

## COMPASSION

Life groups notes - week beginning 24<sup>th</sup> January 2016

### (3) THE MOTIVATION FOR COMPASSION

'And when he saw him, he had compassion for him.' Luke 10.33

- 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 a Chinese woman that everyone could say together:

*We are going home to many who cannot read,  
So, Lord, make us to be Bibles,  
so that those who cannot read the Book  
can read it in us.*

- 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.

The resourceful may find a modern version to share; the creative may even write their own modern version! Those with good memories may learn the parable by heart.

- 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?

- Background teaching

We have seen that a ministry of compassion is a test of true faith for every Christian, but what drives us to care for those in need? A sense of duty? A load of guilt?

The good news is that we can find our inspiration in the gospel of grace. The expert of the law believed that his own moral efforts would earn the favour of God. He wanted to justify himself. The story is so familiar that we can easily miss Jesus' point. Jesus was seeking to confound the expert with a vision of selfless love so great as to be impossible.

One writer put it like this:

*As well visualize the Ethiopian changing his skin or the leopard his spots, as imagine a Samaritan helping a Jew. But nothing else will do. 'An Irish Republican fell among thieves, and an Ulster Orangeman came and helped him; a white colonist fell among thieves, and a black freedom fighter came to his aid; that is what God's law requires of you.'*

Jesus' goal was to show that the law expert who believed he was spiritually rich was spiritually bankrupt (Matthew 5.3; Isaiah 64.6). Although we are all spiritually bankrupt and lost, God has provided wealth for us (2 Corinthians 5.21; 8.9).

Two powerful effects of grace:

- a) The person who knows they have received God's mercy and compassion while an undeserving enemy of God, will have a heart of love for even the most ungrateful and difficult.

b) The deeper experience of the free grace of God, the more generous we become. So for example, the Macedonian church (2 Corinthians 8.2,3) overflowed with joy in their extreme poverty and were rich in generosity. Their gifts were a response not to a formula or ratio, but to the gift of Jesus.

- Questions (read them all first and maybe one or two will help your discussion)
  1. What are healthy and what are unhealthy motives for compassion?
  2. What helps us to grow in becoming more like Jesus in his compassion? Is there one thing you can do this coming week to help you?
  3. Do you sense God is saying anything to you specifically through this study on compassion? Is he affirming something you are already doing at home, at church, at work or elsewhere? Is he challenging you in any way through his word about loving your neighbour as yourself?
- Closing prayer  
Pray for each other and for those God is calling you to care for on your Jericho Road.  
You may want to use the following reflection and prayer:

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours;  
yours are the only hands with which he can do his work,  
yours are the only feet with which he can go about the world,  
yours are the only eyes through which his compassion  
can shine forth upon a troubled world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

*(Theresa of Avila)*

This prayer of Ignatius Loyola is about wholehearted love of God and service. I've always felt it lacks loving neighbour as you love yourself, but it gloriously reflects the Good Samaritan's love in action, taking risk and effort to fulfil God's will despite discouragement.

*Teach us, good Lord,  
to serve you as you deserve;  
to give and not to count the cost;  
to fight and not to heed the wounds;  
to toil and not to seek for rest;  
to labour and not to ask for any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do your will.*