

Church News

Show a little compassion along life's way

One of the many things that my wife does with the children at church is making cards of encouragement for the sick and those going through hard seasons in life. With a little guidance, every child is able to add a personal expression through words, drawings, and sometimes for the youngest ones just some simple scribbling. It is not about making a masterpiece, but it's about providing something to brighten the day of someone in crisis.

A couple of weeks ago as they made cards for a lady in the community who is going through a difficult health battle, Gale brought one of the cards to my attention. It contained a beautiful note expressing love, hope, and comfort. The little ten year old expressed her thoughts well as she reached out to the sick lady through her self-designed and hand written card. It was a lovely act of compassion.

In the world of turmoil that we live in, compassion is needed more than ever. With so much fear and panic about the virus pandemic, many aspects of our daily activities have been disrupted or eliminated. And then images of evil deeds taking place in so many places are constantly being flashed before our eyes. Surely those conditions make the need for genuine compassion greater than ever before.

I came upon a definition for com-



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passion that expressed it as "Sympathy, pity, and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others." That is a suitable description of compassion, but from a Christian perspective, it seems to come up a bit short. Compassion as God would have us to exercise it is more than pity and concern, but it goes the next step and does something about the needs of the suffering and misfortunate. Jesus Christ demonstrated that well while He was on earth. He provided guidance for the spiritually confused, nourishment for the hungry, and healing for broken hearts and bodies.

Matthew records a clear example of the compassion of Christ as He looked at the crowds in their religious confusion and lack of accurate spiritual guidance: "When He [Christ] saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36, New International Version). Certainly it was an expression of His pity and concern for the misfortunes of the people, but it was more than that. In His compassion He took steps to do something about it and

provide a solution for them to follow to give them true spiritual guidance for their lives. What did He do? He instructed His disciples to pray for God to provide reinforcements to help bring Biblical direction to the lives of those who were in such a helpless and vulnerable condition.

In His compassion, Christ was also concerned about the basic physical necessities of the people. On one occasion the Bible says that "Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, 'I have compassion for these people; they have already been with Me for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way'" (Matthew 15:32). Again, He had pity for those in need, but it was not merely an emotional response — He took action. By the divine power of God, He took a few fish and a little bread and fed a huge multitude.

Of all the great expressions of compassion demonstrated by Christ - and there are many - the greatest of all was Him giving His life on the cross to pay for our sins. Romans 5:8 describes it clearly: "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." When we accept His gift of eternal life by believing on Him, we get a personal taste of His compassion. He saw our need for deliverance from sin and only He could do something about it — and He did. As we follow Him, it should be our goal to demonstrate His compassion to those in need. When we become more like Christ, we become more compassionate.



What to do when social distancing meets social anxiety

You know that anxious feeling when you're not sure what others think of you, leaving you with a sneaking suspicion that you're making a fool of yourself? It's called social anxiety. And while everyone has some social anxiety, for many, high social anxiety gets in the way of meaningful social connections and quality of life.

So what happens when social distancing policies tell you to stay away from people? For those with high social anxiety, this likely comes as a big relief. However, even though less pressure and opportunity to socialize may ease anxiety for the time being, the reality is that the best way to beat social anxiety for good is to stay engaged with meaningful social activities, even when you feel anxious.

Why does staying engaged help? Decreased social contact lets anxiety incubate and makes it harder to make and maintain progress. Research shows that the more you avoid what you fear, the more anxiety builds up over time, making it even harder to engage going forward. Also, avoiding social interaction can cause isolation and loneliness, which increases the chance of developing depression.

What to do:

Be kind to yourself. Even if social anxiety is low, other types of anxiety may be high due to changing daily routines, financial stress, and uncertainty around health and safety. Recognize the sources of your anxiety and try to balance short-term soothing and self-care activities with occasional nudges outside your comfort zone that can help you make long-term progress towards overcoming social anxiety.

Remember your long-term goals. When this crisis has passed and you resume your usual activities, what specifically would you like to be able to do that social anxiety typically gets in the way of? Initiate social plans? Speak up at work? Go on dates? It may help to focus on one or two long-term goals that are most important for you, even if it may take a while to get there.

Take small steps now. Based on your long-term goals, what small steps could you take right now? For example, if initiating group social plans is important to you but you typically avoid it, start by reaching out to one friend or family member to schedule a video chat. After practicing that a few times, move on to initiating a virtual get-together for two or three people. The goal is to create a series of mini-challenges for yourself to do things that you know are safe, that will improve your quality of life, but that you typically feel some anxiety while doing and/or tend to avoid altogether. Before each mini-challenge, try to figure out what you're most worried will happen, and afterwards, reflect on what actually happened. Was the outcome you feared as likely or as catastrophic as you thought it would be?

Adapt for social distancing. Take a moment to assess what aspects of your current life circumstances may be causing social anxiety as well as what activities you may be unnecessarily avoiding because of social fears. If use of technology (e.g., video conferencing, phone calls) increases anxiety, it can help to practice using the technology without a social anxiety challenge first. Alternately, if use of technology makes social situations easier, use this as an opportunity to really challenge yourself, perhaps by making a small mistake on purpose to see if it's as bad as you thought it would be. And remember: when you hear social distancing, think distant socializing!

Celebrate your accomplishments. Stepping out of your comfort zone to challenge anxiety is hard. You should expect to feel anxious when doing these exercises, and that's okay! Make sure to notice what you learned (e.g., "it's not as bad as I thought") and celebrate your successes, no matter how small.



Out on a Limb . . . By BO McLeod

I imagine you've noticed it before, but the fact is that all weathermen are pessimists.

They always say a day will be partly cloudy, when, if the prediction is true, they could as well say it will be partly fair.

I don't blame them for looking on the bad news side. Anyone who has to predict weather like we're having now naturally turns sour now and then.

They call them Dog Days because that's what the weather often is not fit for.

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A lot of people have been urging Gov. Maddox to obey and enforce the law, whether he likes it or not, and they have been especially insistent that he obey federal decisions, decrees, laws and guidelines.

But they were not talking about state liquor laws, Lester, that's different!

Now some of them are asking for the impeach-

ment of the Gov. because he stopped the drinking at midnight Saturday.

Yes, kids, times have changed a bit. In the old days they kicked folks out of office (only on rare occasions, of course) for stealing, fraud, or crimes of moral type. Now the trend is to stamp out the stamp outers.

It's interesting to sit here and observe the childish ways some of the Atlanta folks are showing, now they've decided Lester has quit preaching and gone to meddling. They sound like they've had a little too much to drink, proving you can get enough before midnight to sound goofy.

If it's any consolation, research has proved that a person who can't get smashed by midnight is not really trying, anyway, and it is doubtful if two more hours will help much.

Oh, I doubt this uproar over when to stop roaring, midnight or two a.m., will

worry Gov. Maddox much. Certainly not enough to drive him to drink, or anything like that.

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The McLeods at my house went to the big city the other day, and I know again how true it is that "getting there is half the fun". It's more than half. Getting back is all the fun.

After seeing and being a part of some of that fast traffic up there, it's easier to understand why the natives want to keep the bars open later. They want to stay off the roads as long as they can.

Thank goodness, Donalsonville doesn't have a freeway, an interstate circle, raceway, drag strip, or whatever it is they call that thing. We'd never get any work done, and darn little playing.

I don't know where all those speedy folks were going, along the way, but it didn't take them long to get

there.

Come to think of it, they were probably in such a hurry to get there, so they could hurry back, so they could go again, so they could keep those roads filled.

I didn't see many other drivers with a wife and three daughters coaching them, come to think of it, and I wonder how they made it.

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There's a little talk going around in various places, about changing the times for all holidays and placing them on Mondays every time. This makes sense, but it is not enough.

Monday is a busy time for some places, while Fridays are a little slower. So let's take Fridays and Mondays, too, and aim toward eventually working one day a week and resting six.

What with automation, machines, computers, it is ridiculous to keep working so much, that's my platform.

As a weekly celebration of the 2020 Seminole County Centennial Year, enjoy this selection of long time editor Bo McLeod's *Out on a Limb*, reprinted from the August 10, 1967 edition of the *Donalsonville News*



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