

## Care for the Afflicted – Being Compassionate

*“Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.” Col 3:12 – 17 (NIV)*

We are called to love one another. We are called to love our neighbours as ourselves. We’re called to love one another as Jesus loves us. We are called to act justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. What that means is that we need to be attentive to suffering.

We need to be empathetic, and we need to care for the afflicted. We need to be completely covered (clothed) with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

But what does this look like in our everyday life? How do we do this?



WHEN SOMEONE IS BROKEN, DON'T TRY  
TO FIX THEM.  
(You can't.)

WHEN SOMEONE IS HURTING, DON'T  
ATTEMPT TO TAKE AWAY THEIR PAIN.  
(You can't.)

INSTEAD, LOVE THEM BY WALKING  
BESIDE THEM IN THE HURT.  
(You can.)

BECAUSE SOMETIMES WHAT PEOPLE  
NEED IS SIMPLY TO KNOW THEY AREN'T  
ALONE.

### Characteristics of Carers

- Caring
  - Compassionate
  - Takes action
  - Proactive
  - Take responsibility
  - Willing to be inconvenienced
  - Generous
  - Non-judgmental
  - Diligent/Persistent
  - Humble
  - Empathy
  - Perceptive
  - Merciful/forgiving
  - Selfless
  - Hospitable
  - Strong
  - Self-controlled
  - Joyful
- **Everyone** is important and needs care

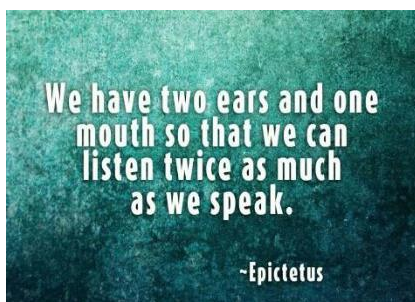
## PRACTICAL SKILLS

### STEP 1 PRAYER

- **In everything:** *Never stop praying.* 1 Thess 5:17
- **Nehemiah:** *Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered . . .* Neh 2:5
- **Job:** *prayed for his friends.* Job 42: 10
- **Jesus:** *I have prayed for you.* Luke 22:32
- **Paul:** *not stopped praying for you* Col 1: 9-11

STEP 2 OFFER CONFIDENTIALITY – this is crucial for their trust in you.

STEP 3 LISTEN



- \* Create a 'safe space' for conversation (quiet, confidentiality, enough time, comfortable place, timing)
- \* Listen to understand, not to respond
- \* Listen to hear what is actually being said/read between the lines
- \* Watch your body language, that you're open and welcoming, not closed and judgmental.
- \* Use silence – it may feel awkward at first, but it is truly amazing how it gives the speaker time to think through their problem and start speaking again. It's their time, their opportunity to think and speak.

STEP 4 RESPOND

- PRAY quietly to God for help BEFORE you open your mouth!!
- What should I say?
- As little as possible
- Not about yourself
- Validation: *'this is real & it hurts'*
- Normalise: *'you're not weird to feel like this/it's understandable'*
- Paraphrase/summarise
- Ask questions to understand – not to pry. Open ended questions to encourage them to open up and talk. And not so many questions that they feel they are on trial.  
 For example: *How does this make you feel? Do you think that perhaps . . .? Do you feel angry when . . .?*
- AVOID: Blaming, criticizing, judging
  - Advice giving, moralizing, preaching
  - Arguing
  - Using yourself as a reference point
  - Jumping in to reassure, comfort and console (saving/rescuing)
  - Jumping to conclusions
  - Finishing their sentences
  - Interrupting
  - Fidgeting

## Watching the time

- Touch – this needs to be very carefully managed. Touch is such an important part of our human relationships but can very easily be misconstrued. Please be very cautious and appropriate.
- Action: ‘Actions speak louder than words’

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” 1 John 3:18

Your presence and compassionate listening may be enough. Maybe they need a good cry and some tissues. Maybe they need you to follow up on something to help them. Maybe they need help solving a problem. Be kind. Be generous. Be Jesus to them. I always try to think “What if this was Jesus sitting here in front of me? How would I treat him?” I know I would do my absolute best I could.

If you’re struggling or it’s a crisis, ask some for help from someone who is able to assist, but always ensure you ask the person for permission to look for other assistance.

### Step 5 – PRAY TOGETHER. End on a positive note.

Father,

*We will not stop praying for each other. May we continually ask You to fill us with the knowledge of Your will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that we may live a life worthy of the You and Jesus, and to please You in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of You, and being strengthened with all power according to Your glorious might so that we may have great endurance and patience. In Jesus precious name, Amen*  
(Col 1:9-11)

Cathy Strachan

