

Too many people have a complex relationship with God mostly due to the context of relationships we have with those who represent God. Sometimes we can base our view of God on what someone says or even the image of fallible parents. We can easily struggle with knowing God because we base it on another's view. Instead of relying on our examples, allow the scripture to show us a different God.

Compassion is a feeling or a showing of sympathy or concern for others with a desire to alleviate the pain. This is our God – with more than just sympathy but with a desire and the means to alleviate our pain. He is concerned with our struggles; He has a desire to alleviate the pain; and also has the means to alleviate. A compassionate God is not helpless to deal with our problems; He is sufficient. But His response is not always as we would like. We think a compassionate God should fix our problems as we think. But He always responds in the way we need.

Exodus 34:6 *Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in faithfulness and truth..."* This is God's first response to a people who have abandoned Him. God responds to their failures - is compassionate. There is nothing that we can do to separate ourselves from the love of God.

It is so important to know what God is like! Why?

1) Knowing what God is like is important because it shows us how to relate to Him. A good example is King David in **Psalm 51**. David falls into sin. God speaks to David through the Prophet Nathan calling out the sin. David's response in **Psalm 51** is not a hope but a calling with confidence on who God is and His lovingkindness and compassion.

We can approach God on a regular basis as we can expect to receive what God says He is – compassion. Our perspective determines our posture. Knowing the compassionate character of God lets us approach Him with boldness, expecting to receive what His nature is.

Psalm 86:15-16 *But You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abundant in mercy and truth. Turn to me and be gracious to me; Grant Your strength to Your servant and save the son of Your maidservant.*

Psalm 116:3-5 *The snares of death encompassed me and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD, "Please, LORD, save my life!" Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate.*

Do we see who God is when it comes to our trials, our difficulties, our struggles? Our God is compassionate to heal.

2) Knowing what God is like is important because we were created like Him. Compassion in us reveals something about God to the world around us. **I Kings 3:16-28** The story of Solomon's wisdom and dividing a baby that two mothers were fighting over. As a result of the compassion of one mother, Solomon knew who the real mother was. When we show compassion, we aren't revealing our concern but God's concern. Compassion reveals the nature of God to the world around of us.

Compassion comes from deep within; from who we were created by. Understanding the source of our compassion drives us to the provision – knowing He will respond.

Psalm 103:8-14 *The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in mercy. He will not always contend with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our guilty deeds. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our wrongdoings from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our form; He is mindful that we are nothing but dust.*

Knowing both who God is and who we are allows us to become what we are called to be. We will never ask for something that we think we don't need. If we can do things on our own, then we won't need God. God knows who we are. Do we know who we are?

3) Knowing what God is like is important because the world needs to know who He is. In the book of **Jonah**, the prophet Jonah was sent to save an entire group of people but he didn't want that to happen. In rebellion, he gets swallowed by a big fish. Jonah in his desperation remembers what God asked him to do, goes to Nineveh, and God relented. **Jonah 4:1-11** *But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. Then he prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was this not what I said when I was still in my own country? Therefore in anticipation of this I fled to Tarshish, since I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in mercy, and One who relents of disaster. So now, LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." But the LORD said, "Do you have a good reason to be angry?" Then Jonah left the city and sat down east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade, until he could see what would happen in the city. So the LORD God designated a plant, and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head, to relieve him of his discomfort. And Jonah was overjoyed about the plant. But God designated a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered. And when the sun came up God designated a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint, and he begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life!" But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to the point of death!" Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant, for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. Should I not also have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 people, who do not know the difference between their right hand and their left, as well as many animals?"*

Jonah thought the people did not deserve compassion. Do we do the same with other people? As we see God give us His compassion, shouldn't we pass it on? Will we have compassion on others?

The Old Testament is a shadow of God revealing His heart to those in His kingdom but also for all people. God meets with compassion anyone who cries out. We can know that He will be compassionate toward us – toward me! We can then be compassionate to others. The world needs God's compassion.

Have you withheld compassion on someone not deserving compassion?

Have you stopped crying out to God thinking He is worn out?

What resources do you need from God who provides all we need?