

**Classroom Guidance Newsletter**  
**Lesson Three: Empathy**

Dear Parents,

In Lesson Three, the students learned the importance of empathy. Empathy is described in the Bible as "The Golden Rule", as spoken by Jesus. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Matthew 7:12). All of the New Testament teachings on interpersonal relations follow from Jesus' commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39). The Bible also states we should always be willing to forgive others and not hold any ill will against them. Holding a grudge and seeking revenge have no place in the lives of those who truly love their neighbors.

Empathy was reinforced with activities that focused on caring, helpfulness (The Parable of the Good Samaritan), listening to your conscience, imagining yourself in some else's shoes, and forgiveness.

*What is Empathy?*

To empathize with someone is to understand what he/she is feeling or to understand what you would feel like if you were in his/her situation. Empathy is a skill that children learn. Its value is multifold. Children who are empathic tend to do better in school, in social situations, and in their adult careers. The best teachers of that skill are the children's parents. Empathy may not always come easily – after all, society too often seems to celebrate selfishness and emphasize a "My, Me, Mine" attitude. But truly connecting to other human beings is a reward in itself and will benefit your child in ways that a self-serving attitude never will.

*What Empathy Looks Like During the Elementary School Years*

By about age 6, a child can see things from another person's perspective, so there is a noticeable increase in their efforts to provide comfort and support. They often try to fix the problem. By ages 10 to 12, a child can extend sympathy beyond people they know to more global situations. However, true empathy usually does not develop until children are adolescents. It is appropriate for children to be egocentric.

*Ways Parents Can Instill Empathy In Their Children*

- Teach manners.
- Treat children with the same courtesy and empathy you would adults.
- Volunteer.
- Give your child an emotional vocabulary; label feelings.
- Value your child's responsiveness to others.
- Help your child identify how others feel.
- Make it a habit to ask not only what your child did, but how he/she felt about it.
- When reading a story, have your child speculate on how characters may feel.
- Don't judge others. Validate feelings, even if they aren't the same as yours.
- Refrain from gossip.

*Empathy Resources*

[http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/spiritual\\_growth\\_for\\_kids/teaching\\_servanthood/raising\\_caring\\_kids.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/spiritual_growth_for_kids/teaching_servanthood/raising_caring_kids.aspx)

<http://www.christian-parent.com/teaching-empathy.shtml>

<http://www.refreshingspringsministry.org/vslItemDisplay.dsp&objectID=2FC16DEE-FDF5-40E7-950E688D709FAC96&method=display>

<http://www.parentingscience.com/teaching-empathy-tips.html>

Sincerely,  
Heidi Jolliffe  
Classroom Guidance Coordinator