesus had actually reached out and touched him. It felt so good to be touched with kindness. Jesus had been willing to help him when no else would or could. With great excitement he returned to his community to reunite with his family.

## Loneliness is Everywhere

Many people around us are lonely. They do not have leprosy, but something else has separated them from those they loved. Sometimes a woman loses her husband to a younger, more attractive lady. She cries herself to sleep, alone in the house. “Does anyone care about what has happened?” “Who can bring me encouragement and hope?”

Children can feel lonely too. Parents are often so busy with their work and other responsibilities that their children seldom see them. Their parents work hard to give them food, clothing and a good education. However, many times the children are simply longing for a parent to take time with them, to listen to them and show that they care. They ask, “Does anyone really love me?” “Who can I go to with my problems?”

Other people keep themselves too busy with work or with fun so that they don’t think about these things. They seem happy,

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but sometimes the thought haunts them, “If I were really sick, would my friends help me?” “When I am old, who will still be beside me?”

## Jesus’ Words of Comfort

Jesus had something to say in answer to such questions. He taught that there is a God who cares for us as His own children. The ancient scriptures say, “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him” Psalm 103:13.

Jesus also said, “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” Luke 12:6-7.

Could it be true? Could there be a God so great that He would know all of us, even be able to see every sparrow and know how many hairs there are on our heads?

The people watched Jesus and the way He lived. When they saw His great compassion it made them sure that what He said about God must be true. Many times they saw Him care for the sick. It did not matter if the people were rich or poor, educated or unable to read. His compassion included all of them.

Usually it is only the rich who can afford to have professional care for them when they are sick. It is difficult for the poor to get good and adequate treatment. Jesus, however, treated each person with dignity and showed interest in their problems. He gave healing to anyone who had faith in Him.

The people were amazed at His kindness. They never saw Him be impatient or show anger or disgust towards anyone.

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Jesus knew the people needed someone to turn to with their heartaches and loneliness. He was faithful to help each who came to Him.

Jesus' actions reminded them of the ancient words written about the eternal God, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" Isaiah 40:15-16.

## Does God have Compassion for People with AIDS?

In our world today it is difficult to find someone who really cares about people like this. Many times someone who contracts AIDS is rejected by his friends and even his family. People often assume that the person did something wrong and deserves the disease. They treat him as one who is cursed.

There was a lady named Minit who lived alone with her daughter Ruth. Her husband had left her after she became pregnant. She had worked hard to care for her baby until she was sick. Her cough became worse and worse. One day a kind Christian lady offered to take her to a clinic for some help. Minit was afraid to go. She was afraid she would be told that she had AIDS. If it was true, she was frightened that everyone would turn away from her.

Finally she went. Tests were made and as she sat before the doctor, the Christian lady held her hand. She heard the sad news—her husband had given her AIDS. She wept and cried out to her friend, "You must really hate me now!"

Her friend held her close and said, "No, not at all. My heart is more full of compassion for you than ever before."

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The next few months were very difficult for Minit. She was sick much of the time and couldn't care for her daughter. The Christian lady visited her often and told her about the God who had made her and loved her as His own daughter. A small group of Christians who met in a house nearby set up a schedule to share in the making of meals for her and for Ruth. They read her stories of Jesus and His compassion for the sick and lonely.

Minit's greatest worry was what would happen to her daughter Ruth when she died. Who would take care of her? No one knew if her daughter also had AIDS. Who would want her if she did? She pled with God to find a home for her.

One day the Christian lady brought a friend to visit Minit in the hospital. Minit was very skinny and weak. She could hardly speak. The friend said, "My name is also Ruth, just like your daughter. I am here to tell you that I will care for your girl and raise her as my own. Do not worry. Do not be afraid. God is with you."

Minit closed her eyes to rest. God had given her peace. He had heard her cry and answered her with a beautiful Christian parents and a home for Ruth. Soon after this, Minit died. Ruth cried. She was so little and she did not understand what had happened to her mother. But soon she was happy again as she found compassion and love in her new home.

Truly the words of an ancient song about God were fulfilled for Minit and Ruth. "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families" Psalm 68:5-6.

## How to experience God's Compassion

God is willing to help anyone with their difficulties. We can

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see from Jesus' life that the God who made us, does not despise anyone, even if they are sick, ignorant, or are not beautiful and talented. His compassion is for each person as the best of parents also care for their children.

So how can you receive help from this God? Is it possible to ask Him for help as the leper did and as Minit did? Listen to the promise that this God Himself had a prophet named Jeremiah write down so we would know the truth. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" Jeremiah 29:11-13.

Isn't that good news? The God who has always existed, the God who is the righteous judge, the God who has power over evil spirits and illnesses, has thoughts of peace towards you and wants to give you a good future and solid hope. He promises that He will hear what you say and answer you as you seek Him with your whole heart.

Why not try talking to Him now about whatever concerns you. Many have found that when they do this, their loneliness eases and God gives them answers for the problems they face. Try telling God about what you are facing and ask Him for wisdom to know what to do. Search in the ancient scriptures for that wisdom and He will show you what will help you.

Here is a prayer that can help you know what to say. It is not necessary to say these exact words. There is no need for you to say the words perfectly. It is not magic. God can listen to your heart and that is what is important to Him. If you are humble and feel your need for His help, He will be eager to respond.

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"Dear Father God, thank You for Your great compassion towards all people. I am grateful for your mercy towards those who are in need. Please help me with the problem I am facing (describe it to God). I need You to give me wisdom to know what to do. I would like You to help fix the problem by (describe what you want Him to do). Thank You for promising that You will help those who call on You. I ask this to be done if it is Your will. In Jesus' name. Amen."

## Questions

1. Fill in the blank.

The disease that people dreaded very much in Jesus' time was \_\_\_\_\_.

An incurable disease that people dread very much today is \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus taught that there is a God who loves us like a Father loves his \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Write true or false before the following statements.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Father of Life sees and care about every sparrow that falls.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Father of Life helps only rich people.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Father of Life knows and cares about you.

3. Check the phrases that are true.

\_\_\_\_\_ Loneliness is very common these days.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is easy to find a loyal friend who you can always trust.

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\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus demonstrated an unconditional love and taught that the Father of life has this love towards each of us.

4. Underline the statements that are true.

People who have AIDS need to be kept alone and away from others.

People who have AIDS have been rejected by God.

God has compassion on those who have AIDS.

People who have AIDS need to be cared for with loving kindness.

5. If this statement is true of your choice today, check it:

\_\_\_\_\_ I will talk to the Father of Life about any problems I have and ask for His help.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will seek to share this loving kindness with those in need around me.