

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.²⁸ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.²⁹ 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.³⁰

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