

### Chapter 1 : Issue 94 | Christian History Magazine

*Contagious Compassion Deadly epidemics and social traumas haunt the news and test the limits of our kindness and courage. How should Christians respond, when the church itself is so divided?*

Newman August 1, Loneliness can strike at any age, although the cause might be different. How Do I Cultivate It? Instead, it can be strengthened through targeted exercises and practice. Here are some specific, science-based activities for cultivating compassion from our new site Greater Good in Action: Cultivate compassion toward a loved one, yourself, a neutral person, and even an enemy.. Put a human face on suffering: When reading the news, look for profiles of specific individuals and try to imagine what their lives have been like. Create reminders of connectedness. Compassion training programs , such as those out of Emory University and Stanford University , are revealing how we can boost feelings of compassion in ourselves and others. Here are some of the best tips to emerge out of those programs, as well as other research. Seeing yourself as similar to others increases feelings of compassion. A recent study shows that something as simple as tapping your fingers to the same rhythm with a stranger increases compassionate behavior. Calm your inner worrier: The practice of mindfulness can help us feel safer in these situations, facilitating compassion. Encourage cooperation, not competition, even through subtle cues: This is a valuable lesson for teachers, who can promote cooperative learning in the classroom. See people as individuals not abstractions: When we blame others for their misfortune, we feel less tenderness and concern toward them. Respect your inner hero: Notice and savor how good it feels to be compassionate. Studies have shown that practicing compassion and engaging in compassionate action bolsters brain activity in areas that signal reward. To cultivate compassion in kids, start by modeling kindness: Research suggests compassion is contagious , so if you want to help compassion spread in the next generation of young men and women, lead by example. Research suggests that as people feel a greater sense of status over others , they feel less compassion.

### Chapter 2 : contagious compassion Archives - Margaret May

*Contagious Compassion These are disturbing times: We cannot escape news of the global AIDS crisis, the impending flu pandemic, the plight of political prisoners, the resurgence of ethnic cleansing and genocide, and the failure of leaders.*

I mean the flu bug. A nasty stomach bug can spread quickly throughout families, schools, and communities. Bugs are relentless and uncontrollable, and they wreak havoc when they enter our lives. Instead of turning our lives upside down like a stomach bug, compassion would make us happier, healthier, and more connected to others. Videos, products, and concepts go viral all the time, thanks to technology and social media. How can we make compassion contagious? Here are some ideas: Thanks to social media, we are connected – for better or for worse. Many campaigns have created awareness and raised funds for important causes. A few examples include: You, too, can use your social media accounts to spread good in the world. Try some of these ideas: Your actions may inspire others. Re-tweet information about compassionate responses to tragedies like the recent Nepal earthquake. There is enough depressing news out there in the world. Actions Speak Louder Than Tweets While social media is an excellent tool for creating awareness and spreading ideas, nothing beats hands-on compassion. Incorporating compassionate actions into your everyday life creates a ripple effect that may impact many. Take a moment and think about a time that someone offered compassion to you. Did that inspire you to do the same for others? She was busy with her own life, to say the least. Tracy lost her dad several years prior, and she felt tremendous empathy for me and offered her compassionate presence. I felt understood and loved, and that is exactly what I needed. Because of Tracy, I have tried to offer the same compassion to friends who lose their loved ones. Small acts of compassion can inspire others, too. When my neighbor texts me to alert me to a package on my doorstep, I seek out ways to be a good neighbor. When my girlfriends take time to listen to the ups and downs of my dating life, I want to lend my ear as a compassionate listener. Your small actions influence those who receive your kindness and also influence those who witness your kindness. Just Sit There I once heard an interview with tennis superstar Martina Navratilova, and she spoke about how visualizations played an important role in her success. She would visualize playing tennis in driving rain, or against strong winds, and she would imagine the ball coming at her from various angles. In her mind, she would handle each ball with skill. Those visualizations prepared her for the real deal, and she dominated on the court. Compassion meditations prepare us to be compassionate superstars. Using various visualizations, we can incline our minds toward compassion when we are faced with suffering. We can imagine opening our hearts to others and providing comfort and compassion instead of being overwhelmed by suffering. Compassion practices open our minds and hearts, and science now indicates that compassion makes us happier, healthier, and even more attractive. Check out this article by researcher Emma Seppala about the scientific benefits of lovingkindness meditation. Find a comfortable, upright position. Gently close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. Return to your normal breathing pace and pay attention to your breath for a few minutes. This will help settle the mind. When you notice your mind wandering which it will! After settling the mind, imagine a loved one standing in front of you. Pay attention to how your body feels when you are with him or her; try to focus on any warm or positive feelings. Imagine sending love, warmth, and light out of your heart to your loved one with each exhale. May you be peaceful. May you live with ease. May we all be peaceful. May we all live with ease. A post-it on a computer screen, an app with alerts, or a wristband can help. We created a simple tool that helps us spread compassion. A reversible black-and-white wristband reminds us to act with compassion every day. Their curiosity often prompts meaningful conversations about the power of compassion. The charter aims to unite everyone in the world under the value of compassion. More than , people around the world have signed the charter, including Richard Branson, the Dalai Lama, Sir Ken Robinson, and others. Learn more and sign the charter here: Once you sign the charter, you can inspire others to sign it by sharing it through social media. Sometimes our society and world will attempt to inoculate us against compassion, but compassion is the ultimate superbug. The byproduct of viral compassion is peace, and our world needs it now more than ever.

**Chapter 3 : Boys and Girls Missionary Challenge**

*Visual mapping of compassionate pro-social behavior Researchers at Stanford University's Center for Compassion, Altruism Research and Education used an open-source mapping tool to see how pro-social behaviors and acts of compassion and kindness affected people who witnessed them in a controlled experiment.*

That suffering, as unpleasant as it is, often also has a bright side to which research has paid less attention: Human suffering is often accompanied by beautiful acts of compassion by others wishing to help relieve it. What propels someone to serve food at a homeless shelter, pull over on the highway in the rain to help someone with a broken down vehicle, or feed a stray cat? What is compassion and how is it different from empathy or altruism? The definition of compassion is often confused with that of empathy. Altruism is an action that benefits someone else. It may or may not be accompanied by empathy or compassion, for example in the case of making a donation for tax purposes. Although these terms are related to compassion, they are not identical. Compassion often does, of course, involve an empathic response and an altruistic behavior. However, compassion is defined as the emotional response when perceiving suffering and involves an authentic desire to help. Is Compassion Natural or Learned? Studies with chimpanzees and human infants too young to have learned the rules of politeness, also back up these claims. They apparently do so from intrinsic motivation without expectation of reward. It appears to be the alleviation of suffering that brings reward – whether or not they engage in the helping behavior themselves. It is not surprising that compassion is a natural tendency since it is essential for human survival. Without it, the survival and flourishing of our species would have been unlikely. One more sign that suggests that compassion is an adaptively evolved trait is that it makes us more attractive to potential mates. The reason a compassionate lifestyle leads to greater psychological well-being may be explained by the fact that the act of giving appears to be as pleasurable, if not more so, as the act of receiving. Giving to others even increases well-being above and beyond what we experience when we spend money on ourselves. This is true even for infants. A new study by Aknin, now at Simon Fraser University, shows that the amount of money spent on others rather than for personal benefit and personal well-being were highly correlated, regardless of income, social support, perceived freedom, and perceived national corruption. Why is Compassion Good For Us? Why does compassion lead to health benefits in particular? We might expect that inflammation would be lower for people with higher levels of happiness. A life of meaning and purpose is one focused less on satisfying oneself and more on others. It is a life rich in compassion, altruism, and greater meaning. Another way in which a compassionate lifestyle may improve longevity is that it may serve as a buffer against stress. One of the reasons that compassion may protect against stress is the very fact that it is so pleasurable. Motivation, however, seems to play an important role in predicting whether a compassionate lifestyle exerts a beneficial impact on health. If you recall a time you were feeling blue and suddenly a close friend or relative calls you for urgent help with a problem, you may remember that as your attention shifts to helping them, your mood lifts. Rather than feeling blue, you may have felt energized to help; before you knew it, you may even have felt better and gained some perspective on your own situation as well. Finally, one additional way in which compassion may boost our well-being is by increasing a sense of connection to others. One telling study showed that lack of social connection is a greater detriment to health than obesity, smoking, and high blood pressure. On the flip side, strong social connection leads to a 50 percent increased chance of longevity. People who feel more connected to others have lower rates of anxiety and depression. Moreover, studies show that they also have higher self-esteem, are more empathic to others, more trusting and cooperative and, as a consequence, others are more open to trusting and cooperating with them. Social connectedness therefore generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional, and physical well-being. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true for those who lack social connectedness. Low social connection has been generally associated with declines in physical and psychological health, as well as a higher propensity for antisocial behavior that leads to further isolation. Adopting a compassionate lifestyle or cultivating compassion may help boost social connection and improve physical and psychological health. Indeed, compassion is contagious. You may have seen one of the news reports about chain reactions that occur

when someone pays for the coffee of the drivers behind them at a drive-through restaurant or at a highway tollbooth. People keep the generous behavior going for hours. Our acts of compassion uplift others and make them happy. Cultivating Compassion Although compassion appears to be a naturally evolved instinct, it sometimes helps to receive some training. Cultivating compassion does not require years of study and can be elicited quite rapidly. In a study Cendri Hutcherson, at the California Institute of Technology, and I conducted in with APS Fellow James Gross at Stanford, we found that a seven-minute intervention was enough to increase feelings of closeness and connection to the target of meditation on both explicit measures, but also on implicit measures that participants could not voluntarily control; this suggests that their sense of connection had changed on a deep-seated level. Fredrickson tested a nine-week loving-kindness meditation intervention and found that the participants who went through the intervention experienced increased daily positive emotions, reduced depressive symptoms, and increased life satisfaction. A group led by Sheethal Reddy at Emory with foster children showed that a compassion intervention increased hopefulness in the children. In addition to questionnaire measures, researchers are finding that compassion interventions also impact behavior. APS Fellow Tania Singer and her team at the Max Planck Institute conducted a study that looked at the effects of compassion training on prosocial behavior. Singer found that daylong compassion training did in fact increase prosocial behavior on the game. Interestingly, the type of meditation seems to matter less than just the act of meditation itself. More research is needed to understand exactly how compassion training improves well-being and promotes altruistic behavior. In addition to having taught hundreds of community members and Stanford students who have expressed interest, we have also developed a teacher-training program currently under way. Given the importance of compassion in our world today, and a growing body of evidence about the benefits of compassion for health and well-being, this field is bound to generate more interest and hopefully impact our community at large. CCARE envisions a world in which, thanks to rigorous research studies on the benefits of compassion, the practice of compassion is understood to be as important for health as physical exercise and a healthful diet; empirically validated techniques for cultivating compassion are widely accessible; and the practice of compassion is taught and applied in schools, hospitals, prisons, the military, and other community settings.

## Chapter 4 : The first step in your journey with One Conversation

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In this adaptation from his talk, Dr. Keltner discusses the evolutionary roots and biological building blocks of human compassion. Charles Darwin was the beloved and engaged dad of a really rambunctious group of children. When one of his daughters died at age 10, Darwin started to have these deep insights about the place of suffering and compassion in human experience. Well, given all the awful things humans do to each other, how could you make the case that sympathy is our strongest instinct? The answer lies in the dependence and vulnerability of our children. Their heads are so big because their brains are so big. To fit their big heads through the human birth canal—which narrowed as we started to walk upright on the African savanna—our babies were born profoundly premature and dependent upon people to take care of them. In fact, our babies are the most vulnerable offspring on the face of the Earth. And that simple fact changed everything. It rearranged our social structures, building cooperative networks of caretaking, and it rearranged our nervous systems. We became the super caregiving species, to the point where acts of care improve our physical health and lengthen our lives. We are born to be good to each other. Are you a vagal superstar? You can see our natural connectivity and compassionate instincts in how our brains react to pain. If you see somebody else suffering, that very same part of the cortex activates. We are wired to empathize, if you will. In mammals, this region is associated with nurturing behavior. We also instinctively want to alleviate that suffering through nurturance. This essay is adapted from a talk by Dacher Keltner. Members of the Greater Good Science Center can watch the entire video of the talk here. We can find another example of how our bodies are wired for compassion in a fascinating part of your autonomic nervous system called the vagus nerve. It then drops down and helps coordinate the interaction between your breathing and your heart rate, then goes into the spleen and liver, where it controls a lot of digestive processes. Recent studies suggest the vagus nerve is related to a stronger immune system response and regulates your inflammation response to disease. The vagus nerve is marked in yellow. Every time you take a deep breath, your heart rate slows down. You see baseball pitchers do this on the mound—they breathe out to calm down, just before they start their windup. The vagus nerve controls that relationship, between the breathing and the calming. In our lab, we show participants photos of suffering and distress and find that these images activate the vagus nerve. If they tell you an inspiring story, their vagus nerve fires. The more you feel compassion, the stronger the vagus nerve response. And that really astounds me. This result tells us that when you feel a strong vagus nerve response, you are feeling common humanity with many different groups. We find that these folks have more positive emotion on a daily basis, stronger relationships with peers, better social support networks. Fifth graders who have a stronger vagal profile are the kids who intervene when a kid is being bullied. There are a lot of data that suggest we are wired to care, down to the neurochemical level. You probably know that breastfeeding mothers release oxytocin and so do men who are engaged in a good long smooch with their sweetheart. But there are also new studies finding that it may induce altruism. If I give 10 dollars to study participants and squirt some oxytocin up their nose, they will share more of that money with a stranger than they would without the squirt. How contagious is compassion?

## Chapter 5 : Contagious Compassion | Christian History Magazine

*Danny's compassion was contagious, just as Paul describes it in 2 Corinthians Paul notes that our "Father of compassion comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." (NIV) And I feel so fortunate that God's compassion for us is new every single day.*

The first images were of physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals diligently and lovingly providing care to sick, contagious patients in West Africa. The next set of images were of a violent, extremist group "holding their assault rifles in the air while waving their flags, celebrating the epitome of hate and violence. How can a single human race be so divided, with people fervently racing toward each end of the spectrum? The answer is quite simple "human beings have a choice whether or not to show compassion and understanding toward others. When we show true compassion, we can make tremendously positive differences in the world. Where compassion and willingness to understand and others is absent, there is a sense of hurt and a longing for love and acceptance. This ultimately appears in a physical form of negativity, including hatred and violence. As Gandhi once stated, we must be the change we wish to see in the world. Accept disagreements and differing opinions. The intricate diversity and differing beliefs of individuals is part of what makes our world a remarkable and interesting place. Debating viewpoints on a particular topic is intellectually healthy and can be quite enjoyable. However, there is a difference between becoming combative verbally, sometimes physically and debating. As thinking creatures, we form opinions on a variety of issues. These opinions are a product of various factors "our environment, home life, upbringing, and intellectual and emotional experiences. Where there are people, there are different opinions. Truly listening to others is a seemingly lost skill for many people today. When in a meeting sometime, notice how many people are swiping and typing away on their phones, looking out the window, or talking to someone else. It is incredibly disrespectful, not to mention discouraging to the person trying to convey their message. To be compassionate means to not just hear, but to listen to others. Making it a point to look someone in their eyes and provide feedback throughout the conversation shows active listening, a tremendous skill to have and one that can show compassion. To empathize with someone does not necessarily mean to sympathize with them. To empathize means to make the conscious attempt to trade places with the person or people in order to gain perspective. Often times, we can show true compassion by just being empathetic. Volunteer for a greater purpose. The biggest differences in our world are often made through groups of determined volunteers. Advocating and volunteering through the giving of yourself and your time is a special kind of compassion. In many ways, time is more precious than money. Regardless of our financial situation, we can make a determined effort to give back through donating our time and efforts towards a greater purpose. It means the simple recognition and appreciation for our differences. One of the beautiful things about the United States, for instance, is the diversity of the population itself. Even today, the U. In fact, most natural born citizens can trace their roots directly to a vast wave of immigration that happened between and How was this possible? We were accepting of other people and welcomed them with open hearts and minds. We should continue to do the same as individuals. Practice acts of kindness. If a daily practice is made of showing kindness, it will eventually become something that is done without much thought and effort. In fact, the satisfaction created by demonstrating these acts of kindness will encourage us to do so more often. Commit to a morning ritual of gratitude. Here is a quote by the Dalai Lama on affirming gratitude and appreciation in the morning. Notice in his quote how he first emphasizes the importance of gratitude and appreciation for life and self-growth before using our energies and abilities to benefit others. In other words, compassion starts with appreciation, gratitude and self-love. I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to expand my heart out to others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, I am going to have kind thoughts towards others, I am not going to get angry or think badly about others. I am going to benefit others as much as I can. Add to the discussion below!

Chapter 6 : Sermon Series: Creating Contagious Compassion - Shared by Ryan Johnson - theinnatdunvilla

*At the end of the day we are all hard on ourselves at times, and something gets in the way of having self-compassion. What gets in the way differs for all of us, and the point still remains that without self-compassion, compassion for others is difficult.*

Frequently asked questions about the This I Believe project, educational opportunities and more [Click here to learn more.](#) Sponsor This Essay It started with a handshake. At the time, I did not know this handshake would turn into a work of contagious compassion. As the game dragged on in the June evening sunlight, my team fell further and further away from winning against this powerhouse. In the last at-bat of the game, I grounded the ball into right field. It took a bad hop and went past the right fielder as I was approaching first base. Coach gave me the go-ahead to move to third. Then, my feet faltered as I rounded second base. After one hard step, I over extended my left quadriceps and let my knees catch my fall. Republic threw the ball in and tagged me out as I scrambled to get back to second base. The game was over, and my team lost. I had become the last out. She gasped for air and winced in pain as her coaches surrounded her. Later in the game, her parents left to take her to the hospital. I felt awful and knew what I had to do. After the game, one of my teammates and I assembled both teams to pray for the injured player. This was my chance to show compassion in hopes of it becoming contagious. I have never seen or talked to either the girls from Republic or the catcher. In fact, we very well may never cross paths again. But, the compassion of a stranger can become contagious, This I Believe. Donate If you enjoyed this essay, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to This I Believe, Inc. Please contact This I Believe, Inc. Seifert and his neighbors discovered that voting was the best tool they had to improve their community. [Click here to read his essay.](#) What Students Believe Throughout the school year, young people around the world write statements of belief as a classroom exercise. [Click here to read a sampling of what young people believe.](#)

**Chapter 7 : The Last Word On Nothing | Redux: Contagious Compassion**

*Compassion Magazine presents 30 days of prayer points and gripping photos to remind and inspire you to pray for people living in poverty. May In this issue, discover how special training helps sponsored children and their families become self-sufficient.*

We cannot escape news of the global AIDS crisis, the impending flu pandemic, the plight of political prisoners, the resurgence of ethnic cleansing and genocide, and the failure of leaders. She lived in a time of almost apocalyptic fear. The Black Death and the institutional convulsions of the Catholic Church caused a devastated populace to cry out. Rebel in Rearing Catherine Benincasa was born in , probably the 23rd of 25 children. As a young girl, she was known for her unquenchable cheer and golden brown hair. At age six, while walking home from church with siblings, she had a vision of Christ smiling and blessing her. The sense of affirmation that God was calling her to ministry was powerful and permanent. On one occasion, she frantically chopped off her hair in hopes of being rejected by a suitor and being taken seriously by her family. She did not want to marry or become a nun, yearning instead to serve God in her own way. Your love should be sincere: After great perseverance, she persuaded her family to let her join the Third Order of Saint Dominic at the age of Seeking purity, humility, and communion with God, she wrestled for three years to gain dominion over her heart and fleshly impulses. Hers was a total surrender, with Word and sacrament as the foundation. These three years concluded with a fervent awakening to the needs of the world outside. Traders carried the infection to the Middle East and Europe. As more than half of the local population in many areas died, traditional social systems broke down and economies were left in upheaval. Dread and depression shrouded the land. One survivor in Siena described the scene: Father abandoned child, wife husband, one brother another, for this illness seemed to strike through the breath and sight. And there were also those who were so sparsely covered with earth that the dogs dragged them forth and devoured many bodies throughout the city. There was no one who wept for any death, for all awaited death. And so many died that all believed it was the end of the world. How did survivors respond? The Florentine author Boccaccio offered readers an escapist world of denial, fantasy, and indulgence. Others relentlessly often religiously reminded people of impending death in literature, the visual arts, dance, and by penitential flagellation. Still others became profiteers in a time of economic scarcity and institutional malaise. Unflinching ministry Catherine would have none of this. Instead, she faced the grim realities and found hope in God as the greatest Reality of all. The result was a courageous, compassionate, and creative path of ministry. In the midst of poverty, terror, and stench, she and her entourage spread the aroma of Christ through selfless service. Catherine resolved to love as Jesus loved in all circumstances. While tending to a widow with breast cancer that had eaten away her flesh, for example, Catherine was overwhelmed by nausea due to the horrible odor. As God lives you shall not remain unpunished! While many she touched were overcome by physical ills, others struggled with injustice and the ills of a devastated society. He asked me to make the sign of the cross over him â€¦ I stretched out his neck and bent down to him, reminding him of the blood of the Lamb. Her nearly surviving letters and other writings bear witness to her widespread influence. She asked questions that others did not dare to ask, and demanded responses. Her communications raised popular awareness, rallied support for change, fostered reconciliation and healing, and unified Christians in service. Catherine actively sought to restore wholeness and find the best possible outcome in each situationâ€”a ministry made possible by her rich, deepening dialogue with God. Next articles Oppressed women around the globe await those willing to carry on the legacy of Pandita Ramabai. Robert Eric Frykenberg What is the role of the government? Can we build a Christian society in this world? Tony Lane Those who fight for religious freedom today stand in a long line of Christian predecessors, including Baptist leader Thomas Helwys. Bradley The difficult choices of Dietrich Bonhoeffer show that, in extreme circumstances, the path to peace may not always be paved with clear ethical answers.

**Chapter 8 : NPR Choice page**

*A compassion contagion isn't out of the question. Videos, products, and concepts go viral all the time, thanks to technology and social media. If planking, "The Evolution of Dance," and "Gangnam Style" (which has had over billion views) can catch on, so can compassion.*

### Chapter 9 : Contagious Compassion | Alicia Allen

*Spread ideas of love and compassion, and resist the temptation to engage in finger-pointing. Be mindful of the words you choose, and choose kindness over being "right". You can inspire others by sharing your own stories and photos of compassion.*