

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2010

Mission Tuesday #85



I was reading in my Reflections for Ragamuffins daily devotional this week, and one of the readings caught my attention...October 21, Works of Mercy:

"The unglamorous and little-publicized works of mercy: the ministry of small things, feeding and sheltering, visiting the sick and incarcerated, educating, correcting, speaking a healing word, bearing wrongs, listening creatively, counseling, washing dirty feet, praying with people, are all ways of living the life of compassion. This is not minor matter. When Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:48, 'Be perfect . . . as your heavenly Father is perfect,' the same commandment is translated in Luke 6:36 (JB) as: 'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.'"

This day's devotion describes what is going on at Mission of Hope perfectly.

Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.

Compassion from WordIQ.com says, "Compassion is a sense of shared suffering, most often combined with a desire to alleviate or reduce such suffering.

Compassionate acts are generally considered those which take into account the suffering of others and attempt to alleviate that suffering as if it were one's own. In this sense, the various forms of the Golden Rule are clearly based in the concept of compassion."

I had a conversation this week with one of our Mission of Hope patrons and friends that I believe I will never forget.

I have written before about this man...he and I didn't get off to a great start with each other in our first interaction months ago. He didn't like me, and I wasn't too sure about him. :) But this week at lunchtime he shared a little of his life with me. We weren't in any sort of deep conversation...I was just standing by the drinking fountain where I usually do during lunch. He came up to me, explained his side of a situation that happened the day before, and then turned the conversation to his childhood, his father and why his father named him with his first name. I never knew his first name...I've just known him by his nickname. As I was listening to him share, I was shocked and blessed, all at the same time. Shocked of what he was sharing with me about his childhood and father, and blessed that he would be that vulnerable with me!

I asked him if I could call him by his first name and he said a resounding "NO!" As I saw how important this was to him, I told him I would never call him by his first name and asked him how he got his nickname. He shared that story with me which made me smile. He added, "I trust you. I've never told anyone my first name." I told him he could trust me. And I will continue to prove that to him.

After our surprising conversation ended I said silently, "God, what just happened here?" I felt God blessed me with that special conversation, and gave me a little insight into this man's life and his history...something I didn't expect that day, and something that I don't take lightly. No wonder this man lives the life he lives with a childhood like that. No wonder he has to be the "tough guy" on the streets. No wonder he looks sad some days. No wonder...

But, then I thought, "Why should he trust me? He doesn't even know me. He knows my name, and he knows that I'm nice now (instead of mean like he used to think), but why should he trust me?" I felt God enlightened me with the next thought, "You've shown him compassion." Because of the compassion I've shown him, he trusts me. I'm honored that he does trust me, and I will not betray that trust. God gave me such a gift that day and blessed me with that conversation. I won't soon forget it.

Compassion. God is working through Mission of Hope and it's people to show others compassion...to help alleviate their suffering. I continue to be astonished with

the great amount of suffering that is going on in the lives of the people in just our little corner of the world. I wonder many days, "Does the general population really understand how much suffering is taking place in people's lives? Do they really understand? Do they care to understand?"

I challenge each one of us to show compassion to someone who needs it today, tomorrow, this week...to attempt to alleviate their suffering. "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate." Whether you know someone who is suffering or not, I encourage you to come down to Mission of Hope. You'll have lots of opportunities to show those who are hurting compassion, and you'll be blessed beyond your expectations in doing so!