

## Chapter 42

# Understanding Others

**Heart Trials of One With Remorse**—When one at fault becomes conscious of his error, be careful not to destroy his self-respect. Do not discourage him by indifference or distrust. Do not say, “Before giving him my confidence, I will wait to see whether he will hold out.” Often this very distrust causes the tempted one to stumble.

We should strive to understand the weakness of others. We know little of the heart trials of those who have been bound in chains of darkness and who lack resolution and moral power. Most pitiable is the condition of him who is suffering under remorse; he is as one stunned, staggering, sinking into the dust. He can see nothing clearly. The mind is beclouded, he knows not what steps to take. Many a poor soul is misunderstood, unappreciated, full of distress and agony—a lost, straying sheep. He cannot find God, yet he has an

intense longing for pardon and peace.

**Powerful Influences Toward Evil**—Oh, let no word be spoken to cause deeper pain! To the soul weary of a life of sin, but knowing not where to find relief, present the compassionate Saviour. Take him by the hand, lift him up, speak to him words of courage and hope. Help him to grasp the hand of the Saviour.... We need to put ourselves in the place of the tempted ones. Consider the power of heredity, the influence of evil associations and surroundings, the power of wrong habits. Can we wonder that under such influences many become degraded? Can we wonder that they should be slow to respond to efforts for their uplifting?—The Ministry of Healing, 167, 168.

Tender Sympathy. Wondrous love, that God, the infinite God, has made it our privilege to approach Him by the endearing name of “Father”! No earthly parent could plead more earnestly with an erring child than He who has made us pleads with the transgressor. No human interest has ever followed the impenitent with such tender

invitations.

Then with what tender sympathy should we labor for those who are erring and sinful, who are perishing around us. We must work in the spirit in which Christ worked, in the compassionate tenderness that He manifested. When we shall, by living faith, claim the promises of God, when we shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, we place ourselves on the side of Christ, and we have His Spirit and His grace to work with our efforts to bring souls to a knowledge of the divine will.—Ms 35, 1886.

**Compassion for the Guilty**—How little do we enter into sympathy with Christ on that which should be the strongest bond of union between us and Him—compassion for depraved, guilty, suffering souls, dead in trespasses and sins! The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin. Many think that they are representing the justice of God while they wholly fail of representing His tenderness and His great love. Often the ones whom they meet with sternness and severity are

under the stress of temptation. Satan is wrestling with these souls, and harsh, unsympathetic words discourage them and cause them to fall a prey to the tempter's power.

It is a delicate matter to deal with minds. Only He who reads the heart knows how to bring men to repentance. Only His wisdom can give us success in reaching the lost. You may stand up stiffly, feeling, "I am holier than thou," and it matters not how correct your reasoning or how true your words; they will never touch hearts. The love of Christ, manifested in word and act, will win its way to the soul, when the reiteration of precept or argument would accomplish nothing.

We need more of Christlike sympathy, not merely sympathy for those who appear to us to be faultless, but sympathy for poor, suffering, struggling souls, who are often overtaken in fault, sinning and repenting, tempted and discouraged. We are to go to our fellow men, touched, like our merciful High Priest, with the feeling of their infirmities.—The Ministry of Healing, 163, 164.

**Result of Coldness and Neglect**—But there has been among us as a people a lack of deep, earnest, soul-touching sympathy and love for the tempted and the erring. Many have manifested great coldness and sinful neglect, represented by Christ as passing by on the other side, keeping as far as possible from those who most need help. The newly converted soul often has fierce conflicts with established habits or with some special form of temptation, and, being overcome by some master passion or tendency, he is guilty of indiscretion or actual wrong. It is then that energy, tact, and wisdom are required of his brethren, that he may be restored to spiritual health. In such cases the instructions of God's Word apply: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

But how little of the pitying tenderness of

Christ is manifested by His professed followers! When one errs, others too often feel at liberty to make the case appear as bad as possible. Those who perhaps are guilty of fully as great sins in some other direction, will treat their brother with cruel severity. Errors committed through ignorance, thoughtlessness, or weakness are exaggerated into willful, premeditated sin. As they see souls going astray, some fold their hands and say, “I told you so. I knew there was no dependence to be placed upon them.” Thus they place themselves in the attitude of Satan, exulting in spirit that their evil surmisings have proved to be correct.—Testimonies for the Church 5:604, 605.

**Love for the Erring**—We are not all organized alike, and many have not been educated aright. Their education has been deficient. Some have had a quick temper transmitted to them, and their education in childhood has not taught them self-control. With this fiery temper, envy and jealousy are frequently united. Others are faulty in other respects. Some are dishonest in deal, overreaching in trade. Others are arbitrary in their families,

loving to rule. Their lives are far from being correct. Their education was all wrong. They were not told the sin of yielding to the control of these evil traits; therefore sin does not appear to them so exceedingly sinful. Others, whose education has not been so faulty, who have had better training, have developed a much less objectionable character. The Christian life of all is very much affected for good or for evil by their previous education.

Jesus, our Advocate, is acquainted with all the circumstances with which we are surrounded and deals with us according to the light we have had and the circumstances in which we are placed. Some have a much better organization than others. While some are continually harassed, afflicted, and in trouble because of their unhappy traits of character, having to war with internal foes and the corruption of their nature, others have not half so much to battle against. They pass along almost free from the difficulties which their brethren and sisters who are not so favorably organized are laboring under.—Testimonies for the Church 2:74.

**Welcome for the Repentant**— “And of some have compassion, making a difference” [Jude 1:22]. Those who are wise in the wisdom born of God will see souls in need of help, souls who have been overcome, and who, though they have sincerely repented, would scarcely dare, without encouragement, to lay hold of hope. The Lord will put it into the hearts of those who are stewards of His grace to welcome these trembling, repentant souls to their loving fellowship. His true followers will not treat sinners as if they were beyond forgiveness. They will have compassion on those whose circumstances have been unfavorable, and who have allowed Satan to lead them in forbidden paths.

These souls have sinned against God, but if they repent and show the genuineness of their repentance by earnest efforts to serve the Lord, who shall dare forbid them? Encourage them. Give them an opportunity to regain what they have lost. Pride, covetousness, sensuality, may have been their besetting sins. Point out their errors, but not in



a way that will drive them from Christ. By words of loving compassion draw them to Him. However low they may have fallen, do not destroy their hope of pardon. Labor for them, pray with them, point them to the Redeemer....

**No Condemnation of Others**—By earnest, Christlike efforts, men will be convicted and converted, and God will speak pardon to them. Let no one turn away a soul who leaves the service of Satan and asks Jesus for pardon. “Of some have compassion, making a difference.” When they give evidence that the Spirit of God is striving with them, present to them every encouragement for entering the Lord’s service. Do not discourage them by indifference, by drawing away from them with an air of, “I am holier than thou” [Isaiah 65:5].

Those who act as Pharisees may not be guilty of exactly the same sins they condemn in others, but they may be guilty of sins much greater in the sight of God. Each will be rewarded according to his work. Let those who condemn others take heed

to themselves, lest they be condemned by God for Phariseism.—Ms 37, 1902.

**People With Love, Not Like Chestnut Burs**—We must expect to meet and bear with great imperfections in those who are young and inexperienced. Christ has bidden us seek to restore such in the spirit of meekness, and He holds us responsible for pursuing a course which will drive them to discouragement, despair, and ruin. Unless we daily cultivate the precious plant of love we are in danger of becoming narrow, unsympathetic, bigoted, and critical, esteeming ourselves righteous when we are far from being approved of God. Some are uncourteous, abrupt, and harsh. They are like chestnut burs—they prick whenever touched. These do incalculable harm by misrepresenting our loving Saviour.

We must come up to a higher standard, or we are unworthy of the Christian name. We should cultivate the spirit with which Christ labored to save the erring. They are as dear to Him as we are. They are equally capable of being trophies of His

grace and heirs of the kingdom. But they are exposed to the snares of a wily foe, exposed to danger and defilement, and without the saving grace of Christ, to certain ruin. Did we view this matter in the right light, how would our zeal be quickened and our earnest, self-sacrificing efforts be multiplied, that we might come close to those who need our help, our prayers, our sympathy, and our love!—Testimonies for the Church 5:605, 606.

**Jesus, Our Example**—It was the outcast, the publican and sinner, the despised of the nations, that Christ called and by His loving-kindness compelled to come unto Him. The one class that He would never countenance was those who stood apart in their self-esteem and looked down upon others....

Even those who had fallen the lowest He treated with respect. It was continual pain to Christ to be brought into contact with enmity, depravity, and impurity; but never did He utter one expression to show that His sensibilities were shocked or His refined tastes offended. Whatever the evil habits,

the strong prejudices, or the overbearing passions of human beings, He met them all with pitying tenderness. As we partake of His Spirit, we shall regard all men as brethren, with similar temptations and trials, often falling and struggling to rise again, battling with discouragements and difficulties, craving sympathy and help. Then we shall meet them in such a way as not to discourage or repel them, but to awaken hope in their hearts.—The Ministry of Healing, 164, 165.