

WHO CARES?

COMPASSION



BIG IDEA: Why don't we typically experience compassion for people? Because we often fail to see people as God does. This study on compassion is designed to help your group view people from a biblical perspective and realize that people's greatest need is for a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Physical needs are easily recognized but spiritual needs are more difficult to discern. Because of this, we often fail to see the spiritual needs of people we interact with every day. This study will help your group better understand Jesus' compassion for people and how they can cultivate Christlike compassion in their own lives.



DESIRED LIFE CHANGE: As a result of this study, your group should begin to take steps to cultivate compassion for the lost. This study should help group members develop greater compassion by challenging their attitudes and actions in relation to people's true spiritual need.



AUDIENCE: This lesson is designed for students who need to better recognize the true spiritual need of people around them. This lesson may be used to help motivate group members to begin sharing their faith.



LEADER'S PREPARATION: Take 45 minutes to work through the entire study with the leader's guide, paying particular attention to the difference between Jesus' response to people and our common responses. Matthew 9:35-38 is used to help motivate group members to begin sharing their faith. As needed, utilize the verses found in the "For Further Study" section to supplement the Matthew 9 passage. Use a dictionary to help your group define the words on page 2.



AT A GLANCE

As your group interacts in this study, they will think . . .

This is my **WORLD:** Since my impression of people is frequently determined by outward appearances, I often fail to see their true spiritual condition. Thus, I don't demonstrate compassion toward them or take action to share Christ with them.

This is my **NEED:** I need to allow God's heart of compassion for the lost to grip me so that I take appropriate steps of action.

This is my **ANSWER:** I will examine my heart of compassion against God's heart of compassion as it is revealed in His Word.

This is the **DIFFERENCE:** By embracing God's heart of compassion, I will reach out to those around me who are lost.

This is what I'll **DO:** I will take steps to cultivate Christlike compassion in my life, and will demonstrate this Christlike compassion as I seek to share my faith with others.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?



Two crucial issues face us in ministry. The first is recognizing others' needs. People have needs in every area of life—physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, etc. Some are more recognizable than others, but all are legitimate. While Jesus ministered to the whole person, what captured His heart was people's need for Him. We want to help students share His heart of compassion with those who are lost.

The second issue is recognizing our own motivations. Unfortunately not all ministry flows from a heart of compassion. We can find ourselves doing the right things for the wrong reasons (performing for others, trying to impress God, etc.) While a heart of compassion is cultivated over a lifetime, a close look at Jesus will help our students take steps toward becoming truly compassionate Christians.

CAPTURE THE INTEREST AND EXPOSE THE NEED

1 **STATE:** "Let's look at a modern-day example of compassion."

2 **READ**

3 **ASK** (She was caring, understanding, loving, comforting, and consoling.)

4 **ASK** (She looked beyond the immediate situation and saw what wasn't self-evident. Thus, she was compelled to take action and become involved.)

5 **READ**


6 **ASK & DISCUSS**

7 **READ**

8 **ASK & DISCUSS**

9 **REFLECT:** Just for them.

10 **TRANSITION:** "Let's look at how Jesus demonstrated compassion for the lost and what motivated Him to take action . . ."



VERSION 2.1

WHO CARES?

TOOLBOX

- THINK
- OBSERVE
- CLOSE-UP
- WRITE
- DISCUSS
- FEELINGS
- BRAINSTORM
- REFERENCE
- PASSAGE
- ARTICLE
- BIG IDEA
- CROSSROAD

MODERN-DAY COMPASSION

On Monday, August 9, 1993, a 31-year-old woman, Sopehia Mardress White, burst into the hospital nursery at USC Medical Center in Los Angeles, wielding a .38-caliber handgun. She had come gunning for Elizabeth Staten, a nurse whom she accused of stealing her husband. White fired six shots, hitting Staten in the wrist and stomach.

Staten fled, and White chased her into the emergency room, firing once more. There, with blood on her clothes and a hot pistol in her hand, the attacker was met by another nurse, Joan Black, who did the unthinkable. Black walked calmly to the gun-toting woman—and hugged her.

Black spoke comforting words.

The assailant said she didn't have anything to live for, that Staten had stolen her family.


"You're in pain," Black said. "I'm sorry, but everybody has pain in their life . . . I understand, and we can work it out."

As they talked, the hospital invader kept her finger on the trigger. Once she began to lift the gun as though she would shoot herself, Nurse Black just pushed her arm down and continued to hold her. At last Sopehia White gave the gun to the nurse. She was disarmed by a hug, by understanding, by compassion.

Black later told an Associated Press reporter, "I saw a sick person and had to take care of her."

Jesus Christ looks upon us in a similar fashion, as persons sick and broken inside, in need of his care. And it is his embrace that disarms us.

—Tom Tripp, Colusa, California
(from *Leadership Journal*, Winter 1994, p.47)




DISCUSS

How did Joan Black demonstrate compassion?

DISCUSS

What motivated her to respond as she did?



WHAT ABOUT YOU?

YOU are in the hospital nursery at USC Medical Center. The date is August 9, 1993. Suddenly, you hear a loud "popping" sound behind you. Reacting immediately, you quickly turn around. Your eyes become locked with those of a wild-eyed assailant, who is randomly firing a .38-caliber handgun.

What would YOU have done if you were in that situation? Would you have taken action as Nurse Black did?

In your daily life, what factors affect whether you will help someone?

DISCUSS

In what situations do you tend to feel or demonstrate compassion for those around you who don't know Christ?

What makes it easy or difficult for you to demonstrate compassion for those around you who don't know Christ?

Is there anything in my life that keeps me from experiencing compassion for the lost and taking action?

Let's look at how Jesus demonstrated compassion for the lost and what motivated Him to take action . . .

DISCOVER THE SOLUTION

1 READ

CONTEXT
Jesus had spent more than a year ministering throughout Galilee. His ministry was already attracting large crowds of people.

2 READ

MATTHEW 9:35-38
Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."



3 ASK

OBSERVE
When Jesus looked at the crowd, what did He see?

HARASSED

HELPLESS

4 DISCUSS the following:

Who would have been in the crowds? (all kinds of people—rich, poor, young, old, etc.)

What does harassed mean? Write your thoughts in the box.

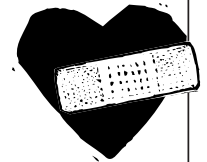
What does helpless imply? Write your thoughts in the box.

Why did Jesus see the people as harassed and helpless? Do you think the people in the crowd would describe themselves in this way? Why?

Why did Jesus compare the condition of the crowd to the condition of sheep without a shepherd? What parallels was He trying to draw? What points was He trying to make? STATE: When attacked by wolves, sheep will scatter, unable to defend themselves. Without a shepherd to protect them or lead them to safety, they are easy prey. People are like sheep. They are in danger and helpless, having no one to guide them and keep them safe.

SUMMARIZE
As Jesus saw the needs of the crowd, what did He feel?

COMPASSION



5 ASK

When Matthew writes that Jesus had compassion on the people, he is not saying that Jesus felt casual pity for them. No, the term is far more graphic. Matthew is saying that Jesus felt their hurt in His gut:

- He felt the limp of the crippled.
- He felt the hurt of the diseased.
- He felt the loneliness of the leper.
- He felt the embarrassment of the sinful.

And once He felt their hurts, He couldn't help but heal their hurts. He was moved in the stomach by their needs. He was so touched by their needs that He forgot His own needs. He was so moved by the people's hurts that He put His own needs on the back burner.

—Max Lucado, *In the Eye of the Storm*, Word 1991, p. 54.

DISCUSS
What action did Jesus take?

6 DISCUSS the following:

What is compassion? Write your answer in the box.

What does compassion imply? (Compassion connotes a desire to help, not just the feeling. For instance, a compassionate person does not feel bad for a homeless person, but will give him the food or shelter he needs.)

What is the difference between compassion and pity? (Pity implies a concern; compassion involves emotion plus action.)

9 ASK. (He prayed and asked His disciples to pray. He empowered them and sent them out among the people to meet their needs.)
OPTIONAL QUESTION: "What actions does compassion prompt you to take?"

7 READ

8 ASK: "Has anyone ever shown this depth of compassion for you? If so, what was it like to be blessed by the compassion of another person?"

**VISUALIZE
THE
PRINCIPLE**

1 ASK. (Often, we only see the external side of people [i.e., the things about them that are readily apparent]. We don't see their inner condition. Outward appearances can deceive. Also, we can be uninvolved in others' lives. We focus on our own needs.)

WHY?
Why do you think we don't often view people the way Jesus does?



RICK'S STORY

Todd and I were football teammates, but never close friends. Todd was someone I looked up to. He was one of the sharpest guys I knew in college. He had everything going for him—intelligence, movie star looks, good family background. He was also dating the best-looking girl on campus. He was an all-conference football player as a sophomore. Almost any guy on campus would have loved to have been in his shoes. If he needed Christ, it sure didn't appear that way to me. He was so confident of himself—almost cocky.

One day we had the chance to travel together. I thought I should talk to Todd about Jesus, but I resisted. *Not now. I'll talk to him on the way back*, I thought. *I'll use this time to build a relationship.* But on the way back, I found myself thinking, *Why ruin a good evening. He's probably not interested. Besides he knows I'm a Christian. If he wanted to talk, he'd ask. Anyway, I've got all next year to share Christ with him.*

The next year passed and I never took the time to talk to Todd about Christ. He graduated, was drafted in the second round by a professional football team, and had great rookie season.

Within a year, I received a letter containing an article from the local paper from a friend back on campus. My heart sank. Todd had quit the pro team to become part of a religious cult, walking away from a lucrative multi-year contract.

The story went on to explain Todd's "testimony." Amid his outward success he was inwardly unfulfilled and empty. Success, fortune and fame did nothing to fill the void in his life.

I kicked myself. I had been fooled by an appearance. I had bought into a lie that Todd was different from the rest of us—that he didn't have a spiritual need. Since that day I've never looked at people the same.

2 TRANSITION STATEMENT: "Let's look at a true story about Rick and Todd."

3 READ

4 DISCUSS

5 ASK: "Have you ever had a similar experience to Rick's? What did you do? Why?"

DISCUSS
How did Rick see Todd? Why?
How did Rick feel about Todd?
How would Jesus have seen Todd?
What would He have felt for him?



TAKE A STEP:

I can seek to introduce them to Jesus. I can demonstrate compassion towards them, showing them that I truly care for and value them. I can look for natural opportunities to share Christ with them.

MOTIVATIONS

- Guilt—I should help or I'll feel bad.
- Performance—I must meet this need to feel successful or significant.
- Compassion—I'll meet this need because I care.

6 ASK: "As a Christian, what would be the most appropriate action for you to take to demonstrate Christlike compassion to the lost students around you?"

7 STATE: "It's been said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. To what degree do you care for the lost students on your campus? What motivates you to reach out and share Christ with them?"

8 READ

9 TRANSITION STATEMENT: "How can we cultivate Christlike compassion for the lost?"

**DESIGN
THE
APPLICATION**

1 STATE: “True compassion is cultivated by capturing God’s heart for the lost, which leads to taking action. How do we allow God’s heart for the lost to embrace us? One significant way is to spend time in His Word and observe the value God places on those who don’t know Him personally.”



VAN’S STORY

One year, I went to Campus Crusade’s spring break conference in Daytona Beach, Florida. The emphasis of the conference is sharing our faith with many of the thousands of college students that come there for spring break. During our first night in Daytona, as my discipleship group of guys and I looked out from the balcony of our motel onto the busy street below, we all couldn’t help but be repulsed by what we saw. The blatant grossness and lewdness made us sick. We wondered why we came in the first place! To be honest, at that point, I did not have a heart for compassion for the lost students that I saw. My attitude was more like: “Forget about them, God. In the condition they’re in, I really doubt that they want to hear about You much less know You.”

But then, I remembered why I had come to the conference in the first place: to be used by God to share Christ with others. I remembered that it is not those who are healthy who “are in need of a physician.” That night, I spent considerable time in Luke 15, looking at the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son. I saw the value that God places on the lost and the privilege I have to be used by Him to compassionately reach out to others. My perspective for the week was completely changed that night. As I spent time in His Word, God’s heart for the lost was renewed within me.

“Here’s one story that illustrates the importance of embracing God’s heart of compassion for the lost.”

2 READ.

TO CULTIVATE COMPASSION FOR THE LOST:

What attitudes do I need to cultivate?

A **burden** for the lost; demonstrate and show **genuine care** for those around me; be **unselfish** toward them; realize that there is an **urgency** (i.e., there is often a limited window of opportunity where my friends are most open to the truth of God’s Word); etc.

What actions will I take?

Spend time in the Bible and observe Jesus’ heart of compassion for the lost and how it motivated Him to take action. See beneath the surface of those around me and recognize their true need for Jesus. Look for opportunities to share Christ. Be bold yet sensitive in sharing Christ. Show that I care.

3 STATE: “Take time to answer these questions. Then, we’ll share our answers as a group.”



4 WRITE: “List the names of 5-10 non-Christians you know, either friends or family. Begin to pray for them and ask God to provide you with opportunities to share Christ with them or ways you can demonstrate compassion toward them.”

MY LIST

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

5 STATE: “Remember compassion’s key questions.”

COMPASSION’S KEY QUESTIONS

1. What is this person’s spiritual condition?
2. What actions will I take?

6 READ

7 CLOSE IN PRAYER

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the *New International Version*, ©1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Published by Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



COACH’S CORNER: Set up individual appointments with those in your group to discuss their action points from the “My List” exercise. Pray with them concerning their non-Christian family and friends. Also, during your appointment time, you might choose to meet during a “high-traffic” time on campus. Watch the students walk by. Ask your group member, “What do you see, both in a literal, physical sense as well as in a spiritual sense? How does it make you feel? What actions does this lead you to take?”



FOR FURTHER STUDY

Look up these examples of the compassion of Jesus.

What did He do and why did He respond the way He did?

Matthew 14:14

Matthew 15:32

Matthew 20:34

Mark 1:41

Mark 6:34

Mark 8:2

Luke 15:1-7; 8-10; 11-32



TOPIC CONNECTIONS

Related *InterACTA*

small group studies: *Two Worlds; When Opportunity Knocks; Talk It Up; Father Knows Best; Heart of the Matter; Live It Up.*

ADDITIONAL HELP

Here are some possible activities the group could do together to develop greater compassion for people.

1. Have the group walk around campus together observing people, trying to discern what some of their needs might be.
2. As a group, arrange to serve at a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
3. Visit a nursing home together, or participate in an outreach ministry through a local church.
4. Become more involved in residence hall/fraternity/sorority activities in order to get to know people better.
5. Develop a questionnaire relating to compassion, and use the questions on campus to initiate conversations with people.

Sample questions:

1. What do you think is the greatest problem in society today?
2. What problems do you think students have?
3. What would you say is the greatest need of college students?
4. How do you think the greatest need could best be met?
5. Do you think a person's religious beliefs help them better deal with their problems and needs?
6. Do you personally have religious beliefs that help you deal with your needs and problems?

The group member(s), at this point, may transition to the *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet, if appropriate.

Possible transition statement: "We have a brief outline that talks about people's greatest need, according to the Bible and its solution. It is called *The Four Spiritual Laws*. Have you ever heard of it? (If not) May we share it with you?" (If yes, share the booklet with them. If no, graciously thank them for taking the questionnaire.)

O V E R V I E W O F M E E T I N G T I M E



Planning your group session

	INTERACTION AS A GROUP	INTERACTION WITH THE STUDY & WORD	INTERACTION WITH GOD	UPCOMING INFORMATION	OTHER IDEAS
	Ice breaker? Refreshments?	Provided. Add personal story?	Worship / Praise / Prayer time?	Next meeting? Special event?	Music / Video?
Allocating your time	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____

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