

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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

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