

**Schedule of Meeting Times:**

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM  
 Study Sunday 10:00 AM  
 Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM  
 Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM  
*Singing every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday evening*  
 Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

**Preacher / bulletin editor:**

Kris Vilander, (256) 472-1065

**E-mail:** kris@haysmillchurchofchrist.org

**Website:** www.haysmillchurchofchrist.org

“Faithful are the  
wounds of a friend,  
but deceitful are the  
kisses of an enemy,”

— Proverbs 27:6

**Servants during October:**

**Songleader:** Larry (5), Dwight (12),  
Stanley (19), Larry (26)

**Reading:** Mike

**Announcements:** Stanley

**Table:** Larry, Mike, Marty

**Wednesday Lesson:** Stanley (1), Kris (8),  
Larry (15), Stanley (22), Kris (29)

**Lawn Mowing (week starting):** Marty  
(5), Stanley (12), Larry (19), Kris (26)

**Area Meetings:**

Jennings Chapel, 26-28, Ralph Walker

**Hays Mill church of Christ**

21705 Hays Mill Road

Elkmont, AL 35620

# The Bible . Examiner

“Examine everything carefully...” 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

Volume 8

October 5, 2025

Number 16

## Empathy... or Biblical Compassion?

*By Joe Hamm*

Empathy is treated like a virtue beyond question in a world full of pain, division, and emotional turmoil. We are told to “feel what others feel,” to “stand with those who are hurting,” and never to question someone’s pain or personal experience. But is this really what the Bible teaches?

Christians are called to love, comfort, and care for those who suffer. The Bible commands it: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep,” Rom 12:15. Yet biblical love never comes at the expense of truth. Scripture warns us that our desire to show compassion can cross into dangerous territory if we ignore discernment: “...for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds,” 2 Jn 1:11. We can become partakers in someone else’s rebellion—not by doing what they do, but by affirming or endorsing it under the guise of empathy.

### **Sympathy vs. Empathy: A Biblical Distinction**

The Bible calls us to have compassion, to show pity, and to bear one another’s burdens. We are commanded to “...be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit,” 1 Pet 3:8, and to “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ,” Gal 6:2. Job also declares, “For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend,” Job 6:14. This is what Scripture means by sympathy—to suffer with someone, to care for them, and to walk beside them in love. It remains rooted in God’s truth while extending mercy to the hurting.

However, empathy, as our culture now defines it, often goes further. It means entering fully into someone’s emotional world, even when that world is shaped by bitterness, confusion, or sin. And validating their feelings without question. Empathy, in this sense, demands emotional alignment that

leaves no room for correction or discernment.

To illustrate, imagine a friend sharing that their spouse spoke harshly to them. Sympathy says, "That sounds painful. Let's talk about how you're doing and how to respond in a way that honors Christ." Empathy says, "That's terrible! I'm so sorry they treated you that way—you didn't deserve that," without asking questions or seeking clarity.

Jesus, by contrast, is our perfect example. "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them," Mt 9:36. He felt deeply for those in need but never lost His footing in truth. His compassion never led Him to affirm sin or overlook repentance.

### **The Highest Good: Affirmation over Truth?**

This confusion between sympathy and empathy reveals a deeper issue—theology and worldview. For many, the highest moral good has become emotional validation. In this framework, the loving thing to do is to affirm someone's feelings without question, even when those feelings contradict God's Word. Correction is treated as cruelty. Discernment is seen as judgmentalism. Truth becomes subordinate to affirmation. But Scripture teaches that true love is grounded in obedience to God. "You are My friends if you do what I command you," Jn 15:14. Our aim is not to make others feel right but to help them live right. Our greater love for God must shape our love for our neighbor.

### **When Empathy Becomes an Excuse for Avoiding the Truth**

Empathy is often treated as the ultimate virtue. But this can lead to a dangerous unwillingness to speak hard truths. Paul writes, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who

are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness," Gal 6:1. Restoration requires truth. It involves lovingly pointing out sin, not merely affirming emotions. Proverbs gives similar wisdom: "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him," Prov 18:13. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy," Prov 27:6.

### **Real-Life Wisdom for Real People**

In our community, conflicts are common. Friends argue. Marriages struggle. Neighbors take sides. When someone tells you their version of a dispute, affirming them can feel loving. But true love seeks clarity. Scripture says, "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD," Prov 17:15. It is possible to affirm someone's pain while also helping them evaluate their heart honestly.

God does not call us to lose ourselves in the emotions of others. He calls us to love with wisdom. Empathy, when misapplied, leads to confusion. It can cause us to become so emotionally entangled with someone else's feelings that we lose clarity and cannot lovingly speak the truth. Instead of helping the person process their pain through God's Word, we may validate their feelings without discernment or direction. But biblical compassion leads to healing.

### **The Gospel: Our Anchor in the Storm**

When emotional storms rage, our anchor must always be God's Word—not public opinion, cultural pressure, or personal feelings. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," Mt 22:37. This comes before loving our neighbor. We cannot love others rightly unless we love God supremely.

Jesus taught that "...you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free," Jn 8:32. Healing comes not from emotional agreement but from sanctifying truth: "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth," Jn 17:17.

### **What Our Community Needs Right Now**

Many people carry grief, anger, or bitterness. Some have been wronged. Others have misunderstood situations or nurtured offenses. They don't need blind agreement but the life-giving truth of Scripture. "Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart," Prov 3:3. Truth and mercy must never be separated.

### **A Final Word of Encouragement**

#### *Key Takeaways:*

- Sympathy is biblical; empathy, when misapplied, can cloud judgment.
- Affirmation is not the same as truth, and feelings are not infallible.
- Jesus modeled compassion rooted in righteousness, not emotional entanglement.
- True healing and restoration come through the truth of God's Word, not unchecked emotion.

#### *What You Can Do:*

- Reflect: Am I confusing emotional agreement with Christ-like love?

- Pray: Ask God for wisdom to love with both grace and truth.
- Share: If this helped you think more clearly, pass it along to a friend or neighbor wrestling with these issues.

Let us be people who care deeply—and think clearly. Who listen well—and speak truth in love. "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul," Psa 19:7. "He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions," Psa 107:20. In a world crying out for healing, let us offer not emotional affirmation, but the unshakable hope of God's truth.

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth," Jn 17:17.

(Article originally was entitled, "When Empathy Goes Too Far: Why Biblical Compassion Requires Truth") 



## *Remember in Prayer*

**Betty** is back home! **Cindy V** plans to have surgery 11/4, God willing. Please continue to pray for **Carolyn; Deborah** and **Serenity; Hazel; John, Sylvia, Marie;**

and **Paige Pollard; Joshua and Kayla V; Pam B, Kaylee, Julie and Violet; Pam McNatt;** and **Bernetta Murrell.** 