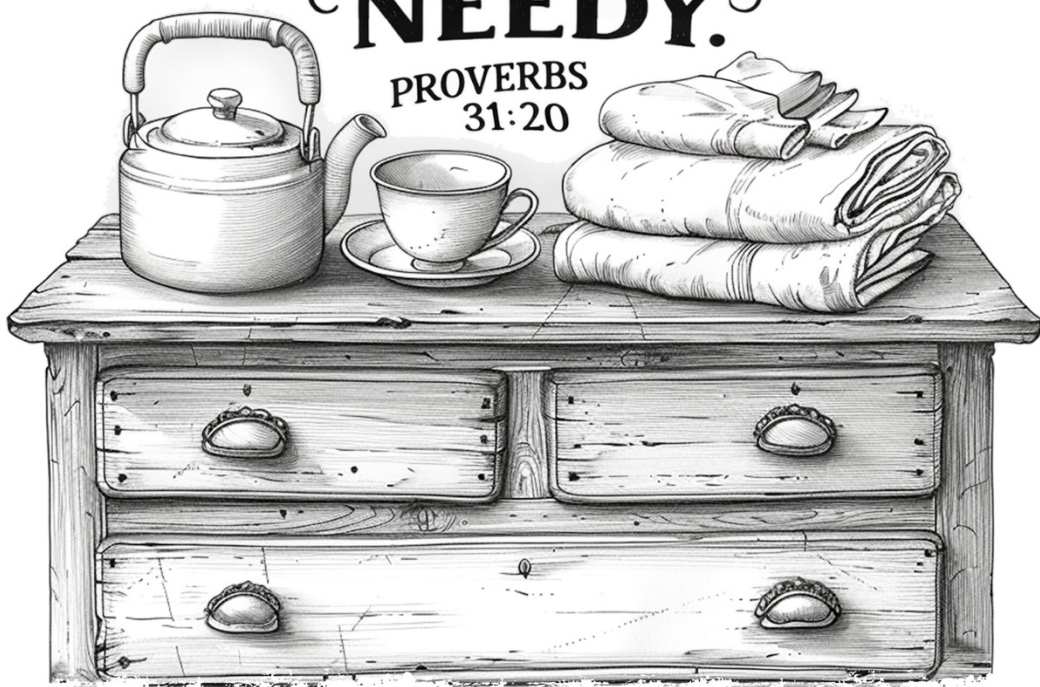


**SHE**  
*opens*  
*her* **ARMS**  
TO THE  
**POOR** *AND*  
*extends*  
*her* **HANDS**  
TO THE  
**NEEDY.**

PROVERBS  
31:20





## CHAPTER 4

# *She is Compassionate*

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: MARK 8:1-10 & LUKE 10:25-37

*I was sitting inside a McDonald's one day,* when I noticed a woman on the other side of the glass. She was pushing a cart, which only got her so far. You know—the ones that lock up when you reach the red line.

Accepting the fact that she couldn't move on, the old woman picked up her bags, trying to carry far more than she could. After watching her drop some and pick them back up I couldn't help but feel sorry for her. I desperately wanted to help—but the glass between us, was barring my way. Getting from my spot to her would be a loop through the mall with four kids in tow. Helpless, I watched as countless people walked by—not one of them stopping to help.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not any better than them. In fact, I wonder how many people, like her, I've passed by. Days I've been too busy to notice someone in need. Too focused on myself to see someone else. I wonder how many times I've stepped back when I should have stepped up.

## SHE IS GOD'S HANDS AND FEET

That day brings me back to Luke 10. Jesus describes a man left beaten on the road. A priest sees him and passes by. A Levite does the same. Then a Samaritan comes along—and Jesus says he was moved with compassion. He doesn't just notice. He gets close. He helps. He gives his time, his energy, his resources, and he stays long enough to make sure the man is truly cared for.

That's the difference between compassion and empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand what someone else is feeling. But compassion goes a step further. The word itself carries the idea of "suffering with." Not in a dramatic way, but in a practical one—where your heart moves toward someone's pain. In a sense it's being God's hands and feet in this world.

Throughout scripture we see people moved with compassion:

- When Boaz let Ruth glean in his field.
- When Noah's sons covered their father.
- When Jonathan gave David his armor.
- When Abigail fed David's army.
- When Moses protected the daughters of Jethro and watered their flock.
- When a woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.
- When Rebekah drew water for Abraham's servant's camels.
- When Ahimelek the priest gave bread to David and his men.

What stands out in each one of their stories is that compassion didn't stay in their hearts—it showed up in their hands. They gave food, protection, water, dignity, and practical help. Most of them didn't have to do it. They chose to. And that's often where compassion becomes clear—when it costs us something, interrupts us, or calls us to get involved.

## SHE TAKES A SMALL STEP OF FAITH

Some days compassion comes easy. Other days it takes intentional effort. It moves us from noticing pain to entering it—and that comes with a cost. Whether it's time, energy, money, convenience, emotional strength, or a shift in our plans, we're not always willing to pay.

Perhaps some of these reasons might speak to you:

- **We feel helpless.** When a problem is big—grief, addiction, poverty, mental illness—we don't always know what to do, and so we pull back.
- **We're tired.** When you're depleted, even small needs can feel heavy.
- **We're afraid of getting pulled in.** Compassion can mean messy conversations, ongoing needs, or the risk of being taken advantage of.
- **Judgment creeps in.** If we think someone's suffering is their fault, compassion gets blocked. We may offer advice instead of kindness.

And then there's the difficult people—the ones that make us want to walk away instead of moving toward them. A P31 Woman is mindful that “hurt people hurt.” They may not say, “I'm lonely,” or “I'm scared,” or “I feel unseen.” Instead, it comes out as sarcasm, impatience, control, or cruelty. That doesn't make it acceptable—but it does help her understand why compassion is necessary. And so, she looks past the surface to see what God sees.

It's the choice to listen when we'd rather rush. It's a gentle answer when we're tempted to snap back. It's choosing to be present instead of pretending we didn't notice. The Bible tells us,

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

—Colossians 3:12

But, how do we do that when we're feeling helpless, tired, or afraid of what we're getting pulled into? We start with a small step of faith—just one—before moving on to the next. Perhaps it might be a kind text, a meal you're dropping off at their house, or sitting with someone for ten minutes—not to fix them, but just to be with them.



Mark 8:1-10

What does the feeding of the 4,000 teach us about our limitations when it comes to compassion?

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James 2:15-17

What example does James give of need, and what does he say is missing when compassion stays only in words?

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2 Corinthians 1:3-4

What does God do for us in our troubles, and what are we then able to do for others?

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Colossians 3:12-13

What five qualities are believers told to 'clothe' themselves with, and what two instructions are given for how to treat each other?

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## SHE STEPS INTO THE MESS

I've shared before that I've had five miscarriages. What I haven't really talked about is 1995. That year holds a particular kind of weight.

I was five months along and went in for what should've been a routine appointment. A few days later we had an ultrasound, and that's when we learned our baby was gone. The shock wasn't only the loss—it was the strange, painful limbo that followed, because my body hadn't caught up to what had happened. I was sent home and told that we'd wait a little while, hoping things would resolve naturally. They didn't.

Those days were hard in a way that's difficult to explain unless you've lived it. I still had to move through regular life—errands, small talk, casual questions like, “When are you due?”—while carrying grief that didn't have a place to go. A few days later, I was brought back in for a medical procedure to help my body complete what it couldn't do on its own.

And I'll be honest: that season felt dark, heavy, awkward, lonely. No one knew what to say, really. What do you say when someone is hurting? Sometimes we just don't have words. And, that's why I'm telling you this. Because sometimes, you don't have to have words to show mercy. Sometimes you just have to show up.

And that's what she did.

It was a quiet cold afternoon when compassion showed up at my door. Joanne stood there with a small bouquet of flowers in her hands. She shifted a bit and finally said, “None of us know what to say... but we wanted to give you some flowers.”

That was it. Simple. Honest. No big speech.

It's been 30 years since that day, and I still remember it clearly. Not because she fixed anything. Not because her words made the pain disappear. But because she stepped into the mess with me. She stood there, present and willing, and that presence was its own kind of comfort.

If you've ever hesitated to reach out to someone who is hurting because you're afraid you'll say the wrong thing, can I gently encourage you? You

don't have to have the right words or have some deep insight prepared.

You just need the courage to show up, offer what you can, and let God take it from there.



Have you ever stayed quiet or stepped back because you weren't sure what to say or do? In light of the loaves and fishes, what might it look like to offer Jesus your small "not enough" and trust Him with the rest?

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## SHE IS PLANTED IN HOLY GROUND

Looking back at that time, I see purpose. Suffering is the seed from which compassion grows and it's not till that seed is put into the mud and buried in darkness that compassion takes root.

Some of God's best work takes place in the soil of darkness. It's in that holy ground, that God meets us. His Holy Spirit comforts us, strengthens us, and transforms us in ways we could never imagine.

But there's a purpose to this, I don't want you to miss: the comfort He gives us is meant to flow through us.

As F.B. Meyer once said, "The Holy Spirit does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters."



When you've walked through grief, you recognize it in someone else. You notice the quiet signs others miss—the faraway look, the short answers, the sudden tears that come out of nowhere. Pain gives us a kind of understanding that can't be taught in a book. It softens our edges. It slows down our judgment.



I'm sure we've all missed opportunities to be God's hands and His feet in this world. We've missed the chance to love as He called us to love.

- We stepped back when we should have stepped up.
- We held back when we should have reached out.
- We looked away when we should have drawn near.
- We stayed comfortable when we should have leaned in.
- We stayed silent when we should have stood up for them.
- We passed by when we should have stopped.
- We protected our schedule when we should have made room.
- We kept back what we should have been giving.

But we don't have to stay parked in the guilt of what was. The point isn't to camp out in regret, but to keep our hearts open and our hands reaching out. Life gives us chances to practice—not only in big ways, but in small, ordinary, everyday ways. Maybe it's smiling at the mother in line at the grocery store who looks like she's got too much on her plate. Perhaps it's letting someone in when traffic is backed up for miles. Maybe it's pausing to really listen instead of rushing the conversation along. Perhaps it's sending a quick text that says, "I'm praying for you today." Or, maybe it's choosing a gentle answer when you're tired and your patience is thin.

Because, after all, compassion doesn't have to be loud to be faithful.

## The P31 Challenge

How might remembering that “hurt people hurt” challenge the way you respond to someone who is difficult?

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Choose one small act of compassion each day.

It doesn't have to be big or dramatic—listen without rushing, offer help without being asked, send an encouraging text, or simply show up when it would be easier to walk by. Ask the Lord to help you notice where He's inviting you to be His hands and feet, and take one faithful step.