

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?²⁵ 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?²⁶ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?²⁷

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