



Mission: Compassion Leader Guide

This study is part of a longer work that would be suitable for a retreat or special meeting. It was prepared by the LWML Oklahoma District Christian Growth Committee (1992–1994). Additional materials and information are available at lwml.org. Type *Mission: Compassion* into the search box and click *enter*.

Opening Prayer: *Lord Jesus, teach us to be open to the challenging experiences that loving others in Your name brings, so we might trust in You all the more and rejoice exceedingly when others come to faith in You because they have known us as Your people. Amen.**

R.C.H. Lenski, in his book *His Footsteps* (page 245) says, "The compassion of Jesus is one of the deepest, richest, and most comforting of all His Savior qualities." Discuss your opinion of Lenski's comment.

GOD'S COMPASSION *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort ... (2 Corinthians 1:3–4 NIV)*

Read **Matthew 9:35–10:8**. Jesus' earthly mission, which led ultimately to the cross of Calvary, was a mission of compassion. How is Jesus acting on His compassion in **Matthew 9:35**? _____
He was visiting cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel, and healing every disease and affliction.

9 ³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." **10** ¹ And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

NOTE TO LEADER: "Splagchnizomai" is the Greek word translated into English as "compassion". Literally this means "to have the viscera moved". The viscera includes the lungs, heart and liver. It was understood by the Greeks as the center of emotions and the seat of feelings. Some have described compassion as a "stirring of the heart" or "a pained feeling at the sight of suffering and a strong desire to remove the suffering".

What suffering moved Jesus in **Matthew 9:36**? "The people were **harassed** and **helpless**."
They were like sheep without a shepherd.

NOTE TO LEADER: "Eskulmenoi", the Greek word translated "harassed", is described as "having been flayed" or "having the skin torn" (like a sheep wandering among brambles and sharp rocks). "Errimmenoi", translated "helpless" has the sense of being thrown down, prone and

helpless", like an exhausted, spent sheep. The word was used by the Greeks of corpses, lying prostrate on the ground.

Torn ... exhausted ... in various abject conditions, the people, like a haggard flock of sheep, were a sight which rent Jesus' heart. He was moved to compassion.

Jesus' compassion was not mere sympathy for the people. His compassion moved Him to action. Jesus responded! Look at **Matthew 10:1**. What did Jesus do? _____ **He called His disciples to Him and asked them to pray for laborers to be sent into the harvest.**

What authority did Jesus give His disciples?

Matthew 10:1 (a) cast out unclean spirits

(b) heal every disease and affliction

Matthew 10:7–8 (a) proclaim the kingdom of heaven is at hand

(b) heal the sick (c) raise the dead

(d) cleanse lepers (e) cast out demons

Why should these disciples go forth and show compassion to the people? Reread **Matthew 10:8**. _____ **The harvest was plentiful and they were to be "laborers to" the lost sheep of Israel. The disciples had received without paying, and, as a loving response, could give without receiving pay.**

Jesus' heart was ever filled with merciful kindness and feelings of pity for the distressed of every description. Whenever and wherever suffering and sorrow of body or soul met His eyes, His heart was moved with compassion and to action. As His disciples had experienced His compassion in action for them, He called them to share His compassion and to be ministers of His compassion to others. In your own words, write your personal definition of Jesus' compassion: _____ **Answers will vary, but may include: Jesus was moved by His love to provide care and comfort.**

GOD'S COMPASSION ... FOR ME ... who comforts us in all our troubles ... (2 Corinthians 1:3–4 NIV)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

After studying each passage below, list ways that God shows compassion for our spiritual needs.

Psalms 51:1 _____ **God is merciful, steadfast in His love, and blots out transgressions.**

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Psalms 103:8–13 _____ **He is merciful and gracious; does not keep anger forever; does not deal with us, nor repay, according to our sins and iniquities; removes our transgressions from us; shows compassion.**

⁸The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. ¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. ¹³As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

Micah 7:19 _____ He will have compassion on us; tread our iniquities underfoot; cast all our sins into depths of the sea.

¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Mark 6:34 _____ Jesus had compassion on the crowd; taught them many things.

³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

Luke 15:20 _____ The father felt compassion toward his prodigal son, ran, embraced, and kissed him.

²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

John 14:1–4 _____ Jesus calms troubled hearts; leaves to prepare a place for us; will come again and take us to be with Him where He is going.

¹“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going.”

John 14:16–17 _____ Christ sent a Helper, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, who dwells with and within us forever.

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Read **Mark 6:34** again. Jesus' teaching takes place shortly before the feeding of the 5,000. How has Jesus "fed" us when we are spiritually "hungry"? _____ He teaches us via God's Word. He also offers His feeding through worship, the Lord's Supper, and Baptism. He keeps His promises of steadfast love, forgiveness, and His presence with us.

³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

Sometimes when we sense that "hunger", instead of searching for Jesus, we may try to fill-up on something else first. List some alternate "fill-ups". _____ Answers will vary. They may include such responses as: food; alcohol; drugs; entertainment; risk-taking; etc.

In the account of the healing of the paralytic in **Mark 2:1–12**, Jesus first took care of the man's spiritual needs and then attended to his physical needs. Why could Jesus forgive the paralytic man's sins (verses 7, 10)? _____

Jesus is God (as well as man) and, therefore, has the authority to forgive sins.

¹And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹"I say to you, rise, pick

up your bed, and go home.”¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!

What is Jesus' priority concerning the needs of people? _____

Our greatest need is forgiveness and then restoration of health.

How did Jesus show His ultimate compassion for your spiritual needs? See **Romans 5:6–8**. _____

Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

How did God show compassion for the physical needs of His Old Testament people?

Nehemiah 9:19–21 _____ **They were led by a pillar of cloud by day, fire by night. God’s Spirit instructed them. They were given manna and water. They were sustained and lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.**

¹⁹ you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. ²⁰ You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. ²¹ Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

Psalms 103:2–5 _____

God forgives iniquity; heals diseases; redeems; crowns with His steadfast love and mercy; satisfies with good.

² Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³ who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵ who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Psalms 119:156 _____ **God gives mercy and life.**

¹⁵⁶ Great is your mercy, O Lord; give me life according to your rules.

Isaiah 49:10 _____ **He satisfies our hunger and thirst — even our need for protection from sun and scorching wind. He is our guide.**

¹⁰ they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.

How did Jesus show compassion for the physical needs of His New Testament people?

Matthew 6:25–33 _____

We are to seek first the Kingdom of God and trust that our daily needs will be met.

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 14:14 _____ **Jesus healed the sick.**

¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Matthew 15:32 _____ Jesus was concerned for their hunger and its physical consequences. He had experienced hunger Himself in the wilderness, fasting forty days and nights (Matthew 4:1–4).

³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”

Matthew 20:34 _____ Jesus healed their eyes (and their souls) and they followed Him.

³⁴ And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

Mark 1:23–26, 32–34 _____ Jesus cast out an unclean spirit, healed the sick, and cast out demons. He wouldn’t allow the demons to speak (and harass) the people.

²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

³² That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the account of the raising of Jairus' daughter in **Mark 5:38–43**, Jesus showed compassion for Jairus' daughter by restoring her life. He took care of the big things. Reread **verse 43**. How did Jesus show He was also concerned about the small details? _____ He asks that she be given something to eat — an action of a person alive does and that would be part of her recovery. He also calls her “little girl,” a term of affection.

³⁸ They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was.

⁴¹ Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”

⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³ And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

How does He show His compassion for the small details in your life? _____ Answers will vary, but may include growing up in a Christian home, healing from disease, safety, etc.

Read **Luke 7:11–17**, particularly verse 13. Describe some specific ways in which Jesus' love and compassion have affected your life. _____ Answers will vary, but may include a long marriage to a Christian spouse; a sense of peace in difficult times.

¹¹ Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. ¹² As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. ¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” ¹⁴ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” ¹⁵ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶ Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” ¹⁷ And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

GOD'S COMPASSION = MY MISSION ... so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3–4 NIV)

THE REASON

Name three reasons King David gives in **Psalm 103:2–4** for showing compassion to others.

a. _____ **God heals.** b. _____ **God forgives.** c. _____ **God redeems.**

He also crowns us with steadfast love and mercy.

²Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

What are some other benefits you have received through God's compassion? _____

Answers will vary.

Read **Ephesians 4:32** and **Colossians 3:12–14**. What are we called to be? **Compassionate.**

Ephesians 4:³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Colossians 3:¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

List some specific ways God gives in these passages to share compassion: _____

Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving, compassionate, humble, meek, patient, loving.

About whom did Old Testament prophet **Zechariah** seem particularly concerned in Chapter **7:9–10**? _____ **Widows, orphans, and the poor.**

⁹“Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, ¹⁰do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”

Scan **Acts 6:1–6**. The early New Testament church also shared this concern and delegated responsibility for widows and orphans to certain men in the church. Most of our congregations today also include widows or widowers, the elderly, the invalid, divorced individuals, as well as single parent families with special needs. List specific ways to show compassion to these members. _____ **Answers will vary, but may include: providing food or funds, transportation, help with children and grandchildren, etc.**

¹Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” ⁵And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

In **2 Corinthians 1:3–4**, how is compassion a sharing process? _____ **God comforts us and we pass along that comfort to those who are afflicted.**

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

THE RISK

Read **Mark 1:40–42**. What is significant about Jesus’ reaching out His hand and touching this leper? _____ People were not supposed to be near a leper, who was to cry out a warning of “unclean.” Touching would have made Jesus unclean and, from a practical standpoint, could have resulted in contracting the disease itself. Christ, however, was moved with pity — not fear — and His touch healed the leper.

⁴⁰ And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” ⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” ⁴² And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

What would it mean to you to have Jesus *touch* you? _____ Answers will vary, but may include: being made whole, using His deeds AND words. [NOTE: color change]

Where do you need this special touch this week? _____ Answers will vary, but may include: illness, economic difficulties, needing a job; heartache for a spouse or child in difficulty.

How can you touch lepers in your part of the world? _____ Answers will vary, but may include: helping the homeless or poverty-stricken; caring for the ill and elderly.

What are the risks involved in doing so? _____ Answers will vary. Today we fear Covid-19 and AIDS, lawsuits and violence which could make a person hesitate and be reluctant to get involved.

THE REWARD

Our salvation is by grace, but Scripture also promises reward for these acts of compassion. Write in your own words the promise found in the following passages:

Proverbs 19:17 Using our gifts to the benefit of others may have earthly rewards, such as gaining friends, joy, a sense of accomplishment, etc.

¹⁷ Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

Matthew 25:31–40 At the final judgment, Jesus will separate believers from those who have rejected Him. The latter will be condemned. The former, through faith in Christ, will receive eternal life in heaven. The acts of compassion listed in this text are fruits which show forth faith in Jesus, the compassionate Savior. They give great joy in compassionately serving others as we serve Jesus!

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’ ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

Luke 14:12–14 God knows and recognizes compassionate acts (giving to the poor, crippled, lame, blind, and those who cannot repay) that His people show forth in faith in their Savior – a faith which saves. Rewards in this passage could include: showing saving faith, joy in serving, recognition at the resurrection.

¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Have you experienced these rewards in your life? Share with the group.

If time allows: How does it make you feel when you realize that you have special gifts to contribute to the world's needs?

- a. Lump in my throat
- b. Scared stiff
- c. Pretty responsible
- d. Eager to do something
- e. Mixed feelings
- f. Question God's choice of me

Closing Prayer: Read aloud together 1 John 4:10–11 as printed below. Put your name in the blanks provided. *“This is love: not that _____ loved God, but that He loved _____ and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for _____'s sins. Dear friends, since God so loved _____, _____ also ought to love one another”* (NIV). *Lord, make me more like You, that I grow in faith and love for my neighbor. May people see You in my actions as I reach out to them with Your love. Amen.***

Closing Hymn: Sing or say together “Lord, Whose Love through Humble Service” (LSB 848) or “Oh, How Great Is Your Compassion” (LSB 559; LW 364; TLH 384).

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