Dear Parents,

Empathy is taking on someone else’s perspective. Jesus, Himself, is the perfect example of this. 2 Corinthians tells us ‘He who knew no sin became sin for us’. We all want to help our children be more like Jesus, but teaching our children to see things from another person’s view feels like a tall order. We all tend to think of our own needs first, so how do we help our children to see from other people’s perspective? How do we help them be compassionate individuals, ones who connect with human suffering with care and understanding in a way that brings comfort? The video below will give you a good glimpse into helping our children develop empathy and compassion.

<https://vimeo.com/parentministry/review/106922273/6d779421db>

Let’s admit it, we all tend to be self-absorbed at times. This goes for you, and me, AND our kids! Hopefully, as adults we realize this negative personality trait and work (with God’s strength) to put others above ourselves. However, this idea of thinking of another person’s feelings may be like speaking a foreign language to your child. In American society, we tend to talk about our own personal feelings. A LOT. Thinking of our feelings before considering the feelings of others around us, is the exact opposite of compassion and empathy! How can we help our children see beyond themselves to be people who are compassionate and empathetic toward others? By surrounding ourselves with people who are different from us and finding what we have in common with them. Here are a few examples:

1) As a parent, be authentic and kind to everyone (the store clerk, the bus driver, the person cutting in front of you in line). Your children will learn from you how to speak to people, and how to treat them.

2) Don’t prioritize YOUR child’s happiness over other’s.

3) Reading and discussing literary fiction is a great way to help your children see how they relate to other people. Ask them questions such as, “Why did that character do that?” or “What do you think that character must have been feeling in order to act as they did?”

When you read the story of Job you see him battling with friends who show NO compassion or empathy. All they do is judge him and tell him what he’s doing wrong. What Job needed was an empathetic and compassionate friend, but he received judgment and hostility instead. Let’s make sure we help our children develop into empathetic, compassionate people who value individuals for the unique creation they are.

Building Young Disciples,

Pastor Sarah