

Rejoicing and Weeping
by
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God's Word says to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. That's compassion in action.

Many sincere Christians, and that includes ministers of the gospel, are ready and willing to rejoice with those who rejoice, but we have a hard time weeping with those who weep. We seem to have a strong need to say something positive, like, "Cheer up, you'll be OK, it's not that bad, things will get better." That's rejoicing with those who weep. We don't say it that bluntly or crudely, but sometimes that's what we do: rejoice with those who weep. It's not compassion.

We would never weep with those who rejoice. When someone says, "I got a good report from the doctor" you don't say, "Well, the doctor probably missed the problem, and you'll most likely be very sick very, very soon." We would never say that, would we? That would be weeping with those who rejoice. It makes no sense. We would say something like, "Wonderful! That's great! Praise God!" That's compassion: rejoicing with those who rejoice.

You don't always have to be a cheerleader. We don't weep with those who rejoice, so let's not feel obligated to rejoice with those who weep. Most people who are sad don't need to be cheered up. They need to know that they are not alone, that someone cares (someone like you), and that someone (like you) is walking with them through their sadness. They need someone to weep with them. They need to hear someone say, "I'm so sorry. Your pain must be incredible. I'll be praying for you. What else can I do to help?" When you enter into their pain and sadness, they feel less alone, and the burden becomes a little easier to bear.

I remember hearing about the military chaplain who, at the funeral of a soldier killed in action, went up to the dead soldier's weeping father, embraced him in his strong arms, held him close, and whispered in the father's ear, "Let me take some of your pain." Then the chaplain held on while the father sobbed, finally releasing some of his pent-up grief and sorrow.

That's compassion in action: walking with someone through their situation, identifying with them, feeling what they are feeling – whatever it is. That's what God has done for us in Christ. He became like us in every respect except sin. He has suffered and been tempted, so He is able to help us when we suffer and are tempted. He understands your struggles and challenges, and He cares for you with almighty love.