

enditnow[®] Emphasis Day

Resource Packet

August 22, 2026

SERMON

Moved with Compassion

Written by Karen Holford

CHILDREN'S STORY

Passing on the Smile

Written by Karen Holford

SEMINAR

The Healing Power of Compassion

Written by Karen Holford

enditnow[®]

Adventists Say No to Violence

Prepared by Department of Women's Ministries
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
On behalf of the enditnow[®] team of General Conference departments
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Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, *Adventist Review*, Children's Ministries, Department of Education, Family Ministries,
Health Ministries, Ministerial Association, Women's Ministries, Youth Ministries

Seventh-day Adventist® Church

GENERAL CONFERENCE
WORLD HEADQUARTERS



WOMEN'S MINISTRIES



Dear Sisters,

Warm greetings from the Women's Ministries Department! The fourth Sabbath in August is our **enditnow**® Emphasis Day, when we unite our voices against any form of violence and abuse and promote healthy relationships.

We all want to be loved, cared for, and understood. But do we treat other people in this way? Do we treat them the way we want to be treated? Do we practice this golden rule?

Following Jesus' teachings and His example, we will be purposefully compassionate. 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.

This **enditnow**® packet focuses on compassion. Let us learn how we can be more compassionate, more proactive, more helpful, and more like Jesus.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32, NIV).

Wishing you God's special blessings on this special day!

With love and prayers,

Galina Steele, DMin
Director
Women's Ministries

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV).

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About the Author

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Program Notes

Please feel free to translate, adjust, and edit the resource packet according to your division’s needs. Include the best Bible version for your use. Also, you are free to adapt the packet according to your cultural audience. When your division has translated the assigned packet for French, Portuguese, and Spanish, please send us a digital file to share with our sisters who need it. Check our website for additional translated packets that you may be able to use.

Scripture References

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A Suggested Order of Worship Service

Call to Worship

Opening Prayer

Scripture Reading

Luke 10:25–37, NKJV

Hymn of Praise: 476

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal
“Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary”

Pastoral Prayer

Children’s Offering and Story

“Passing on the Smile”

Call for the Offering

Special Music or Hymn

Sermon

“Moved With Compassion”

Hymn of Response: 469

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal
“Leaning on the Everlasting Arms”

Closing Prayer

—End—

Children's Story

Passing on the Smile

Written by Karen Holford

Storytelling Notes

When we comfort our children and show them compassion, and when we encourage the character strengths of kindness and compassion in our children, we make the world a safer place. By showing them God's compassion and actively teaching them to show compassion to others, we nurture children who are less likely to abuse others in the future. The following story teaches children the important steps of compassion which are

- noticing other people's distress,
- listening to their story,
- asking how you can help, and
- responding with compassion by blessing them and relieving their distress.

Tips

- Children listen better when they have something to look at and when they can interact with the story.
- Ask them to look sad when you mention *sad*, and smile when you mention *smile*. Use pictures of a sad face and a happy face to prompt them.
- Objects that can be shown in the story have been highlighted. Adapt the illustrations to suit your context and use situations and objects that are familiar to your children.

Story: Passing on the Smile

Tommy woke up and stretched.

Mommy kissed his forehead and said, "I love you, Tommy!"

He smiled and gave Mommy a big hug as he climbed out of bed.

He was happy as he got dressed for school. Today was going to be a good day!

At breakfast he met his little sister, Sarah. She was sad.

"Why are you so sad, Sarah, and how can I help?" asked Tommy.

"I have spelling tests today, and I don't like spelling tests."

(Optional—Show a bread bun with a happy honey face on it.)

Tommy drizzled honey on Sarah's bread to make a smiley face and tested her on spelling. Sarah smiled and ate her happy honey bread. She felt better now.

When Sarah got to school, she met Mark. Mark was sad.

"Why are you so sad, Mark, and how can I help?" asked Sarah.

"My pet hamster has escaped from his cage," sobbed Mark, "and I don't know where he is . . ."

(Optional—Show a toy hamster or other small pet.)

Sarah chose to make Mark smile. She gave him a big hug and prayed that he would find Scamper when he got home. Mark smiled. He felt a little happier now, and he was looking forward to his favorite class—art.

Mark enjoyed drawing pictures of colorful flowers. But he noticed that Hannah was sad. “Why are you so sad, Hannah, and how can I help?” asked Mark.

“I only have a blunt pencil to draw with,” sobbed Hannah, “and I don’t like my dull picture. I wanted to draw something colorful for Grandma, but it is not pretty.”

So Mark chose to make Hannah smile. He shared his crayons with her and showed her how to make her picture pretty for Grandma.

(Optional—Show a colorful child’s drawing of flowers.)

Hannah was delighted with her colorful picture! She was looking forward to lunch. Mommy had made her favorite sandwiches and packed some extra treats in her lunch box.

In the lunchroom, Hannah noticed that Katie was sad.

“Why are you so sad, Katie, and how can I help?” asked Hannah.

“I left my lunch at home,” sobbed Katie, “and now I am very hungry.”

(Optional—Show a sandwich or lunch box.)

So Hannah chose to make Katie smile. She sat down next to Katie and shared her lunch with her. Katie was so happy about Hannah’s kindness and the delicious lunch. She had a warm glow in her heart all afternoon.

When Katie met Daddy after school, she noticed he looked very sad.

“Why are you so sad, Daddy, and how can I help?” asked Katie.

She gave him an enormous hug and told him he was the best daddy ever!

Daddy smiled and hugged Katie. She always made him feel better. Whatever happened at work, he had a wonderful family who always loved him.

Daddy and Katie stopped at the gas station on the way home. A lady was standing by her car and looking very sad. Katie waved at the lady’s children!

They were Tommy and Sarah, her special friends from school!

“Why are you so sad, and how can I help?” asked Katie’s daddy.

“I filled up my car with gas,” she said, “but I have left my purse at home and I cannot pay for it.”

(Optional—Show a purse or wallet.)

Katie’s daddy paid for the gas. Tommy and Sarah’s mommy promised to pay him back the next day. Mommy smiled happily as they drove back home.

When Mommy tucked Tommy into bed that night, Tommy gave her a big hug and a smile. He was so glad that she was *his* mommy! Mommy smiled back.

Mommy's smile was extra happy because it had been passed from person to person all through the day! And then it came back to her when she felt sad! And the best thing about a smile was finding ways to make sad people happy again, through kindness, sharing, helping, praying, and love.

I want you to show me your biggest smile ever!

Beautiful!

Now I want you to pass your beautiful smile on to someone who might be sad.
You never know when your smile will go around in a big circle of love and come back to you, just when you need it.
And your kind smile will show everyone God's loving smile too!

—End of Story—

Sermon

Moved With Compassion

Written by Karen Holford

The Compassionate Quilt

Anna lived in a safe house for women and children who had been abused by their husbands and fathers. She struggled to earn money to provide for her children. She lived in constant fear that her husband would find them and hurt them more than ever before. She also felt abandoned, unloved, and unlovable.

One day, the women from a local Adventist church gave Anna a gift box. It contained a beautiful quilt, an encouraging message of God's love, and fragrant toiletries. The Adventist women's group used colorful fabrics donated by curtain/drape stores and cut them into large squares. Then they stitched the squares together to make quilts for women who had experienced domestic abuse. Tears ran down Anna's face as she unpacked the quilt. The compassionate women cared enough to make her feel special and beloved.

Understanding Compassion

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. In order 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.

(Preacher—tell your own story of a time when someone showed compassion to you, and describe how you felt.)

Think about a time when you were in a difficult or dangerous situation and someone showed compassion to you. Maybe your car had broken down or you were injured or someone had treated you badly. How did you feel? Perhaps you felt frightened, sad, worried, or alone. And then someone came to help you, to fix your car, or to protect you from danger, and they gave you something you needed or something that showed how much they cared about you. When we experience compassion, we breathe deeply and we feel more peaceful. There is a spark of joy and hope in our hearts and a smile on our face because we have experienced God's loving compassion through another human being.

(Preacher—here you could tell your own story of showing compassion to someone else and how you felt.)

Or perhaps you can remember a time when you showed compassion to someone else? You noticed that someone was sad or hurt or struggling, and you asked them how you could help. Perhaps they needed a friendly smile, an encouraging word, a drink of water, some bread and fruit, or a place to stay. Do you remember how you felt when you showed compassion? You probably felt joyful and peaceful too! That is because God created our brains to feel joyful, peaceful, warm, and

grateful whenever we show compassion to others! Amazing, right? Because we are made in His image, God created us to find joy in caring for people who are suffering, just as He does.

Jesus—Our Model of Compassion

Jesus came to live among us so that we could experience God's compassionate love. He knew that every person He met was suffering some kind of pain, trauma, guilt, fear, or distress in their lives. He treated them with the deepest compassion so that they could taste God's gentle, comforting, and forgiving love through Him.

Matthew tells us that when Jesus "saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Wherever Jesus went, He noticed the suffering around Him and chose to help others by feeding the hungry, forgiving those who felt overwhelmed by guilt, healing the sick, comforting the sad and bereaved, and helping people to feel safe and grateful. Whenever we choose to show compassion, we choose to be like Jesus. We choose to bless others with kindness, love, and support, rather than cruelly adding to their pain and distress, which is the opposite of Jesus' character.

Jesus saw a lonely woman by the side of a well. He warmly accepted her, even though her community had rejected her. He even told her that He was the Messiah. His loving compassion changed her life.

Jesus met a woman who was caught in adultery. She had been abused by a man, and now she was being publicly shamed by the Pharisees, adding emotional and spiritual abuse to the physical and intimate abuse she had experienced. Jesus tactfully and gently dealt with her accusers, and they all slipped away, quietly. Then He looked at her with deep compassion and told her that she was completely free and forgiven. His loving care changed her life. Jesus' example teaches us to relieve distress, to comfort the brokenhearted, and to bring hope, peace, love, and joy to the world.

What the Good Samaritan Can Teach Us About Compassion

Jesus also told a parable packed with wisdom for everyone who wants to follow His example of compassion. It is the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37.

(If this passage was not read for the Scripture reading, invite a young person to read it now. For greater effect, invite some children and young people to act out this story as it is read.)

The Samaritan believed that he had a responsibility to help other people, no matter who they were, and that he was responsible for showing compassion to anyone who was suffering. The Samaritan did not let prejudice and racial issues hold him back from helping others, just as Jesus helped people of different races, cultures, genders, and ages. As soon as he saw the injured man, the Samaritan went to help him, so that he did not have to suffer any longer than necessary.

Then the Samaritan looked carefully to see what kind of help the man needed. If the man was able to talk, he would have asked him where he hurt the most and how he could help him in the best possible way. It is important and respectful to ask people who are suffering what they consider to be their greatest needs and to involve them in the decisions about how to care for them.

When he saw the man's wounds, the Samaritan washed them clean and treated them with oil and wine to prevent infections. He carefully bandaged the wounds and gave the man a drink of water to soothe his dehydration. Then he gently lifted him onto the back of his donkey and walked slowly, probably with great difficulty, until they reached an inn where he could rest and sleep.

We may feel we do not have much to offer someone in need, but every small thing we do can make a big difference to a person who is suffering. A kind word, a gentle touch, a drink of water, a slice of bread, or a bandage can all bring hope and comfort to people who have experienced violence and abuse. It is vitally important for them to know that someone notices their suffering and wants to help.

The Samaritan had a long journey ahead of him. He knew it would be very uncomfortable and unsafe for the injured man to ride on the back of a donkey for several days. So, he left him in the care of the innkeeper and promised to pay for the injured man's expenses when he returned. Sometimes we need to help people access the best care for their needs when they have been hurt and abused. We may not have the skills, time, and resources to provide everything they need, but we can find other people who are better able to help them when we have done as much as we can.

We Can Be Good Samaritans Too

When someone is suffering, they need help quickly. The sooner someone shows them compassion, the less trauma, fear, anxiety, and sadness they will experience. When we help others in difficulty, we can also follow Jesus' example and be as generous as possible. Jesus showed us the abundant extravagance of God's love for every human, by making more bread and fish than the crowd could eat on the hillside and more juice than the guests could drink at the wedding in Cana.

We also need to adapt our help over time. Anna, the lady I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon, needed different things at different times when she left her alcoholic and abusive husband. First, she needed to find a ride to the safe house in her town. Once she had found shelter, she needed food for herself and her children—then clothes and toys for the growing children and personal supplies for herself, such as shampoo, soap, and toothpaste. The local Adventist church collected food and toiletries every week to take to the shelter. They bought toys for the children's birthdays and gave Anna vouchers to buy clothes for herself and to visit a hairdresser. Once she was ready to move into her own apartment, the church community helped her to find furniture and gave her the beautiful quilt for her bed to remind her of God's love.

Compassion Expresses True Religion

When we choose to be compassionate, like Jesus and the good Samaritan, we start by believing it is our mission and responsibility to help those who are suffering, whoever they are. Then we need to ask God to show us where they are and to keep our eyes open to notice those who need help. When we find them, we must listen carefully to their story and understand how much they hurt. We can ask them what they would like for us to do to relieve some of their distress and suffering. Whatever we do to help someone, however small the action, God uses the experience to bless us as we bless others.

Ellen White wrote: "In the story of the Good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in *bringing the greatest good to others*, in genuine goodness."¹

She continues: "Many, many, have fainted and become discouraged in the great struggle of life, when one word of kindly cheer would have strengthened them to overcome. Never should we

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press®, 1898), 497.

pass by one suffering soul without seeking to impart to him of the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God.”²

Becoming Compassionate Disciples

Before we can comfort others, we need to let God comfort us with His compassion. In 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4, Paul tells us that God comforts us in all our troubles so that we, in turn, can comfort others. Our loving Father wants us to come to Him with all our troubles and sorrows and burdens so that He can help us. Peter reminds us to give God all our worries because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). Once we have experienced the incredible compassion and comfort of God, then we are ready to share that compassion and comfort with others.

(Use a balloon to illustrate the following section.)

When we care for others, we can easily become depleted. And our hearts can feel empty and floppy, like a flat balloon (*show flat balloon*). Whenever this happens, we can ask God to fill our hearts with His love, like a balloon being inflated with air (*inflate balloon*). But God’s love has not been put into our hearts to stay. We need to take our filled-up hearts and pour love and compassion into other people’s lives, like an inflated balloon releasing air (*release little bits of air toward different people, as if sharing God’s love with them*). Whenever we feel low on love, we can ask God to fill us up again with His love (*reinflate the balloon*) so we can show compassion to others.

Our hearts are filled up with God’s love when we notice how much He loves us each day. The more we focus on how God is showing His love to us, the more of His love we will notice. As we experience different aspects of His love for us, we learn from Him how to love others in different ways, in accordance with their needs. At the end of each hour, or each day, ask yourself: “How has God shown His love for me in the past hour—or day?” Write your ideas down and keep a journal of God’s love for you to encourage and fill up your own heart.

Immerse yourself in God’s love by reading, memorizing, or reflecting on Bible passages that describe His love for us. Try Psalm 23; 103; 145; 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 3; 1 John 4; and parables like the lost sheep, the good Samaritan, and the prodigal son. Or work your way through the alphabet and find at least one word, beginning with each letter, that describes God’s love. You will be amazed at how many words you can find when you search for them.

Meditate on the different aspects of God’s love and consider how you can love others in the ways that God has loved you. Read the Father’s Love Letter from FathersLoveLetter.com. This is a beautiful letter from God constructed by paraphrasing different verses from the Bible. It has been translated into almost every language. Imagine that you are like a funnel, gathering as much of God’s love as possible so you can pour it into other people’s lives. As God’s love flows through you to bless others, it will bless you tremendously too.

Sometimes we notice that our hearts have hard and stony places. Are there some people whom we do not want to help? What is holding us back from being compassionate? Do we have certain thoughts and feelings that make our hearts feel stony and less able to care? Take all these stony places to God. Ask Him to heal you and to transform all the hard parts in your heart into a heart of compassionate flesh like His (Ezekiel 36:26).

We All Need Compassion

² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press®, 1898), 504.

We also need to be compassionate to ourselves. Jesus told us to love our neighbors as ourselves, which means we need to be as compassionate to ourselves as we are to others. We can speak to ourselves as gently and kindly as Jesus would speak to us if we could hear Him. We can treat ourselves as gently and kindly as our best friend would treat us. If we do not treat ourselves with kindness, we will struggle to treat others with loving kindness too.

Small Acts of Compassion Make a Big Difference

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 us 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. Researchers trained oncology consultants to say one short phrase when they saw a person with a new diagnosis of cancer. The phrase was similar to this: "I am so sorry to hear of your diagnosis. You must be experiencing all kinds of challenging emotions right now. We cannot tell what will happen to you because every person's journey through cancer is different. But we can assure you that we will always be here for you, and we will be with you every step of the way."

This short phrase, which took less than one minute to say, radically changed the way that the patients responded to their illness, treatment, and care. They left the appointment with more hope and positive emotions. Even one year later, they remembered those words and the compassion they experienced at that first appointment with their consultant. They were more likely to comply with their treatment, have less side effects, and need fewer treatments than the patients whose doctors did not express the same compassion for them. These few kind words reduced the cost of their treatment by many thousands of dollars.³

Harvard Business Review sponsored research into the best kind of leadership style by studying leaders around the globe. They discovered that wise, compassionate leaders were happier than those who were not compassionate. Their colleagues were happier too. These compassionate leaders experienced less burnout and were far more satisfied with their jobs.⁴ We can also nurture and encourage compassion in our children and young people and help them to grow Christlike characters that will strengthen our compassionate communities.

When the researchers investigated the main strategies of compassionate leaders, they identified seven key points. Each one is a Biblical principle that we can practice in our lives.

These are the seven simple practices of compassion demonstrated by the leaders:

- Treat others how you would like to be treated.
- Listen carefully to what others tell you about their lives and their suffering.
- Think deeply about what the other person is feeling and experiencing.
- Be generous with others and give more than you take.
- Ask yourself how you can be the greatest blessing in the situation.

³ Linda A. Fogarty, et al., "Can 40 Seconds of Compassion Reduce Patient Anxiety?" *Journal of Clinical Oncology* 17, no. 1 (1999): 371–379.

⁴ Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter, *Compassionate Leadership: How to Do Hard Things in a Human Way* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2022), n.p.

- Help others to live their best lives by working with their gifts and strengths.
- Show people that caring for others will bring them joy, too, because they will also be blessed.⁵

A Compassionate Challenge

Now that you understand the importance of compassion, how will you respond to God's compassionate love for you? And how will you share your experience of compassion with others? Imagine what it would be like if your neighbors knew you for being the most compassionate person on the street—or your colleagues knew that you were the most compassionate person at work? What an amazing witness to God's love and what a positive way to counteract the distress of pain and abuse in your community!

Now imagine that in a year's time, there will be an award to honor the most compassionate church in the town. How likely is the Seventh-day Adventist church to be recognized? Does your church have a reputation for hurting and rejecting people, for tolerating abusers and showing a lack of care for the victims? Or is your Adventist church known for being the most compassionate church in town, the one that best reflects the Christlike characteristic of caring for others?

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very uncompassionate and 10 is very compassionate, what score would you give your church? What can you do, personally, to help increase this score by at least one point so that next year, if the town leaders honored the most Christlike and compassionate church, the name of your church would be engraved on the award?

Ending Violence and Abuse

We can only bring an end to violence and abuse when we choose to experience God's compassion for us—and when we let His love melt the hard parts of our hearts into compassion for others. At the simplest level, we can do what Jesus did. Whenever He interacted with someone, He considered their best interests. He chose to say and do whatever would leave each person more blessed, joyful, peaceful, beloved, hopeful, and grateful. We can do this too. Whoever we meet in our daily lives, we can aim to leave more blessed than when we met them. These people may be our family members, colleagues, neighbors, fellow travelers, and those who serve us. Then, as we show compassion to others, one person at a time, we can become a powerful part of ending violence and abuse by counteracting the devastation it causes through the power of God's comforting, healing, and encouraging love.

When Christ's disciples follow His compassionate example, we will help to shape caring communities where people are less likely to be abused, and those people who are hurt will feel safe, and cared for, and can begin to heal again. Together we can become a powerful part of ending violence and abuse. We can counteract the devastation it causes to people and communities with the compassion we have received from God.

And finally, I wonder what you will choose to do this week to experience more of God's compassionate love for you, and what will you do to show that compassionate love to everyone else you meet, so that God's kingdom of love can be enlarged and others will fall in love with Him forever?

—End of Sermon—

⁵ Hougaard and Carter, *Compassionate Leadership*, 27.

Seminar

The Healing Power of Compassion

Written by Karen Holford

Simple ways to comfort and support someone
who has been abused or traumatized

Introduction

Many people around us are suffering and distressed. Some of them have experienced abuse and trauma. We may feel that we cannot help them, because we are not therapists, psychologists, counselors, or pastors. However, for thousands of years there were no mental health professionals and counselors. Instead of therapists, there were kind and compassionate friends, who listened with love, comforted the tears, and found ways to support.

Today we understand that there are many kinds of abuse, and it is helpful to name some of them so that we can help others to recognize when they are being abused. Then they can make wise choices to protect themselves and their loved ones. Abuse happens when one person misuses their powers to hurt other people and limits their activities and relationships.

(Ask the group to name some of the ways in which people can be abused. Write them on a flip chart or blackboard or share them on-screen. Then add any from the list below that have not been named by your group. Point out that different kinds of abuse are being added to this list as they are identified.)

- *Physical abuse*—being violent toward others by hitting, biting, burning, kicking, throwing, showing weapons, threatening to hurt them, et cetera
- *Emotional abuse*—belittling others through shaming, criticizing, false accusations, blaming, et cetera
- *Controlling/coercive power*—pressuring people to do something they do not want to do
- *Financial abuse*—limiting someone's finances, taking their money away, not providing enough resources for their survival, even though those funds are available in the family
- *Relational abuse*—limiting contact with others; monitoring a person's internet use, social media, texts, emails, or letters; and invading their relational privacy
- *Elder abuse*—mistreating vulnerable elderly people physically, emotionally, sexually, and financially
- *Racial abuse*—hurting and belittling others who are racially different from you
- *Spiritual abuse*—inflicting emotional, physical, sexual, relational, coercive power, and financial abuse, et cetera, within a spiritual context
- *Sexual abuse*—forcing others to do sexual activities against their choice and will, hurting others during sexual intimacy

People who are being abused are often silenced by their abusers, who threaten to hurt them, or those they love, if they talk to others about their abuse. It is important to look out for those who might be hurting and to be careful not to increase their risk of being hurt.

Why Abuse Is So Devastating

Abuse is an invasion of another person's internal and social world. Abuse makes the world feel very unsafe and damages a person's sense of self, their relationships, and their physical health; their emotional and mental health; and their spiritual well-being.

Abuse is selfish and violent. It vandalizes the lives of the victims, and it can leave long-term damage in a person's life. Victims of abuse often have increased risk of severe mental illness, impaired ability to work and earn money, and an increased likelihood of turning to drugs and alcohol to numb the intense pain. There is even a higher incidence of people in prison who have experienced abuse in their lives.

Abuse Is the Complete Opposite of Love

Read and discuss these verses about God's love and compassion.

- God describes Himself as compassionate (Exodus 34:6).
- God is compassionate and forgiving (Psalm 103).
- Compassion starts in God's heart, and it is shared with us so we can show compassion to others (2 Corinthians 1:3–5).
- Jesus was filled with compassion for those who were suffering (Matthew 9:36; 20:34; Mark 6:34).
- Perfect love does not make people feel afraid (1 John 4:18).

Experiencing Compassion in the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Ask for five volunteers. Give each person a piece of paper with a different name on it:

- The Priest
- The Pharisee
- The Injured Man
- The Good Samaritan
- The Innkeeper

Invite the five people to think about the story from the position of their assigned character as you read the parable of the good Samaritan from Luke 10:25–37.

- Read aloud the story of the good Samaritan.
- Interview each Bible character about their thoughts and feelings throughout the story.
- Ask the priest and the Pharisee why they chose to hurry past the injured man. What were their thoughts and feelings? What did they prioritize when they chose to ignore his desperate needs?
- Ask the Samaritan about his thoughts and feelings when he stopped to help the man, when he struggled to put him on his donkey and carry him a long way to the inn, when he arrived at the inn safely, and when he chose to leave the man in the care of the innkeeper.
- Ask the innkeeper about his thoughts and feelings when he was asked to care for the injured man.

- Ask the injured man about his thoughts and feelings when he was beaten up and robbed, when the priest and Pharisee ignored him, when the Samaritan stopped to help, and when the Samaritan left him at the inn and offered to pay for his care.
- Ask the audience to discuss and suggest answers to the following questions:
 - What do you like best about the story of the good Samaritan?
 - What is the most important message for us in the story?
 - Which character in the story is most like you? Why?
 - What does this story tell you about God's compassion?
 - How does this story inspire us to show compassion to those who have been abused?

Noticing Those Who Are Hurting

Before we can show compassion to those who have been abused, we need to recognize those who might be hurting because of abuse, trauma, or challenging life events.

Possible Signs of Abuse

What are some of the signs that someone may be abused, distressed, or hurting? *(Ask the group for suggestions. If they seem reluctant to share in a large group, ask them to discuss ideas for a few minutes in small groups and then share their ideas with the large group.)*

- Being unusually quiet, withdrawn, sad, and afraid
- Becoming increasingly isolated from family and friends
- Not being allowed to come to church
- Having bruises, burns, or bite marks or wearing long sleeves in hot weather to cover up injuries
- Not being given enough money to buy food, pay bills, or purchase items for personal care, including clothes
- Frequently looking around to check that their abuser is not watching them and listening to their conversations
- Not being allowed to leave the house or being prevented from going to college or work
- Having their internet or social media use monitored, being reluctant to send and receive messages because someone else is reading them
- Being repeatedly belittled, put down, or told one is worthless
- Being pressured into sex
- Being told that abuse is one's fault or that one is overreacting

(Ask the group to list other signs that someone may have been abused or hurt.)

Discussion Question:

How can we keep our eyes open, like Jesus did, to notice those around us who may be suffering so that we can show them God's love?

- Believe that relieving the suffering of others is an important work for God's people on earth.
- Pray for our eyes to be opened.
- Listen for the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- Gently, safely, and confidentially check on those we are concerned about to show that we have noticed and we care.

Listening and Believing

When we have identified someone who is hurting, it is important to listen to their story and believe them. Many victims are hesitant to tell others about their experience because they are afraid that they will not be believed. Often those who have abused them have also told them that no one will believe their story, especially when their abuser may be their spouse, a respected person in the community, or a church leader. When others do not believe the stories of their abuse, victims may experience their lack of belief as further emotional abuse.

How to Listen Well

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you listen well and be a comforting presence.
- Ask the person what their hopes are for talking to you, so you understand what the conversation means to them and how you might be able to help them.
- Take long, deep breaths to help you stay calm, if their story is painful and sad.
- Listen with your eyes—use eye contact to show your attention is focused on them.
- Listen with your ears—focus your thoughts and listen carefully to their words.
- Listen with your mind—think about what they are saying, listen for their emotions, thoughts, questions, concerns, fears . . .
- Be curious—ask warm, open-ended questions that encourage the person to talk more, if they want to. Help them to feel free to say what they need to say.
- Remember that everyone responds differently to trauma. Some will speak calmly and others will be very distressed. Let them express themselves in the way that is comfortable for them. Do not judge or criticize them for what they say or how they say it. Sometimes people who have been abused might use strong language because in their distress, they struggle to find the best words to express their pain. Show compassion for their suffering and let the words go. They are not as important as caring for the person who is hurting.
- The effect of trauma on their brain may disrupt their memory of events, which can sometimes seem inconsistent and confusing. This is normal when abuse has happened. Accept their story, even if they tell it in different ways each time. They are not lying or making things up. Their memories of the event have been shattered and each time they may pick up a different piece and put it back in a different order.
- Emphasize your loving concern for them.
- Remember that your warm, accepting, and focused listening is a very precious gift to them.

- Consider how you can be a channel of God's love and compassion in their life.

Do People Need to Describe the Details of Their Abuse?

- Sometimes being made to talk about their experience of abuse can re-traumatize the victims.
- Never pressure people into talking about their abuse.
- Instead, ask them, "What have been the effects of this experience on your life? What has it stopped you from doing, and what are you doing differently? How has the experience changed how you think; how you see yourself; how you talk to yourself; how you feel; how you think about God, your health, and your sense of safety; and so on?"
- Sometimes they can express themselves more freely through poetry, art, or sculpture or through a song, psalm, or piece of music that reveals how they feel.

Helpful and Compassionate Messages for Someone Who Has Experienced Abuse

As a person tells their story of abuse, they need to hear comforting messages from us. Some of these are:

- *I care about you* (Ephesians 4:2).
- *I am so sorry you went through that painful experience* (Romans 12:15).
- *God cares about you* (Jeremiah 31:3).
- *God is always with you* (Isaiah 41:10).
- *God notices every tear and comforts you* (Psalm 56:8; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4).
- *I believe you.* (See the slides for further explanation.)
- *You are courageous.* Affirm their courage in speaking up about what happened. Let them know that that you will not judge them, blame them, or shame them.
- *I will do what I can to help you feel safe.* I will help you find the best help available (1 John 4:18).
- *You did your very best in those circumstances* and you made the best choices you could in a difficult and dangerous situation.
- *You are not to blame.* What happened to you was wrong. It was not your fault at all. You did nothing wrong. You were the victim of someone else's bad choices and faults (Ephesians 4:29).
- *I am here for you* (Galatians 6:2).

Comfort Their Story

- Listening to a person's story, and comforting them, is a Biblical way to help heal the traumas, tragedies, and disappointments of life.
- Jesus tells us that those who mourn will find comfort (Matthew 5:4).
- Paul tells us to be sad with those who are sad, so that they do not feel alone in their painful sadness (Romans 12:15).
- We comfort others best when we have experienced God's comfort for our own suffering and sadness (2 Corinthians 1:4, 5).

Offer to Relieve Their Suffering

- Ask: “What is the best thing I could do to relieve some of your suffering right now?” Then do whatever you can to meet their greatest needs. If you cannot do this on your own, ask others to join you in caring.
- Pray a short prayer for them, focusing on God’s compassionate love for them. Someone who is suffering will find a long prayer tiring and confusing.
- Continue to listen and be there whenever they need to talk.
- Help them to get medical, legal, and counseling support when it is available.
- Help to protect them from further abuse.
- Continue to show care in warm and loving ways, as often as possible.

Comforting and Healing Activities

This section contains some activities designed to comfort people who are hurting. Choose several activities for participants to experience during the workshop.

Create a Comfort Menu

Help the person write a short list of things that they can do alone, or with others, to soothe and comfort their pain.

A comfort menu might include suggestions such as:

- Pray with me.
- Give me a hug.
- Listen to me.
- Stay with me so that I am not alone with my painful thoughts.
- Walk with me in a beautiful place.
- Enjoy my favorite hobby with me because it distracts me from my painful thoughts.
- Make my favorite drink.
- Share a moment of wonder with me at God’s creation.

Discussion Questions:

- When you are distressed, what do you like for people to do with you or for you that helps to soothe you and calm you down?

(Gather their answers and show that there are different ways to help each other through times of pain and suffering.)

Make a Comfort Basket

Fill a basket with supplies that can bring comfort to your friend when you are not able to be with them:

- Books of short and encouraging devotions
- A prayer journal
- Hand lotion
- Favorite drinks
- Handwritten prayers or notecards
- Distracting and soothing activities—Bible verse coloring cards, et cetera
- Father's Love Letter in their language—available from FathersLoveLetter.com.

Discussion Question:

- What else could you include in a gift basket that might comfort someone who has been abused or traumatized and that lets them know that you care and God cares?

Sitting with God

- Imagine you are sitting with God, and He is giving you a big hug. Or cross your arms across your chest to give yourself a hug from God and stroke your upper arms with your hands. This helps to soothe the body.
- Imagine God smiling warmly at you, holding you close to His heart, and telling you what your broken and hurting heart most needs to hear.
- Write down the encouraging and loving thoughts that the Holy Spirit brings to your mind.

Be Compassionate Toward Yourself

- When we feel anxious, our brains experience stress and fear.
- When we feel calm, and loved and soothed, we feel happier.
- Learning to experience self-compassion when we are triggered by memories and anxious thoughts helps to soothe the brain.
- Remember that you are precious and loved.
- Speak to yourself as you would speak to a hurting friend in this situation. How would you show them compassion?
- God is eternally compassionate toward you, and He cares for you. Search the Bible for evidence of His compassion. Look for evidence of His love in your life every day.
- Create safe boundaries.

Soothing Breathing

- God has created our bodies so that we are calmed when we take long, deep breaths in through our nose and let them out slowly through our mouth.
- Try this three times and notice how it calms you down.
- Imagine you are blowing bubbles or blow real bubbles. Blowing bubbles is another way to experience soothing breathing.
- This activity is useful to help children calm down when they are anxious and distressed.

“100 Things that Bring Me Joy” Healing Project

- When we feel well and happy, we usually choose to do something every day, however small, that brings us joy. It may be as simple as making our favorite drink, walking in a beautiful place, putting a wildflower in a vase, or spending time on our hobbies. Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and it is good for us to experience joy as a gift from God. Joy brings healing (Proverbs 17:22).
- When people have experienced severe trauma, abuse, and distress they are less likely to choose activities that bring them joy, which can help them to feel better and to heal.
- Purchase a pack of 100 index cards or a notebook with at least 100 pages. Write down each small thing that brings you joy on a different card or page. List the things you like to see, hear, taste, smell, and touch, activities that bring you joy, your favorite books, songs, Bible stories, Bible verses, clothes, places, memories, people, et cetera.
- Pick at least one card a day, preferably more, and experience that joy in some way. Write about your joy experience on the back of the card, with the date. Add illustrations, mementos, stickers, and doodles to the card or page if you wish.

Group Activity

Ask the group to share some of the activities that brought them joy in the past week and share the list on a flip chart, whiteboard, or screen.

Experiencing Gratitude

When we experience gratitude, our brains are soothed. We cannot experience gratitude and anxiety at the same time. When we have experienced abuse and distress, taking time to focus on gratitude helps us to rebalance by noticing God’s loving care in our lives.

- Make a list of 30 things you are grateful for. Think about them when you wake up or as part of your devotional time with God.
- Keep a diary or notebook and write at least 3 things you are thankful for each day.
- Sit in a room and thank God for 30 things in that room.

- Walk along a path and thank God for one thing after another, continually, as you notice the different things around you.

Group Activity

Call out each letter of the alphabet and ask people to call out the names of things that they are grateful for beginning with that letter. Let them call out 4 to 5 things and then move to the next letter. Ask how they feel after they have participated in this simple activity, and suggest that they do this activity whenever they want to experience the healthy blessings of gratitude (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

What Went Well (WWW)?

When people have experienced abuse and trauma, they can easily be overwhelmed by negative experiences and not notice the things that are going well. Every good gift in our life comes from God (James 1:17). Noticing what went well each day blesses us with peace, joy, and encouragement from God, and it lowers our risk of anxiety and depression.

- Pause at the end of each day and think of three things that went well, however small.
- Write them down in a diary or notebook.
- Thank God for them because each one is a gift from Him.
- As you do this, you will become more hopeful and grateful because you will notice the things that God is helping you to do (Philippians 4:8).

Group Activity

Invite people to reflect alone on three things that went well yesterday. Then invite them to share their thoughts about the benefits of noticing what went well.

Sifting Thoughts

When people have experienced trauma and abuse, they often experience negative thoughts and messages in their minds. Read 2 Corinthians 10:5 and notice that Paul invites us to take our thoughts captive and choose loving thoughts that come from God. Satan, the accuser, likes to fill our thoughts with negative and discouraging messages that do not belong to us. God wants to fill our minds with comforting, peaceful, encouraging, and loving messages.

Try this:

- Take a pad of small paper notes.
- Write down the negative messages in your head—the thoughts that often come to mind and make you feel sad, alone, worthless, and hopeless. These are not from God. You can let them go.
- Put them in piles of themes or similar messages.

- Look at the thoughts and think about the ways in which they are untrue. Would you say these things to your best friend? No.
- Throw them all away or burn them in a fire. When these thoughts come to your mind again, reject them quickly and imagine that you are taking them out of your mind and throwing them away.
- Read Philippians 4:8. Paul tells us to focus our minds on positive and uplifting thoughts.
- Take a pad of small paper notes.
- Write down any encouraging, comforting, loving, forgiving, and hopeful thoughts that the Holy Spirit brings to your mind. Focus on these beautiful thoughts and think about how true they are.
- Keep them in a beautiful box and add more positive thoughts, Bible verses, and kind messages from what people say to you and write to you.
- Whenever a discouraging and painful thought comes to mind, replace it with one of these beautiful truths. By doing this, you are taking your thoughts captive, rejecting the ones that are not from your loving Father in heaven, and choosing to listen to His loving care for you.

Be an Advocate

- People who have experienced abuse need an advocate who can speak up for them, and speak out on their behalf, defending them and working for justice (Micah 6:8).
- The more people who will speak out to defend those who have been abused, the safer the world will become.
- We need to be people who love mercy, do justly, and walk humbly with a compassionate God, who cares for the suffering of every creature in the universe—especially His beloved children who have experienced trauma and abuse.

Remember

Keep being there for those who are hurting—praying, loving, listening, comforting tears, soothing fears, and caring for them with great compassion.

Discussion Questions:

- What have you learned about showing compassion today?
- How will you show compassion to everyone you meet this week (because you do not know what kind of pain they are experiencing)?
- How can we be the most compassionate church in our community?
- Every time you show compassion to someone else, you are showing them that God loves them and cares for them. Each act of compassion is an act of mission.

Prayer—Broken Heart Prayer

Prepare for this prayer by cutting a paper heart for each person in the group. Cut short strips of adhesive tape, slightly longer than the widest part of the paper hearts. If you can find pretty tapes, or gold tape, this is even better. Stick one end of each short tape to the edge of a table, broom handle, or yardstick so that people can easily take a piece of tape. Also provide pencils or pens for writing.

- Ask each person to take a paper heart, a piece of tape, and a pencil.
- Invite them to write on their heart the name of a person who is sad, hurting, traumatized, or abused (or just their initial).
- Then ask them to tear the heart to illustrate the person's broken heart.
- Invite everyone to hold the broken pieces of their heart in their hands.
- Pray a short prayer, placing all the broken hearts into God's hands for healing. Pray that each person in the group will show compassion to the hurting ones and work with God's Holy Spirit to comfort them and help to heal the broken hearts.
- Then ask everyone to take their piece of tape and stick their torn hearts back together, as a reminder that God longs to mend all our brokenness and soothe our hearts.
- Close by reading Revelation 21:4 and Ecclesiastes 3:11 as a reminder that one day, God will wipe every tear from our eyes and make everything beautiful in His time.

—End of Seminar—