

MISSION:



COMPASSION

Lutheran Women's
Missionary League

#59069
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MISSION: COMPASSION

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, 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 Objectives of this Study:

That each participant ...

1. comes to understand God's compassion;
2. comes to recognize God's compassion for each one;
3. be moved to share God's compassion with others.

Using This Study:

This Bible study topic was originally used in conjunction with the Zone Rally. With that in mind, the following agenda is offered:

Registration and Fellowship
Opening Devotions
Zone Business

Topic/Bible Study: MISSION: COMPASSION

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To extend the program for a retreat/workshop, you may wish to invite a speaker involved in a "compassion" ministry (nurse, social ministry worker, Birthright representative, etc.).

This study was prepared by the Oklahoma District
LWML Christian Growth Committee:

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Mrs. Gayla Smith, Member
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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 ..."

1. Read Matthew 9:35 - 10:8.

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.

2. 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?

3. Matthew 9:36 says that when Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion.

"Splanchnizomai" 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 _____ and _____."

"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 _____.

4. Jesus compassion was not mere sympathy for the people. His compassion moved Him to action. Jesus responded!

Read Matthew 10:1. What did Jesus do?

5. What authority did Jesus give His disciples?

Matthew 10:1 -- (a) _____ (b) _____

Matthew 10:7-8 -- (a) _____ (d) _____
(b) _____ (e) _____
(c) _____

6. Why should these disciples go forth and show compassion to the people? Read Matthew 10:8.

7. 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:

GOD'S COMPASSION ... FOR ME

"... who comforts us in all our troubles ..."

1. After reading the passages below, list ways that God shows compassion for our spiritual needs.

Psalm 51:1

Mark 6:34

Psalm 103:2-4, 8-13

Luke 15:20

Psalm 145:8-9

John 14:1-4

Micah 7:19

John 14:16-17a

2. 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"?

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".

3. Read the account of the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12. Here is an account where 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 (v. 7, 10)?

What is Jesus' priority concerning spiritual and physical needs of people?

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

4. Read 1 John 4:10-11 aloud 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."

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

Nehemiah 9:19-21
Psalm 103:2-5

Psalm 119:156
Isaiah 49:10

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

Matthew 6:25-33
Matthew 9:35-36
Matthew 14:14
Matthew 15:32 (Mark 8:2)

Matthew 20:34
Mark 1:41-42
Mark 1:23-26, 32-34

7. Read the account of the raising of Jairus' daughter in Mark 5:38-43. Jesus showed compassion for Jairus' daughter by giving her back her physical life. He took care of the "big" things.

Reread verse 43. How did Jesus show He was also concerned about the "small" details?

How does He show His compassion for the "small" details in your life?

8. Read Luke 7:11-17, particularly verse 13. Name some specific ways in which Jesus' love and compassion has affected your life.

GOD'S COMPASSION = MY MISSION

"... so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

THE REASON

1. Reread Psalm 103:2-4. Name three reasons King David gives in this passage for showing compassion to others.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

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

2. Read Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:12-14. What are we called to be?

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

3. Read Zechariah 7:9-10. This Old Testament prophet seemed particularly concerned about compassion for widows and orphans.

Read 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.

4. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (our theme verse). Explain how compassion is a sharing process.

THE RISK

1. Read Luke 10:30-37. The Good Samaritan took several risks in his act of compassion. Let's examine these:
 - a. The Good Samaritan did not know the injured man. If the man had had leprosy, the Samaritan would have been exposed to it. Today we live with the dreaded fear of AIDS. Would this make you hesitate when confronted with a similar situation? Are we reluctant to get involved if there is a health risk to us? Discuss.
 - b. The Good Samaritan's actions would have been resented by Jews and Samaritans alike. Evidence of racial tension (i.e. riots, beatings, and the like) has been publicly televised to the nation. Does the church's compassion reach across "racial barriers"? Are you comfortable with helping those of different races and beliefs other than your own? Discuss.
 - c. Had the injured man died, the Good Samaritan could have been suspected as his murderer. Today we live in a litigious society -- everyone seems to be afraid of being sued. Would this fear keep you from coming to the aid of an accident victim, an injured child, or a choking diner? Discuss ways of overcoming this fear.
 - d. Besides the personal risks to himself, the Good Samaritan also gave a great deal of his time and money (the equivalent of two day's wages) for the care of the injured man. Our acts of compassion may also cost us in time, money and inconvenience. Are you ready to make these sacrifices? How much more did God's compassion for us cost Him?

2. Read Mark 1:40-42 -- The Cleansing of the Leper.

What is significant about Jesus reaching out His hand and touching this leper?

What would it mean to you to have Jesus "touch" you?

Where do you need this special "touch" this week?

How can you "touch lepers" in your part of the world?

THE REWARD

1. Our salvation is by grace, but Scripture also promises reward for these acts of compassion. Paraphrase (in your own words) the following passages:

Psalm 135:14 -- _____

Proverbs 19:17 -- _____

Matthew 25:31-40 -- _____

Luke 14:12-14 -- _____

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

Extra Discussion:

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

SKIT

Mission: Compassion

by Shari Miller

Four women sit around the "kitchen table" following their weekly Bible study. All have Bibles and coffee mugs which they sip occasionally as if drinking.

Patty: I always enjoy having Bible study with you ladies. Our Wednesday morning study is just the best! I'm glad you could come over to my house today. I really enjoy the chance we have to have a mug of coffee afterwards and just chat.

Betty: I'm with you, Patty. By the way, I suppose you've all heard that I just got a new job.

Agnes: Why no, Betty. What are you going to be doing?

Betty: I'm going to be working as a part-time receptionist at the Mid-Bank. I really don't need the job or the salary, but I just need something to do now that the children are all out of the house. It won't interfere with my Wednesday morning Bible study, though.

Jane: Speaking of work, did you hear that Alice Worthy's husband was laid off from his job at the car plant last Friday. I wonder what they are going to do with three children running around under the age of six. I sure would hate to be in their shoes.

Agnes: Me, too! Another person I really feel sorry for is Nancy. Do you realize it's been about one month since her husband died? I haven't visited her since the funeral because I really don't know what to say to her. I hope she's starting to recover from her loss.

Jane: Come to think of it, I haven't seen Nancy in church the past two Sundays. Also, I was talking with Judy last week, and she told me that her daughter is going to have a baby. I think she's only about 17 years old. Judy was pretty upset about the whole thing, but I hardly said a word -- I just didn't know what to say. In fact, I even avoided talking to the two of them at church on Sunday.

Agnes: I probably would have done the same thing. Sometimes you just don't know the right thing to say and it's better to keep quiet. Mrs. Macon called me the other day to ask if I would be interested in helping downtown at the homeless shelter. She suggested that I might want to work in the serving line one day a week at lunch time. I told her I would think about it, but what I was really thinking was how busy my days already are without adding another project.

Betty: I agree! Sometimes it seems like I have so many things going on, it's almost like my daily mission is impossible to complete.

Patty: Why Betty, I'm surprised at you! I don't want to sound like a "know-it-all", but as you and Agnes and Jane were talking, I remembered the Bible passage we studied right here in Bible study just last week. Do you all remember our study on 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 where Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians and says, *[read from Bible]* "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." Remember what we talked about in Bible study?

Betty: I do! We said that because God showed us His compassion by sending His Son and giving us salvation and eternal life, as well as providing for all our physical needs, we are called to forgive as the Lord forgave us, teach in word and deed of the compassion of Christ Jesus, and provide for the emotional and physical needs of our neighbors.

Agnes: I remember. I really enjoyed that study!

Jane: Me, too. We really had a good discussion, didn't we?

Patty: Yes, we did. But I was thinking as I was listening to all the problems we've been talking about that maybe I should do more than discuss compassion. Maybe it isn't such an impossible mission after all. Maybe I should give more of my time and actively become involved in this calling of compassion.

Betty: You're right, Patty! I just had a terrific idea. With the extra money I'm earning at my part-time job, maybe I could buy a bag or two of groceries for Alice Worthy and her family until her husband can find another job. I might be able to help in other ways ... I know! I could offer to babysit her children for free when she and her husband just need to get away. I miss the sound of children's voices anyway!

Jane: I just thought of a couple things I could do! You mentioned Nancy and her husband's recent death. I could give her a call and invite her to our Bible study next Wednesday. I'll even offer to pick her up for Bible study and church. I also feel for Judy and her daughter. Maybe we could offer to have a baby shower for her daughter, and I'm going to make a special effort to talk to them next Sunday.

Agnes: We all can, Jane! I suppose you know what I've decided to do! I'm going to call Mrs. Macon and tell her I can help out in the serving line for one meal a week at the homeless shelter. If Jesus could show so much compassion to me, I should be able to give some of my time to show compassion to others.

Patty: All your ideas sound just great, ladies! I really admire you. Isn't it great to know that our mission is not impossible, but our mission is one of compassion ... sharing God's compassion!

Betty: Well, I really have to go now. I've got some grocery shopping out do!
[Leaves, waving goodbye.]

Jane: I'll see you gals later. I've got some phone calls to make. I'll be contacting you about a baby shower for Judy's daughter. Bye!
[Leaves.]

Agnes: Well, Patty, thanks for hosting our Bible study today. See you next Wednesday. I need to get home and telephone Mrs. Macon. Let's see, I think I'll tell her I can work at Tuesday lunchtime. See you later!
[Leaves.]

Patty: Goodbye, ladies. I enjoyed having you here! *[Continues reading Bible, then looks up.]* Thank You, Lord, for showing us Your compassionate mission. Bless us all as we do Your work of compassion in the world. In Jesus name, Amen. *[Looks in phone book.]* Now let's see, maybe I could give Nancy a call and ask her out to lunch tomorrow. After all, I haven't seen her since the funeral either!
[Walks briskly off stage with new resolve.]

CLOSING LITANY

Leader: Heavenly Father, thank You for the lessons and examples of compassion that You have given me today. This is a new day in my life .. let it be one of openness.

People: Let me open my arms for surprise hugs.

Leader: Help my eyes to be open to special needs around me.

People: Open my heart to one needing a shoulder or an ear.

Leader: When I can help feed the hungry by giving food to a food bank or giving my time to work on a service line;

People: Help me to act with compassion, dear Lord.

Leader: When someone in my family leads a lifestyle I cannot understand;

People: Help me to act with compassion, dear Lord.

Leader: When my life crosses the path of a girl who is unmarried, pregnant and scared;

People: Help me to act with compassion, dear Lord.

Leader: When I can use my car to provide transportation for someone in need:

People: Help me to act with compassion, dear Lord.

Leader: When a lonely person's life could be cheered by a thoughtful call, card or a visit from me;

People: Help me to act with compassion, dear Lord.

Leader: When there is disagreement among the Christians I love;

People: Help me to act with compassion, dear Lord.

Leader: In every situation You put before me, Heavenly Father,

People: May I act with gentleness, kindness, love and the same compassion You have for me.

Leader: May my good deeds always be done from a desire to serve You and not as acts of self-glorification. Open my heart, eyes, soul and self to You, Lord,

People: That I may close my day knowing You and I spent it working together.

Leader: In the name of Jesus, our compassionate Savior.

All: AMEN!

HYMN: "O God of Mercy, God of Light" (LW #397)
"O God of Mercy, God of Might" (TLH #439)