

On the Corner

by Robert Docter –

What with our natural inclination to believe that a message is comprised solely of content, somehow, I think it's possible for us to perceive Jesus as someone without feeling. Actually, a more passionate person never walked the earth. The Gospel writers gave us the content of his message. We need to infer the feeling.

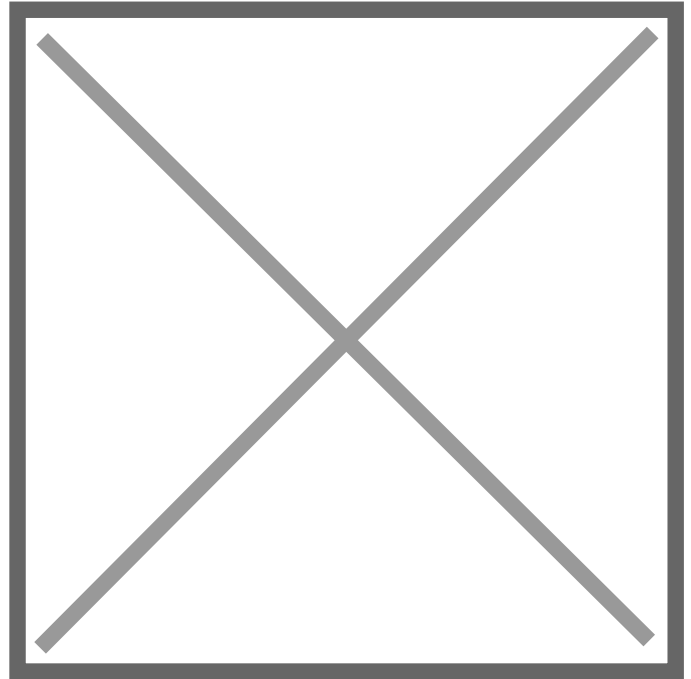
Empathy connects. When we feel *with* someone, our behavior toward that person changes. Jesus revealed his empathy constantly in his interaction. He was able to sense deeply within him the feelings of those he met only briefly on dusty roads and quiet streets, beside small ponds and massive lakes, on hilltops and in valleys. His empathy was certain and sure, and he acted on the feelings generated within him by the feelings expressed in those he met.

He felt the pain and confusion of sickness, the frustration of disease, the fear of rejection in those perceived as different. He reframed the plight of the discouraged, the lowly, the spiritually depressed, the persecuted, the weak and gave them hope when he called them "blessed." He empathized and he acted.

*News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, **and he healed them.***

His powerful sermons contrasted Jewish legalism with the need for people to establish strong codes of personal ethical behavior. He knew the power of strong feelings—of rage, of sexual misconduct, of emotional battery, of hate. He was aware that rules alone would not save us from the behavior that would follow these strong feelings. Therefore, he revealed to us God's optimism. He demonstrated that the power of choice in relation to our feelings beats within each of us. Then, he taught us how to behave responsibly.

Jesus revealed great compassion for the poor. He asked us to share those feelings—to give of ourselves *altruistically*—without the expectation of any return.



Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them.

He was as concerned about our *motive* for good works as for the content of the work itself. The *intent* of the act was as important as the act. The act done for recognition by others reaped an earthly reward of recognition and praise while the act done in "secret" is rewarded in heaven.

He sensed the stress and difficulty of daily existence and tells us: *Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

He not only senses our stress and gives us advice, he tells us how to find peace. It seems to be based on the kind of *foundation* we construct in our lives

He senses the exhaustion of our predicaments and empathizes with us as he discloses his inner self.

Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest in your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

He was filled with anger and disgust in confrontations with the Jewish legalistic system, but on a hillside overlooking Jerusalem he wept for the city. In mock trials his brief answers were truthful, without resentment; honest, without guile. On a crude wooden cross between two robbers he suffered the pain of human existence, and in triumph he conquered death.

When we empathize with him, we sense him within us.