

## Fostering Compassion

Compassion – that’s a big word! It comes from Latin, and roughly translated means ‘feeling with somebody’ – so it’s about us trying to understand how other people are feeling, and treating them in a way that makes them feel better.

Compassion can be really helpful in the way we behave towards each other: if we all can remember to be compassionate, we can avoid hurting others, and instead help each other when we feel sad or discouraged.

Compassion is also important not only in the way we treat other people, our parents and brothers and sisters, and our friends, but also in the way we treat the world around us: how we treat and care for animals, who can’t tell us with words how they are feeling (but can show us, and definitely appreciate and deserve being treated with understanding and kindness), and how we treat the world itself: and our planet needs us to be compassionate, too, and care for and protect it.

In the Bible, we see how God creates the world: our world, the plants and animals in it, and humans, too. And God tells the humans to take care of the world and the plants and the animals, and to take responsibility for treating them well.



Even in the earliest stories in the Bible, animals are mentioned: animals that are as much part of the world as humans are, and also animals that help humans, like donkeys who carry luggage (and even Jesus himself, on his way into Jerusalem), and animals that humans care for, like sheep that are looked after by a shepherd.

In the thousands of years since the Bible was written, animals have become companions to humans, too: not only seen for their usefulness in doing work or providing food for us, but also for their friendliness, and the friendship we can have with them.

Whether we have a pet at home, or have animals on the farm that will provide food, or see animals in the zoo or wild ones in documentaries, we as humans have a responsibility to treat all animals kindly, to protect them, and to act with compassion towards all of creation: other people, animals, and the world itself.

- What is your favourite animal, and why?
- How can we show compassion with animals?
- How can we show compassion with other people?
- How can we show compassion with the world?