

COMPASSION

Life groups notes - week beginning 17th January 2016

(2) THE CHARACTER OF COMPASSION

'He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper.' Luke 10.34,35

- Prayer

A time to open ourselves to God's Spirit and word through time spent together, seeking God's blessing on each other's lives and on the lives of those we touch.

Here's the prayer of Richard of Chichester that everyone could say together:

Thanks be to thee, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which thou hast won for us, for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for us.

O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, may we know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly and follow thee more nearly, day by day.

- Read Luke 10. 25 -37

As this passage is read each week, be open to the Holy Spirit drawing your attention to different parts of the story, week by week. Different versions of the Bible can help us to see the passage and words from different angles.

- Question (to be explored briefly. Each group member is invited to share.)

Is there a sentence, phrase or word that stands out for you that relates to anything you have heard, seen or experienced this week?

- Exploring the story

The Good Samaritan meets a variety of the needs of the beaten man. The first is just bringing his presence: 'He went to him.' So many people appreciate and are enormously encouraged by the presence of someone who is there for them as a friend.

A question - Can you think of an instance when you've 'just been there' for someone else, or when someone's been there for you?

The Samaritan went on to supply immediate medical treatment, transportation to a place of shelter, care overnight, and finally a financial gift to pay for the man's rent until he had fully recovered or until the Samaritan returned. He met the hurting man's needs.

Through the Bible we learn that we are created to be dependent beings, staying in perfect relationship with God supplying all our needs. In the book of Genesis we get a picture of this in the story of Adam and Eve. In spite of being made to know and serve our Creator, we sought and seek to live our own way, turning our backs on God. This creates alienation from God ('they hid from God' Gen 3.8); from self ('I was afraid, I hid.' Gen.3.10); from others ('they sewed fig leaves' Gen.3.7) and from nature ('cursed is the ground.' Gen 3.17).

Jesus came to bring us and all creation back to God as his kingdom comes. The blessedness of the kingdom is radical and all embracing (Matthew 5.3-10).

The kingdom of God is the means to renew the entire world and all dimension of life, hastening the time when there will be no disease, decay, poverty or pain.

The church is God's pilot project of the kingdom that he uses to bring healing. The Good Samaritan can be an illustration of this. We are to work for the healing of persons, families, relationships and nations, doing deeds of compassion and justice.

When people see Christians feeding the hungry, comforting the suffering, supporting causes with time, talent and treasure, they can start to be drawn to the beauty of Christ. The ministry of compassion is a call for every Christian.

- Questions (read them all first and maybe one or two will help your discussion)
 1. Are there areas relating to the needs of others that particularly touch you?
 2. Can you recognise how God is already using you to reach out to others?
 3. Is God leading you in a new direction in sharing his compassion or do you sense he is affirming what you're already doing?
 4. How do we avoid suffering compassion fatigue?
- Closing prayer
Pray for each other's 'ministry of compassion', for your shared journey on the Jericho Road and for being able to 'go and do likewise'.

You may want to use the following prayer:

*Pilgrim God, bless us with courage where our way is fraught with danger.
Bless us with good companions, where the way demands a common cause.
Bless us with good humour,
for we cannot travel lightly when weighed down with too much solemnity.
Bless us with humility, to learn from those around us.
Bless us with decisiveness, when we have to move quickly.
Bless our lazy moments, when we need to stretch our limbs for the journey.
Bless us, lead us, love us and bring us home, bearing the gospel of life. Amen.*