

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,³⁵ 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.”³⁶

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

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.”⁴⁰

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