

## WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

I was sitting in a restaurant when I heard the sound of someone crying. It was not the cry of an infant or child. Rather it was the heartbroken sound of an adult crying. I sat and listened for a few moments. But then I stood up and went looking for the person who was the source of the mournful sound.

Yes, I wondered if I was being weird by doing such a thing. It wasn't my business. Odds were that the person would be a total stranger. And what was I going to be able to do, anyway?

Sometimes we have no idea what to do. But what we must *not* do is to turn a deaf ear to the sounds of suffering and loss. We have been called by the Lord to heal and help. We don't always know how to go about doing this. We don't always know how receptive others will be to our efforts. But if we follow Jesus, we will be available to others in their need.

"Finally, all of you, have... love for one another, a tender heart and a humble mind," wrote Peter (1 Peter 3:8). A tender heart is one that feels with others. Another word for this is compassion. "As God's chosen ones... clothe yourselves with compassion" (Colossians 3:12). Jesus had compassion for the sick (Matthew 14:14), the hungry (Mark 8:2), the blind (Matthew 20:34), and the grieving (Luke 7:12-13).

The word compassion comes from two Latin words: "com" together and "pati" to suffer. To have compassion is to *suffer together* or to *suffer with* another. It is to be sensitive to the feelings and pain of someone else. When scripture says, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus," compassion was integral to what it meant (Philippians 2:1, 5).

Yes, through Christ we are given a message of "good news of great joy for all people" (Luke 2:10). And, yes, joy is the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22). And, yes, we are to "rejoice with those who rejoice" (Romans 12:15). But we don't preserve our joy by keeping our distance from the sorrow of others or by closing our ears to the sound of their cries. Rather we open our hearts to those who are hurting, as did Jesus "who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).