

Compassion: (definition) a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

DQ #1: Discuss an experience you have had when you gave or received or witnessed compassion.

Article:

- 1) Mother Teresa knelt beside the man lying in the gutter of a Calcutta street. His eyelids flickered; his breath came in gasps. He was so thin his ribs looked like a bird cage. The small woman wearing the white sari with blue stripes knew the man was dying.
- 2) "Taxi!" she called in Hindi. When a taxi stopped, she said, "Take me to the hospital with this man – quickly." The taxi driver took one look at the man's diseased body and drove off without them. After several more tries, Mother Teresa gave up and borrowed a wheelbarrow from a workman. She lifted the lying man into the wheelbarrow and wheeled him to the nearest hospital.
- 3) But the hospital wouldn't take him, either. "We can do nothing for him," they said. "We only have room for people who might get better."
- 4) Mother Teresa shook her head sadly and took the man home with her. "No one should die alone and unloved," she told the other Missionaries of Charity. "We need a home where the very ill can die in peace." She went to city officials and asked help in funding someplace to care for the dying. They showed her some rooms that travelers had used who came to visit the Temple of Kali, a Hindu goddess. The rooms were filthy and needed cleaning, but Mother Teresa immediately accepted. She named the new home Nirmal Hriday, "Place of the Pure Heart", and went to work cleaning it up. Soon the Home for the Dying was full of men and women no one else wanted to help.
- 5) But some of the neighbors were angry. They thought a Catholic missionary was corrupting their Hindu temple. One day a group of tough young men blocked Mother Teresa's way. "If you don't leave, we will kill you!" they threatened. Mother Teresa shrugged. "If you kill me, I will just get to heaven sooner," she said. Puzzled that she wasn't afraid, the young men backed off.
- 6) But still the neighbors complained. They sent a policeman into the Nirmal Hriday to kick out the nuns. The policeman strode into the Home for the Dying, ready to do his job. As he looked around the first room, he saw two young women gently washing the dirt from an old man just off the street. Another woman was feeding a feeble man who could hardly swallow. She had to try many times.
- 7) "Don't you get tired?" the policeman asked her
"How can I get tired?" she smiled. "This is Jesus in a distressing disguise."
Nearby another woman was tenderly stroking the face of a man with sores all over his body. The man lifted his eyes to the policeman. "I have lived like an animal on the street," he whispered hoarsely, "but I die like an angel, loved and cared for."
- 8) The policeman finally found Mother Teresa. She was carefully picking maggots from an open wound in a man's face, talking soothingly to him the whole time. Turning on his heel, the policeman went back outside. "I will throw out these nuns," he said glaring at the complaining neighbors, "when your mothers and sisters take their place and do what they're doing for people who are dying."

DQ #2: What impacted you most from this story?

DQ #3: What character traits hinder compassion within us? (Why is it difficult to be compassionate?)

DQ #4: What do you think helps or causes people to become more compassionate?

DQ #5: Why do you think that compassion is a strong theme in Christianity?

Quotes:

- Jesus said, "You must be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate." (Luke 6:36)
- Jesus quotes, "I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices." (Matthew 9:13)
- "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."
- "Compassion is the basis of all morality"

- “Make no judgments where you have no compassion.”