Compassionate Communication:
God's Love and Our Faith

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Luther Seminary
In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

THESIS ADVISER: PROFESSOR TERRI ELTON

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
2012

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first thank God for giving me the inspiration for this paper, and guiding me daily. I thank my husband for editing this thesis and being my second pair of eyes. A huge thank you to all my professors and classmates for giving their thoughts and ideas, and supporting me throughout the process and all the years of schooling.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Compassionate Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNVC</td>
<td>Center for Nonviolent Communication</td>
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<td>NVC</td>
<td>Nonviolent Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>EYM</td>
<td>Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry</td>
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<td>NSYR</td>
<td>National Study of Youth and Religion</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

As a small group leader of eighth grade girls last year, I was sometimes appalled by the language the students use with each other. For example, one night we were talking about Identity, and how God created us in God's Image. At the start of the lesson, we all wrote a list of how we saw ourselves. Over half in the group had trouble finding the eight descriptors I told them to write down. They started to suggest things to each other like: “Mean,” “Ugly,” “Smelly,” to name a few. I said, “Girls, please be nice to each other. Tonight we are focusing on how to build each other up.” But no matter how many different ways I said that, I could not prevent more name-calling until I had ended that activity. That was just one evening of several in which that I was unable to stop my group of girls from hurting each other with words.

*Compassionate Communication* (abbreviated as CC) is more than a language process. It's a way of life. It helps us view people as human beings, not just obstacles to our goals. CC offers a beautiful new perspective, enabling us to empathize better with ourselves and others. It allows to be more compassionate as God us calls to be, to follow God's Compassionate footsteps in Jesus' ministry, and to help others grow in their faith. CC, also called *Nonviolent Communication* or *NVC*, teaches us how to observe others without criticizing or blaming them, to identify our feelings and share them, to connect our feelings to our needs and to request others to meet our needs. CC is useful to learn because God is Compassionate, and we need to share God's Compassion with others, and
one tool is CC. CC holds the key to help people learn a new way of seeing others. In this paper, I will use statistics showing what churches and families are like today, illustrating the lack of CC. Next, I will discuss the theological foundations to use CC. Third, I will describe CC in more detail and communication theories. Lastly, I will offer suggestions for churches to teach CC.
CHAPTER 2
DESCRIPTIVE

Parents are vital to their children and teens. Parents are necessary for their infants' very survival. As children grow older, parents may believe they are less necessary. But this is not true. Parents are vitally important to their children.

The Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry (EYM for short) examined “congregations that consistently establish faith as a vital factor in the lives of their youth” and found their methods.\(^1\) It discovered “forty-four Faith Assets” in four areas: “Congregational Faith & Qualities, Youth-Ministry Qualities, Family and Household Faith Assets, [and] Leadership in the Congregation.”\(^2\) For the purpose of this paper, only the Family and Household Faith Assets will be presented here.

The first asset is that parents have a strong faith themselves and are active in church activities.\(^3\) Parents who have strong faith have children with a strong faith. The parents whose faith is not important to them will likewise have children whose faith is not important, as can be seen in Table 1. Parents influence their adolescents, regardless of whether the parents realize it, and regardless of their adolescents' verbal and nonverbal messages, often suggesting that the parents' influence is minimal. However, “most parents in fact still do profoundly influence their adolescents—often more than do their


\(^2\) Ibid., 15.

\(^3\) Ibid., 174.
peers—their children's apparent resistance and lack of appreciation notwithstanding.” No matter what their teenagers tell them, parents are influencing their adolescents.

<table>
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<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not Very</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Percent Total</th>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>19</td>
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</tr>
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Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding and unreported don't know and refused answers.

By studying table 1, it is clear that teenagers' faith usually mirrors their parents' faith. Parents with faith that is extremely important to them are likely to have teenagers whose faith is extremely important or very important. Kenda Creasy Dean observes:

Yet there is no doubt that teenagers’ appreciation of a life-orienting God-story, and their ability to discern God’s ongoing movement in their lives and their communities are heavily influenced by adults’ appreciation of such a story, and adults’ ways of discerning and responding to the Holy Spirit’s presence in their lives. Proximity matters. Teenagers’ ability to imitate Christ depends, to a daunting degree, on whether we do.

The second asset is that families have conversations about faith at home. “Faith instruction in these congregations does not all occur in their youth ministries; families reinforce what's learned at church through intentional faith practices and conversations at home.”


5. Ibid.


Faith and spiritual practices start at home and are “embedded in and sometimes
draw much of their life from personal relationships in families, with friends, at school and
with other adults.” The NSYR found that families talk together about religion. (See
Table 2 below.) “There we see that about one-third (34 percent) talk together about God,
the scriptures, prayer, or other religious and spiritual matters a few times a week or more;
28 percent talk about these matters a few times a month or weekly; and 38 percent a few
times a year or never.” The study also found that “Forty-one percent of all teenagers
report praying [with parents, outside of worship and mealtimes] with their parents in the
previous year.” Overall, table 2 reports “that for a significant number of teens, religion
and spirituality are not simply compartmentalized in church […] but are also expressed
and shared in the family life of the home.”

| Table 2. Religious Life in Families of U.S. Adolescents, Ages 13-17 (Percentages) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                                 | CP | MP | BP | RC | J | LDS | NR |
| Family talks about God, the scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual things together |
| Everyday                        | 14 | 19 | 8  | 27 | 6 | ~   | 50 | 4   |
| A few times a week              | 20 | 27 | 15 | 29 | 18| 9   | 24 | 5   |
| About once a week               | 11 | 14 | 11 | 12 | 10| 8   | 6  | 5   |
| A few times a month             | 17 | 16 | 26 | 17 | 22| 16  | 3  | 10  |
| A few times a year              | 19 | 14 | 19 | 10 | 25| 22  | 5  | 26  |
| Never                           | 19 | 10 | 20 | 5  | 19| 44  | 11 | 48  |
| Family gives thanks before or after mealtimes |
|                                 | 54 | 67 | 54 | 79 | 45| 13  | 84 | 18  |
| Teen prays out loud or silently with one or both parents, other than at mealtimes or religious services |
|                                 | 41 | 53 | 35 | 56 | 36| 22  | 79 | 11  |


Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding and unreported don't know and refused answers; cells of <1 are reported as ~.

8. Smith and Denton, 54.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 55.

11. Ibid., 56.
The third asset is family harmony: “Family members' expressions of respect and love create an atmosphere promoting faith.”\textsuperscript{13} Families discover how to handle daily stresses and challenging conversations held in “respect, equal regard, open communication and cooperation.”\textsuperscript{14} Family members are held accountable, forgiving and reconciling and thus live out their faith in an environment where faith can be discussed openly.

Families having a high degree of family harmony share these characteristics: Parents and teenagers enjoy close relationships. Parents show interest in their teens. Families spend quality family time. Furthermore, youth receive affection and support from their parents, plus no verbal abuse.\textsuperscript{15}

The fourth asset is that these families are not alone in raising their children. The church supports parents through programs that guide the parents in their own faith walks and teach parents how to best strengthen their children's faith walks.\textsuperscript{16} The NSYR found that most adolescents have relationships with adults (excluding family members) “whom they enjoy talking to and who give them lots of encouragement. […] Religious American teens thus do not appear to be entirely relationally isolated from other adults in their congregations. Moreover, even more teenagers would like to have significant relationships with adults in their congregations.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{13} Martinson, Black and Roberto, 173.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 178.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 179.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 180.
\textsuperscript{17} Smith and Denton, 60.
The fifth asset is that the congregation provides opportunities for parents and youth to strengthen their relationships with each other. These programs help them with issues such as: “family communication, adolescent independence, decision-making, choosing friends, sexual expression, […] conflict resolution […], studying the Bible together, discussing case studies from youth culture, and exploring popular media.” Congregations best equip parents to pass on their faith when supported with programs that teach parents how to best communicate with the teens.

Especially in these assets, CC can provide a way for families to communicate with each other in loving and supportive ways, and the church can teach families CC and give the families opportunities to practice it with each other.

18. Martinson, Black and Roberto, 180.

19. Ibid.
CHAPTER 3
THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

In order to better explain the reasons to teach others CC in the church, it is important to clarify the theological foundation, and I will use a few references to pop culture to illustrate a few points. The first is that God is Trinity, and the three Beings are interconnected in a circular relationship. Second, God is Compassionate and calls God's children to be compassionate also.

God is Trinity

The Triune God is in relationship with itself. The Triune God is not a hierarchy, a triangle shape, as Western culture tends to promote. Instead, the Trinity is a circle, everyone equal.20 The Shack tells a story about God meeting Mack in the very shack where his daughter's, Missy's, bloody dress was found. Over the weekend, Mack has many conversations with Papa (the Father), Jesus and the Holy Spirit. One such conversation centers on the nature of the Trinity. Papa tells Mack:

Mackenzie, we have no concept of final authority among us, only unity. We are in circle of relationship, not a chain of command or 'great chain of being' […] What you're seeing here is relationship without any overlay of power. We don't need power over the other because we are always looking out for the best. Hierarchy would make no sense to us.21

20. George Cladis, Leading the Team-Based Church, (Jossey Bass, 1999), 4.
In other words, the three Beings of God willingly submit to each other, and that is how God intends our relationships to be, too. We need to be in relationship with each other, cooperating with each other and submitting to one another.

Cladis describes the Trinity as being a circle, a dance, a *perichoresis*. Dancing is a beautiful image of God. God doesn't command. God dances. This dancing means movement: God is active. In a scene in *Take the Lead*, Antonio Banderas is teaching the parents and teachers the benefits of dance lessons. Dancing with the principle, he says: “If she allows me to lead, she is trusting me. But more than that, she is trusting herself.”

If we dance with God, we will trust God and ourselves.

Cladis writes about being in a circle:

In a circle, we can see each other. No one is left out. We are all interconnected. We hold each other up. […] Round tables create a sense of community and wholeness. Have you ever tried to have a discussion with people sitting next to you on a long couch? Then why, in the church, do we still use so many long rectangular tables or pews? Sitting, standing, or dancing in the round, we feel together. A sense of community is immediately communicated.

The circle is how God relates with God's self, and how God wants us to relate with each other, without hierarchy or power over others. In a circle, everyone is equal. They have power with each other.

**God's Compassion**

God is compassionate, and God calls us to be compassionate. Jesus Christ has shown us what it means to be compassionate: to be moved to heal others. This section


includes the definition of compassion, and then God's suffering and God's compassion.

According to Andrew Purves, “Compassion is not mercy, empathy, sympathy or pity.”\textsuperscript{24} Mercy is God's faithfulness to God's people, even when we sin and leave God. God does not leave us.\textsuperscript{25} Empathy is how people seek to understand another's emotions. Empathy is used for healing others, but it is not mentioned in the Bible. We are called to be compassionate, not empathetic.\textsuperscript{26} Sympathy is sharing another's feelings, but there's no act to change the situation.\textsuperscript{27} Pity is sorrow for another person, but pity denotes disdain for the sufferer.\textsuperscript{28}

Compassion means “to suffer with” someone, to feel their pain, enter into it,\textsuperscript{29} and minister to them.\textsuperscript{30} Only when we suffer with someone else, can we truly be moved to minister to them. Jesus Christ suffered on the cross, to die for our sins. God's suffering did not end with the cross. “Only a suffering God can help,” as Dietrich Boenhoffer wrote.\textsuperscript{31} Only by God suffering with and for us, can God truly relate with us and be with us. During another conversation in The Shack, Mack notices that Papa has scars on her wrists, identical to Jesus'. Papa said:

“Don't ever think what my son chose to do didn't cost us dearly. Love always leaves a significant mark. [….] We were there together.”


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 57.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 58.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Purves, The Search for Compassion, 14.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 17.

Mack was surprised. “At the cross? Now wait, I thought you left him—you know—’My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ […]
“You misunderstand the mystery there. Regardless of how he felt at that moment, I never left him.”
“How you can say that? You abandoned him just like you abandoned me!”
“Mackenzie, I have never left him, and I have never left you.”
“That makes no sense to me,” he snapped.
“I know it doesn't, at least not yet. Will you at least consider this: When all you can see is your pain, perhaps then you lose sight of me? […] Don't forget, the story didn't end in his sense of forsaken-ness. He found his way through it to put himself completely into my hands. Oh, what a moment that was!”

The beauty of this conversation is its imagery: all three Persons of the Trinity, only one visible, on the Cross, suffering with Jesus during those final moments, those last painful breaths. This describes that God suffered, and God continues to suffer with us.

Andrew Purves defines compassion: In contemporary culture, compassion might have a pleasant but a little fruitless meaning. But

in the New Testament especially it is found to be a theological word of considerable power and particularity. […] Compassion makes caring specific. Compassion radicalizes caring, giving our caring root in the deepest places of God's being.

Additionally, Andrew Purves points out that English does not have a verb form of compassion. Compassionate is an adjective, compassionately an adverb. To the contrary, in the New Testament, compassion's meaning is in between.

It steers a course between the action-oriented noun and the interior and slightly passive sense of the adjective. It includes both, yet suggests a synthesis in which the outward ministry of compassion and the inner quality of one's affections belong together in the one movement.

32. Young, 96.
33. Purves, 15.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
Also, the Bible uses compassion “to characterize God's self-revelation to Israel, and it shaped the life of the community called out by that revelation.” Compassion in the New Testament is only used to describe God, and is how God relates with us. “Jesus' compassion becomes a window of access to understand God now in terms of God's vulnerability and willingness to suffer with us.” Compassion is the perspective from which we are to view God and God's ministry to and with us, and CC is one way to view God's ministry.

Compassion is seen in Jesus' ministry. Every time Jesus felt compassion, Jesus engaged in ministry. There is not one instance when Jesus felt compassion for someone and did nothing for him or her. By studying the first feeding story in the Gospel of Mark (6: 30-44), Andrew Purves notes that there are three parts: the double introduction (vv. 30-34), a long conversation with the disciples (vv. 35-38), and the feeding (vv. 39-44). The introduction of the story starts with the disciples' return from their missions to the villages by Galilee, and their reports to Jesus. The crowds had followed them there, and Jesus said, “We need to get out of here for some rest and relaxation” (v. 31, author's paraphrase). Purves interprets: There wasn't peace in that gathering. “Jesus, sensitive to the disciples' need for rest and debriefing, suggested that they retreat […]. They also needed to be ministered to by Jesus.” Jesus saw their needs and was moved to meet them. When the crowd ran ahead to the other side, Jesus “had compassion on them” (v.

36. Ibid., 15-16.
37. Ibid., 16.
38. Ibid., 17.
39. Ibid., 25.
40. Ibid., 26, emphasis added.
and taught them. Jesus' compassion moved Jesus, and changed his priorities.

“[C]ompassion is not restricted to one-on-one relationships. Compassion includes social as well as pastoral ministry.”

Later, the disciples suggested that Jesus send the crowd away to get food. Jesus instead instructed them to feed them. Purves writes that Jesus meant, “You too show them compassion,” meaning that perhaps the disciples needed to be taught to be compassionate, and that “[in] order to be compassionate, they had to rely on the power of God's compassion. […] A compassionate ministry must be grounded in God and God's own compassion for the world.” Humans need to know God and God's Compassion in their lives so that they can be compassionate to others, and one tool is CC.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.
CC, also called *Nonviolent Communication* was pioneered by Marshall Rosenberg during the 1960's. Throughout his life, Rosenberg wanted to help others be more compassionate with others. He thus developed CC, and spent the rest of his career teaching CC in school systems and later mediated conflicts in the Middle East. Since then, the *Center for Nonviolent Communication* has become international, with teachers and trainers all over the world, teaching in prisons, schools, churches, and local community centers.

CC seems simple to learn but is hard to practice in daily life. 1) Observation and not evaluation, 2) Know your feelings, 3) Connect your feelings to your needs, and 4) Request what you need from yourself or others.

Observations are hard to make without evaluating. Our evaluations are judging, diagnosing, labeling, comparing, blaming, criticizing, putting down, and insulting others. They all block our ability to be compassionate or empathetic with others. Such behavior Rosenberg calls “life-alienating communication.” Rosenberg suggests that our judgments “are actually expressions of our own needs and values.” The consequences of

44. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 15.
47. Ibid., 16.
judgments are growing resentment of the people we judge, so if they do fill our needs, guilt, fear or shame is their reason why.48 In Theresa Latini's article, "Nonviolent Communication: A Humanizing Ecclesial and Educational Practice," Dr. Latini further explains the difference between observations and evaluations. “Observations are concrete, in reference to a particular time, place, and event. Totalizing words like 'never, always, whenever, everyone, no one' are absent from our observations of others and self.”49 For example, “John always procrastinates because he is so lazy” is a double evaluation. This could be the translation of the observation: “John studies the night before a test, saying, 'I haven't studied for tomorrow's test at all before now.’” Dr. Latini also notes this essential truth: “the intent of making this observation would be to connect or to promote understanding. Without this motivation, even the most neutral observation can carry the energy and tone of judgment.”50

Additionally, Rosenberg makes the distinction between value judgments and moralistic judgments. Value judgments are expressing how we want our values (such as love, honesty, harmony for example) to live life the best we can. Moralistic judgments happen when we see others behaving in ways contrary to our values. 51 For example, someone values harmony and beauty witnesses graffiti painters and says, “Those people are horrible violators of other people's property! They're completely evil!” A compassionate response would instead be: “I feel the fear of the loss of beauty and

48. Ibid.


50. Ibid.

51. Rosenberg, 17.
harmony of that building, and because I value those things, I also fear that others in the neighborhood will move out or avoid coming here because of the graffiti.”

Dr. Latini separates value judgments from ethical or moral judgments. Value judgments are simply part of how we live life, shaping our actions and guiding our practices. When our practices differ from others’ practices, “we engage in second-order reflection and interpretation about how to live with integrity. Ethical or moral judgments emerge from this intentional discernment.” As Christians, we discern our values from the Bible, but it is not compassionate to make moral judgments of others.

The second part of CC is knowing what we are feeling and expressing those feelings. This can be hard. Feelings are not often recognized or spoken. Many people do not know how to identify their own feelings. But feelings are important guides to our needs, and if they're unmet or met. When we feel anxious, depressed, or apprehensive, our needs are unmet. Feelings like bliss, serenity or jubilation tell us that our needs are met.

Additionally, it is important to know that certain “feelings” are not emotions, but actually express what we think about others' actions toward us. For example, cornered, ignored, rejected, manipulated, or used are words that describe what people think others are doing to them.

Dr. Latini points out that thoughts and ideas can also be life-affirming communication. Ideas often create visions to inspire others. What we believe in and our

52. Latini, 23.
53. Rosenberg, 38.
54. Ibid., 43-46.
55. Ibid., 42-43.
“intellectual passions” can develop from our needs. By knowing how our and others' passions and beliefs stem from feelings and needs, we can communicate compassionately with each other instead of trying to compete with each other.

The third step is knowing that our needs and our needs alone cause our feelings, and being able to connect our feelings to our needs. People's actions and words do not cause us to feel a certain a way, but merely stimulate our feelings. Other people can tell us something or do something to us, but we alone have the power to choose our emotional response. When hearing a negative statement like, “You can't do anything right!” we have four options. We can “1. blame ourselves” or “2. blame others.” Or, we can 3. recognize our feelings and needs, or 4. recognize the other's feelings and needs.

By expressing our needs, we are most likely to get those needs met. On the other hand, by judging or blaming or criticizing others, we are most likely to have unmet needs. Unfortunately, many people, especially women, fear to express their feelings when they're frequently severely criticized for expressing their needs.

The fourth step “addresses what we would like to request of others in order to enrich life for us.” In order to improve the likelihood that people will respond to to our requests compassionately, we need to be absolutely clear about what we do want.

57. Ibid.
58. Rosenberg, 49.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid., 50.
61. Ibid., 52.
62. Ibid., 55.
63. Ibid., 67.
64. Ibid.
want my husband to cook for us, I should ask him to cook, instead of asking him, “Would you not play online video games with your friends before dinner?” By asking him the latter, he might browse the internet instead of cooking dinner.

Moreover, we need to avoid making demands instead of requests. A request is heard as a demand if others think we will criticize or retaliate against them. The more one has heard requests as demands, the more likely it is that one will hear requests as demands.65 In contrast, a request happens when we are able to empathize with a denial. “Choosing to request rather than demand does not mean we give up when someone says no to our request. It does mean that we don’t engage in persuasion until we have empathized with what’s preventing the other person from saying yes.”66

**Communication Theories**

In order to better understand CC, it is important to understand communication theory. There are two theories relevant here. The first is the speech-act theory and the second theory, free-will theory of communication, developed by John Greenman.

The first theory, speech-act theory, is very complex. According to this theory, speech has two parts: our words (locutions) and actions with those words, two types of actions: perlocutionary and illocutionary.67 Perlocutionary acts are said to bring specific results: By shouting out “Fore,” a golfer wants people to avoid the oncoming ball. An illocutinary act can be seen “as an act in-and of itself.”68 Here are a few examples.

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65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., 81.


68. Ibid.
referee on a soccer field waves a yellow card at a player, and warns the player. A pastor says, “I now pronounce you man and wife,” and marries the couple. To be illocutionary, an act must bring the intended result. To be perlocutionary, an act can have results that are not intended. One act can be both illocutionary and perlocutionary. For example, when the referee flashes the card, it's an illocutionary act in that it warns the player, but a perlocutionary act in that the fans cheer or boo the yellow card. In addition, the illocutionary act of marrying a couple can also be perlocutionary: the bride and groom cry, along with some of their guests.

There are many perlocutionary and illocutionary acts in the classroom, where students and lecturers send messages to each other, and unfortunately some mean to silence the other. While there are times when teachers may wish to literally gag (locutionary act) their students (and students to gag another student or their teacher), nobody would. Yet there is more than one way to silence another person. It is possible to silence another person's illocutionary speech-acts. Here are two examples. An actor's role in a scene is to convince others of a fire. A real fire breaks out, and he cannot convince the audience of the real fire. The actor has not alarmed the audience, and so was “illocutionary silenced.” A perlocutionary silence would be the audience comprehending the warning but not running away. A locutionary silence would be a sound-proofed stage. Fisher writes: “The situation was such that, whatever the actor did,
the conditions were not in place for him to be able to perform the act of warning that there was a fire."76 A second example is that Muslim women cannot divorce their husbands. Only the men can say the words that perform the action. Women cannot.77

Fisher points out that these two situations both have powerlessness in common. The woman and the actor do not have the power to divorce or to warn. Additionally, the situations have no reciprocity due to unequal power. Therefore, without authority, one can be incapacitated to perform illocutionary acts. Authority depends on reciprocity. An important thing to notice is that the environment itself can incapacitate illocutionary acts.78

This is important because it is vital that as a facilitator leads a workshop, it is possible to silence people because of the environment, and people can be silenced in other environments such as the home, office or church. CC cannot occur when one person or group is silenced. It is vital that CC workshop facilitators strive to create an environment where everyone's voice is welcome.

John Greenman, in his article “On Communication” proposes a new theory: “the free-will theory of communication.”79 Greenman defines it as:

In determining what communication is, we are engaging our intuitions about free will. More specifically, we are engaging our intuitions about freely willed mental responses. By this I mean that communication occurs when Person A tries to convey a thought—some idea or feeling—to Person B, and Person B can freely choose whether to accept that thought. An act is communicative, in other words, if the important change that A wants to make in B's mind occurs only when B wills it to.80

76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., 508, 509.
78. Ibid., 509.
80. Ibid.
Greenman defines communication as “acts meant to convey thoughts done through means reasonably recognizable.”\(^81\) In other words, communication is any words or behaviors that intend to communicate an idea through conventional means. For example, a protester could drop a bowling ball off his roof and not communicate his intended purpose because dropping a bowling ball is not seen as protesting anything at all.\(^82\)

This is important for understanding CC because it says that communication happens only when the listeners will accept the message. The message content matters less than how the listener hears and perceives the message from the speaker. This directly relates to CC, which frequently mentions that the message and its delivery are vital to communication so that the listeners will hear compassion. Furthermore, it means that listeners can choose to listen to the emotions and needs they guess lie behind the judgments or the evaluations.

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81. Ibid., 1341.

82. Ibid.
The best way for parents to have caring conversations so that their faith will be caught by their children is CC, communication that helps families to love each other the way God loves God's Children, and to foster faith in the home.

Compassionate Communication in Churches

Some churches today already offer opportunities to learn and use CC. The Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church started “Nonviolent Communications Book Study” based on Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication—A Language of Life. It's a five-week study. The Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Maine offers practice groups and workshops, along with other educational programs in partnership with the Maine NVC Network. These are only two churches of many advertising opportunities to learn and practice CC.

Family Retreats

Another way to teach CC is during retreats over a weekend in workshops. During

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these workshops, the basic process of CC is taught and practiced in large and small group settings. For example, one workshop begins with an explanation of Observations vs. Judgments. Then, as a large group, a few volunteer to say recent observations or judgments they have made. The facilitator gently guides them to the real observation. The Center for Nonviolent Communication has resources for these as well. These retreats would be for people of all ages, from children to adults. Some would be age specific, and others would be open to families and friends.

**Curriculum**

The third possibility to teach CC is through curriculum, during Sunday School or Education Hour on Sunday mornings. Over a period of six weeks, for example, the class would study CC. For example, during the lesson of Joseph's beautiful coat, the discussion questions would center around the principles of CC, such as: What do you see happening in the story? What emotions did Joseph and his brother feel? What needs were met or unmet? These weeks will help children and adults alike practice empathy and compassion, enabling them to see that others have feelings and emotions (especially important for young children who are not quite aware of others' emotions). Teachers will thus need to know CC in order to guide their students to see the world a bit differently.

Teaching classes this way will help the families understand that CC can be used for talking about faith at home and in the church. By using CC weekly in church, families will grow more comfortable using CC at home, too. Thus, CC will become another way for parents to foster faith in their homes.
The Center for Nonviolent Communication provides many different resources for anyone wish to learn CC and for those who wish to teach it, even without specialized training. The best way to teach CC is through a card game called GROK: two sets of cards with feelings and needs. A children's version of the game is now available, with drawings accompanying the words on the cards. Along with the cards, they provide different scenarios for people to experiment with. Some scenarios are, “My co-worker accused me of being lazy and incompetent.” For a family playing that scenario, each player takes the feelings cards (dealt out in even stacks) and guesses what the person might be feeling, laying them down on the table face up. After all the Feeling cards have been laid down, the person with the scenario chooses what feelings they would feel in that situation. Then the same process would be done with the Needs cards. Once the Needs had been chosen, they're matched with the Feeling cards. (One might choose “Respect” to go with “Discouraged” or “Nervous” for example.)
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

*Compassionate Communication* is a wonderful tool to help families communicate God's Love in order to foster faith in the home and the world. As God's children, we are called to witness to and participate in God's compassionate ministry in the world. One way is CC, which gives us more language to love and live the way Jesus taught us: to feel another's pain and be moved to minister. CC can change the way we perceive other's and our own feelings and needs, judgments and observations. We can learn to see the real feelings and needs behind their judgments. This new insight brings us to a more compassionate, even Godlier, view of our neighbors and ourselves, enabling us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, in a different way. When our need for love is met, we are more likely to believe the story of God's Love, and grow in our faith.


God commands us to love one another. Love is supposed to be the defining characteristic of our lives as Christians. Has that been your experience? Is that how you would describe yourself? Some people aren’t naturally compassionate or people-focused. God has created us each uniquely, but we are all commanded to love. Related Post: 5 Truths About Loving Difficult People.

Show God’s Love by Listening. In today’s culture, it seems like so many voices are speaking (and often shouting). Communication is always at our fingertips through email, text, social media, and the 24-hour news cycle. While social media has increased communication, it has also given us the false appearance of true connection and real relationships. The love of God is the sure foundation of our faith in Him. His love gives us the absolute assurance that we are never alone or without help. God’s love for us is unfailing, it never stops, it is eternal. God’s love is the reason we are alive. The more we become rooted and grounded in God’s love, the more we will become happy, fruitful and fulfilled. I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. (Ephesians 3:18).

And it was the compassionate love of God that motivated him to keep fighting the good fight of faith, to reveal Jesus Christ to the world. God had poured out His own mercy in the heart of Paul. For Christ’s love compels us (2 Cor. 5:14).

GOD'S WORD® Translation

The LORD is compassionate, merciful, patient, and always ready to forgive.

International Standard Version

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, patient, and always ready to forgive.

JPS Tanakh 1917

The LORD is full of compassion and gracious, Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

Literal Standard Version

YHWH is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abundant in mercy.

They stiffened their necks and appointed a leader to return them to their bondage in Egypt. But You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in loving devotion, and You did not forsake them. Psalm 62:12 and loving devotion to You, O Lord. For You will repay each man according to his deeds. What does God do? “The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls Father.” ~ C. H. Spurgeon.

Sample Lesson.

We believe that God is the loving Father of all kids. It is HIS divine will that young people come to faith in Jesus Christ and find salvation through the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit to bring them to faith. We believe that children and parents benefit from a strong Christian education program in the church. Every kids church ministry deserves the very best resources for teaching God’s Word, even when they don’t have the financial resources.