

BOOK REVIEW

Boundless Compassion

By Joyce Rupp

Reviewed by Deacon Kathy Paisley, CENetwork of the ELCA

Boundless Compassion is the ultimate Christian guide to living the compassionate life Jesus talked about and modeled throughout the Gospels. Joyce Rupp has written many great books on living the spiritual life. She has even been called a midwife to women's spirituality, but this book is her most compelling and life changing yet. She encourages and inspires readers to the kind of love that motivated Jesus' life and his mission with his disciples. She heightens our awareness to develop a new consciousness for our hurting world.

Rupp's book is written as a six-week daily study guide and can be read by an individual for personal reflection and is also a great resource for small or large group discussion too. Week One starts with a broad survey of compassion as a way of life. Awareness, attitude, and action are the three essentials that comprise the movement of compassion. With our awareness of suffering that is all around us, and an attitude of wanting to alleviate it, we then choose to act in a positive way for the benefit of all beings. Sounds easy right? Or does it sound too good to be true? Rupp's encouragement in this book is compelling!

Rupp's knowledge of human behavior speaks to compassion as being fully immersed in the condition of being human. Especially life changing for me were the readings for Week Two as she explores the whole issue of self-care, where all compassion must originate. We must learn to open our hearts to ourselves as beloved children of God before we can truly love another. We learn the difference between self-compassion and self-centeredness. Rupp helped me understand that compassion is an inside-out movement! Especially helpful is how she lays out a way of life that prevents compassion fatigue. In ministry and in life, I have been there.

Throughout the book she shows that, "Compassion includes all of life. Humans are not the only receptors of our empathy. We owe our kindness to each and every part of what makes up our environment. There exists nothing that is unworthy of the touch of our compassionate and protective care. The suffering of one part of life touches all the other parts." Rupp draws from many sources, other authors on compassion, and personal examples to write this wonderful book that for me was life changing.

At the end of each daily reading is a reflection, prayer and "Scripture to carry into your heart today." At the end of each week is a section entitled "Review and Rest" that helps the reader savor and digest the insights of the week. This essential book for all followers of Jesus Christ provides a new lens to view and respond to our hurting world.