

# ACTS *of* COMPASSION



BRINGING LOVE AND CARING  
BACK INTO YOUR LIFE

MICHAEL SPANGLE, PhD  
LINDA SPANGLE, RN, MA

## *Acts of Compassion*

Book Study and Discussion Guide

By Michael and Linda Spangle

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**Permission for duplicating:**

Permission is granted to duplicate all or parts of this discussion guide as needed for church studies, small groups or book clubs as well as individuals. There are no restrictions on the number of copies as long as the guide is used as a companion to the book *Acts of Compassion*.

**Number of Sessions**

This guide is designed to provide book study and discussion for eight sessions. However, groups are welcome to adjust the number of sessions as needed to match schedules or individual needs.

Each session will cover between two to three chapters in *Acts of Compassion*.

**Scriptures**

All scripture quotations in the guide are from NIV (New International Version) Bible.

**Action steps**

Each session ends with suggested action steps to complete. At the beginning of a new meeting, leaders may choose to ask participants to report on their actions from the previous session.

**Contact authors**

Michael and Linda Spangle are available for speaking, coaching and consulting. They live in North Liberty, Iowa and would be happy to talk with you.

The authors are happy to do guest appearances via Zoom. Please let them know if you would like to have them visit your group.

Michael Spangle  
Email: [mspangle47@gmail.com](mailto:mspangle47@gmail.com)  
Cell phone: 319-304-5166

Linda Spangle  
Email: [lmspangle@gmail.com](mailto:lmspangle@gmail.com)  
Cell phone: 303-503-1138

## **Guidelines for Small Group Participants**

### **Beginning of each meeting**

- Start on time and end on time. Arrive early so you are settled when it's time to begin.
- Notice and welcome any new participants. Introduce them to the rest of the group.
- Plan to read the book chapters ahead of time so you are ready for the discussion.
- Silence your cell phone. Avoid texting and side conversations during group meetings.

### **During each meeting**

- Maintain confidentiality. What's said in the group stays in the group.
- Listen well. Be sensitive to how long you share. Don't talk too much or too little.
- Encourage all group members to participate. Ask questions to draw people out.
- No fixing, solving or rescuing. Give encouragement, show warmth and caring but don't try to give solutions.

### **After each meeting**

- Appreciate and thank the group leader. If possible, offer positive feedback.
- Read the book chapters for the next meeting.
- Pray for the group, including individuals who are struggling in their lives.
- Tell others about the book, the lessons and how the discussions are helping you.

# *Acts of Compassion*

## Sessions

Welcome and Introduction

### **Session One – Gift of Compassion**

Chapter 1 How it begins

Chapter 2 How compassion works

### **Session Two – Compassion and meaning**

Chapter 3 The power of presence

Chapter 4 Compassion heals and connects

### **Session Three – Compassion and relationships**

Chapter 5 Compassion helps both people

Chapter 6 Stories behind the people

### **Session Four – Understanding compassion**

Chapter 7 Compassion and the brain

Chapter 8 Self-compassion

Chapter 9 Receiving compassion

### **Session Five – Growing compassion**

Chapter 10 Compassion in communities

Chapter 11 Compassion in organizations

Chapter 12 Compassion at work

### **Session Six – Compassion and faith**

Chapter 13 Compassion in churches

Chapter 14 Compassion and forgiveness

### **Session Seven – Capacity for compassion**

Chapter 15 Barriers to compassion

Chapter 16 Compassion fatigue

Chapter 17 Compassion renewal

### **Session Eight – Bringing it back**

Chapter 18 Compassion and happiness

Chapter 19 Compassion stories

Chapter 20 Compassion for life

**Wrap up and Reflections**

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### Session 1

### The Gift of Compassion

#### 1. Preparation: Read Chapters 1 and 2 in *Acts of Compassion*

#### 2. Opening prayer

Ask for God to give you an open heart and help you learn and understand this lesson as well as apply it to your daily life.

#### 3. Warm-up question

What is your favorite flavor of ice cream? Where are you most likely to eat it?

#### 4. Chapter summaries and key points

Chapter 1—How it begins

Compassion begins when someone in your life really sees you and notices your distress. This person shares words of comfort and understanding that make a difference in your life. Often the person is a parent, but sometimes it can be a teacher, a friend or a pastor.

- Example of high school teacher—one brief moment of compassion can have a long-term effect on someone's life.
- The green chair in Mike's office provided a safe place for people to talk and process life issues.
- Seven minutes of compassion takes some effort, but can make someone's life a lot better. Besides helping others, this can increase your own positive emotions, helping you feel happier and more peaceful.

Chapter 2—How compassion works

Compassion starts with an empathetic response to the distress or suffering of another person. In some cases, the needs are obvious. But other times you might just sense that someone needs a little help or kindness. Then you take steps that show you care about that person.

There are three steps or factors involved with an act of compassion.

- **Notice**— pay attention to the small ways someone might need help.
- **Feel**—be emotionally moved by someone's misfortune or need.
- **Do**—take action to provide help, encouragement or support.

Acts of compassion don't have an agenda. They are freely given without expecting something in return.

#### 5. Scripture reading **Matthew 6:25-27**

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus talks about God having compassion for us by providing for us and watching over us.

*Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?<sup>25</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father*

*feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?<sup>26</sup> Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?<sup>27</sup>*

## **6. Group discussion**

What would you like to learn or accomplish most in this study on compassion?

On a scale of 1-10, how good are you at displaying compassion? What would help you improve?

Chapter 1 talks about the benefits of seven minutes of compassion. Can you recall a time when you have received or given seven minutes of compassion?

Chapter 2 describes empathy as one of the components of compassion. Are there people or situations where you struggle to feel empathy?

Where is the easiest place to learn compassion? Is it from parents, teachers at school, at church, or in your natural friendships?

Why does our world need more compassion and how could you contribute to helping improve that?

### **Actions for this week**

Watch for opportunities to show compassion and record your actions. Do one act of compassion that takes seven minutes. Report these to the group at the next session.

Read Chapters 3-4 in *Acts of Compassion*.

### **Closing prayer**

Ask God for help to be more aware of people in need of compassion. Also ask for help to see ways God shows you compassion every day.

### **Additional scriptures**

If time permits, have someone read these scriptures, then talk about how compassion was shown in each of them.

God's compassion for us: Psalm 103:1-5

The depth of God's compassion – Isaiah 54:10

The promise of God's compassion - Jeremiah 29:11

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### Session 2

### The Meaning of Compassion

#### 1. Preparation: Read Chapters 3 and 4 in *Acts of Compassion*

#### 2. Opening prayer

Ask for God to open your eyes to the needs of people around you and help you learn new ways to show compassion.

#### 3. Warm-up question

What is something in your house that you want to get rid of but can't? (Please—no naming your spouse or children!)

#### 4. Chapter summaries and key points

Chapter 3—The Power of Presence

Never underestimate the power of your presence when people need compassion. Instead, be willing to spend time with them, listen and if necessary, help them cry. Even a few minutes of sitting quietly with a person who is suffering or has been through a loss can bring comfort and healing.

- Example of Mrs. Lothian who said, "Please stay. You are enough."
- Ideas for things to say when someone goes through a loss.
- How one minute of compassion can change everything.

Chapter 4—Compassion Heals and Connects

When people feel like giving up because of challenging situations, compassion can restore their hope for a better life. Compassion doesn't discount the reality of suffering. But through words of hope, it helps people realize they are strong enough to find a way through it.

- Compassion gave a teen hope that her life could get better.
- A compassionate friend goes extra steps, plus displays warmth.
- To be emotionally available to someone, avoid looking at your cell phone.

#### 5. Scripture reading **Matthew 6:28-30**

This week's scripture focuses on God's compassion for us and how he cares for us in our journey through life. When Jesus did this sermon, he was probably standing on a hillside, surrounded by colorful flowers.

*And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.<sup>28</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.<sup>29</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith.<sup>30</sup>*

#### 6. Discussion questions

Recall a time when your presence meant more than your words? Describe the situation or event.

Think of times when you're tempted to say, "At least..." followed by your suggestion about what to do. What could you say instead?

When is it hardest for you to know what to say to someone who's been through a life challenge such as a death or other loss? What are some statements or phrases you might be able to use in these situations?

Think of a time when you received "one minute" of compassion when you really needed it. Describe this.

Was there a time in your childhood when you received extra compassion? What was the situation and who was it that showed you compassion?

### **Actions for this week**

Spend time with someone without speaking. Reflect on how it feels to allow your presence to be a way to show compassion.

Read Chapters 5-6 in *Acts of Compassion*.

### **Closing prayer**

Thank God for helping you learn new ways to show compassion. Ask for help with improving your ability to let your presence be a form of compassion.

### **Additional scriptures**

If time permits, have someone read these scriptures, then talk about how compassion is described in each of them.

God's compassion for us - Psalm 103:7-11

Basic elements of compassion: Zechariah 7:9-10

Instructions on compassion: Philippians 2:1-3

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### **Session 3 Compassion and Relationships**

#### **1. Preparation: Read Chapters 5 and 6 in *Acts of Compassion***

#### **2. Opening prayer**

Pray that God will bless your relationships through the compassion you show and the compassion you receive from others.

#### **3. Warm-up question**

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up and why? How does that compare to your actual work or career?

#### **4. Chapter summaries and key points**

Chapter 5—Compassion helps both people

By nature, our minds tend to focus on what is negative, but compassion draws us into a realm of seeing the good around us. Through our compassionate acts, we give others hope at the same time we instill a greater hope in ourselves.

- Helping a patient be willing to take his medications.
- Professor Scott Pious teaches “Day of Compassion.”
- Mother Teresa – always let people leave better and happier.

Chapter 6—Stories behind the people

Remind yourself that all people have a story and that’s what makes them unique. You don’t need to fix them or even hear their story. Instead, strive to show compassion, and trust that your action has the ability to heal, comfort and encourage them, no matter what’s in their stories.

- Student who lived in homeless shelter at night.
- Listen longer and learn the stories of other people.
- Stories: lady with blanket over her head, lady in hobby store.

#### **5. Scripture reading Ruth 1:16-17**

The book of Ruth tells a story about two women in a helpless situation who discovered the power of compassion and the strength to keep going. Instead of heading back to Moab, her home country, Ruth said this to her mother-in-law:

*Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.<sup>16</sup> Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you from me.<sup>17</sup>*

#### **6. Discussion questions**

What are some things you have done to express kindness and compassion this past week or two? Did your actions improve a relationship or help you get along better with someone?

What are situations where you tend to make judgments or assumptions about people? How can you change your thoughts and consider showing compassion to them?

Can you remember a time when you've changed your opinion of someone after you've heard their story? Did that help you feel compassion?

When someone you've cared about hurts you or lets you down, how can you find the courage to express compassion toward them?

What is one of your own stories that you wish people knew? How might it change the way they see you or show compassion to you?

### **Actions for this week**

Learn the story behind at least one person this week. Write a few notes about how knowing the story helped you show compassion.

Read Chapters 7-9 in *Acts of Compassion*.

### **Closing prayer**

Ask God to help you express compassion in an important or difficult relationship. This could be with children, marriage, neighbor or someone at work.

### **Additional scriptures**

If time permits, have someone read these scriptures, then talk about how compassion is described in each of them.

Qualities of compassion in our relationships: 1 Peter: 3:8-9

Strive to demonstrate this kind of compassion in our relationships: Psalm 86:15

Seek first to understand the stories of others before judging: Matthew 7:1-2

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### **Session 4 Understanding Compassion**

#### **1. Preparation: Read Chapters 7-9 in *Acts of Compassion***

#### **2. Opening prayer**

Pray that God will help you let go of negative attitudes and improve your ability to care about people who need compassion.

#### **3. Warm-up question**

When was a moment in your life when you received a big surprise? Did you enjoy the surprise?

#### **4. Chapter summaries and key points**

Chapter 7—Compassion and the brain

Compassion begins in the brain and is nurtured by watching for signs of distress in others. By paying attention to thoughts and signals, we can recognize a need for compassion.

- Manage distractions and focus on people.
- Create “buffers” between work and home.
- To calm stress or anxiety, look for something green.

Chapter 8—Self-compassion

Self-compassion calms your inner critic and helps you live a life of courage. It also involves letting go of the past—a place you no longer live. When you focus on what went right rather than your failures, you discover how to let go of the wrongs and move on with your life.

- Self-criticism promotes negative emotions that drag you down and keep you stuck.
- Story about Donna who couldn’t let go of the past.
- Practice “reframing” negative messages and create new beliefs about yourself.

Chapter 9—Receiving compassion

Receiving compassion with joy demonstrates value for the caring of others. Be willing to allow others to show compassion and be sure to appreciate their efforts. Showing gratitude validates the people who show you caring and kindness.

- Slow down and notice times when someone does a kind or compassionate act.
- Linda’s story about receiving compassion during recovery from breast cancer.
- Acknowledge cards and messages from people who show you compassion.

#### **5. Scripture reading Matthew 29:30-34**

When Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed them. But Jesus stopped and showed compassion for people that others might have ignored.

*Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”<sup>30</sup> The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”<sup>31</sup> Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.<sup>32</sup> “Lord,” they answered, “we*

want our sight."<sup>33</sup> *Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.*<sup>34</sup>

## **6. Discussion questions**

Our brains sometimes get stuck on seeing the negative in other people or situations. How might compassionate thinking combat this tendency?

In Matthew 20:29-34, Jesus tells the story about the good Samaritan. In today's world, what would this story look like? Would it be a challenge to show compassion to the man who was robbed and beaten?

In recent years, have you shown compassion under fearful or uneasy circumstances?

Do you ever express compassion toward another even though you don't feel like doing it?

Which is easier, compassion for yourself or compassion for others? What does compassion for self look like?

What kind of words can you use to show appreciation when someone shows you compassion?

## **Actions for this week**

Watch for a time when someone shows you compassion. Be extra intentional about expressing gratitude and appreciation. Write a few notes about what you did and how it felt.

Read Chapters 10-12 in *Acts of Compassion*.

## **Closing prayer**

Ask God to help you be willing to show compassion in difficult situations. Ask for courage to offer someone help during those times.

## **Additional scriptures**

If time permits, have someone read these scriptures, then talk about how compassion is described in each of them.

The importance Jesus gives to compassionate living: Matthew 25:35-40

How compassion strengthens a Christian life: 1 John 3:17

A few of the elements of compassion: Galatians 5:22-23

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### **Session 5 Growing Compassion**

#### **1. Preparation: Read Chapters 10-12 in *Acts of Compassion***

#### **2. Opening prayer**

Pray that God will help you be a source of compassion for the members of the group.

#### **3. Warm-up question**

If you are at the zoo, what animal do you enjoy watching most and why?

#### **4. Chapter summaries and key points**

Chapter 10—Compassion in communities

This chapter focuses on the importance of compassion in communities, including schools and neighborhoods.

- How to ask kids about their school day.
- Compassion when you least expect it.
- University of Iowa “wave” during football games is known nationally.

Chapter 11—Compassion in organizations

Many organizations provide relief after disasters, help people with food insecurity and promote working on building homes for those in need.

- Disaster recovery team that leaves homeowners with a Bible after completing repairs.
- Important work done by American Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity.
- How to show compassion through listening.

Chapter 12—Compassion at work

Receiving compassion with joy demonstrates value for the caring of others. Be willing to allow others to show compassion and be sure to appreciate their efforts. Showing gratitude validates the people who show you caring and kindness.

- Example of store clerk who took care of customer’s extra payment.
- Recognizing when someone in a work setting needs help.
- Research that shows kindness and compassion are contagious.

#### **5. Scripture reading Luke 10:33-37**

One of the most familiar parables of Jesus is the story of the good Samaritan. It describes a man who was robbed, beaten and left half dead. A priest and a Levite both avoided him by passing by on the other side of the road.

*But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.<sup>33</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.<sup>34</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.”<sup>35</sup>*

Jesus followed the story with a question, “Who was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

### **6. Discussion questions**

What group or organization have you belonged to that shows compassion for people?

Where in our neighborhoods or communities is there a greater need for compassion?

How can one group member who expresses compassion influence the behaviors of others in the group?

In what situations are groups better at showing compassion compared to individual actions?

What are the biggest challenges for trying to show compassion in a work or neighborhood setting?

### **Actions for this week**

Notice times or people who need compassion in your community, organizations or work setting. Make an effort to respond to these needs when possible. Write a few notes about this.

Read Chapters 13-14 in *Acts of Compassion*.

### **Closing prayer**

Ask God to help you recognize the need for compassion in your work, community and organizations and give you the ability to show caring when you get the opportunity.

### **Additional scriptures**

If time permits, have someone read these scriptures, then talk about how compassion is described in each of them.

The kind of behavior God would like of us: Colossians 3:12-13

Instruction on showing compassion: Ephesians 4:32

The gifts of our compassion to others: 1 Peter 4:10

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### **Session 6 Compassion and faith**

#### **1. Preparation: Read Chapters 13-14 in *Acts of Compassion***

#### **2. Opening prayer**

Pray that God will help you find ways to express compassion in your church.

#### **3. Warm-up question**

What is a favorite activity from childhood that you miss doing? Or are you still doing it?

#### **4. Chapter summaries and key points**

Chapter 13—Compassion in churches

This chapter summarizes many ways churches can become known as compassionate places. It reviews importance of welcoming people, recognizing those who are alone and building small groups.

- Ways to notice and greet people who visit a church.
- Using small groups effectively in churches.
- Two by four program for building new friendships.

Chapter 14—Compassion and forgiveness

When forgiveness happens, compassion can come forward. This chapter explains the three phases of forgiveness and how grace has to be a part of it.

- How the “issue of the glove” harmed family relationships and decisions.
- Memories of being harmed in the past may not be accurate.
- How compassion and forgiveness move both directions.

#### **5. Scripture reading Matthew 25: 35-40**

In this passage, Jesus tells one of the last stories before His betrayal by Judas and the events of Holy Week. He includes a list of ways to show compassion to others.

*The King will say, “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,<sup>35</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”<sup>36</sup>*

*Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?<sup>37</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?<sup>38</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?<sup>39</sup>*

*The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”<sup>40</sup>*

#### **6. Discussion questions**

What do you think describes a “compassionate church? How would visitors know if they are at a church that values compassion?

How is prayer an expression of compassion for someone in need?

What would our world look like if it were more compassionate?

How is God's forgiveness or our forgiveness of others a gift of compassion? Think of situations in your life where you can use forgiveness as a way to show compassion.

"They will know we are Christians by our love" is a favorite Bible school song about showing compassion to anyone we meet. Think of a current or old-time church song that talks about expressing compassion.

### **Actions for this week**

Watch for people or situations in your church that model compassionate behaviors. If possible, thank people for their compassion. Think about how it felt to show this small step of kindness to these people. Write a few notes about this.

Read Chapters 15-17 in *Acts of Compassion*.

### **Closing prayer**

Pray that you can reach out to someone in your church to help them feel appreciated, to help them feel like they belong and to help them feel closer to God through your actions.

### **Additional scriptures**

If time permits, have someone read these scriptures, then talk about how compassion is described in each of them.

The source in God's heart of our forgiveness: Psalm 51:1

The depth of God's compassion for us: Lamentations 3:22-23

God's compassion once again linked to forgiveness: Isaiah 55:6-7

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### **Session 7** **Capacity for compassion**

#### **1. Preparation: Read Chapters 15-17 in *Acts of Compassion***

#### **2. Opening prayer**

Pray that God will give you peace in our life, comfort emotional fatigue and renew your spirit.

#### **3. Warm-up question**

How many times have you moved as an adult? Which home was or is your favorite?

#### **4. Chapter summaries and key points**

Chapter 15—Barriers to compassion

Many days you want to show compassion, but you can't seem to do it very well. You struggle to understand what people are going through and aren't sure what to say or how to help them.

- Instead of getting overwhelmed with big events, look for small ways you can help.
- Ideas for ways to respond when someone is grieving a loss.
- Why "distress tolerance" can make it hard to show someone compassion.

Chapter 16—Compassion fatigue

We can all reach points when we have nothing left to give. Watch for signs of being worn down to the point of feeling compassion fatigue.

- The highest risk of compassion fatigue occurs in helping professions, high stress demanding jobs and those who work as ongoing caregivers.
- Refilling your emotional bucket helps with recovering from compassion fatigue.
- Focus your attention spotlight on positive things and let negative ones go dark.

Chapter 17—Compassion renewal

Once you realize you are struggling with showing compassion, take steps to renew your emotional spirit. Focus on practicing gratitude and looking for rainbows around you.

- Learn to recognize the most common reasons for losing your compassion.
- Count your blessings and feel joy in as many small life moments as possible.
- Remember who you are when you are at your best.

#### **5. Scripture reading **Matthew 9: 35-36****

Jesus reminds us that during times when we feel helpless or alone, he'll be there for us.

*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.<sup>35</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>36</sup>*

#### **6. Discussion questions**

What kinds of activities or events in life drain your emotional bucket?

What are some church or spiritual activities that renew your spirit when you need it?

Have you ever experienced compassion fatigue? What helped you recover from it?

Picture the t-shirt that says, "Nope! Not today!" Where in your life that you need to say that phrase more often?

In *The Wizard of Oz*, each character needed help with one area: mind, heart and courage. In which of those three areas would you like God to give you more compassion?

### **Actions for this week**

Identify things that get in the way of you showing compassion as well as times when you feel compassion fatigue. Make a list of ways you can renew your compassion.

Read Chapters 18-20 in *Acts of Compassion*.

### **Closing prayer**

As God to make you an instrument of peace in our troubled world and to help you show love and compassion to those who are hurting or needing to be cared about.

### **Additional scriptures**

If time permits, have someone read these scriptures, then talk about how compassion is described in each of them.

How God helps us have courage to show compassion: Exodus 33:19

Important qualities in our compassion for others: Galatians 6:2

How we are asked to treat others: Psalm 86:15

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### **Session 8** **Bringing it back**

#### **1. Preparation: Read Chapters 18-20 in *Acts of Compassion***

#### **2. Opening prayer**

Ask God to help you begin something new in your life such as showing kindness in every relationship and being more aware of times when you can show someone compassion.

#### **3. Warm-up question**

What is one of your favorite road trips or vacations? When did it take place?

#### **4. Chapter summaries and key points**

Chapter 18—Compassion and happiness

Research confirms that doing acts of compassion can make us feel happier.

- Acts of compassion help us look for what's positive in situations as well as view our own life issues with more grace and understanding.
- Simply thinking about doing an act of compassion can make you feel happier.
- Strive each day to make your number of positive and compassionate interactions outnumber the negative ones.

Chapter 19—Compassion stories

Stories came from all types of organizations and individuals. In all of the stories, you can see the power of kindness and the lasting benefit for the person who received it.

- Ways that compassion improved someone's life.
- Compassion among friends and through connecting.
- When compassion helps lots of people.

Chapter 20—Compassion for life

Think about *why* you choose to live as a compassionate person. Perhaps you want to show gratitude, bring joy to others or demonstrate God's spirit within you.

- Linda's mother learned names of caretakers in nursing home.
- Work on sneaky ways to show compassion to difficult people.
- Build a sense of empathy and caring for all people you cross paths with in life.

#### **5. Scripture reading *Philippians 2:1-2***

What we have received from God, we are encouraged to share with others.

*Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,<sup>1</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.<sup>2</sup>*

#### **6. Discussion questions**

When was a time in your life where you showed compassion and it made you feel happy?

What are some of the biggest reasons *why* you want to be more compassionate?

Recall a time when an act of compassion (yours or someone else's) was especially important or meaningful to you. Share the story about this.

During the weeks of this study on compassion, who has touched your life in a warm and caring way? This could be someone in this group or in your regular daily life.

What's the most important thing you learned from this study and how will you apply that to your life?

### **Actions for this week**

Spend some time reviewing all of the lessons from this group study. Pick out a few of the most important things you've learned and record them on a note card or in a document on your computer. Determine ways you can build an identity of being a compassionate person.

Do each of the reflection exercises at the end of the book. Use them to deepen your understanding about compassion and ways to show it to others as well as yourself.

### **Closing prayer**

Ask God to give you a spirit of being a compassionate person and to help you show kindness, love and caring to everyone who crosses your path in life.

### **Additional scriptures**

If time permits, have someone read these scriptures, then talk about how compassion is described in each of them.

As God has cared for us, so we care for others: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

The timing of God's compassion for us: Isaiah 30:18

Important times to be there with others: Romans 12:15

## *Acts of Compassion* group study

### **Reflections**

At the end of the book *Acts of Compassion*, you will find examples of quiet reflections which are designed to help you focus and redirect your thoughts. You can use them to calm your stress as well as to nurture positive thoughts and mental images.

These are especially helpful during times when you are struggling to show caring and compassion. The reflections can be used as a “quieting time” or, if you are comfortable with it, as a prayer time to nurture your compassion.

When your spirit is quiet and you feel centered and peaceful, you are more able to be patient, forgiving and compassionate toward others.

While it’s helpful to do these reflections in order, it isn’t necessary. When you are ready to sit quietly and focus, choose the one that fits your needs best at that time. Each of the reflections can be completed in about ten minutes.

As you read the words for each reflection, you can mentally review them or even whisper or pray each of the statements. There’s no right or wrong way to use these tools. They simply provide an easy yet structured way to focus your attention and strengthen your ability to show compassion.

**Preparation: Read the general instructions on how to prepare for doing the reflections.**

#### **The Four Reflections:**

Reflection 1: Self-care

Reflection 2: Just like me

Reflection 3: Loving kindness

Reflection 4: Do it anyway

#### **Closing thought**

As you strive to be a caring, compassionate person, remember that even the smallest kindness matters and can change a person’s life forever.