THE GIFT OF BIBLICAL SELF-COMPASSION

WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION?

How enduring is God's loyal love! The Eternal has inexhaustible compassion. (Lamentations 3:22 VOICE)

Taken from its Latin roots, compassion means *to suffer together*. Do we believe we are alone when we suffer, make a mistake, or fail – or do we listen to the Holy Spirit who whispers about Emmanuel (*God with us*)? Our Emmanuel promises He is with us always (Matthew 28:20), He will never leave nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6), and in Him there is no condemnation in Christ (Romans 8:1).

We feel drawn to help alleviate another's suffering when we think of compassion. Yet we engage in negative self-talk and berate ourselves for making a mistake, failing, or misunderstanding instead of offering that same compassion to ourselves. Too often, we treat no one as poorly as we treat ourselves.

Recognizing and acknowledging that Jesus suffers with us (that we are God's beloved children who are *also* flawed by sin) is a first brave step towards self-compassion.

When we learn to embrace God's unfailing love for us, we begin to understand that self-compassion isn't selfish. Instead, it is life-giving comfort, kindness, love, and care flowing from the Father's heart into and through ours to others.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

Self-compassion is seeing ourselves as God sees us, not self-indulgently, but truly self-accepting, recognizing that we are flawed *and also* overwhelmingly and perfectly loved.

Sometimes, we are the ones who need compassion the most.

7 POSITIVE STEPS TOWARD SELF-COMPASSION

1. **HONOR YOUR FEELINGS.**
   Acknowledge your feelings and allow yourself to *feel* them. For help identifying emotions, visit chronic-joy.org/emotions-wheel.
2. **ASK:** How would I treat a friend in a similar situation?
3. **IDENTIFY WHAT YOU NEED.**
   Are you hungry, lonely, or exhausted? Sometimes, acknowledging what we need is the first step in a positive new direction.
4. **SPEAK WORDS OF COMPASSION TO YOURSELF.**
   Recognize critical self-talk and substitute it with one good thing about yourself. If that is difficult in the moment, write a few positive comments on sticky notes and place them where you'll see them often.
5. **BE CURIOUS.**
   Asking *what* instead of *why* invites us to learn from challenging situations. Be curious about the voice in your head. Often, it stems from something we were told in childhood.
6. **READ GOD'S WORD.**
   I will erase their sins and wicked acts out of My memory as though they had never existed. (Hebrews 10:17 CEV) If God can forgive and forget, so can we.
7. **TRY WRITING.**
   Explore a variety of options through journaling. Writing from a place of acceptance and compassion can be a powerful tool.

Self-compassion is an act of faith, forgiveness, trust, hope, and generosity. Recognizing who created us and whose we are, acknowledging that we are eternally purposed, and believing that we have hope as long as we have breath gives us comfort and confidence. We are all beautiful works in progress this side of heaven.

PRAYER FOR SELF-COMPASSION

Heavenly Father, I know I utter judgments and negative, demeaning words to myself. I long for peace, for a mind and heart that are settled and no longer stirred up or rife with conflict. I come to You seeking forgiveness and help. Teach me to see myself the way You see me (with unending love and kindness from a deep well of compassion) so that I might learn to love others as I learn to truly love myself. In Jesus' name, amen.