

Sustainable Compassion: A Retreat for Caregivers

John Pavlovitz

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Matthew 9:35-38

Today, we will sit with two wounds:

the wounds _____ and the wounds _____.

The central questions:

How can we have a compassionate heart for people/ their pain, and not _____?

How can we fight in a way so that we are not _____ by the fight?

How can we live a lifestyle of _____ compassion?

There is a personal cost to compassion, there is a price tag to cultivating empathy in days when cruelty is trending.

Some of the symptoms of compassion fatigue:

irritability, impatience, physical illness, eating emotionally, addictive behavior, the inability to be present to the people who love you, an obsession with social media, a fixation on how bad things are.

Compassion:

is a _____ of yourself on behalf of someone else. (There is a subtraction.)

can make you _____ and _____ ill. (It is embodied.)

The word we translate as *compassion* has its original roots in the word _____.

Reflection Question:

What "twists you in your bowels" as you do this work?

3 Barriers to Sustainable Compassion:

1) _____

There are three kinds of fear:

Real: a genuine present threat that needs to be appropriately addressed.

Imagined: a threat that we are creating right now that does not exist.

Anticipated: a future threat that we believe is coming and alters our present.

Key to overcoming: Look for the _____.

“Of all the liars in the world, sometimes the worst are our own fears.” — Rudyard Kipling

2. _____

Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are. - Augustine of Hippo:

Question: Is there such a thing as _____ anger?

Aristotle:

‘Anybody can become angry - that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.’

The _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____ of my anger matter.

Anger Practices:

1) _____, before we enter into the trenches.

2) Invite _____ into our initial anger.

3) _____ our anger into something else.

3) FATIGUE

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the

unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Matthew 11:28-30 The Message

Sustainable Compassion Toolbox

1. Engage and withdraw.
2. Mount and dismount social media.
3. Practice strategic levity.
4. Get in the body.
5. Follow your muse.
6. Take a hope inventory.
7. Cultivate gratitude.
8. Know who you aren't.
9. Share the load.
10. Do daily maintenance.