

“A Compassionate Heart”

Growing up on a farm in Eastern Oregon, we had various irrigation methods for our field crops, including low-cost moveable pipe with sprinklers (“handlines”). “Push...Pull; Push...Pull” was my mother's mantra as she and I changed the 25 sections of pipe in the hot sun and fastened them with locking water-tight clamps. The handlines were connected to a stationary main water line. There were dry intervals between irrigation sessions when the water line was turned off. During this time, irrigation pipes were disconnected and lying on the ground, affording frogs, gray field mice, and wild bunnies a water source and much-needed safety from prey. Before we set the handlines each morning, Mother and I would pick up the pipe, inspect the inside, and ensure no critters were inside when reconnected. Always tight on time, Mother could have been indifferent or callous, but she was not.

Recently, I reflected on this childhood lesson in compassion and asked myself two formidable questions: “Do I live a compassionate lifestyle that entails caring for the person, plant, and animal kingdom by actively seeking ways to minimize their suffering? Do I exude congruency between my beliefs about compassion and my behaviors?” If truth be told, I fall woefully short because my opinions and judgments are far easier to formulate than compassion.

If you long to be compassionate, as I do, I have fantastic news: Compassion is a virtue and a quality that can be further developed! Much like a muscle, it can atrophy or strengthen. I chose the latter and studied the scriptures that tell of Jesus, our ultimate example, time and again, caring for the helpless, hurting, and suffering. Various scriptures give direct commands to us, including *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity”* (NIV, 2011, Col. 3:12-14) and *“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be*

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sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble” (NIV, 2011, 1 Pet. 3:8).

Glory be to the Lord for his gift of compassion!

By Remi Smith, founder and CEO of Compassionate Caring Ministries, whose mission is "To bring compassion, love, and support to parents whose adult child identifies as transgender."