

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.³⁵ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.³⁶

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