

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2010

## Mission Tuesday #78



The word compassion has been popping up in front of me all over the place this week...in scriptures and in books I have been reading, on the page-a-day calendar that sits on my desk, in the daily devotional I received today in my email inbox from Charles S. Swindoll. I think God may be trying to get my attention.

At our weekly staff meeting at Mission of Hope this week, we talked about keeping our hearts soft to show compassion to those we serve. I am reminded of the most appropriate and convicting definition of compassion that was given to me by Tom Munckton back in May, and it has stuck with me ever since.

Definition of Compassion given by Henri Nouwen:

*"The word compassion is derived from the Latin words pati and cum, which together mean 'to suffer with.' Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish.*

*Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears.*

*Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human."*

Also...from C. Thomas Davis, *Fields of the Fatherless* "compassion means to get out of the boat of our current circumstances and get into the boats of those who are suffering."

Compassion. Whose boat(s) have you and I climbed in this week?

The more I'm at Mission of Hope, the more I realize just how many people are out there suffering, are lonely, are hurting, are broken, are in misery. God thoroughly touched my heart this week for these dear ones. I saw Him touch others' hearts too.

We lost a dear friend of the Mission this week in a tragic death in Iowa City. Tommy was a good man who was loved by all of us who knew him. He helped with much of the restoring of the Mission of Hope building years ago. At the Mission yesterday, one man in particular was having a difficult time handling Tommy's death. We talked for a long time. Each time he recalled a memory with Tommy, his eyes welled up with tears. He reminisced about conversations those two shared. He recalled being on the same team with Tommy at the Mission of Hope golf outing a couple of years ago. He shared with me how he used to give Tommy rides to different places. We talked about being secure in our eternity. He said he knew Tommy was, and is now in heaven, and some day we would all be reunited with him again. This man has had much loss in his life, and now with another loss...the loss of a friend...I couldn't help but feel compassion for him.

My friend Becky came to volunteer yesterday. Her heart is full of compassion for people normally, but it seems to overflow when she's at the Mission. I am loving watching her experience what few people get to experience...God changing hearts and lives through being involved at Mission of Hope. What a gift she was to so many yesterday!

I was also able to witness what I call a "God thing" yesterday. Tom, Kimmie and I were doing some final cleaning after closing for the day. I saw Dave, one of our Mission friends, come to the door. He knocked and asked to come in and said, "I have something to share with you, Tom and Kimmie." We gathered around him, and he began to share how he felt down and sad all day because he didn't know how he would be able to continue staying at the Mission of Hope Shelter...he didn't know how he was going to come up with the \$3 a day rent. He then showed us a receipt with his name on it, written by Jenny at the Shelter. It was a receipt for seven nights paid at the Shelter. He said, "An angel came in today and took care of me." Here, an anonymous person stopped at the Shelter and paid for a week's stay for him. He fought back tears as we

encouraged him and were so happy for him. He didn't quite know what to say. Someone was filled with compassion for Dave to help him out in this way. What a gift for him and a gift for us to witness! And what a blessing for the "angel" who was filled with compassion to do that! That event will have a lasting impact on me for quite awhile.

That got me thinking...what if each one of us would be so filled with compassion, that we would get into another's boat who's suffering and reach out to help him or her, like this "angel" did? Could we help someone stay at the shelter for a week by giving \$21, or just one night for \$3? Could we dig a little deeper into our pockets to help cover some of the Mission's operating expenses? Could we help a family have meals on their table by donating canned food items for the Mission's Food Pantry? Could we help clothe someone who isn't able to purchase clothes on their own by donating clothes to the Mission, especially since the weather is changing? Could we be willing to listen to someone who needs a friend, like this man who is grieving the loss of Tommy? Could we lead a Bible study at the Mission, and help those who may be seeking/needng the Truth? Could we feed those who are hungry by serving a noon meal at the Mission?

The needs of the people are great. The needs of the Mission are great. But we serve a mighty God whose compassion for His people is even greater. Compassion...I pray God will fill our hearts with it to overflowing, to reach out to those who are needing some of it today.