



## 2008 DISCUSSION Questions

# WEEK OF SACRIFICE

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS produced by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist® Youth Ministries Department



HE DIDN'T LOVE IN ORDER TO GET SOMETHING FROM US BUT TO GIVE EVERYTHING OF HIMSELF TO US.

**LOVE LIKE THAT** CHECK OUT **EPHESIANS 2:5**

**2008**

*Year of Sacrifice  
(Compassion)*

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS  
FOR  
ADVENTIST YOUTH**

Prepared by the  
**Youth Ministries Department**  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®

## ABOUT THIS MANUAL

The year 2008 has been designated by the General Conference Youth Ministries Department as a year of Sacrifice (Compassion). This is part of the yearly themes for the youth around the world.

This year, the Seventh-day Adventist church around the world will be focusing on the joys and benefits of Sacrifice through Discipleship, Leadership, Evangelism and Service. Young people will learn how to close the gap that exists between belief and action, knowledge and practice.

These small group discussions have been developed to be used during Youth Meetings when youth meet for their weekly programs. There are enough programs for the whole year. Youth leaders should feel free to pick any topic from the document for their youth groups.

It is the prayer of the General Conference Youth Ministries Team that these discussions will help youth to grow in love with Jesus Christ and become His vehicle on earth to bring hope to the suffering world.

“It is through sacrifice that God’s work must be carried forward. Of every child of God self-sacrifice is required. Christ said: ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself; and take up his cross daily, and follow me’ Luke 9:23. To all who believe, Christ give a new character. This character through His infinite sacrifice, is the reproduction of His own” (*Testimonies Vol 6 pp. 449*).

This year, the goal of our youth is that they will more fully understand what true sacrifice is and experience it with a heart filled with God’s compassion. With Christ as our example, we turn our attention to the hopeless, the impoverished, and those in need of love.

-

General Conference Youth Ministries Team



# Table of Contents

About this Manual	3
Quotable Quotes	5
2008 Sacrifice (Compassion)	8
Introduction	13
Discipleship	
Leadership	
Evangelism	
Service	
Christ Our Example – Servant	25
Christ Our Example – Cross, Incarnation, Mission	31
Our Response	43
What Compassion Is	55
What Compassion Is NOT	70
Love Your Neighbor	84
Consider Others Above Yourself	96
Encourage the Brethren – Compassion in the Church	107
Whatever You Did for the Least of These...	118
Challenges to Compassion	130
God in the Midst.../Revealing God	141
Disciplines of the Compassionate Life	154



# QUOTABLE QUOTES

**1**

I asked of life, “What have you to offer me?”

The answer came, “What have you to give?”

– Anon

**2**

I have found that if you love until it hurts there is no more hurt, only love.

– Mother Teresa

**3**

None can be at peace while others wallow in poverty and insecurity.

– Nelson Mandela

**4**

At the end of the ... century most of us will not have to repent of the great evils we have done but of the apathy that prevented us from doing anything at all.

– Martin Luther King

**5**

God has given us two hands – one to receive and the other to give to others.

We are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are channels made for sharing. If we fail to fulfill this divine duty and privilege we have missed the meaning of Christianity.

– Billy Graham

**6**

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

– Jim Elliot

## 7

What kind of greatness can this be,  
That chose to be made small?  
Exchanging untold majesty  
For a world so pitiful.  
That God should come as one of us  
I'll never understand  
The more I hear the story  
The more amazed I am.

The One in whom we live and move,  
In swaddling clothes lies bound.  
The voice that cried "Let there be light,"  
Asleep without a sound.  
The One who strode among the stars,  
And called each one by name  
Lies helpless in a mother's arms  
And must learn to walk again.

What greater love could He have shown  
To shamed humanity  
Yet human pride hates to believe  
In such deep humility.  
But nations now may see His grace  
And know that He is near,  
When His meek heart, his words, his works  
Are incarnate in us here.

– Graham Kendrick

## 8

Surrendering to...love, then, means giving your love, your time, and your attention when [it is needed]. It means choosing to live your life in such a way that you are physically present and emotionally available for large chunks of "quantity" time, even when it's inconvenient. It means difficult choices – professional, financial, and personal choices – so that you can be [present] in body, heart, mind and soul. It may mean postponing your dreams. It will definitely mean making sacrifices.

– Brenda Hunter

## 9

Without the story of Jesus I would not believe in God. Or more probably, God simply would not matter. The story of Jesus enables me to envision God as One who genuinely cares for each and all of us. In Jesus, God confronts the Darkness face to face, Incarnate, for our sake. Jesus is Light to the gentle face of God. The story of Jesus says that God laughs with us in our joys and weeps with us in our sorrows. God strengthens us in the helplessness of our hoping, God stands with us in our yearning to be loved. Ultimately the lonely companionship of Jesus in the suffering of his passion made my painful journey a sometime story of faith.

– E. Frank Tupper, *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God*

## 10

The mystery of personhood includes openness to an engaging encounter with another and the gift of friendship from the other. Through the dynamics of personal relationship one experiences the personhood of the other and the affirmation of one's own personal identity. To ignore another person denies the human dignity of the other, and to manipulate another person uses the other as an impersonal object. The presence of another person demands respect and resists manipulation, the claim in the personhood of another and the promise in relationship to the other.

– E. Frank Tupper, *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God*

## 2008 – SACRIFICE (Compassion)

*“For you did sympathize and suffer along with those who were imprisoned, and you bore cheerfully the plundering of your belongings and the confiscation of your property, in the knowledge and consciousness that you yourselves had a better and lasting possession.”*

—Hebrews 10:34 (KJV – Amplified)

*Giving when it hurts is sacrifice and only as we are filled with the Holy Spirit are we able and willing to repeatedly give in this way. Jesus sacrificed the glory, honor and comfort of heaven to come here and serve us so that we would know the truth about the Father. Jesus is our example of true sacrifice and service. This year our goal is for our youth to more fully understand not only what true sacrifice is but to experience it with a heart full of God’s compassion.*

### Renewing through:

- Discipleship
- Leadership
- Evangelism
- Service

The word *compassion* generally evokes positive feelings. We like to think of ourselves as compassionate people who are basically good, gentle, and understanding. We more or less assume that compassion is a natural response to human suffering. ...

But, if being human and being compassionate are the same, then why is humanity torn by conflict, war, hatred, and oppression? Why, then, are there so many people in our midst who suffer from hunger, cold, and lack of shelter? Why, then, do differences in race, sex, or religion prevent us from approaching each other and forming community? Why, then, are millions of human beings suffering from alienation, separation, or loneliness? Why, then, do we hurt, torture, and kill each other? Why, then, is our world in such chaos?

Questions such as these suggest that we need to take a critical look at our understanding of compassion. The word *compassion* is derived from the Latin words *pati* and *cum*, which together mean, “to suffer with.” Compassion asks us to *sacrifice* – to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable,



and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human. When we look at compassion this way, it becomes clear that something more is involved than a general kindness or tenderheartedness. It is not surprising that compassion, understood as suffering with, often evokes in us a deep resistance and even protest. We are inclined to say, “This is self-flagellation, this is masochism, this is a morbid interest in pain, this is a sick desire.” It is important for us to acknowledge this resistance and to recognize that suffering is not something we desire or to which we are attracted. On the contrary, it is something we want to avoid at all cost. Therefore, compassion is not among our most natural responses. We are pain-avoiders and we consider anyone who feels attracted to suffering abnormal, or at least very unusual.<sup>1</sup>

But in showing compassion, we are reflecting our Maker, in whose image we were created, for the Bible emphasizes that compassion is an attribute of God, as you’ll study more in the following lessons. God is called the “Father of Compassion” and according to Midrash creation was born of the divine compassion toward creatures.

To say that God is compassionate is to say that God suffers at the sufferings of others. God suffers. God is in pain. Human compassion then becomes the relief of the pain of God as well as the relief of human pain. This theme of God in pain is an ancient one, well developed in Judaism and in certain thinkers but very much underdeveloped in much of Christian spirituality....

According to [Kazoh] Kitamore, who has devoted a book to the *Theology of the Pain of God*, God is in pain because God embraces “completely those who should not be embraced” and God’s love comes from a love that is rooted in pain....<sup>2</sup>

Do we do the same? In *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God*, E. Frank Tupper relates the following story:

“Look, I’m an atheist. I don’t believe a [damn] thing. They tell me I have five to eight months to live, and I want you to help me die.” So began the conversation of Will Campbell with a young woman he hardly knew just out of exploratory surgery in a Nashville hospital. The lung cancer had metastasized throughout her entire body and far beyond the help of surgery. The bad news brought Will to her bedside. Since she had made her confession, penance was supposed to follow, but Will thought penance contrary to the gospel of unconditional grace. So he ignored the necessity of penance, struck his most professional pose, and asked: “Would you like to talk about this God who has damned what you don’t believe?”

“Don’t give me any of your counseling [stuff], Reverend!” she said. “I just chased that [blankety-blank] nurse out of here when

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion*.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*.



she said, ‘And how do you feel about what has happened to you, Millie?’ Thirty-five years old and just figured out what I’m doing in this world and they tell me in six months I’ll be [blankety-blank] gone from it.” She began to cry, and Will was glad, glad she could get some of the hurt and anger out, glad for the time it gave him to do penance. He had been more offended by her profanity than concerned with her condition.

How often do we miss the opportunity to show compassion because we make a judgment, deem someone not “worthy,” or encounter some other trivial obstacle? The compassion we are called to is not a surface sympathy or pity, but the deep compassion that allowed Jesus to die on the cross for a sinful people. He acted. He didn’t just have empathy about our hopeless situation. He did something about it.

Indeed, God’s bowels are said to turn with anguish and with pain. Here lies the origins of true compassion, from the bowels and not the heart; from the true seat of deep emotions according to Jewish thinking. God then experiences compassion at the gut level where we all do. Compassion is passionate. Compassion is about being moved. It is a movement.

The doing is outward-directed – it is toward others and toward society and this is how Rabbi Heschel describes the prophet’s task. The prophet’s compassion is “the opposite of emotional solitariness.... Not mere feeling, but action, will mitigate the world’s misery, society’s injustice or the people’s alienation from God.” It is for this reason that the prophets ... “were not in the habit of dwelling upon their private experiences.” The prophet does not turn inwards to find peace and calm there, for the prophet knows that peace without justice is a lie and a cover-up. Rather, insists Heschel, the prophet turns outward to find God and the God who is found is a verb and not a noun. “What the prophet faces is not his own faith. He faces God. To sense the living God is to sense infinite goodness, infinite wisdom, infinite beauty. Such a sensation is a sensation of joy.” It is ecstasy, the beginning of all prophetic and compassionate spirituality.... As Heschel puts it: “Asceticism was not the ideal of the Biblical man. The source of evil is not in passion, in the throbbing heart, but rather in hardness of heart, in callousness and insensitivity.” ... The divine Word that the prophet calls the people back to is not a noun but a verb. ... Compassion and the giving birth to compassion is its name.<sup>3</sup>

A.W. Tozer: warns:

Christian churches have come to the dangerous time predicted long ago. It is a time when we can pat one another on the back, congratulate ourselves and join in glad refrain. “We are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!” It certainly is true that hardly anything is missing from our churches these days except the most important thing. We are

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



[illegible]

Why then could he still say yes? I can't fully answer that question, except to say that beyond all the abandonment experienced in body and mind Jesus still had a spiritual bond with the one he called Abba. ...

Jesus didn't throw the cup away in despair. No, he kept it in his hands, willing to drink it to the dregs. ...This was a deep spiritual yes to Abba, the lover of his wounded heart.

When I contemplate my own sorrow-filled heart...and the immense anguish of men, women, and children far and wide on our planet, then I wonder where the great yes has to come from. In my own heart and the hearts of my fellow people, I hear the loud cry "O God, if it is possible, let this cup of sorrow pass us by."...

From where then will come that great yes? "Let it be as you, not I will have it." ...

In the midst of Jesus' anguished prayer asking his Father to take his cup of sorrow away, there was one moment of consolation. Only the Evangelist Luke mentions it. He says: "Then an angel appeared to him, coming from heaven to give him strength" (Luke 22:43).

In the midst of the sorrows is consolation, in the midst of the darkness is light, in the midst of the despair is hope, in the midst of Babylon is a glimpse of Jerusalem, and in the midst of the army of demons is the consoling angel. The cup of sorrow, inconceivable as it seems, is also the cup of joy. Only when we discover this in our own life can we consider drinking it.<sup>4</sup>

In his commentary on Galatians, Martin Luther said, "To love means to bear another's burdens. Christians must have strong shoulders..." We must have compassion like Christ's that we may – as Luther goes on to say – be like "little Christs" in the world.

<sup>4</sup> Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?*

# Introduction

## DISCIPLESHIP

### Essence

When we take a critical look at ourselves, we have to recognize that competition, not compassion, is our main motivation in life. We find ourselves deeply immersed in all sorts of competition. Our whole sense of self is dependent upon the way we compare ourselves with others and upon the differences we can identify...It is by our differences, distinctions, that we are recognized, honored, rejected, or despised. ...It is upon these positive or negative distinctions that much of our self-esteem depends. ...Thus, we define ourselves in ways that require us to maintain distance from one another. We are very protective of our “trophies.” After all, who are we if we cannot proudly point to something special that sets us apart from others?

This all-pervasive competition, which reaches into the smallest corners of our relationships, prevents us from entering into full solidarity with each other, and stands in the way of our being compassionate. We prefer to keep compassion on the periphery of our competitive lives. Being compassionate would require giving up dividing lines and relinquishing differences and distinctions. And that would mean losing our identities! This makes it clear why the call to be compassionate is so frightening and evokes such deep resistance.

This fear, which is very real and influences much of our behavior, betrays our deepest illusions: that we can forge our own identities; that we are the collective impressions of our surroundings; that we are the trophies and distinctions we have won. This, indeed, is our greatest illusion. It makes us into competitive people who compulsively cling to our differences and defend them at all cost, even to the point of violence.

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Do you agree/disagree with the assertion that “competition, not compassion, is our main motivation in life”? Explain.

2. What would life look like if compassion were the main motivation? Develop and perform skits demonstrating how various situations would look different, depending on the main motivation – competition or compassion.

3. Have individuals list as many descriptive qualities as possible about themselves. Stand as a group and have people read defining characteristics (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, hair color, eye color, age, honors, etc.), separating until everyone stands alone. Find on descriptor to bring everyone back together. Discuss.

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***

# Introduction

## LEADERSHIP

### Essence

What is lost when compassion becomes ego-centric and narcissistic? Transcendence itself, according to José Miranda. “Love which is not an acute sense of justice and an authentic suffering-with-my-outraged-brother, such love *does not transcend*. It is satisfied with itself although with its words it denies that it is so; and thus it remains in itself and does not transcend.” Compassion, then, that is truly directed outward is the new word for transcendence. This is what John says in his first epistle, also, when he declares that “no one has seen God” and so God is to be seen only in love of neighbor. It is interesting that in this powerful passage (1 Jn 12-21), the archetype for love is not love of parent for child or even husband for wife, but it is fraternal love. True compassion is fraternal and sororal and not paternal, patriarchal or even parental. ...Without [compassion’s] active presence in the world of economics and in the arenas of public decision-making, we will all perish....

Personalism, or the caring of one person for another, may be an instance of compassion and may truly lead to development of compassion, but compassion is far fuller than personalism. This is not only because compassion leads to justice-making and therefore to the recreation of society’s structures but also because compassion is about energy we give and take from all creatures, not just from human beings. ...The selling of psychological personalism has often ignored compassion and reduced it to ego-feeling alone, just as it often tends to ignore the mystery and riches of silence and solitude where so much compassion is learned and developed.

Krister Stendahl characterizes our times as being “cosmically scared,” frightened as we are by “principalities and powers where tiny little human beings just know that they cannot do much, that they are not in control, that they are just caught.” In such a situation he cautions against still more introspective and individualized religion....

Compassion is a spirituality of meat, not milk; of adults, not children; of love, not masochism; of justice, not philanthropy. It requires maturity, a big heart, a willingness to risk and imagination. Yet for many persons with good spiritual intentions spirituality has meant either meditative disciplines or introverted contemplation. Compassion moves beyond these beginning stages of spiritual searching to a fuller stage of dialectical living that experiences both cosmic contemplation and local pain and then gives birth to alternative healing of that pain.

– Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*



# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Read 1 Jn 12-21.  
Discuss why you think fraternal love is the archetype for love as opposed to other types of love.

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss the quote on page 15 by Krister Stendahl.  
What can be done in this “cosmically scared” time?

---

---

---

---

3. Discuss: “Yet for many persons with good spiritual intentions spirituality has meant either meditative disciplines or introverted contemplation.”

---

---

---

---

---

4. Create a compassionate society. Assign each group a societal institution – economics, politics, religion, education, etc. have the groups share with the larger group what their “compassionate” institution would look like. Discuss how the parts fit together and what the “compassionate society” they have built looks like. What needs to happen to make this a reality? What concrete actions can be taken in the week ahead to move closer to make your society more compassionate?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***





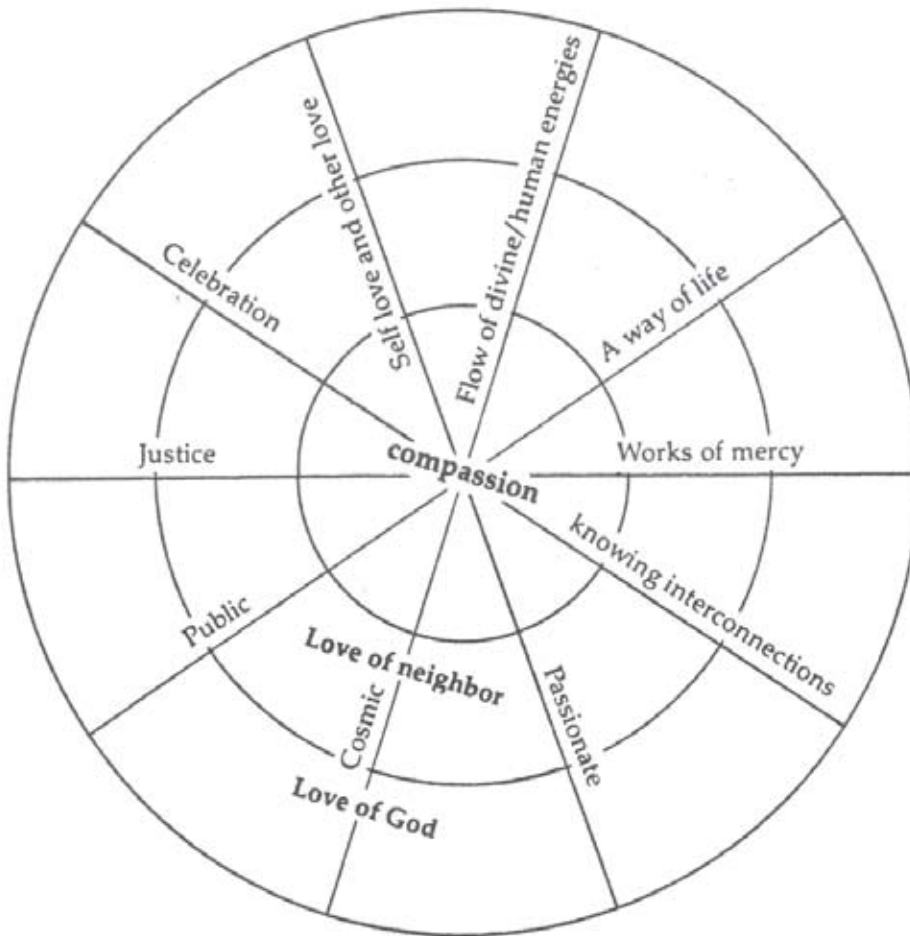
# Introduction

## EVANGELISM

### Essence

All elements of compassion are themselves interconnected, and to fail in one of these is to threaten compassion altogether, for each energy depends on the others, much like spokes on a wheel.

– Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*



- 1a. Discuss the diagram above.
- 1b. Take time to discuss each “spoke” and give examples. How does failing in ONE area threaten the whole of compassion? Have individuals identify what “spokes” are weak in their lives and concrete actions that can be taken over the next week to strengthen these.

[illegible]

Each week focusing on service will include possible service project ideas and less “study.” Suggested projects are excerpted from *Everybody Wants to Change the World: Practical Ideas for Social Justice*. You’ll want to look ahead at future service ideas, as some may take considerable preparation.

[illegible]

Involve the youth in the identification of appropriate projects and discuss the need for various types of service, and how essential commitment and follow-through are in starting any given service project

[illegible]

You loved us first, oh God. Alas, we speak of it as if you loved us first one time only, historically speaking, when in very truth, without ceasing, you love us first all the time. When I awaken in the morning and my soul turns at once toward you, you are first. You have already turned toward me. If I rise at dawn and in the very first second of my awakening my soul turns to you in prayer, you have beat me to it. You have already turned in love toward me. Thus, we speak ingratitude if, unthankful and unaware, we speak of you as having loved us first only one time.

[illegible]

An unjust situation does not happen by chance; it is not something branded by a fatal destiny: there is human responsibility behind it. The prophets said it clearly and energetically and we are rediscovering their words now. [The characterization of the state of things ... as a “sinful situation,” as a “rejection of the Lord”], in all its breadth and depth, not only criticizes the individual abuses on the part of those who enjoy great power in this social order; it challenges all their practices, that is to say, it is a repudiation of the whole existing system – to which the Church itself belongs.

[illegible]

## Scripture

1. Look up the following texts and note what they reveal about the example Jesus sets for us:

Matthew 4:23-25 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 6:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 10:1; 7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 19:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 1:35-39 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 6:31-34 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Look up the following texts and note how the early church continued in service after Christ's death and resurrection:

Acts 4:32-35 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 6:1-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 9:36 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 11:27-30 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Read Matthew 10:24-25. In following Jesus' example, what is one thing we can expect to encounter?
4. Read Mark 10:13-15. How can service / interaction with the world help us in our Christian walk?

## Consider

1. Discuss together the role of service in the Christian church, reflecting on the introductory quotes and the texts you've just read. Make plans for how you can serve others more effectively, both individually and corporately.
2. Explore the role "compassion" plays in service. Discuss the difference between compassion and pity and how each manifests itself in service. What should be the Christian's approach? Explain, using Biblical examples.

# Reflections on *Christ Our Example – Servant* DISCIPLESHIP

## Essence

...Jesus' teaching on compassion derives much if not all of its insight from the matrix of Jewish spirituality in which he was born, raised and nourished. His admonition in Luke (6:36) to "be compassionate as your Father is compassionate" is identical to Jewish admonitions...with the slight alteration that was so characteristic of Jesus: namely his calling God "Father." ...Like the Jewish prophets before him, Jesus insisted on compassion's being an action of justice, a *mispat* a deed of love and justice. "Happy the compassionate: they shall have compassion shown them" declares Jesus (Mt 5:7). Compassion breeds compassion.

Two words are used in the Gospels in expressing Jesus' experience of compassion and his teaching about compassion. The first, *eleeo*, ...is used by the sick and suffering who appeal to Jesus for relief from their pain. ...

The second word used in the Gospels apropos of Jesus' compassion is the Greek word *splanchnizomai*, which means literally "to be moved in one's bowels." We have seen this understanding of the experience of compassion to be a basic Jewish grasp of the experience. This is the word used to express how Jesus responded to these cries for mercy and compassion...

It is evident that Jesus was a compassionate person and that people approached him for exactly that purpose, because they were seeking compassion. The Gospel writers identified this compassion of Jesus with its being a divine attribute in him, as is clear in the restoring of the son of the widow of Nain to life: There, for the first time in Luke's Gospel, Jesus is called "Lord." The sentence reads: "When the Lord saw her he felt compassion for her." (Lk 7:13) This title of "Lord" has been strictly reserved to Yahweh up to this time. Thus Jesus becomes the Son of the Compassionate One for Christians. Jesus is compassion incarnate, compassion made flesh and historical. Jesus becomes the Son of God, the Son of the Compassionate One.

– Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*

## Scripture

1. Look up the following verses employing the first term for compassion – *eleeo*; note who uses the term:

Mt 9:27 \_\_\_\_\_

Mt 15:22 \_\_\_\_\_

Mk 9:22 \_\_\_\_\_

Lk 17:13 \_\_\_\_\_

Lk 18:38 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Now look up the following verses employing the second term for compassion – *splanchnizomai*; again, note who is being referred to in having this compassion and for what reason:

Mt 9:36 \_\_\_\_\_

Mt 14:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Mt 15:32 \_\_\_\_\_

Mt 20:34 \_\_\_\_\_

Mk 1:41 \_\_\_\_\_

*You know that feeling you get in your stomach when you are going down the first drop of a roller coaster or when you hear horrible news? Your stomach feels like it has just been kicked in. It's this term used in the New Testament, literally meaning bowels or guts, but translated "Compassion." The only person that this word is associated with is Jesus.*

3. Reflecting on the above verses and others with which you're familiar, discuss the various ways God's compassion manifests itself. How can we heed the call to "be compassionate as your Father is compassionate"? Be sure to include *concrete* ways you can follow this admonition in the coming week, noting Jesus' insistence on compassion being action – a deed of love and justice. How does the above assertion that "compassion breeds compassion" fit into this?

# Reflections on *Christ Our Example - Servant* **LEADERSHIP**

## Essence

Jesus, God's compassion became visible to us. Jesus not only said, "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate," but Jesus also was the concrete embodiment of this divine compassion in our world. Jesus' response to ... all those who came to him with their suffering flowed from the divine compassion which led God to become one of us. We need to pay close attention to Jesus' words and actions if we are to gain insight into the mystery of this divine compassion. We would misunderstand the many miraculous stories in the Gospels if we were to be impressed simply by the fact that sick and tormented people were suddenly liberated from their pains. If this were indeed the central event of these stories, a cynic might rightly remark that most people during Jesus' day were not cured and that those who were cured only made it worse for those who were not. What is important here is not the cure of the sick, but the deep compassion that moved Jesus to these cures.

There is a beautiful expression in the Gospels that appears only twelve times and is used exclusively in reference to Jesus or the Father. That expression is "to be moved with compassion." ... It was out of his compassion that Jesus' healing emerged. He did not cure to prove, to impress, or to convince. His cures were the natural expression of his being our God. The mystery of God's love is not that our pain is taken away, but that God first wants to share that pain with us. Out of this divine solidarity comes new life. Jesus' being moved in the center of his being by human pain is indeed a movement toward new life. God is our God, the God of the living. ... The great mystery is not the cures, but the infinite compassion which is their source.

We know too well what it means when cures are performed without compassion. We have seen men and women who can walk again, see again, speak again, but whose hearts remain dark and bitter. We know too well that cures not born out of care are false cures leading not to light but to darkness. Let us not fool ourselves with a shortcut to new life. The many cures by Jesus recorded in the Gospels can never be separated from his being with us. They witness to the infinite fecundity of Jesus' divine compassion, and show us the beautiful fruits of his solidarity with our condition. The truly good news is that God is not a distant God, a God to be feared and avoided, a God of revenge, but a God who is moved by our pains and participates in the fullness of the human struggle.

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss the following quote:  
“The great mystery is not the cures, but the infinite compassion which is their source.” Explain why you agree/disagree with the statement.

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss God’s “motivation” for compassion. Reflect on some of your possible “motivations” for compassion. How can you bring your motivation more in line with God’s?

---

---

---

---

---

3. Discuss the “problem of pain” in light of the above excerpt. One author has suggested that the mystery of God’s pain is also the mystery of God’s love [Jer 31:20; Is 63:15].

---

---

---

---

---

4. Find texts to support your understanding of whether or not God experiences pain. Be sure to explore all the implications of this idea.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*





# Reflections on *Christ Our Example - Servant* EVANGELISM

## Essence

Jesus and His followers are walking into the town of Capernaum. Jesus sees Matthew sitting in the tax booth collecting taxes. Tax collectors were looked upon as the scum of the earth. They worked for the Roman government and were looked upon as traitors by other Jews. They made their living by overcharging and cheating the very people they collected taxes from.

Matthew was despised by the Romans because he was a Jew, and despised by fellow Jews because he was working for their enemy.

...When Jesus saw Matthew he saw a man with a lonely heart. Jesus saw his pain, his loneliness and his lack of purpose in life. Jesus saw a man who needed a Savior.

Jesus had compassion and love toward Matthew the tax collector and called out to him, "Matthew, come be my disciple." Matthew got up and followed him.

To follow Jesus meant for Matthew to give up a lucrative business and an income that provided for a comfortable life. Matthew made a radical decision that forever changed his life. He became a follower of Jesus. He didn't care what the Romans might say or what his fellow Jews might do. He left his way of life and followed Jesus.

... Jesus didn't care what the Pharisees and others thought of his partying with Matthew and his spiritually lost friends. Jesus said that His mission was to seek and to save the lost. The Pharisees said that by His very association with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus was also a sinner.

Jesus saw the worth of Matthew and looked beyond his faults. The Pharisees worried about associating with sinners and following the letter of the law.

Jesus was concerned about mercy and compassion. The Pharisees were concerned about their reputation in the community. Jesus was concerned about the lost souls in the community and how to reach them.

Do you believe Jesus is still radically changing the lives of people? Do you have confidence enough in Jesus to do your part in reaching out in love and compassion to people who are spiritually lost?

Paul gives us this admonition in Romans 12:11, "Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically." What is your level of passion for spiritually lost people? [Jesus did not give up on Matthew. He gave the call and Matthew responded to the call.]

When do you give up on praying for a friend or family member? ...

[illegible]

Jesus healed their hurts.

– Ray Ellis, *Pursue a Heart of Compassion and Love*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Review Christ's calling of Matthew in Mt 9:9-13. Note Jesus' compassion for spiritually lost people, and their response to Him as opposed to the "spiritual elite." Discuss where you see yourself and your church in this scenario. What can you do to be more in line with Jesus' compassion?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Who are the "tax collectors" of today? How can you show them compassion? How can you "take the initiative and get involved in the lives of people"? How can you persist in showing compassion even when challenged for your actions?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Discuss the advantages / disadvantages of compassion for compassion's sake as opposed to as an opportunity for "evangelism." Be prepared to defend your answers.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *Christ Our Example – Servant* **SERVICE**

## Essence

In *Greatest Story Ever Told* we see the young man Jesus standing in the shadow of a doorway in a town in Palestine observing the misery of mankind such as could be found on any street, in any town in that part of the world, in that day or in ours: the lame, the sick, the mentally deranged, the mean, the cruel, all the inhumanity of the world.

He watched it all. For years he watched it – and it rubbed his feelings raw, but he developed no callouses. He kept his sensitivity intact, and that's what made him the perfect vehicle through which the divine compassion could enter the world. . .

As he was growing up, Jesus saw the human condition all around him. He saw sickness, he saw death, he saw poverty, he saw broken relationships, etc. He saw it all. So when his time for ministry began, he had already developed the compassionate heart that was needed. Now he could do something about the human condition. He healed the sick, he gave support to the grieving, he told the people that God loved them as they experienced the human condition.

So when the crowds followed him, he did not send them away but he had compassion on them. He saw their brokenness and he extended the compassion of God's Son to them.

And that brings us to the question, if Christ had compassion on the crowds, what are we to do?

– Tim Zingale, *Compassion*



- **Tunnel of Oppression:** In 2000, a group of students and staff at the State University of New York created a walk-through experience on their campus as a means of pulling students into a discussion regarding the subject of oppression. Called the “Tunnel of Oppression,” the exhibit featured a number of rooms in a multi-room set that depicted shocking scenes of genocide, rape, racism, and sexism. The props included video footage, skits, posters, sculptures and paintings....  
...Choose the subjects that are most meaningful to [you] ...and those ideas can often be related to local events... For more information regarding the Tunnel of Oppression, check out the features archive of the *New Paltz Oracle*,...at [www.newpaltz.edu/oracle](http://www.newpaltz.edu/oracle). Or, for creative ideas on how others have put together a Tunnel of Oppression, simply do a search for “Tunnel of Oppression” on the internet.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Give to the Sick and Disabled:** People who are sick are often hesitant to ask for help, even when they are connected to a caring church or community. That response is understandable: They want to preserve their dignity and do not want to feel like a burden.  
One church ... learned to be sensitive to this situation.... The pastor announced a special meeting and invited members who were willing to give a few hours a month for friends and neighbors who were sick. ...When the volunteers arrived, the pastor stood at a blackboard and asked members to shout out things they wished they could ask people to do for them when they were sick....  
The pastor then asked everyone to think through 12 activities they would be willing to do throughout the year for someone else who was sick – one activity a month. Each volunteer made up 12 special coupons on poster paper, with each coupon describing a specific service they would be happy to perform, and listed their name and phone number on the paper. All of the coupons were collected, shuffled and arranged into packets of 12 (each volunteer appeared no more than once in each packet). Members made colorful envelopes for each of the coupon sets and included the church's phone number and address on the packets.  
As the church received calls regarding people who were experiencing serious illnesses, volunteers sent one of these packets to be delivered by the regular visitation team that was already in place. At the end of the visit, the team handed the packet over to the sick person as a gift from the church. ...Taking action for [people with disabilities] could be just as easy, if not exactly the same....However you go about this, keep in mind that it always needs to occur in the spirit of equality and dignity.

---

---

---

---

---

# Reflections on *Christ Our Example – Cross, Incarnation, Mission* **DISCIPLESHIP**

## Essence

Sacrifice means that you look out for the needs of others even when you are hurting....

Take a look at what Jesus was enduring at this moment in His life. (John 19:23-27) Not only was He going through excruciating physical pain, but He was also enduring extreme humiliation and extreme apathy concerning His pain. We don't like to think of Jesus being naked on the cross, but the verses here talk about the fact that the soldiers had stripped Him even of His undergarments. It was one final act of humiliation that they could subject Him to before He was gone. Then, while He hung there on the cross, they had the gall to argue over who was going to get His clothes. They had become so calloused to the event of crucifixion that they could feel no compassion for the one who was dying.

I don't know about you, but when I am in pain, I want other people to notice. I want other people to console me. I want to be the center of attention. Look at how Jesus reacted to His situation [vs 25-27]. Instead of focusing on Himself, Jesus focused on making sure that His mother would be provided for. Joseph, Mary's husband and Jesus' earthly father, was probably dead by this time. It was Jesus' responsibility as the oldest son to take care of His mother and to meet her needs. Jesus knew that He was not going to be around to do this. He saw His mother weeping there at the foot of the cross, and He saw one of His disciples, probably John, standing with her. In the middle of all the agony that He was feeling, He had compassion on His mother for the agony that she was feeling and took the opportunity to communicate to John that Mary was to now reside in his home and was to be his responsibility. In the middle of His pain, He helped to ease the pain of someone else.

For me to give you \$100 when I have a 100 million dollars in the bank is not a sacrifice. It is an insult. I am giving you something which costs me absolutely nothing. But for me to give you \$1 when I and my family are about to starve to death, that is a sacrifice.

[illegible][illegible]



# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Read 1 Kings 17. Discuss the widow's sacrifice and/or compassion. Find other examples of true sacrifice in the Bible. What are the factors common to all these examples?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss why you agree/disagree with the following statements, supporting your answers Biblically:

- "A sacrifice isn't a sacrifice unless it costs you something."
- "Sacrifice is not done in accordance to what we have, but in accordance to what God desires – *obedience*."
- "If God didn't call us to sacrifice beyond ourselves nothing great would ever be achieved for God."

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Answer the question posed above: "Most of us would probably classify ourselves as giving people....But are we sacrificial people?" Discuss/explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***



# BREAKOUT TIME

4. In light of this week's lesson, discuss the following scenario:

*Two little brothers were playing in the bathtub with a brand-new, brightly painted Noah's Ark, and imagining a flood. After the bath water was let out, one brother said, "Now we ought to do what Noah did — build an altar and offer a sacrifice." So...they went outside, and found some sticks and built an altar. But they needed animals to sacrifice. Looking at the nice animals in their new ark, they felt they were too good to burn. "I know," said the other brother, "there's an old Noah's Ark in the attic." So he ran upstairs and returned with a little lamb which had two legs broken off and the tail gone. Solemnly they placed the broken, useless lamb on the altar, offering that which cost them nothing.*

## Consider

Make two lists: (1) sacrifices you've made, reflecting what you care most about; (2) sacrifices you feel God is calling you to make. Compare and pray about the two lists. Give God the opportunity to reveal Himself in an even greater way to you by making the sacrifice He's calling you to make!

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***

# Reflections on *Christ Our Example – Cross, Incarnation, Mission* **LEADERSHIP**

## Essence

The Bible records that after Jesus knew that every prophecy concerning the cross had been fulfilled and the penalty for every sin had been paid, He finally asked for something for Himself. He asked for something to drink. His body had been hanging on the cross for hours now, and the loss of fluids from the blood that flowed from his body would have made him extremely dry, not to mention the fact that He had probably had nothing to eat or drink since the supper that He had enjoyed with His disciples in the upper room the night before. His mouth would have been so dry at this point that it might have been difficult for Him to enunciate His words. His tongue would have been swollen and would have stuck to the roof of His mouth. At the beginning of Jesus' crucifixion, He had been offered something to drink, but Jesus refused it. The drink that He had been offered was a mild sedative – something that would have helped to ease the pain just a little bit. Jesus wanted to be fully aware of the pain of the sacrifice that He was making. He didn't want to cushion the blow. He wanted it to hurt so that all mankind would be able to see the extent of His love for them. But now, near the point of his death, after He had fulfilled His mission and the sacrifice had been accepted as the payment for the sins of mankind, now He was willing to receive some refreshment.

Do you know that this generation of Christians is probably the first to think that being a Christian and being comfortable can co-exist with one another? We have preachers that tell us that if we just give financially, then the Lord is going to pour out His blessings on us so much that all of our bills are going to be paid, and our kids are never going to get sick, and our cars will never break down, and nothing bad will ever happen in our lives. Try telling that to Stephen as he is being stoned for proclaiming the name of Jesus. Try telling that to the Tribulation Christians as they watch their children have their heads chopped off because they would not deny Christ. Try telling that to Paul. (2 Cor. 11:23) Try telling Jesus that living as a Christian and living comfortably can go hand in hand with one another. Try telling that to Him as you're looking up at him from the foot of the cross. The Christians of the past knew that living in right relationship with Jesus was going to cost them something. ... They knew that standing up for Jesus might very well cost them their lives. (Mark 8:34-35)...

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss: “This generation of Christians is probably the first to think that being a Christian and being comfortable can co-exist with one another.” Do you agree/disagree? Explain.
2. In what way have you become too comfortable? Are there sacrifices God is calling you to make in those areas of your life?
3. Did Jesus promise His followers comfort? Find Bible verses where Jesus tells what His followers have to look forward to. Does your life reflect this? Why/why not?

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *Christ Our Example – Cross, Incarnation, Mission* EVANGELISM

## Essence

The immense suffering of humanity can easily be understood as a sign of God's wrath, as a punishment. It often was understood that way, and it often still is.... And we, looking at the horrors that plague our world, are saying, "How can there be a loving God when all this is happening? It must be a cruel, spiteful God who allows human beings to suffer so much!"

Jesus, however, took upon himself all this suffering and lifted it up on the cross, not as a curse but as a blessing. Jesus made the cup of God's wrath into a cup of blessings. That's the mystery.... Jesus died for us so that we may live. He poured out his blood for us so that we may find new life. He gave himself away for us, so that we can live in community. He became for us food and drink so that we can be fed for everlasting life. That is what Jesus meant when he took the cup and said: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). The Eucharist is that sacred mystery through which what we lived as a curse, we now live as a blessing. Our suffering can no longer be a divine punishment. Jesus transformed it as the way to new life. His blood, and ours too, now can become martyr's blood – blood that witnesses to a new covenant, a new communion, a new community.

When we lift the cup of our life and share with one another our sufferings and joys in mutual vulnerability, the new covenant can become visible among us. The surprise of it all is that it is often the least among us who reveal to us that our cup is a cup of blessings....The cup of blessings is the cup the meek have to offer us.

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss various news events people have seen as signs of God's wrath. Discuss why you agree/disagree with this understanding of world events, giving Biblical references to support your answer.

2. EXPLAIN: “Jesus made the cup of God’s wrath into a cup of blessings.”

3. In most cases, God is not looking for “martyr’s blood,” but Romans 12:1 *does* say He wants “living sacrifices.” What prevents you from offering yourself as a living sacrifice? From sharing with one another your “sufferings and joys in mutual vulnerability”? Chose one suffering and one joy to share with the group. If necessary, outline as a group parameters for protecting one another’s “vulnerability” before sharing.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *Christ Our Example - Cross, Incarnation, Mission* SERVICE

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

### Christians and Pagans

People go to God when they are sore bestead,  
Pray to him for succour, for his peace, for bread,  
For mercy for them sick, sinning, or dead;  
We all do so, Christian and unbelieving.

People go to God when he is sore bestead,  
Find him poor and scorned, without shelter or bread,  
Whelmed under weight of the wicked, the weak, the dead;  
Christians stand by God in his suffering and grieving.

God goeth to every one when sore bestead,  
Feedeth body and spirit with his bread;  
For Christians, pagans alike, God dies cross-dead,  
And both alike forgiving.  
– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*





# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

### ▪ **Planned Famine:**

By some estimates, as many as 40,000 people die of poverty-related circumstances every day....A planned famine is a really great two-day event for people who want to learn more about the plight of the hungry world while also feeling a bit of what that means....

A planned famine is typically a 30-hour program that begins at 6 p.m....and runs until midnight the next day. The entire 30 hours are packed with games, multi-media presentations about the hungry, and group discussions about hunger. No food is eaten during the entire 30-hour period, although all kinds of juices and water are usually made available. At midnight, once the 30 hours are over, everyone goes out to a café together for their closing event – food.

...Construct the program so that there is some rhythm and breathing space for fun and organized learning....we recommend that you connect with the Bread for the World Institute ([www.bread.org/about-us/institute/](http://www.bread.org/about-us/institute/)) for a number of helpful resources to use over the weekend....

Between meals, plan a good mix of games to play, videos to watch and study packets to go through as small groups.... Be sure to talk out loud about how hunger is affecting members of the group....

...For your three “meals” during this day, have everyone sit down around tables that are set with plates, silverware, serving bowls and baskets. But instead of food, only serve water and juice. Inside each serving bowl, have some prepared bits of information about world hunger....At each table, have people pass around the serving bowls as they serve up a portion of “hunger” for their meal. It’s a great, symbolic way of connecting to hunger. Then have each person read what his or her serving teaches about hunger.... for your last group event before the 30 hours is up, ...have groups make posters on what they believe people can do about the hungry world....Offer enough quiet space at the end so that everyone can make personal commitments to do something about the hungry....



# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Alternative Spring Break:**

Use the week away from school or work to serve others in the community or abroad

- **Help Out an Organization.**

Connect with a local organization that serves people directly. ...Offer to provide some much-needed relief to the staff by doing whatever menial tasks you and your friends could take on in a week...

- **Go on a Blitz Build.**

Join up with Habitat for Humanity's home-builders blitz. The organization always has spring-break builds: [www.habitat.org/buildersblitz](http://www.habitat.org/buildersblitz).

- **Go to the Park.** Volunteer

...to do some trail maintenance or campground cleanups. ...

- **Pick Up Some Trash.**

Offer to help ...clean up a stretch of road that is always littered with trash or the stream that some hikers seem to abuse with their garbage.

# Reflections on *Our Response* DISCIPLESHIP

## Essence

Rabbi Dressner has underscored how basic compassion is to the Jewish way of life or spirituality. In that way of life “compassion was a cornerstone and mercy the other side of every act of justice.” Taught to walk in the ways of God who is the Compassionate One, Jews were called *rahamanim benei rahamanim* – “compassionate ones and the children of the compassionate ones.” To be compassionate as God is compassionate is to perform the *imitation dei*, the imitation of God. ... Compassion is meant to be the characteristic mark or sign of the Jew....

Compassion is truly a walking in the way of the Lord for the Jewish people, walking in the way of the divine attribute that is compassion. Thus Rabbi Hama ben Hanina says: “it is written: *After the Lord your God shall ye walk.* ... God’s compassion points the way to humanity’s compassion as a spirituality which becomes the art of walking in God’s way. ... “When we are aware” of compassion, remarks Rabbi Dressner, “not necessarily in any conscious fashion, but in the intuitive style of our living – then we are no longer encased in the armor of our own ego, utterly consumed by our own cares, utterly unbound by the bond which joins each man to his neighbor and all men to God.”

Jesus urges those who believe in him and his Father to become compassionate themselves. ...

[C]ompassion is meant to be a way of life, a way of thinking in the Lord, for Jesus and his followers. His Sermon on the Mount and his Beatitudes become the culmination of his teaching on compassion and his teaching on how to live. And this is how the first Christians understood his teaching of “the way” – that it be a way of walking in justice and compassion.

... And so we see that, in the Biblical view of things, both from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament which owes so much of its teaching of compassion to the Hebrew Bible, knowledge of God is very different from “acts of religion.” Knowledge of the compassionate God is concerned first of all with the *imitation dei* which is walking in the way of the Compassionate One. Jesus tried to emphasize this basic Jewish teaching and became, in the eyes of his followers, an incarnation of this way. An incarnation of Compassion. Have his followers followed that way? Might they?

– Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*



# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Have different groups each take one of the following parables– Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37); Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32); Unforgiving Debtor (Mt 18:23-35).

Act out the story (or a modern version) and lead a discussion of what the story teaches on the compassion of God and humanity.

2. Discuss the Jewish focus on God's compassion and its implications for His people. Do you feel this same emphasis is present in Christianity? Why/why not? What would everyday Christianity look like if this were more of an emphasis?

3. What does it mean to walk "after your God"? What are some practical ways you can do this in the week ahead?

4. Discuss Rabbi Dressner's quote above regarding awareness of compassion freeing us from ego and selfish bonds. Share examples of where you've found this to be true in your life.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# BREAKOUT TIME

5. Explore the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. In what ways are these the culmination of Jesus' teaching on compassion and how to live? What would have been different in the past week if you had truly applied these teachings? In what practical ways can you apply these teachings in the week ahead?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on

## *Our Response*

### LEADERSHIP

#### Essence

Joy and gratitude are the qualities of the heart by which we recognize those who are committed to a life of service in the path of Jesus Christ. ...Wherever we see real service we also see joy, because in the midst of service a divine presence becomes visible and a gift is offered. Therefore, those who serve as followers of Jesus discover that they are receiving more than they are giving. Just as a mother does not need to be rewarded for the attention she pays to her child, because her child is her joy, so those who serve their neighbor will find their reward in the people whom they serve.

The joy of those who follow their Lord on his self-emptying and humbling way shows that what they seek is not misery and pain but the God whose compassion they have felt in their own lives. Their eyes do not focus on poverty and misery, but on the face of the loving God.

This joy can rightly be seen as an anticipation of the full manifestation of God's love. The hymn of Christ [Ph 2], therefore, does not end with the words about his downward road...Without these final sentences [of Ph 2:9-11] we would never be able to grasp the fullness of God's compassion. God's compassion as revealed in Christ does not end in suffering but in glory. The servanthood of Christ is indeed a divine servanthood, a servanthood that finds its fulfillment in the lordship of the risen Christ who received the name that is above all other names. The resurrection of Christ is the final affirmation of his servanthood. And with the servant Christ, all servanthood has been lifted up and sanctified as the manifestation of God's compassion. This is the basis of all our joy and hope. Our life of servanthood is lived in union with the risen Christ, in and through whom we have become children of the compassionate God ... Thus Paul can say, "And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory. I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us" (Rm 8:17-18).

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss Philippians 2:1-18 in light of the excerpt on the previous page. Verses 6-11 are often referred to as the Hymn of Christ. Notice the structure – starting with Christ’s descent from heaven to earth and then his ascension back to glory with God the Father, as noted above.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss: “Joy and gratitude are the qualities of the heart by which we recognize those who are committed to a life of service in the path of Jesus Christ.” Give examples of witnessing and/or experiencing joy in real service.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *Our Response* EVANGELISM

## Essence

If the emphasis on prayer were an escape from direct engagement with the many needs and pains of our world, then it would not be a real discipline of the compassionate life. Prayer challenges us to be fully aware of the world in which we live and to present it with all its needs and pains to God. It is this compassionate prayer that calls for compassionate action. The disciple is called to follow the Lord not only into the desert and onto the mountain to pray but also into the valley of tears, where help is needed, and onto the cross, where humanity is in agony. Prayer and action, therefore, can never be seen as contradictory or mutually exclusive. Prayer without action grows into powerless pietism, and action without prayer degenerates into questionable manipulation. If prayer leads us into a deeper unity with the compassionate Christ, it will always give rise to concrete acts of service. And if concrete acts of service do indeed lead us to a deeper solidarity with the poor, the hungry, the sick, the dying, and the oppressed, they will always give rise to prayer. In prayer we meet Christ, and in him all human suffering. In service we meet people, and in them the suffering Christ.

The discipline of patience reveals itself not only in the way we pray but also in the way we act. Our actions, like our prayers, must be a manifestation of God's compassionate presence in the midst of our world. Patient actions are actions through which the healing, consoling, comforting, reconciling, and unifying love of God can touch the heart of humanity. They are actions through which the fullness of time can show itself and God's justice and peace can guide our world. They are actions by which good news is brought to the poor, liberty to the prisoners, new sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and God's year of favor is proclaimed (Lk 4:18-19). They are actions that remove the fear, suspicion, and power-hungry competition that cause an escalating arms race, an increasing separation between the wealthy and the poor, and an intensifying cruelty between the powerful and the powerless. They are actions that lead people to listen to each other, speak with each other, and



[illegible][illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss Luke 18:9-14 in light of the above excerpt.

---

---

2. Discuss the idea that true prayer leads to action, and action to prayer. Do you see this evidenced in your life? Why/why not?

---

---

---

---

3. Explore the differences between patient and impatient action. How can you tell the difference? Identify Biblical examples you feel illustrate each.

---

---

---

---

---

4. What are some burdens that hinder action? How can we free ourselves from theses?

---

---

---

5. Develop a prayer list, being sure to list parallel actions for each prayer listed.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***



# BREAKOUT TIME

6. Discuss:

Compassion, far from being a privatizing energy, actually frees us from too privatized a way of feeling and acting. Or at least it ought to. Jewish scholars have complained about how this has not been the case at all in Christian history, calling Christian morality for the most part “unlimited and unconditional individualism” lacking entirely “an ideal for humanity.” What a far cry such individualism is from the Hebrew notion of *hesed* or deeds of love. The domestication of compassion took place especially with the industrial revolution when morality came to mean bedroom morality because the real issues of injustice, such as work, unemployment, child labor, were removed entirely from home or church into the market place.

–Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *Our Response* SERVICE

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

### Is My Sacrifice Living?

*“Abraham built an altar...; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar...” (Genesis 22:9).*

This event is a picture of the mistake we make in thinking that the ultimate God wants of us is the sacrifice of death. What God wants is the sacrifice *through* death which enables us to do what Jesus did, that is, sacrifice our lives. Not – “Lord, I am ready to go with You...to death” (Luke 22:33). But – “I am willing to be identified with Your death so that I may sacrifice my life to God.”

We seem to think that God wants us to give up things! God purified Abraham from this error, and the same process is at work in our lives. God never tells us to give up things just for the sake of giving them up, but He tells us to give them up for the sake of the only thing worth having, namely, life with Himself. It is a matter of loosening the bands that hold back our lives. Those bands are loosened immediately by identification with the death of Jesus. Then we enter into a relationship with God whereby we may sacrifice our lives to Him.

It is of no value to God to give Him your life for death. He wants you to be a “living sacrifice” – to let Him have all your strengths that have been saved and sanctified through Jesus (Romans 12:1). This is what is acceptable to God.

– Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Celebrate Earth Day:** For more than 30 years, Earth Day (April 22) has provided a way for people to focus attention on issues that concern our environment. [It is curious how many Christians do not seem to care about being good stewards of God's creation.... The Church has been silent for far too long on this issue....When we care for the environment, we show our deep respect for the Creator....] Earth Day is a great time to provide general public education on the environment...

To really get into the spirit of Earth Day, consider volunteering at an Earth Day event in your city or region. Volunteer to do a local trash cleanup, start a recycling program and use more recycled goods, plant trees....There is no shortage of organizations for good resources on Earth Day celebrations, including helpful websites such as [www.earthday.gov](http://www.earthday.gov), [www.earthday.net](http://www.earthday.net), [www.earthdaybags.org](http://www.earthdaybags.org), and [www.environmentaldefense.org](http://www.environmentaldefense.org).

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page or a sheet of stationery.

- **Green Your Church.** Make sure your church's habits are friendly to the environment. By doing so, you will be instituting patterns that can become a daily reminder that you worship the Lord of Creation – and therefore are taking good care of His “garden.” Some of the ways that you can help green your church include:
  - **Reduce Paperwork.** Whenever possible,...project announcements or any materials you are using for a presentation on a screen instead of printing them on a sheet of paper.
  - **Avoid Waste.** Be careful to avoid waste at church functions. When possible, use plates, cups and silverware that can be washed. And stamp out Styrofoam altogether – it is almost impossible to recycle.
  - **Create a System.** Create a simple recycling system, if there isn't one in place, to collect all newspapers, magazines, used office paper and junk mail.



# Reflections on *What Compassion Is* DISCIPLESHIP

## Essence

How does one work to relieve the pain of those that can be relieved? The contemporary word for that relief of pain is justice-making. Psychologist William Eckhardt defines compassionate justice as “moving towards equality, guided by the assumption that human beings are equally human.” But justice-making is not only a contemporary term for compassion. It is a Biblical word as well. “The Hebrew idea of justice approaches our notion of holiness, piety, and righteousness.... This justice, as the basis of human conduct, must embrace all activity, especially in the relationship of an Israelite with his neighbor.” We see works of mercy becoming acts of justice in the Hebrew notion of *zedakah*, which literally means “righteousness” or “justice” but which is usually translated as “charity.” In this kind of charity the action taken is not “a favor to the poor but something to which they have a right, and the donor, an obligation.” Thus rabbis teach that “the poor man does more for the householder (in accepting alms) than the householder does for the poor man (by giving him the charity).”

A Biblical word which is translated sometimes as “compassion,” sometimes as “mercy” and other times as “pity” is the Hebrew word *hesed*. It also means grace to the believing Israelite. Yet all scholars agree that there is no adequate one-word translation into English. Greek Bibles translated *hesed* as *eleos* and the Latin vulgate translated it as *misericordia*. What is lacking in all these translations is the dimension of action that the Hebrew word implies. The Hebrew talks of “doing *hesed* with someone” and *hesed* is frequently associated with the word *mispat* or right. It implies the doing of deliverance that justice is about. It implies liberating self and others, as Micah speaks of “What does Yahweh ask of you except to do *hesed* (i.e. compassion) and love *mispat* (i.e. justice)?” (Mi. 6:8). When Jesus comes announcing that “The Kingdom of God is at hand,” he is suggesting that the messianic time of justice-making and compassion is ready to begin, much as Isaiah had foretold. ...

In Judaism an atheist is not one who denies God’s existence but one “who maintains that there is neither justice nor Judge in the world.” The [believer] is exhorted to justice by the Torah: “Justice, justice shall you pursue” (Dt. 16:20). And the prophets call the...people back to the fundamental law of Torah: “Let justice roll down like waters and

righteousness like a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24). We see how far Christian speculation on interior righteousness and on striving for a life of perfection has come from the outward-oriented holiness that Jewish faith expected in acts of justice. “A holy man in Judaism is a ‘just man’; his characteristics are consideration for others, integrity, truthfulness, *compassion – all social traits*. In Jewish thought, justice is ‘akin to holiness’; it is a recognition of the sacred, inalienable rights of every individual group, and people. Justice, in Judaism, demands removal of all discrimination; it calls for a continuous battle against hate, prejudice, or defamation of any people or group... No Jew can be morally neutral.”

Latin American exegete José Miranda makes a strong case for translating *hesed* as “interhuman compassion” as for example in the prophet Hosea (6:6).

The prophet in this context is complaining about the rank injustices among the people. The prophet is putting compassion ahead of worship and liturgy and is also equating knowledge of God with compassion, an equation that we have seen the prophet Jeremiah making and that John in both his Gospel and his epistles continues to make. ...Miranda approves of the translation of *hesed* as *eleos* or compassion because “this is a compassion strictly related to a sense of justice.... It is a compassion-for-the-poor-and-oppressed, which can be identified with the indignation felt below the violation of the rights of the weak” and he demonstrates how frequently *hesed* appears with justice (*sedekah*) or right (*mishpat*) in Biblical parallelisms. Miranda is convinced that compassion best translates the word *hesed* (often translated as grace) “in spite of the degeneration into paternalism that the term ‘compassion’ has suffered over the last twenty centuries.... The paternalistic sense of compassion is foreign to both Old Testament and the New.... Biblical compassion is not condescension; it is unreserved commitment to the weak, the poor, and the oppressed. It acknowledges their rights; it is identical to an absolute sense of justice.” (Being, 152)

...Krister Stendahl appears very much in agreement with Miranda when he [points out that] the English and German languages are dualistic...in the distinctions they make between the words “justice” and “righteousness” whereas the Biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew make no such dichotomies. ... For what is mercy for the have-nots is judgment for the haves. Thomas Aquinas also made the point that compassion is not pure feeling but implies *election* or moral decision-making and doing.

Injustice, then, is a prime enemy of compassion, ....Rabbi Dressner calls us back to Biblical compassion which is justice when he observes that many Westerners “forgot justice in the midst of an over-extended, loosely-conceived, compassion, there is also justice – the exacting, demanding, stern call to justice.” (D, 208f.) And the epistle of James takes up the same theme, linking the works of mercy with justice.

– Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*





# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Create a “wall of prejudice.” Make sets of paper with opposite characteristics on them (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.). Read off the opposing characteristics and post the papers on opposite walls, having people stand by the one they’re more comfortable with. Note the ones with the lowest level of comfort. Explain that this is obviously an artificial exercise, forcing a choice, so no one should be made to feel bad about their choices, but that everyone does have prejudices. Discuss prejudice and discrimination, especially regarding those groups for which the fewest people indicated their preference and in light of the above excerpt on “moral neutrality.” As the group identifies ways to overcome discrimination against these groups, pull down the “wall of prejudice.”
2. Discuss the quote on page 55 (paragraph 1) by William Eckhardt. While it seems redundant to say that human beings are equally human, has this concept ever actually been practiced in human history? Explain your answer.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# BREAKOUT TIME

3. Discuss: “Biblical compassion is not condescension; it is unreserved commitment to the weak, the poor, and the oppressed. It acknowledges their rights; it is identical to an absolute sense of justice.” Different societies have different concepts of “human rights.” As a group, brainstorm what “human rights” mean to you. Add in any biblical concepts or ideas from different cultures that seem to differ from your societal/cultural view of human rights. Discuss the value of incorporating these divergent ideas into a broader picture of “human rights.”
4. Read James 2:15,16, 24, 26. Discuss the role of action in compassion and how the works of mercy are linked with justice. Discuss the dichotomy that has arisen between these concepts since biblical times.

[illegible]

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *What Compassion Is* LEADERSHIP

## Essence

Here we touch on an aspect of compassion that we seldom recognize as such: confrontation. ...[T]he discipline of action frequently requires the courage to confront. We are inclined to associate compassion with actions by which wounds are healed and pains relieved. But in a time in which many people can no longer exercise their human rights, millions are hungry, and the whole human race lives under the threat of nuclear holocaust, compassionate action means more than offering help to the suffering. The power of evil has become so blatantly visible in individuals as well as in the social structures that dominate their lives that nothing less than strong and unambiguous confrontation is called for. Compassion does not exclude confrontation. On the contrary, confrontation is an integral part of compassion. Confrontation can indeed be an authentic expression of compassion. The whole prophetic tradition makes this clear, and Jesus is no exception. ...

Honest, direct confrontation is a true expression of compassion. As Christians, we are *in* the world without being *of* it. It is precisely this position that renders confrontation both possible and necessary. The illusion of power must be unmasked, idolatry must be undone, oppression and exploitation must be fought, and all who participate in these evils must be confronted. This is compassion. We cannot suffer with the poor when we are unwilling to confront those persons and systems that cause poverty. We cannot set the captives free when we do not want to confront those who carry the keys. We cannot profess our solidarity with those who are oppressed when we are unwilling to confront the oppressor. Compassion without confrontation fades quickly into fruitless sentimental commiseration.

But if confrontation is to be an expression of patient action, it must be humble. ...It is not easy to confront compassionately. ...Probably the best criterion for determining whether our confrontation is compassionate rather than offensive, and our anger righteous rather than self-righteous, is to ask ourselves if we ourselves can be so confronted. Can we learn from indignation directed at us? When we can be confronted by a NO from others, we will be more able to confront with a NO. Saying NO to evil and destruction in the awareness that they dwell in our own heart is a humble NO. When we say NO with humility, this NO is also a call for our own conversion. No to racial injustice means a call to look our own bigotry straight in the eye, and NO to world hunger calls upon us to recognize our own lack of poverty. NO to war requires us to come to terms with our

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. It is suggested that the key to compassionate confrontation is that “The evil that needs to be confronted and fought has an accomplice in the human heart, including our own. Therefore, each attempt to confront evil in the world calls for the realization that there are always two fronts on which the struggle takes place: an outer and an inner front. For confrontation to become and remain compassionate, these fronts should never be separated.” How does the realization that that which is being confronted “has an accomplice” in our own heart keep the confrontation compassionate? Discuss some ways to confront the “inner front.”

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# BREAKOUT TIME

2. Using examples given above (racial injustice, world hunger, war, torture) and other your group comes up with, explore practical ways you can “compassionately confront” societal injustices in the week ahead. Take some time to examine the “inner front” and address the questions these issues raise in the need to purify your own heart in its role as “accomplice” to these injustices.

3. Have each group develop and present a skit to the whole group depicting what compassionate confrontation might look like. Discuss different ways you can practice compassionate confrontation and under what circumstances. How would failing to confront be a failure of compassion?

4. Discuss how well you take “NO” from others. Give examples of circumstances in which you’ve taken this well and circumstances in which you have not. What made the difference?

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *What Compassion Is* EVANGELISM

## Essence

What is clear in all fourteen of the traditional “Works of Mercy” – feeding, clothing, sheltering, setting free, giving drink, visiting, burying, educating, counseling, admonishing, bearing wrongs, forgiving, comforting, praying – is that they are works. Compassion leads to works. ... Though they come from the heart and go to the heart, they are not restricted to sentiment or heartfelt emotions, however powerful. They all involve other people which is to say they are political activities. They are also works of justice-making....

The New Testament continues the action orientation of the works of compassion that the Hebrew Bible initiates. Jesus insists that compassion involves action and not mere sentiment as, for example, in his parable about the Good Samaritan.... Clearly compassion in the Biblical understanding is about relieving the pain of another and not merely feeling sentiment over it. Similar lessons are revealed in his parables about the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-18), whose act of compassion is actually one of “laying down his life for his sheep,” and the Lost Coin (Lk. 15:8-10), where Jesus insists that the angels of heaven rejoice at a lost sinner who is repentant just as a woman who loses a coin holds a celebration on finding it.

Jesus addressed himself to six of the corporal works of mercy in an explicit way in [Matthew 25:34-46]....

It is clear from this passage that God is to be loved through the relief of the pain of others. “Hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison – these are the realities of pain. God becomes *immanent* in these realities of pain: he says, ‘for I was hungry.’” Thus our works of compassion are works of God-love as well, for God suffers and not only others when others suffer. The term “good works” is a technical term in the Scriptures, as Biblical scholar Walter Grundmann indicates. “Good works are actions of mercy on behalf of all those in need of them, and they are works of peace-making that eliminate discord among people.” This is the meaning of Jesus’ story of the Last Judgment [in] Mt. 25. In this passage..., it is highly significant that, as José Miranda points out, “the only criterion of judgment is stated to be good or evil works,” and that this passage constitutes “the only description of the Last Judgment in the New Testament.”

It has been pointed out that the feeling of compassion in Jesus “always gave rise to an outward act of succor.” ...Compassion as feeling separated from action is inconceivable to Jesus. When he talks about

being “compassionate as your Father is compassionate” he talks about *giving*: “Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you give will be given back” (Lk. 6:36,38). Compassion is giving and not only feeling for Jesus. Jesus’ teaching on the works of compassion underlines the starting point of all compassion: namely, that I am not only I but we are one another. And he brings in still a new and deeper mystery.... That God suffers as we suffer. That God is relieved as we relieve the pain of one another.

– Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*

## Scripture

- Match each verse with the appropriate “work of mercy” and identify practical ways to show these mercies in the week ahead:

Isaiah 58:6	Feeding	
1 Samuel 31:11-13	Clothing	
2 Chronicles 17:7	Sheltering	
Isaiah 58:7	Setting free	
2 Kings 8:29	Giving drink	
Isaiah 37:6, 10	Visiting	
2 Samuel 16:5-14	Burying	
Isaiah 58:7	Educating	
Genesis 45:1-5	Counseling	
Jeremiah 45	Admonishing	
Genesis 18:22-33	Bearing wrongs	
Isaiah 58:7	Forgiving	
1 Samuel 15:16	Comforting	
Genesis 24:18	Praying	



2. The above (pg. 62, 63) excerpt asserts that “compassion as feeling separated from action is inconceivable to Jesus.” Discuss this in light of what the following verses show about the connection Jesus made between compassion and action:

Mt. 20:34

Mk. 1:41

Mk. 6:34

Lk. 7:13

Mt. 15:32

Mk. 8:2

Mt. 11:4,5

3. Identify all the *ACTION words* in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). What practical actions can you take in the week ahead to show compassion?

4. How do the parables listed in the excerpt above demonstrate the Biblical understanding that compassion “is about relieving the pain of another and not merely feeling sentiment over it”?

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. In what ways are good works “works of peace-making that eliminate discord among people”?
2. Discuss the significance of “the only criterion of judgment [in the only description of the Last Judgment in the New Testament being] good or evil works.”

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *What Compassion Is* SERVICE

## Quotable Quotes

### SEVERAL WAYS WE CAN BE COMPASSIONATE TODAY

1. Start with a Compassionate Attitude

2. Learn how to love people.

People over policies  
Relationships over rules  
Inclusion rather than exclusion  
Individuals rather than the institution.

3. Have humility to be a servant

4. Be involved in the lives of people.

– Alan Tison, *A Question about Compassion*



# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Slow Down to a Dollar:** The statistics on poverty in the world are almost too large for us to grasp: 1.2 billion people live on less than one dollar a day....It may be a moral issue for those of us with means that we are able to go through our days without giving much thought to people who live with so little. But perhaps it is because those numbers are so staggering. In fact, some suggest that we suffer from compassion fatigue....

One simple idea for combating this compassion fatigue is to try to live on less than one dollar a day once per month. Commit to doing this for a year with a group of friends who also want to go on the same spiritual journey of keeping the poor alive in their hearts. After the year is up, evaluate how the discipline has shaped your lifestyle and commitments regarding the needs of the poor.

Living on less than one dollar will be a challenge, because you will have to deprive your body for 24 hours. You will probably have to fast for the day.... Your beverages will consist of water from the faucet. And you won't be able to drive very far, because you'd probably use up one dollar worth of fuel in just a few miles.

If you want to turn this into a truly honest exercise, limit the time your lights are on, the time your heater or air conditioner is working, the time your TV is running and the time your computer is powered on....

[www.targetearth.org](http://www.targetearth.org)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Donate Your Room:** In the space of two weeks, a couple million students throw away enough furnishings to fund scores of organizations that work for the poor....Why not collect these items and donate them to local thrift stores?

...At the end of the school year, ...connect with the various thrift stores in town. Find out if they are prepared to receive a massive shipment of used goods at one time. Work with universities in your area to come up with a way of collecting all the goods from the students as they move out en masse.

Some students have used the following approach: Using yellow tape, they marked off a large area near each major dormitory so that students could drop off their goods for donation rather than hauling them to the dumpster. The university allowed the students to hold donated dorm materials in these areas for 24 hours and gave the students permission to operate university vehicles to haul the goods to the various thrift stores in town. Another method is to arrange for the thrift stores to send their truck to pick up all the goods from designated locations....

[illegible]

# Reflections on *What Compassion Is NOT* DISCIPLESHIP

## Essence

Compassion is not the eleventh commandment. Why not? Because it is...a spirituality and a way of living and walking through life. It is the way we treat all there is in life – our selves, our bodies, our imagination and dreams, our neighbors, our enemies, our air, our water, our earth, our animals, our death, our space and our time. Compassion is a spirituality as if creation mattered. It is treating all creation as holy and as divine...which is what it is.

Those prone to building ethical systems or to moralizing will not be at home with the way of living called compassion. For compassion is not an ethical system. It is...the fullest experience of God that is humanly possible. While it includes ethics, ...it blossoms and balloons to something greater ... – to celebration of life and relief, where possible, of others' pain. Compassion is the breakthrough between God and humans. It is humans' ... recovering and remembering their divine origins as "images and likenesses" of God. ... Every soul is joined to every other soul by its origin in the Creator of all souls." It is the "truth of all truths," Rabbi Dressner declares, "that every man is our brother, that we are all children of our Father... all creations of one Creator, all parts of one infinite, gracious spirit that pervades and sustains all of mankind." ... Compassion then becomes the "love of man for his fellow man, which is God's love for all men."

...To reduce compassion to pity and to pitiful feelings is to exile compassion altogether from adult living. The word "pity" has evolved to mean something very different from compassion... Pity connotes condescension and this condescension, in turn, implies separateness. "I feel sorry for you because you are so different from me." Gestalt therapist Frederick Perls emphasizes that pity and compassion present shades of meaning that, "while subtle from the linguistic standpoint, are profoundly significant from the psychological." ... Pity "sometimes regards its object as not only suffering, but weak or inferior." There is less participation in the sufferings of another in pity than in compassion – compassion never considers an object as weak or inferior. Compassion, one might say, works from a strength born of awareness of shared weakness, and not from someone else's weakness. And from the awareness of the mutuality of us all. ... "Most of what passes muster as pity is actual disguised gloating," warns Perls.

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss what you think the author means by asserting that “Compassion is not the eleventh commandment.” Compare/contrast with later assertion that “compassion is the breakthrough between God and humans.” Explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Take a few examples of showing compassion and develop skits showing the difference in how PITY and COMPASSION would handle the given situation. Discuss any common themes that arise among the different skits.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. We call each other “brother” and “sister,” but do we really believe “that every man is our brother”? What do you believe of creation? From whom are all human beings descended? And if the account of the flood is to be believed, who is another common ancestor to all? How does this reality change your perspective, if at all?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*





# Reflections on What Compassion Is NOT LEADERSHIP

## Story

She looked to me to be in her late 50s, gray hair bushing out beneath her knit cap. She grasped a large shopping-bag-type purse with one hand and pounded persistently on the church door with the other. We could see her through the hazy Plexiglas window as the pastor and I walked down the hall, the lively discussion of our early morning meeting on homelessness still fresh on our minds.

“The clothes closet opens at 10. You can come back and get some clothes then,” the pastor informed her, with as much sensitivity as any busy urban leader who is running late for his next meeting. “No, no!” she interrupted before the sentence had barely escaped his lips, her countenance visibly fallen. “I’m here to help sort clothes.” But the damage was done. The spirit that had moved this little lady to get up early in the morning to help clothe others had been wounded. A simple error. Understandable. Unwittingly made. Irreversible.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), our Lord told His followers. The blessedness of rising early to serve others in need had been marred by identifying the little lady as a recipient of charity rather than a giver. Her face reflected the hurt that the loss of self-esteem can inflict.

Receiving, I am beginning to realize, is a humbling thing. It implies neediness. It categorizes one as being “worse off” than the giver. Perhaps it is for this reason that we tend to reserve for ourselves the “more blessed” position.

One thing that has been troubling me about our diverse urban congregation is the lack of authentic reconciliation between the “have-a-lots” and “have-a-littles.” The little lady in the knit cap may be showing us where part of our difficulty lies. I came to the city to serve those in need. I have been given resources and abilities to clothe the ill-clad, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless – good works that our Lord requires of us. There is blessedness in this kind of giving, to be sure. But there is also power in it – which can be dangerous. Giving allows me to retain control. Retaining the helping position protects me from the humiliation of appearing to need help. And, even more sobering, I condemn those whom I would help to the permanent, prideless role of recipient.

When my motivation is to change people, I inadvertently communicate: Something is wrong with you, but (quite subtly) I am okay. If our relationship is defined as healer/patient, then I must remain well and they must remain sick in order for our interaction to continue.

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss the following, identifying where most of your acts of compassion fall in these “levels of charity”:

*Ancient Hebrew wisdom describes four levels of charity. The highest level is to provide a job for one in need without his knowledge that you provided it. The next, lower level is to provide work that the needy one knows you provided. The third level is to give an anonymous gift to meet an immediate need. The lowest level of charity, to be avoided if at all possible, is to give a poor person a gift with his full knowledge that you are the donor.*

2. Discuss: “There is blessedness in ...giving...but there is also power in it – which can be dangerous.” Explore some of the power dynamics in the scenario given above. Give examples of other power dynamics you’ve witnessed in common acts of charity (i.e., soup kitchens, food baskets, etc.). Some have suggested that “perhaps the best giving is the kind that enables the poor to know the blessedness of being givers.” Explain why you agree/disagree. What might this kind of giving look like?

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# BREAKOUT TIME

3. How does the notion of “saving” people affect the way in which your service is presented?

---

---

4. Discuss: “One who would be a leader, I am cautioned, has a greater weight of responsibility to honor the despised, share his earthly possessions, model interdependency and encourage the use of gifts concealed in the unlikeliest among us.” In what practical ways can you do this in the coming week?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5. What are you in need of? How can you receive/allow others to give to you in your compassionate service? How can you come into true community with those of different status? The “least of these”?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *What Compassion Is Not* EVANGELISM

## Essence

Radical servanthood does not make sense unless we introduce a new level of understanding and see it as the way to encounter God. To be humble and persecuted cannot be desired unless we can find God in humility and persecution. When we begin to see God, the source of all our comfort and consolation, in the center of servanthood, compassion becomes much more than doing good for unfortunate people. Radical servanthood, as the encounter with the compassionate God, takes us beyond the distinctions between wealth and poverty, success and failure, fortune and bad luck. Radical servanthood is not an enterprise in which we try to surround ourselves with as much misery as possible, but a joyful way of life in which our eyes are opened to the vision of the true God who chose to be revealed in servanthood. The poor are called blessed not because poverty is good, but because theirs is the kingdom of heaven; the mourners are called blessed not because mourning is good, but because they shall be comforted.

Here we are touching the profound spiritual truth that service is an expression of the search for God and not just of the desire to bring about individual or social change. This is open to all sorts of misunderstanding, but its truth is confirmed in the lives of those for whom service is a constant and uninterrupted concern. As long as the help we offer to others is motivated primarily by the changes we may accomplish, our service cannot last long. When results do not appear, when success is absent, when we are no longer liked or praised for what we do, we lose the strength and motivation to continue. When we see nothing but sad, poor, sick, or miserable people who, even after our many attempts to offer help, remain sad, poor, sick, and miserable, then the only reasonable response is to move away in order to prevent ourselves from becoming cynical or depressed. Radical servanthood challenges us, while attempting persistently to overcome poverty, hunger, illness, and any other form of human misery to reveal the gentle presence of our compassionate God in the midst of our broken world.

...As Christians, we are called to be ambassadors of Christ in whom the reality of God's infinite compassion becomes concrete and tangible (2 Co 5:20). To become humble servants with Christ in discipleship is to become witnesses of the living God. The Christian life is a life of witnessing through servanthood to the compassionate God, not a life in which we seek suffering and pain.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss the idea of service as “an expression of the search for God and not just of the desire to bring about individual or social change.”
2. Discuss the idea of “compassion as competition.”
3. Develop and perform skits contrasting service that seeks to bring others up and service that involves putting oneself in a lower position.
4. Discuss the differing models in light of Philippians 2:5-11.

[illegible]

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# BREAKOUT TIME

5. The contrasting ideas of bringing others up vs. lowering oneself are in keeping with the “ladder” motif common to much of Western culture. In Jewish tradition, however, a spiritual person grows ever more sensitive to those *around* one. God is not spatially up but in one’s midst. (Ex. 29:45) Amongness, not upness, is the dynamic of the spiritual journey. The question is not so much *where* God is as *when* will the people allow God to be among them? Discuss the implications of thinking not in terms of a ladder, then, but perhaps a circle where there are no winners or losers, as the circle can ever be expanded and the fate of others is our fate as well. Can you think of other possible models that better fit the idea of Biblical compassion? Explain.
6. Explain in your own words the notion of “radical servanthood.” What are some practical ways you can practice this in the week ahead?

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*





# Reflections on *What Compassion Is Not* SERVICE

## Quotable Quote

An important part of Christianity is love, and love doesn't insist on its own way (1 Corinthians 13:5). Insisting on our own way is not loving our neighbor, but following our own desires. So not showing love is the same as being disobedient. Whoever isn't pure, whoever doesn't struggle daily against himself, will give in to sin and do wrong. Whoever doesn't have the fruit on the inside won't show it on the outside towards his neighbor. If you have not died to yourself so that you can disregard your own desires, how can you seek what's best for others?

– Martin Luther, *By Faith Alone*

To persevere without visible success we need a spirit of gratitude. An angry action is born of the experience of being hurt; a grateful action is born of the experience of healing. Angry actions want to take; grateful actions want to share. Gratitude is the mark of action undertaken as part of the discipline of patience. It is a response to grace. It leads us not to conquer or destroy, but to give visibility to a good that is already present. Therefore, the compassionate life is a grateful life, and actions born out of gratefulness are not compulsive but free, not somber but joyful, not fanatical but liberating. When gratitude is the source of our actions, our giving becomes receiving, and those to whom we minister become our ministers because in the center of our care for others we sense a caring presence, and in the midst of our efforts we sense an encouraging support. When this happens we can remain joyful and peaceful even when there are few successes to brag about.

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion*



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Support Prisoners' Families:** Often, your local church will find ways to support the families of persons in prison, but if you don't know of a local ministry in your area, there are still ways you can help....

Here are ideas of things you can do to help families of persons in prison....

- Run a toy drive in your community ...and then donate the toys you receive to the children of prisoners.
- Write letters to the families of prisoners to offer them encouragement and support.
- Donate resources.
- You can also get a team together to have a time of sharing with the families who have a member in jail.

For more ideas, visit [www.angeltree.org](http://www.angeltree.org).

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Restore Humanity/Bring Persecution to Light:** [As we see from the Bible, not everyone in prison necessarily deserves to be there.] Do we really believe that prisoners automatically deserve whatever happens to them while they are incarcerated?...It's important to ask these and other questions. Why? Because prisons by and large create more problems than they solve....

To learn more about the prison system from a human rights point of view, go to the website of Human Rights Watch, a non-profit activist organization that stands on the side of those who have been denied their humanity....Check out their website at [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) and follow the links to "Prison Issues."

...There are several ways that you can assist in Amnesty International's work [of tirelessly documenting the abuse of prisoners, raising public awareness around specific cases, and then lobbying to convince governments to stop the abuse]. Perhaps the most common way to help is to commit to a letter-writing campaign that is focused on a particular political prisoner. Amnesty International provides the data on the prisoner, as well as the names and addresses of the key persons in government to whom to write when requesting the prisoner's release. (A number of the political prisoners that Amnesty International supports can be found on the organizations' website at [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org) under the "Act Now" link.) You could make this a fun activity by ordering in take-out and working with others on this project for an evening....

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Reflections on *Love Your Neighbor* DISCIPLESHIP

## Essence

The breakthrough in compassion is the break from dualistic and separatist thinking and acting. ... Compassion... refuses to separate love of God from love of neighbor and experiences both at once. According to Matthew (22:37-40) Jesus taught exactly this: That the “law and the prophets” could be summarized in two great commandments, love of God and love of neighbor. By simply operating out of the Hebrew sources that Jesus himself knew so well, Rabbi Dressner sheds light on this New Testament teaching of compassion. He says:

The possibility of fulfilling the commandment, *Love thy neighbor as thyself*, is only understood when we read the next phrase which follows it in the Bible, *I am the Lord*. Thus God tells us, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* because *I am the Lord*. That is to say, because your self and his are bound up in Me; because you are not really distinct and competing beings, but together share in the one existence; because ultimately you are no ‘self’ and he no ‘neighbor,’ but one in source and destiny. Because I love you both, you shall love Me in him as yourself.

Matthew’s Gospel quotes Jesus as summarizing the law and the prophets when he says, “Whatever you want people to do to you, do this to them” (7:12). José Miranda observes that Matthew “takes it for granted that the God of Israel is loved in the love of neighbor.” And Paul reduces these two commandments to just one: “The whole of the law is summarized in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14). For Paul, as for John, love of neighbor is the name for love of God (1 Cor 8:1-3). Compassion is one energy, divine and human. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Jesus is cited as saying in John’s Gospel (13:34). It is our works of compassion and love of neighbor that will constitute the dwelling of God among us – “if we love one another, God dwells in us.” (1 Jn. 4:12) It also constitutes the presence of Christ after his going away. Kazoh Kitamore comments that the two commandments that Jesus spoke of are in fact one as if one target were placed on another and a person were to shoot both targets with just one arrow. He “cannot help thinking that love of God and love of neighbor are two yet one at the same time.... Because God is immanent in our neighbor, love of neighbor becomes love of God. Similarly, because the pain of God is immanent in the pain of reality, service of the pain of reality can become service for the pain of God.”

## Scripture

1. Read the above texts in context, noting the further light they shed on the compassion to which God calls His people:

Mt 7:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Mt 22:37-50

Gal 5:14

1 Cor 8:1-3

John 13:34 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn 4:12

- Discuss Leviticus 19:18 in light of the quote from Rabbi Dressner above.

- What does it mean that love of neighbor is love of God? Explain. Identify some practical ways you can apply this during the coming week.



# Reflections on *Love Your Neighbor* LEADERSHIP

## Story

Some time ago, I was invited to address the student body of a Bible college well known for its strong commitment to the authority of Scripture. It was “urban emphasis” week, and I was asked to be the keynote speaker to kick off the event. The most enjoyable part of my time on campus was interacting in the classroom with eager students who voiced many insightful questions about ministry in the city.

During a lively discussion with a group of upperclassmen, I posed the question, “What is the number-one mandate for the followers of Christ?”

“Evangelize!” came the immediate and emphatic response.

I pushed them a little harder: “But what did Christ *say* was top priority?”

There was a slight pause. “Make disciples,” they responded, offering a slight modification to their initial answer.

“I know that evangelizing and making disciples is important,” I agreed, “but what did Christ *actually say* was that most important mandate for His followers?”

After a moment or two of puzzled silence, a student in the back of the classroom ventured a hesitant response: “You mean ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, mind, soul and strength and thy neighbor as thyself?’”

“Is this what He said was number one?” I continued to push. There were head-nods and another student added, “On this hang all the law and the prophets.” These young people had their Scripture down well.

“I agree with you,” I concurred. “That’s how I read it, too. Our Lord called it the greatest command, didn’t He?” There seemed to be consensus. “Given that Scripture declares this to be our number-one mandate, then what courses do you have here on neighboring? I know you have an entire department of evangelism. Who teaches Neighboring 101?”

There was an uncomfortable silence as the implications of my question began to sink in. “We don’t have any courses on neighboring,” they reluctantly admitted.

“Not a single course?” I questioned again. Stone silence. “The greatest command of Scripture and you don’t have *even one* course on it? Then this Bible College is just not biblical enough,” I declared.

“Do you believe in a literal heaven and a literal hell?” one sharp young theology student retorted. I knew the rationale behind his question. If you believe that either eternal bliss or eternal damnation awaits every person after death, then the most loving act is to present the truth of the gospel to as many people as possible and thus save them from everlasting destruction.

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss: "When we skip over the Great Commandment on the way to fulfilling the Great Commission we do great harm to the authenticity of the faith." Do you agree/disagree? Why? Back up your answer with Biblical texts.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What's the danger in opting "for rescuing souls over loving neighbors"?

---

---

---

3. Give some examples of compassionate acts degenerating into evangelism techniques. What were the results? Were the acts effective in either compassion or evangelism? Explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. Is your church stepping over basics on the way to "deeper" theological pursuits? Are you?

---

---

---

---

5. What are some practical ways you can be a better neighbor in the week to come?

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*





# Reflections On *Love Your Neighbor* EVANGELISM

## Essence

### *To Know God is to Do Justice*

[If humanity, each person, is the living temple of God, we meet God in our encounter with others.]

The Old Testament is clear regarding the close relationship between God and the neighbor. This relationship is a distinguishing characteristic of the God of the Bible. To despise one's neighbor (Prov. 14:21), to exploit the humble and poor worker, and to delay the payment of wages, is to offend God [Deut. 24:14-15; cf. Exod. 22:21-23]. This explains why "a man who sneers at the poor insults his maker" (Prov. 17:5).

Inversely, to know, that is to say, to love Yahweh is to do justice to the poor and oppressed. When Jeremiah proclaimed the New Covenant, after asserting that Yahweh would inscribe the law in the hearts of human beings, Jeremiah said: "No longer need they teach one another to know the Lord; all of them, high and low alike, shall know me" (31:34). But Jeremiah advises us exactly on what knowing God entails [Jer. 22:13-16]. Where there is justice and righteousness, there is knowledge of Yahweh; when these are lacking, it is absent [Hos. 4:1-2; cf. Isa. 1]. To know Yahweh, which in Biblical language is equivalent to saying to love Yahweh, is to establish just relationships among persons, it is to recognize the rights of the poor. The God of Biblical revelation is known through interhuman justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known; God is absent. ...Where social peace does not exist there will we find social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities, there will we find the rejection of the peace of the Lord, and a rejection of the Lord himself.

On the other hand, if justice is done, if the alien, the orphan, and the widow are not oppressed, "Then I will let you live in this place, in the land which I gave long ago to your forefathers for all time" (Jer. 7:7). This presence of Yahweh is active; Yahweh "deals out justice to the oppressed. The Lord feeds the hungry and sets the prisoner free. The Lord restores sight to the blind and straightens backs which are bent; the Lord loves the righteous and watches over the stranger; the Lord gives heart to the orphan and widow but turns the course of the wicked to their ruin." So "the Lord shall reign forever" (Ps. 146:7-10).

This encounter with God in concrete actions towards others, especially the poor, is so profound and enriching that by basing themselves on it the prophets can criticize – always validly – all purely external worship. This criticism is but another aspect of the concern for asserting the transcendence and universality of Yahweh. We love God by loving our

[illegible][illegible]

## Scripture

Read the above texts (pg. 89, 90) in context, noting the further light shed on the close relationship between God and neighbor:

Pr 14:21 \_\_\_\_\_

Dt 24:14-15 \_\_\_\_\_

Pr 17:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Jer 31:34 \_\_\_\_\_

Jer 22:13-16 \_\_\_\_\_

Hos 4:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

Jer 7:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps 146:7-10 \_\_\_\_\_

Is 1:10-17 \_\_\_\_\_

Is 58:6-11 \_\_\_\_\_

Hos 6:4-6 \_\_\_\_\_



# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Define JUST relationships.  
How can you establish such relationships?
2. Discuss: “When justice does not exist, God is not known; God is absent.”
3. Discuss JUSTICE in Biblical terms. Skim the prophets to get a sense of the kind of justice God calls His people to. In what ways can you “do justice” (Micah 6:8)?
4. Explore some practical ways in which you can “know God.”

[illegible]

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections On *Love Your Neighbor* SERVICE

## Quotable Quotes

### The Greatest Love

*The greatest love you can show is to give your life for your friends.  
You are my friends if you obey my commandments. — John 15:13-14*

Christ uses friendly and kind words in this passage to convince his disciples of the importance of the command he was giving to them. He reminds them of his own example of how he loved them and of all that he had done for them. It would take a great and powerful love for someone to give another person in need one hundred dollars, a thousand dollars, or even to pay off that person's entire debt. But think how amazing it would be for a king to give a poor beggar an entire city – even his own kingdom, land, and people. The entire world would hold this up as an unprecedented act of love. But that would be trivial compared to Christ giving his body and life for you. This is certainly the highest expression of love a person can show to another on this earth. Someone can love and serve others with his money, his property, and even his life. But everyone would rather give up his money and property, his land and people, than to die for someone else. Even if someone did that, it still would be nothing compared to God sending his Son from heaven. It would be nothing compared to God's Son taking your place, willingly shedding his blood and dying for you, even though you were his enemy and were condemned. This love is greater and higher than heaven and earth and anything else you could name.

What will you do for Christ in return? Even if you gave your life for your neighbor, what is that compared to his life? But Christ doesn't even ask that much of you, except in emergencies, of course, when you should risk your life to save others. Christ simply asks you to show love to your neighbor in a tangible way.

– Martin Luther, *By Faith Alone*



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Provide a Home:** Consider for a moment that you were homeless. Where would you keep your possessions? Where would you go to the bathroom? ...Where would you get your mail? How would you get cleaned up for a job interview? What would protect you from others while you are asleep?

The homeless have to get creative to survive....There are many reasons why people are homeless, but one is simply the cost of housing. Some people live so close to the edge financially that the loss of a job means eviction. Getting enough money together for first and last month's rent (not to mention the security deposit) becomes almost impossible. Once on the streets, the individuals find it difficult to get a new job, and so the cycle goes....

One of the simple answers to homelessness and degraded living environments is to provide safe, livable, affordable housing....

Habitat for Humanity has lead the way for hundreds of thousands of volunteers to spend their weekends and vacations building homes in 100 countries throughout the world....To find out how to become involved or to volunteer with a house-building project, visit the Habitat for Humanity website at [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org).

[illegible]



# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Solidarity Sleep Out:** When politicians get together to write their laws, it is doubtful that the first question they ask is, “How will this law benefit the poor and disenfranchised?”...It is illegal in many cities to be homeless! What’s next? Outlawing all forms of poverty? Wouldn’t that be great if it meant that the lawmakers were responsible for coming up with ways to wipe out poverty? Wiping out homelessness should not be the same as wiping out the homeless. Yet that appears to be how the law often works – to get rid of the people, not the problem. [In one city with such a law, a] group of conservative Christian college students decided to turn this into an opportunity to change the laws. They silently rounded up large numbers of their friends and colleagues to join the homeless on the sidewalks at night. As the police did their sweeps, they were suddenly confronted with large numbers of shaven, showered, well-dressed people sleeping on the sidewalks. ...Of course, it had never been the city’s intention to arrest large numbers of people who seemed to look like the sort of citizens we want hanging around on our sidewalks! The coldhearted policy was exposed for what it was, and the city had to retreat from its attack on the homeless. We think this is a perfect way to side with the right side of the law. If your city has a policy that harms the homeless, find a way to join in solidarity and bring the pressure of regular, warm-hearted citizens to bear on the shameful policies toward the poor. There are several groups that encourage “A Night Without a Home” or “Sleep Out Sabbaths” to encourage solidarity with the homeless and provide people with some kind of experience of living without a home. For more information and available resources, search the web for “Sleep Out Sabbath” or “A Night Without a Home.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Reflections On

## *Consider Others Above Yourself*

### DISCIPLESHIP

#### Quotable Quotes

##### Carry Each Other's Burdens

*Help carry each other's burdens.*

*In this way you will follow Christ's teachings. – Galatians 6:2*

Everywhere love turns it finds burdens to carry and ways to help. Love is the teaching of Christ. To love means to wish another person good from the heart. It means to seek what is best for the other person.

What if there were no one who made a mistake? What if no one fell? What if no one needed someone to help him? To whom would you show love? To whom could you show favor? Whose best could you seek? Love would not be able to exist if there were no people who made mistakes and sinned. ...

The corrupt nature – or the kind of love that is really lust – wants others to wish it well and to give it what it desires. In other words, it seeks its own interests...People who follow this corrupt nature completely reverse God's teaching. They want others to bear their burdens, serve them, and carry them. ...They don't want to live on earth but in paradise, not among sinners but among angels, not in the world but in heaven. ...[F]eel sorry for these people because they are receiving their reward here on earth and possessing their heaven in this life.

– Martin Luther, *By Faith Alone*



# BREAKOUT TIME

1. DISCUSS: “To love means to wish another person good from the heart.” How often do we do this? With no ulterior motive? Explain why you think this simple act isn’t done more.

---

---

---

---

---

2. How often do we meet our obligation of loving others with no expectation that others do the same for us? Explain.

---

---

---

---

---

3. There are many passages in Scripture that seem paradoxical at first glance. One of these is Matthew 11:29-30, where Christ promises that His “burden is light.” Share examples of where you’ve experienced this to be true.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. List burdens you can help carry in the next week.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections On

## *Consider Others Above Yourself*

### LEADERSHIP

#### Essence

By revealing the unique gifts of the other, we learn to empty ourselves. Self-emptying does not ask of us to engage ourselves in some form of self-castigation or self-scrutiny, but to pay attention to others in such a way that they begin to recognize their own value.

Paying attention to our brothers and sisters in the human family is far from easy. We tend to be so insecure about our self-worth and so much in need of affirmation that it is very hard not to ask for attention ourselves. Before we are fully aware of it, we are speaking about ourselves, referring to our experiences, telling our stories, or turning the subject of conversation toward our own territory. The familiar sentence, “That reminds me of...” is a standard method of shifting attention from the other to ourselves. To pay attention to others with the desire to make them the center and to make their interests our own is a real form of self-emptying, since to be able to receive others into our intimate inner space we must be empty. That is why listening is so difficult. It means our moving away from the center of attention and inviting others into that space.

From experience we know how healing such an invitation can be. When someone listens to us with real concentration and expresses sincere care for our struggles and our pains, we feel that something very deep is happening to us. Slowly, fears melt away, tensions dissolve, anxieties retreat, and we discover that we carry within us something we can trust and offer as a gift to others. The simple experience of being valuable and important to someone else has a tremendous recreative power.

If we have been given such an experience, we have received a precious knowledge. We have learned the true significance of Paul’s words, “Always consider the other person to be better than yourself” (Ph 2:3). This is not an invitation to false humility or to the denial of our own value, but it is a call to enter Christ’s healing ministry. Every time we pay attention we become emptier, and the more empty we are the more healing space we can offer. And the more we see others being healed, the more we will be able to understand that it is not through us but through Christ in us that this healing takes place.

Thus, in togetherness we call forth the hidden gifts in each other and receive them in gratitude as valuable contributions to our life in community.

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Share times when you've experienced someone listening with real concentration and expressing sincere care for your struggles and pains. How did it feel to know someone truly cared? How can you pass this experience along to others? What, if anything, do you need to change in order to be a better and more compassionate listener?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# BREAKOUT TIME

2. Discuss the following diagrams from Campus Crusade for Christ ([www.basicsteps.org/english/christianadventure/step112.htm](http://www.basicsteps.org/english/christianadventure/step112.htm)) depicting the throne of our lives and where Christ (cross) and self (S) are position in the self-directed versus Christ-directed life.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

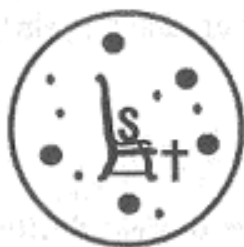
---

---

---

## Self-Directed Life

- Legalistic attitude
- Impure thoughts
- Jealousy
- Guilt
- Worry
- Discouragement
- Critical spirit
- Frustration
- Aimlessness
- Fear



- Ignorance of his spiritual heritage
- Unbelief
- Disobedience
- Loss of love for God and for others
- Poor prayer life
- No desire for Bible study

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

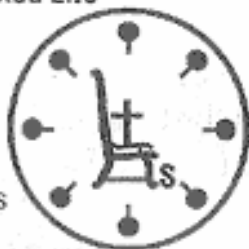
---

---

---

## Christ-Directed Life

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Faithfulness
- Goodness



- Life is Christ-centered
- Empowered by Holy Spirit
- Introduces others to Christ
- Has effective prayer life
- Understands God's Word
- Trusts God
- Obeys God

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS**

# BREAKOUT TIME

3. Discuss: “To pay attention to others with the desire to make them the center and to make their interests our own is a real form of self-emptying, since to be able to receive others into our intimate inner space we must be empty.” How can we steer clear of “false humility” and “denial of our own value” in doing this?

## Consider

Try going an entire week without redirecting any conversations to be about self.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections On

## *Consider Others Above Yourself*

### EVANGELISM

#### Story

There's a story told about a bitter, cold evening in northern Virginia many years ago. An old man sat by a river, waiting for a ride across. His beard was glazed by winter's frost and the wait seemed endless. His body became numb and stiff from the frigid north wind.

He heard the faint, steady rhythm of approaching hooves galloping along the frozen path. Anxiously, he watched as several horsemen rounded the bend. He let the first one pass by without an effort to get his attention. Then another passed by, and another. Finally, the last rider neared the spot where the old man sat like a snow statue. As this one drew near, the old man caught the rider's eye and said, "Sir, would you mind giving an old man a ride to the other side? There doesn't appear to be a passageway by foot."

Reining his horse, the rider replied, "Sure thing. Hop aboard." Seeing the old man was unable to lift his half-frozen body from the ground, the horseman dismounted and helped the old man onto the horse. The horseman took the old man not just across the river, but to his destination, which was just a few miles away.

As they neared the tiny but cozy cottage, the horseman's curiosity caused him to inquire, "Sir, I notice that you let several other riders pass by without making an effort to secure a ride. Then I came up and you immediately asked me for a ride. I'm curious why, on such a bitter winter night, you would wait and ask the last rider. What if I had refused and left you there?"

The old man lowered himself slowly down from the horse, looked the rider straight in the eyes, and replied, "I've been around these here parts for some time. I reckon I know people pretty good." The old-timer continued, "I looked into the eyes of the other riders and immediately saw there was no concern for my situation. It would have been useless even to ask them for a ride. But when I looked into your eyes, kindness and compassion were evident. I knew, then and there, that your gentle spirit would welcome the opportunity to give me assistance in my time of need."

Those heartwarming comments touched the horseman deeply. "I'm most grateful for what you have said," he told the old man. "May I never get too busy in my own affairs that I fail to respond to the needs of others with kindness and compassion."

With that, [U.S. President] Thomas Jefferson turned his horse around and made his way back to the White House.

— Source: Author unknown



# Reflections On

## *Consider Others Above Yourself*

### SERVICE

#### Quotable Quotes

The more superior one person is to another whom he loves, the more he will feel tempted, humanly speaking, to draw the other up to himself. Divinely speaking, however, the more he will feel moved to come down to him. This is the logic of love. Strange that people have not seen this in Christianity.

– Søren Kierkegaard, *Provocations*

You talk about wanting to find comfort in Christ. All right, then try this: at the very moment you yourself are suffering most of all, simply think about comforting others, for this is what he did. The task is not to seek consolation – but to be consolation.

– Søren Kierkegaard, *Provocations*





# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Reach Out to the Elderly:** Chances are your town has a convalescent center where dozens of people do not receive regular visits from family....A great way to honor the elderly is to enlist a group willing to visit people on a regular schedule. Try to create teams that include a variety of ages.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- **Work for the Elderly:** Many of the elderly in your church and community are probably still living in their own homes. They maintain wonderful gardens, enjoy their hobbies and keep up with the repairs, but it does become more difficult over time to maintain these habits. Slowly but surely, the elderly must let some things go as the tasks become too difficult and strenuous for them to manage....Why not pick up some of the slack for the elderly in your community?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Go Shopping:** One of the biggest challenges for some people as they move into their senior years is loss of mobility....It's not always easy to know how to merge into the life of people who are shut in. but one very natural point of contact is shopping for food. Elderly people often end up with a poor diet...for not other reason than the difficulties they encounter negotiating traffic and aisles.

...Make a commitment to do a few regular shopping hours per week for a person who is shut in....Here's how this typically works. First, ... find a person who would love assistance when he or she is shopping. Visit that person for a planning meeting and talk through what he or she likes to purchase, what stores he or she likes to frequent, and what budget he or she needs to work within. Agree on a time for the first shopping trip, and be sure to show up at least five minutes early for the first outing.

Don't take charge of the shopping. Most people relish the chance to make decisions for themselves, sort through the various vegetable options, and compare prices. Your job is to provide a kind of buffer to the pace, crowd and noise. Keep in mind that the shopping trip will take much more time than you are used to and will require building trust.... Be exceptionally patient, stay conversational and don't offer advice!

[illegible]

---

# Reflections on *Encourage the Brethren – Compassion in the Church* DISCIPLESHIP

## Essence

I heard a particularly stimulating lecture this past year by an expert on Jewish spirituality. The opening was especially memorable: “Christians must learn,” the speaker said, “that Judaism is not a religion but a way of life.” Indeed, they must! And how differently human history would have read these past 2000 years had Christians known exactly that: that Judaism *and* Christianity are meant to be ways of life and not religions. The early Christians followed the lead of Jesus and never spoke of themselves as a religion. Instead, in the *Book of Acts* which is the first book Christians wrote about themselves, Christianity is called “the Way” on numerous occasions (Acts 9:2; 18:25; 19:9; 23; 22:4; 24:14,22). On all these occasions the early Church called itself a Way – but never a religion.

What is the difference between a Way and a Religion? I believe that a Way of life or a spirituality is the living that spiritual people engage in, whereas religion is what empires need to sustain themselves. ...

The distinction between religion and a way or spirituality also helps to explain why, since the Constantinian era of Christianity, which was a marriage of empire and church who were betrothed in 312 with the edict of Milan, there has been so little interest in compassion as integral to spirituality. Empires, you may have noticed, and empire-builders, have very little use or interest in compassion....It also explains why [anyone] studying compassion in the West would have to rely so heavily on Jewish spirituality – for the Israelites have never been empire-builders.... Their tradition has not lost touch with the Way called Compassion. Compassion, which hardly belongs to religion at all, is the very centerpiece of Biblical spirituality.

Two scientifically developed studies on compassion among religious people, one done by a psychologist and another by a sociologist, have concluded independently of each other that no correlation exists between religion and compassion in contemporary society. Thus the psychologist William Eckhardt writes: “Compassion was not consistent with conventional religiosity...(as) conceived and practiced in our culture today” and “compassionate theists are in the minority...in the Western world today.” Eckhardt does see, however, a connection between compassion and the teachings of Judaism and Christianity and other great faiths as they were originally taught. James A. Christenson’s study on

[illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. In your own words, explain the distinction between a “way of life” and religion. Give biblical examples of each. “What intervened between the lives and teachings of [Moses, Amos, Jesus] and those who claim to follow after them”? are there any commonalities through the ages of what has caused people to stray from the teachings of those they claim to follow? Apply this to today.
2. Discuss the assertion that “compassion hardly belongs to religion at all.” Do you agree/disagree. Explain, citing Biblical examples. Be sure to note the results of the studies mentioned above, as well.
3. Discuss: “Compassionate people do not make docile citizens.” Explain why you agree/disagree.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *Encourage the Brethren - Compassion in the Church* LEADERSHIP

## Essence

Lest the point be missed, Jesus was rejected and crucified because he relativized the Law in the name of God who gave the Law. In the name of his merciful *Abba* Jesus stood with those whom the Law excluded: the prostitutes and tax collectors, collaborators with the Roman occupying powers for money; women and children, significantly less than and subject to the disposal of men; the lepers and the demon-possessed, untouchables, disfigured outside and within; the people of the land, ordinary people rendered ritually unclean through their everyday work; unconverted Gentiles, Roman soldiers who trusted the word of grace and healing. Jesus taught that the God of love liberates from oppressive and depressive societal structures through the creation of a new family that offers a place of love and equality for each family member. Jesus envisioned a family of God constituted through the *Abba* experience of all family members – without hierarchy or patriarchy, chauvinism or sexism, racism or class. In the name of God, the God whom he name *Abba*, Jesus rejected the walls of privilege that divided the children of the God from one another. The blessing of God embraces all of those who belong to the new family of the God through the midwifery of Brother Jesus.

– E. Frank Tupper, *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. **Discuss:** “Jesus envisioned a family of God constituted through the *Abba* experience of all family members – without hierarchy or patriarchy, chauvinism or sexism, racism or class.” Explain in your own words the “*Abba* experience.” What can you/your church do in the week ahead to better see this vision realized?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What separations exist today? Who are the “despised and rejected” with whom you should be standing if following Jesus’ example?

---

---

---

---

3. What privileges do you need to reject?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***

# Reflections on *Encourage the Brethren – Compassion in the Church* EVANGELISM

## Essence

My own life in this community has been immensely joyful, even though I had never suffered so much, cried so much, and anguished so much.... Nowhere am I as well known as in this little community. It is totally impossible to hide my impatience, my anger, my frustration, and my depression from people who are so in touch with their own weakness. My needs for friendship, affection, and affirmation are right there for everyone to see. I have never experienced so deeply that the true nature of priesthood is a *Compassionate-Being-With*. Jesus' priesthood is described in the letter to the Hebrews as one of solidarity with human suffering. [This] radically challenges me to let go of every distance, every little pedestal, every ivory tower, and just to connect my own vulnerability with the vulnerability of those I live with. And what a joy that is! The joy of belonging, of being part of, of not being different.

Somehow my life [here] has given me eyes to discover joy where many others see only sorrow. Talking with a homeless man ...doesn't feel so frightening anymore. Soon money is not the main issue. It becomes: "Where are you from? Who are your friends? What is happening in your life?" Eyes meet, hands touch, and there is – yes, often completely unexpected – a smile, a burst of laughter, and a true moment of joy. The sorrow is still there, but something has changed by my ... sharing a moment of togetherness.

And the immense suffering of the world? How can there be joy among the dying, the hungry, the prostitutes, the refugees and the prisoners? How does anyone dare to speak about joy in the face of the unspeakable human sorrows surrounding us?

And yet, it is there! For anyone who has the courage to enter our human sorrows deeply, there is a revelation of joy, hidden like a precious stone in the wall of a dark cave....[W]hen Heather...recently returned from ten months' relief work in Rwanda, she had seen more than despair. She had also seen hope, courage, love, trust, and true care. Her heart was deeply troubled, but not crushed. She has been able to continue her life ... with a greater commitment to work for peace and justice. The joys of living were stronger than the sorrows of death.

The cup of life is the cup of joy as much as it is the cup of sorrow. It is the cup in which sorrows and joys, sadness and gladness, mourning



and dancing are never separated. If joys could not be where sorrows are, the cup of life would never be drinkable. That is why we have to hold the cup in our hands and look carefully to see the joys hidden in our sorrows.

Can we look up to Jesus as to the man of joys? ...

This is a resurrection cross, in which we see Jesus lifted up in glory. Jesus' words "When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself" (John 12:32) refer not only to the crucifixion but also to his resurrection. Being lifted up means not only being lifted up as the crucified one but also being lifted up as the risen one. It speaks not only about agony but also about ecstasy, not only about sorrow but also about joy.

... Jesus who cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:47) also says in total surrender: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Jesus, who participated fully in all our pain, wants us to participate fully in his joy. Jesus the man of joy wants us to be the people of joy.

... Our cup is often so full of pain that joy seems completely unreachable. When we are crushed like grapes, we cannot think of the wine we will become. The sorrow overwhelms us, makes us throw ourselves on the ground, face down, and sweat drops of blood. Then we need to be reminded that our cup of sorrow is also our cup of joy and that one day we will be able to taste the joy as fully as we now taste the sorrow.

...Joys are hidden in sorrows! ...We keep forgetting this truth and become overwhelmed by our own darkness. We easily lose sight of our joys and speak of our sorrows as the only reality there is.

We need to remind each other that the cup of sorrow is also the cup of joy, that precisely what causes us sadness can become the fertile ground for gladness. Indeed, we need to be angels for each other, to give each other strength and consolation. Because only when we fully realize that the cup of life is not only a cup of sorrow but also a cup of joy will we be able to drink it.

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Share a time you found joy in the midst of sorrow. How can we keep sight of this when “overwhelmed with darkness”? How can you help another experience the same?
2. In that we are all called to be priests, how can we manifest the “compassionate-being-with” and solidarity with human suffering discussed above?

## Consider

Keep a gratitude journal this week. Find something everyday to be grateful for – *especially* in trying circumstances. It's a spiritual discipline. Psalm 103:2 says, "Praise the Lord and forget not all his benefits."

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



[illegible]

The togetherness of the Christian community...grows from a deep sense of being called together to make God's compassion visible in the concreteness of everyday living. In the Acts of the Apostles, we get a glimpse of this new togetherness: "The faithful all *lived together* and owned everything in common... Day by day the Lord added to their *community* [literally: their togetherness] those destined to be saved" (Ac 2:44-47). The Christian community is not driven together but drawn together. By leaving the ordinary and proper places and responding to the call to follow Christ, people with very different backgrounds discover each other as fellow travelers brought together in common discipleship.

[illegible]



- **Tutoring for Life:** One of the clearest predictors for poverty ...is level of education.... It serves our purposes well to believe that people are poor for no other reason than the fact that they are lazy. But anyone who takes the time to encounter the reality of impoverished communities...will discover wonderful, hard-working human beings who would give their right arm to overcome the poverty that defines their families' existence.

Our suggestion is to find ways to provide tutoring to those who are the most vulnerable. It's not the world's answer to overcoming poverty, but it is a specific, effective way to make a difference in a few people's lives.

[illegible]



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Make Friends with International Students:** Campuses often serve as a meeting place of nations. Because of this, there are tremendous opportunities for Christians to build bridges with people from these other cultures....Here are a few suggestions:
  - **Join an Outreach Program.** International Students, Inc. is a nonprofit ministry that helps Christians host international students. ([www.isionline.org](http://www.isionline.org))
  - **Launch an Outreach Program.** If there is no International Students, Inc. chapter in your area, contact the organization and ask them to help you organize one through your church.
  - **Provide Student Orientation.** Contact your local college or university and offer to help out with international student orientation. If you simply present yourself as a volunteer to their program, they will likely accept your participation. This will give you the opportunity to provide practical assistance to foreign students as they adjust to this culture, and it will open the door for a deeper relationship with them in the days ahead.

[illegible]

# Reflections on *Whatever You Did for the Least of These...* DISCIPLESHIP

## Story

The Son of Man has become the Ward of all Mankind. Incarnated as the human Jesus of Nazareth, he is after his resurrection the principle of Jewish justice itself, incarnated in the person of anyone and everyone who needs our help. It is ironic that some Christians make such a fuss about the elements of the Eucharist...but have never bothered to heed these solemn words about the presence of Christ in every individual who is in need. Jesus told us only once (at the Last Supper) that he would be present in the Bread and Wine, but he tells us repeatedly in the Gospels that he is always present in the Poor and Afflicted....

[T]he first-century church people, the people of the Way, took this lesson with all solemnity. It gave them their constant focus – on the poor and needy. Though this focus will be abandoned soon enough as Christian interest turns in the second century to theological hatred, in the third century to institutional triumphalism, and in the fourth to the deadly game of power politics, it has remained the focus of a few in every age. ... In every age, brother and sisters of Jesus have come forward to heed the lesson, not least Dorothy Day, ...who spent her life in service to the hungry and homeless, the displaced and dispossessed, ...and who once wrote:

It is no use saying that we are born two thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Nor will those who live at the end of the world have been born too late. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts.

But now it is with the voice of our contemporaries that He speaks, with the eyes of store clerks, factory workers, and children that He gazes; with the hands of office workers, slum dwellers, and suburban housewives that He gives. It is with the feet of soldiers and tramps that He walks, and with the heart of anyone in need that He longs for shelter. And giving shelter or food to anyone who asks for it, or needs it, is giving it to Christ....

If we hadn't got Christ's own words for it, it would seem raving lunacy to believe that if I offer a bed and food and hospitality to some man or woman or child, I am replaying the part of ...Martha or Mary, and that my guest is Christ. There is nothing to show it, perhaps. There are no halos already

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss the ways mentioned above that the church has lost focus: Theological hatred; institutional triumphalism; and power politics. What vestiges of these still remain? How can we stay focused on the compassionate way of life to which God calls His people?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Explore the book of Acts as a reflection of the way of life the first followers of Christ modeled. What are some practical ways we can incorporate the example set for us in the 1<sup>st</sup> century today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Find and discuss texts in which Jesus says He is present in the “Poor and Afflicted.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. Share some ways you’ve both treated the “poor and needy” as Christ and neglected to do so. What are some practical ways you can serve Christ in the week ahead?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *Whatever You Did for the Least of These...* LEADERSHIP

## Essence

The human person is destined to total communion with God and to the fullest fellowship with all other persons. “Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God. For God is love” (1 John 4:7-8). This was Christ’s revelation. To be saved is to reach the fullness of love; it is to enter into the circle of charity which unites the three Persons of the Trinity; it is to love as God loves. The way to this fullness of love can be no other than love itself, the way of participation in this charity, the way of accepting, explicitly or implicitly, to say with the Spirit: “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). Acceptance is the foundation of all communion among human persons. To sin is to refuse to love, to reject communion and fellowship, to reject even now the very meaning of human existence. Matthew’s text is demanding: “Anything you did not do for one of these, however humble, you did not do for me” (25:45). To abstain from serving is to refuse to love; to fail to act for another is as culpable as expressly refusing to do it. This same idea is found later in John: “the man who does not love is still in the realm of death” (1 John 3:14). The parable of the good Samaritan ends with the famous inversion which Christ makes of the original question. They asked him, “Who is my neighbor?” and when everything seemed to point to the wounded man in the ditch on the side of the road, Christ asked, “Which of these three do you think was neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” (Luke 10:29, 36). The neighbor was the Samaritan who *approached* the wounded man and *made him his neighbor*. The neighbor, as has been said, is not the one whom I find in my path, but rather the one in whose path I place myself, the one whom I approach and actively seek. The other aspects of the Christian life become meaningful if they are animated by charity; otherwise, in Paul’s words, they simply are empty actions (cf. 1 Cor. 13). This is why Matthew’s text says we will be definitely judged by our love for others, but our capacity to create comradely conditions of life. From a prophetic viewpoint, the judgment (“crisis”) will be based, according to Matthew, on the new ethic arising from this universal principle of love.

But this charity exists only in concrete actions (feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, etc.); it occurs of necessity in the fabric of relationships among persons. “Faith divorced from deeds is barren” (James 2:20). To know God is to do justice: “If you know that he is righteous,

[illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss the significance of Jesus' inversion of the original question He answers through the parable of the Good Samaritan.

---

---

---

---

2. How can you practically place yourself in the path of those you want/need to make your neighbor? Identify concrete acts of mercy/justice/charity you can perform this week.

---

---

---

---

---

3. Does your heart melt or are acts done out of sense of duty/guilt? How can this change or be maintained, as necessary,?

---

---

---

---

---

## Consider

"To abstain from serving is to refuse to love; to fail to act for another is as culpable as expressly refusing to do it." Reflect on instances in which you've abstained from serving. What was your reasoning at the time? How do you see this abstention looking back on it now? How does this impact your future service?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***

# Reflections on *Whatever You Did for the Least of These...* EVANGELISM

## Story

TOUCH PEOPLE WHERE THEY HURT (*feel as Jesus did*)

*A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. (Mark 1:40-42)*

The amazing part of this healing is how Jesus did it – Jesus TOUCHED him! Even if he had not been healed physically, this would have begun to heal him emotionally.

Physically leprosy patients don't feel pain, but they suffer as much as anyone. Almost all the pain they feel comes from the outside, the pain of rejection imposed on them by the surrounding community. They are rejected because they are contagious. Their body is rotting. ... So they are forced to live outside the community. They must keep a six-foot distance from anyone – even their spouse and children. They know great loneliness.

Philip Yancey tells the story of Dr. Paul Brand who has devoted his life to treating leprosy patients in India. In the course of one examination Brand laid his hand on the patient's shoulder and informed him through a translator of the treatment that lay ahead. To his surprise the man began to shake with muffled sobs. "Have I said something wrong?" Brand asked the translator. She quizzed the patient and reported, "No, doctor. He says he is crying because you put your hand around his shoulder. Until he came here no one had touched him for many years."

Mother Teresa has said, "We have drugs for people with diseases like leprosy. But these drugs do not treat the main problem, the disease of being unwanted. That's what my sisters hope to provide. The sick and poor suffer even more from rejection than material want. Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty."

[illegible]

*The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)*

When I was about 20 years old, I was with some of my friends at the University of Illinois. It was late at night and we were walking the streets when a homeless man approached us for some money for coffee. I was a young Christian and my friends weren't Christians. I wasn't sure what the right thing to do was, but I decided to help. We were right outside a [fast food restaurant] so I took him inside and bought him a coffee. As we walked out he threw it on me.

Afterwards I had to reevaluate if I did the right thing. I came to the conclusion that I needed to discern how to help, but not whom to help. [I'd rather] err on the side of helping someone who was ungrateful than pass up an opportunity to serve Jesus by serving someone less fortunate.

I think Jesus feels about us the way [people] feel about [their] kids. The quickest way to [a parent's] heart is not to treat [them] well, but to treat [their] children well. The quickest way to hurt [them] is to hurt [their] children. I want to warm Christ's heart by serving His children.

Jesus more than identified with the outcast – he was an outcast. He was conceived out of wedlock in a culture that disdained that. He was homeless and hungry. What would happen if we saw that by serving others we were serving Jesus?

– Brian Mavis, *Mercy Me: Cultivating the Gift of Compassion*



# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Discuss the author's story about buying coffee for a homeless man. Share similar experiences of where the question of whether to help someone and how best to do so has come up. Using biblical texts, come to some conclusions about how to handle such situations in the future.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Identify some practical ways you can "feel what Jesus felt" in the coming week. What are some practical ways you can "do what Jesus did"? It might help to list things Jesus did NOT feel or do, as well.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*

# Reflections on *Whatever You Did for the Least of These...* SERVICE

## Story

Ralph Neighbour, pastor of Houston's West Memorial Baptist Church tells the story of a man named Jack:

Jack had been president of a large corporation, and when he got cancer, they ruthlessly dumped him. He went through his insurance, used his life savings, and had practically nothing left. I visited him with one of my deacons, who said, "Jack, you speak so openly about the brief life you have left. I wonder if you've prepared for your life after death?"

Jack stood up, livid with rage. "You -- ---- Christians. All you ever think about is what's going to happen to me after I die. If your God is so great, why doesn't He do something about the real problems of life?" He went on to tell us he was leaving his wife penniless and his daughter without money for college. Then he ordered us out.

Later my deacon insisted we go back. "Jack, I know I offended you," he said. "I humbly apologize. But I want you to know I've been working since then. Your first problem is where your family will live after you die. A realtor in our church has agreed to sell your house and give your wife his commission. I guarantee you that, if you'll permit us, some other men and I will make the house payments until it's sold. Then, I've contacted the owner of an apartment house down the street. He's offered your wife a three-bedroom apartment plus free utilities and an \$850-a-month salary in return for her collecting rents and supervising plumbing and electrical repairs. The income from your house should pay for your daughter's college. I just wanted you to know your family will be cared for."

Jack cried like a baby. He died shortly thereafter, so wrapped in pain he never accepted Christ. But he experienced God's love even while rejecting him. And his widow, touched by compassionate Christians, responded to the gospel message.

— Dr. Bruce Emmert, *Contagious Compassion*



# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Establish a SickNet:** Sometimes we are caught off guard by a friend's account of what it was like to be sick for the previous month – the loneliness, isolation, depression, lost income, stacked-up work. Usually our response is, “Oh, I wish I had known!”

Where do people turn when they need help? Who is ready to give extra help to make their illness a little more tolerable? Who is there to take care of the details that cannot afford to slip? Some people feel awkward depending on others, fearing that they will be a burden. Yet most people are more than willing to lend a hand – if only they knew who needed help.

A SickNet is a simple system that you can employ to make sure people who are sick do not go unnoticed....First, recruit a team of volunteers...willing to sign up for a weekly commitment (or as needs arise) and perform simple tasks to relieve the sick person's burden: cook a meal or two, spend an hour cleaning the house, run a few errands....

Next, if someone gets sick, he or she calls the designated SickNet coordinator of the week. The coordinator finds out what the needs are and then contacts people from the roster of volunteers to help meet the specific need...

Ask members of your team to be on the lookout for neighbors or acquaintances who are dealing with physical illnesses or limitations. Emphasize that this program is for *everyone*, not just for close friends or church members....A SickNet will provide you with a wonderful opportunity to tangibly express God's love to those in need....

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Support the Families of People with Disabilities:** Sick and disabled people need help, but so do their family members. One of life's sad statistics is the impact of serious illness and disabilities on families. Only 25 percent of marriages survive an illness in which one of the partners is chronically ill, bedridden or immobilized for a protracted period of time...The stress upon the other spouse to survive financially, manage the household affairs, raise the children and plan for the future is apparently too much....

It is not our place to judge people who cannot survive these circumstances. But it is our place, as Christians', to ask what we can do to support these stressed-out families. One suggestion is to look for qualified volunteers in your church who can attach themselves to families and actively search out ways to be useful and supportive to them. Volunteers can help with housecleaning, doctor visits, shopping and yard work to free up the spouse for essential family activities such as playing with the kids, attending to the sick or disabled partner, getting away fro some rest time, or going to favorite events. These are the most important elements of family life – and are always the first to go when a crisis hits....Encourage the creation of a team around each family. This would ensure a much more consistent style of service and would help prevent burnout for the care providers.

[illegible]

# Reflections on *Challenges to Compassion* DISCIPLESHIP

## Story

### PERSONAL SACRIFICE

In Matthew 6, we find a record of the day when Jesus delivered His Sermon on the Mount to His friends and followers. He came on rather strong when He started to discuss material wealth and things that have price tags. ...

...I find at least two sermons in Jesus' words. The first one is on hoarding – the greedy grappling for more and more stuff. Complicating life with better, larger, more expensive, more extravagant things that bind us to mandatory service to maintain them. Anytime you hear a sermon on this passage, that's what the preacher usually goes for. It's a valid focus.... However, any sermon based on Jesus's words that only condemns materialism is but half a sermon.

Being the master communicator, Jesus used word pictures that even a little child could understand. A little moth that can eat a garment. A bit of rust that can ultimately destroy a piece of steel. I love His sense of humor drawn from a scene in nature: "Look up in the air. Look at those birds. They don't sow. They don't reap. They don't store food in barns" (see v. 26).

From what I've observed, they spend all their time in the parking lot at McDonald's. That's where the food is! And I've never seen one of them shake his head and say, "Man, I'm so worried about where that next French fry is going to come from. I mean ... what if somebody doesn't drop his Coke this evening?" Jesus assured His listeners that our heavenly Father cares about them. He went on to point out that if He takes care of birds and flowers, certainly He will attend to our needs.

Personal sacrifice begins with a choice: who will we trust to meet our needs? We naturally serve what we trust. Hoarding wealth is a sure sign that a person trusts his things instead of his God....

The point of Jesus's sermon was not to say that having nice things is wrong. Read the passage again and look for anything that would suggest that He wanted people to be poor.

...His point is not about wealth; it's about us. Whether or not we own nice things, He wants to be sure that we aren't owned by them! As soon as something begins to feel just a little too crucial to our happiness or safety, it's time to apply the discipline of sacrifice.

Are you open to a little advice for no extra charge? Show your material stuff who's boss by giving it away.

Richard Foster tells this story on himself.

Not long ago we had a swing set, not one of those store-bought aluminum things but a real custom-made job – huge steel pipes and all. But our children would soon be beyond swing sets, so we decided it would be good to sell it at a garage sale. My next decision was what price to put on it. I went out in the backyard and looked it over. “It should bring a good price,” I thought to myself. “In fact if I touched up the paint just a bit I could ante it up some, and if I fixed the seat on the glider I could charge even more....”

All of a sudden I began to monitor a spirit of covetousness within me, and I became aware of how really dangerous it was spiritually. Well, I went into the house and rather tentatively asked my wife, Carolyn, if she would mind if we gave the swing set away rather than selling it.

"No, not at all!" she responded quickly. I thought to myself, "Rats!"

But before the day was out we had found a couple with young children who could make good use of it, and we gave it to them....

The simple act of giving crucified the greed that had gripped my heart, and the power of money was broken – for the time being.

May I press the point? When was the last time you just gave something away? I mean something very nice. Something that has meant something to you. It won't be easy. Sacrifice doesn't come naturally. It's a discipline that requires faith – a trust that the Almighty will look after your needs in ways that you will never see until you allow Him the opportunity.

...I would be willing to wager that we don't have intimacy with the Almighty because we haven't given enough away. We don't really trust our God sufficiently. To exercise the spiritual discipline of sacrifice, start cultivating generosity.

– Charles R. Swindoll, *So, You Want to be Like Christ?*



# BREAKOUT TIME

1. What can you give away this week?
2. Who do you trust to meet your needs? Share times when God has met your needs. How does recalling these times and hearing others' testimonies help you trust God more? How can you recall these the next time you need to trust God to meet your needs?
3. Is there anything that "owns" you or is beginning to feel "a little too crucial to [your] happiness or safety"? Explain. What can you do about this?

[illegible]

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *Challenges to Compassion* LEADERSHIP

## Essence

When we are tempted to think that we are too important to lower ourselves and put ourselves out for others, we need to remember Jesus. He was “the Son of Man.” That was his preferred way of speaking of himself. It is a title taken from the prophecy of Daniel ... where it stands for a figure of tremendous authority.... There could not be a greater figure and yet, says Jesus, even he “did not come to be served, but to serve.” He should have a chariot, a crown of jewels and a glorious throne, but instead he chose a donkey, a crown of thorns and a cross.... God raised him to life again and now, as the great king of the universe, he calls on us to follow his example. His self-sacrificial service to others is to be the pattern for our lives.

...Are we prepared to follow his example? Of course we cannot do everything.... But could we do more?

For some, the answer will be “no.” Your time is filled serving others and the Lord Jesus. If so, his words still bring a strong challenge. What is our attitude to this “service”? It is very easy to serve ourselves even when we appear to be serving others. We enjoy doing what a friend of mine calls “the hidden humble jobs in the limelight.” Our chests swell as others spot what we are doing and the word goes round the office. “He has such a servant heart.” And we smart in those times when no one sees what we have done or bothers to thank us. We love to see our name on the church notice sheet or, better still, on the notice board outside, where more people can see it. And we are livid when a previous job is taken from us.... Mrs. Jones has led the [Sabbath] School for years – rather badly, if the truth be told. But no one dares to ask anyone else to do it – she would be furious; it is her life.

Even our Christian “service” can become an outlet for “self-fulfillment,” “self-esteem,” “self-glorification.” But we are called to resist the self-centered instinct which our world promotes and follow instead the One who “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” [Philippians 2:7]. That will not be easy – suffering and service never are, but they are the path to greatness in the eyes of the only one who really matters.

– Michael Luke, *Making Worship a Lifestyle and Not an Event*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. How has living in a self-centered world affected you? Being *completely* honest, what would you list as your “rights” or expectations of what you deserve in life?  

---

---

---

---
2. What does it mean that the way of the cross is the path to glory for Jesus? And for His disciples?  

---

---

---

---
3. Explore Jesus’ self-sacrificial service as a pattern for your life. What do you need to do to better follow His example?  

---

---

---

---
4. Is your time so filled (even with doing good) that you’ve lost the proper attitude toward service? **Explain/discuss.**  

---

---

---

---
5. **Discuss:** “It is very easy to serve ourselves even when we appear to be serving others.... Even our Christian ‘service’ can become an outlet for ‘self-fulfillment,’ ‘self-esteem,’ self-glorification.”  

---

---

---

---

---

---
6. Identify some “hidden humble jobs in the limelight.”  

---

---

---

---

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***



# Reflections on *Challenges to Compassion* EVANGELISM

## Essence

[T]he point where ministry and spirituality touch each other...is compassion....

Let us not underestimate how hard it is to be compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely, and broken. But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it. As busy, active, relevant ministers, we want to [make] a real contribution. This means first and foremost doing something to show that our presence makes a difference. And so we ignore our greatest gift, which is our ability to enter into solidarity with those who suffer.

It is in solitude that this compassionate solidarity grows. In solitude we realize that nothing human is alien to us, that the roots of all conflict, war, injustice, cruelty, hatred, jealousy, and envy are deeply anchored in our own heart. In solitude our heart of stone can be turned into a heart of flesh, a rebellious heart into a contrite heart, and a closed heart into a heart that can open itself to all suffering people in a gesture of solidarity.

...In order to be of service to others, we have to die to them; that is, we have to give up measuring our meaning and value with the yardstick of others. To die to our neighbors means to stop judging them, to stop evaluating them, and thus to become free to be compassionate. Compassion can never coexist with judgment because judgment creates the distance, the distinction, which prevents us from really being with the other.

Much of our ministry is pervaded with judgments. Often quite unconsciously we classify our people as very good, good, neutral, bad, and very bad. These judgments influence deeply the thoughts, words, and actions of our ministry. Before we know it, we fall into the trap of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Those whom we consider lazy, indifferent, hostile, or obnoxious we treat as such, forcing them in this way to live up to our own views. And so, much of our ministry is limited by the snares of our own judgments. These self-created limits prevent us from being available to people and shrivel up our compassion.

“Do not judge and you will not be judged yourselves” is a word of Jesus that is indeed very hard to live up to. But it contains the secret of a compassionate ministry....

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*



# BREAKOUT TIME

1. **Discuss** ways in which “much of our ministry is pervaded with judgments.”
2. **Discuss:** “Compassion can never coexist with judgment.” Explain why you agree/disagree, using Biblical texts to support your argument.
3. Develop and perform skits showing self-fulfilling prophecies in both compassionate and judgmental approaches. **Discuss.**
4. In what concrete ways can we “enter into solidarity with those who suffer” in the week ahead?

## Consider

Reflect on the state of your heart: stone, flesh, rebellious, contrite, closed, open? What do you need to do to turn your heart to God and follow His leading?

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***

# Reflections on *Challenges to Compassion* SERVICE

## Quotable Quotes

The willing sacrifice of the innocent is the most powerful answer to violent tyranny that has yet been conceived by God or man.

– Mahatma Gandhi

When I hear somebody sigh, “Life is hard,” I am always tempted to ask, “Compared to what?”

– Sydney J. Harris

Compassion is the truth that sets men free from the compulsion to destroy one another. Far from being an instinct over which we have little or no control, compulsion is determined by material conditions of inequality, and these conditions and theories are made by human beings. Consequently, they can be changed by human beings...

– William Eckhardt



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Buy Nothing Day:** In an almost disturbing coincidence, in the United States the day of the year with the highest foot traffic in shopping malls is typically the day after Thanksgiving....People go from stuffing their bellies with turkey one day to cramming their bags with stuff the next.

Surely, the notion of giving thanks shouldn't lead us to a near orgy of spending. Wouldn't it make sense that after a time of pause every year when we give thanks for having so much, we would also put a pause on our consuming?...It is especially disturbing that in a world of so much desperate poverty, "thanksgiving" in our society is followed by heartless disregard for those who have nothing.

Buy Nothing Day came about as a response to the madness of this consumerism. This movement now has affiliates in more than 20 countries around the world....Those who participate in the Buy Nothing Day simply pledge to buy nothing on the day after Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday of November). It seems to be a highly appropriate way of taking back this holiday!...To connect to the Buy Nothing Day movement, visit their website at [www.buynothingday.org](http://www.buynothingday.org).

[illegible]



# SERVING

## service *PROJECT* ideas

**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Human Trafficking:** The idea that slavery is a thing of the past is sadly not true. Today, the industry is thriving, with an estimated 800,000 to 900,000 people forced into slave-style labor and prostitution each year....

Economic need is often the condition that paves the way for human trafficking. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people respond to what they believe are economic opportunities in a distant urban center or another country. They venture out on what they expect to be a one-year contract to perform cleaning services or factory work but are lured into a trafficking scheme that relegates some of them to prostitution and others to remote labor environments....

One way that you can get involved in the fight against human trafficking is by starting or joining a local or regional campaign run by an organization that advocates for those being trafficked around the world. ...The goal of your campaign would be to raise the awareness of those around you as to the severity of the problem.

One organization devoted to this work is <http://humantrafficking.org>. ...The website provides various ways to identify people who may be victims of human trafficking, offers advice on how to become an advocate and rescuer of human slaves, lists local and national government offices that could serve as a resource, and suggests current campaigns both locally and globally for action.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Reflections on *God in the Midst...* *Revealing God* DISCIPLESHIP

## Story

God has always chosen to identify with the victims, because one must either identify with the victims or the executioners: And *not* to identify with the victims *is* to identify with the executioners. The problem nonetheless is not restricted to the activity of God. “Neutrality” in the light of the righteousness of God is an impossibility. ...

Berlin, 10 November 1938, *Kristallnacht*: The windows of elegant Jewish stores were broken, and well-dressed people took fashionable merchandise. Synagogues were burned to the ground, and holy books were destroyed. Jewish men disappeared to concentration camps. Father Bernhard Lichtenberg ...saw the destruction of Jewish property and sacred places. He did just one thing. He returned to his church and prayed publicly “on behalf of the Jews and the poor concentration camp prisoners.” He prayed in public rather than private. At great risk for nearly three years, Father Lichtenberg prayed for Jews *in public* and *by name* until his arrest on 23 October 1941. ...

Finally brought to trial on 22 May 1942, Lichtenberg was found guilty and denied clemency because he had shown no repentance during his... imprisonment. Father Lichtenberg asked for permission to speak:

Mr. Prosecutor,...the last point you made...to the effect that I have not changed and would speak and act exactly as before, that...is completely accurate.

This question [of how I could pray for the Jews] I can answer quite precisely. It happened in November 1938, when store windows were smashed and the synagogues burned.... When I saw this destruction, with the police looking on doing nothing, I was scandalized by all this vandalism and asked myself what, if such things were possible in an ordered state, could still bring help.

...Then I told myself that only one thing could still help, namely, prayer. That night I prayed for the first time as follows: “Now let us pray for the persecuted ‘non-Aryan’ Christians and Jews.”

Father Bernhard Lichtenberg was weak and powerless in his world, but he was not impotent. He publicly identified with the victims of his church and beyond it, as Christ himself had identified with the victims (Matt 25:34-45). ...

[illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

– E. Frank Tupper, *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God*

1. In a fixed time period, have groups identify as many Biblical examples as possible where God identifies with the victim. Compare results with other groups and form a comprehensive list. Now juxtapose the idea of “majority rule”: can you find any examples of God ever operating on this principle? Why, then, do we?

2. What does it mean to identify with the victim? In what practical ways can you do this in the week to come?

3. Who are some unpopular victims that could use your compassionate prayers today? Take time to pray for those identified as a group and individually throughout the week.

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***

# BREAKOUT TIME

4. Discuss:  
The Rabbi of Kotzk is supposed to have put the following question to a group of very learned men: "Where does God dwell?" They laughed when they heard the question, saying "What a thing to ask! Is it not written 'The whole world is full of his glory?'" But the Rabbi had a different answer. He replied to his own question: "God dwells wherever man lets him in."

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5. What do you need to let go of in order to let God in? It is our very clinging and compulsiveness that prevent us from waking up to the fact of giftness and holiness, of causes for reverence and celebration everywhere. Thus, we need to let go in order to let things happen and in order to let things be. "There where our clinging to things ends," says Eckhardt, "is where God begins to be."

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *God in the Midst...* *Revealing God* LEADERSHIP

## Essence

The great news we have received is that God is a compassionate God. In Jesus Christ the obedient servant, who did not cling to his divinity but emptied himself and became as we are, the fullness of God's compassion is revealed to us. God is Immanuel, God-with-us. The great call we have heard is to live a compassionate life. In the community formed in displacement and leading to a new way of being together, we can become disciples – living manifestations of God's presence in this world. The great task we have been given is to walk the compassionate way. Through the discipline of patience, practiced in prayer and action, the life of discipleship becomes real and fruitful.

As long as we live on this earth, our lives as Christians must be marked by compassion. But we must not conclude these reflections on compassion without observing that the compassionate life is not our final goal. In fact, we can only live the compassionate life to the fullest when we know that it points beyond itself. We know that Jesus who emptied and humbled himself has been raised high and has been given a name above all other names, and we know too that he left us to prepare a place for us where suffering will be overcome and compassion no longer necessary. There is a new heaven and a new earth for which we hope with patient expectation. [Rv 21:1-4]

This is the vision that guides us. This vision makes us share one another's burdens, carry our crosses together, and unite for a better world. This vision takes the despair out of death and the morbidity out of suffering, and opens new horizons. This vision also gives us the energy to manifest its first realization in the midst of the complexities of life. This vision is indeed of a future world. But it is no utopia. The future has already begun and is revealed each time strangers are welcomed, the naked clothed, the sick and prisoners are visited, and oppression is overcome. Through these grateful actions the first glimpses of a new heaven and a new earth can be seen.

In the new city, God will live among us, but each time two or three gather in the name of Jesus he is already in our midst. In the new city, all tears will be wiped away, but each time people eat bread and drink wine in his memory, smiles appear on strained faces. In the new city, the whole creation will be made new, but each time prison walls are broken down,

[illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. **Review/discuss** the vision of eternal life as presented in Revelation 21-22. How does this vision of the future affect your living today? Explain.
2. Some have argued that there are people that are “so heavenly minded they’re no earthly good.” Do you agree/disagree? **Give examples.**
3. In what ways does eternal life start NOW? What can you do in the week ahead to bring a little piece of heaven to earth?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *God in the Midst...* *Revealing God* EVANGELISM

## Essence

“And they will call him Immanuel” – which means, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23, NIV). ...the ultimate answer to laments is not to be found in the specifics of what is lamented for. The true answer for a lament of disease is not ultimately a cure. The real solution for a lament of financial distress is never simply money. The answer is always found in the Presence of God. It is rarely what we ask for, but it is always what we ultimately need.

In the end of the book, God’s answer to Job’s loss is not getting his dead children back. Indeed he never gets them back. The answer, God’s answer, is that Job gets God back. And Job’s response, brought into focus by his suffering is clear: That is all he ever really needed. The same can be said for both David and Jeremiah and you and me.

The coming of Immanuel, “God with us,” must be understood as the Father’s answer to ages of expectant laments. But God did not send the Messiah as the sort of solution everyone expected. They wanted someone who would kill the Romans. Jesus, instead, died for the Romans. They wanted someone who would give them answers. Jesus gave them Himself. What else but His Presence could have perfectly answered all our deepest needs? For though we could have never imagined it, what we thought we needed, solutions for the problems that cause our pain, would have never fixed the problem.

...What we need most...is never what we think we need. What we were created at the depths of our souls to need is only the Presence of God. It is the answer, as Jesus is the answer.

After the Resurrection, whenever Jesus spoke of His imminent departure to go and be with the Father, His disciples would inevitably lament, “Why can’t you stay with us?”

Jesus’ remarkable answer is found in John 14. There He resonates with their sorrow. “Don’t let your hearts be troubled,” He comforts. “I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you.”

The object of this wonderful promise is, of course, the Holy Spirit. By their very nature, it would be impossible for either God the Father or Jesus the Son to not be with us. So the Spirit, the Comforter, who comes today in response to all our laments, still provides the only answer that will ever be enough, whether we realize it or not.

[illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. Share a time when you've found that God's presence was all you needed.
2. Share times when all you needed was a listening ear, comforting shoulder, or someone's mere presence, but they tried to "solve your problem" instead. How did this make you feel at the time? Have you ever been guilty of the same thing? **Discuss** why you think we find it so difficult to just be present. [NOTE: Job's friends proved wonderful friends, so long as they sat quietly with Job in his loss. It wasn't until they started "giving their two cents" that their presence became problematic.]
3. In what ways can you "be present" for others in the week to come? What practical ways can you keep from offering "advice" or filling silence needlessly?

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*



# Reflections on *God in the Midst...* *Revealing God* SERVICE

## Quotable Quotes

“You may call God love; you may call God goodness; but the best name for God is Compassion.”

– Meister Eckhart

Be kind and merciful. Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting. In the slums we are the light of God’s kindness to the poor. To children, to the poor, to all who suffer and are lonely, give always a happy smile. Give them not only your care, but also your heart.

–Mother Teresa

Time is cluttered with the wreckage of communities which surrendered to hatred and violence. For the salvation of our nation and the salvation of mankind, we must follow another way... To our most bitter opponents we say: “We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you... But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer ...” Love is the most durable power in the world.

–Martin Luther King



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Eradicating AIDS:** There are several actions you can take to join the effort to eradicate AIDS worldwide and lessen the burdens of those who live with it. The first is to identify positively with people who suffer with AIDS. ...  
...check with your local health-services organizations to find out ways to help when it comes to the AIDS epidemic. For example, many organizations train volunteers to work in hospices that serve as a final home for people with AIDS. Such volunteers often find that they bring friendship and a sense of community to people who have been cut off from families who either disapprove of them or are afraid of them. These hospice workers often end up helping families say goodbye to their loved ones in a way that is dignified, reconciling and healing to the spirit.  
You can also link up with the annual World AIDS Day (which always falls on the first day of December) by joining rallies or marches to link arms with other people who are devoted to overcoming both the prejudice against people who are HIV positive and the challenges of the disease itself. For other ideas and resources, visit the UNAIDS website at [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org). Also check out [www.data.org](http://www.data.org).

[illegible]





**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Rally for Rights:** We think it makes sense to join together with others to celebrate human rights. One way to do this is to schedule public rallies that advance the rights of ethnic minorities, various religious traditions and other groups that have been marginalized by society. In this way, you can help to raise awareness of human rights violations and work to end oppression in our world.

One group that excels in telling the stories of human rights violations is Human Rights Watch. The organization's website is packed with information, resources and up-to-date news on human rights violations in specific countries around the world and also on specific global issues such as AIDS, children's rights, counterterrorism, international justice, and refugees. You can visit the Human Rights Watch website at [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) to connect with the organization's campaigns and get ideas on what issues you can address.

Additionally, you can connect with specific human rights issues that are occurring in your own community....The bottom line is to look out for those who are the least of society – those who have a small voice, those who are despised, and those who are most likely to be taken advantage of by others in the pursuit of wealth, security and power.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Reflections on *Disciplines of the Compassionate Life* DISCIPLESHIP

## Essence

Probably no New Testament writer is as explicit about the importance of concrete acts of service as James. He writes, “Pure, unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world” (Jm 1:27)....

It is obvious that James does little more than restate in a new context Jesus’ emphasis on concrete acts of service. When the disciples of John the Baptist ask Jesus if he is “the one who is to come,” Jesus points to his actions, “the blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the Good News is proclaimed to the poor” (Lk 7:22-23). His actions are the source of his credibility. The same is true of his disciples. Jesus wants them to be people of action. He leaves little doubt about his opinion, “...the one who listens and does nothing is like the man who built his house on soil, with no foundations: as soon as the river bore down on it, it collapsed; and what a ruin that house became!” (Lk 6:49). With great persistence, Jesus stresses that the test of true discipleship lies not in words but in actions: “It is not those who say to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Mt 7:21-22). Indeed, prayer must yield specific fruits. The final criterion of the value of the Christian life is therefore not prayer but action. In the “wordy” environment of teachers, masters, scribes, and Pharisees, Jesus wants his followers to discover for themselves that mere words will not bring them into the kingdom (Mt 21:28-31).

Should there still exist any question in his hearers’ minds, Jesus erases the vestiges of doubt when he describes the last judgment, in which concrete acts of compassion are the undeniable sign of “unspoilt religion.” Perhaps nowhere else in the New Testament do we find the importance of the discipline of action so clearly presented [as in Mt 25:31-46].

This dramatic scene vividly portrays the meaning of the discipline of action. Action with and for those who suffer is the concrete expression of the compassionate life and the final criterion of being a Christian. Such acts do not stand beside the moments of prayer and worship but are themselves such moments. Why? Because Jesus Christ, who did not cling to his divinity, but became as we are, can be found where there are

[illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

## Scripture

What do the following texts in James teach about faith and works?  
Jm 2:14-17 \_\_\_\_\_

Jm 2:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

Jm 2:26 \_\_\_\_\_

1. James uses the lives of Abraham and Rahab to show how faith and deeds work together. What other biblical and modern examples can you give of this? Be prepared to defend your answer.

2. Imagine someone coming to you as John the Baptist's followers came to Jesus, asking if you're really a Christian or if they should look elsewhere. Can you answer as Jesus did? Explain, discussing what needs to happen in your life to follow Jesus' example more closely.

3. What are some concrete acts of service you can do this week?

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***

# Reflections on *Disciplines of the Compassionate Life* LEADERSHIP

## Essence

If the disciplines form a small mound of gems, then sacrifice is the diamond at the top. No other discipline is more closely associated with the character and the mission of Jesus Christ than sacrifice. Yes, He was intimate with the Father, lived simply, sought solitude, surrendered His will to the Father daily, and lived a prayerful, humble life characterized by self-control. But it is sacrifice that distinguishes the Son of God from all mere historical figures and identifies Him as Savior – even to those who scarcely know of Him.

... You want to be like Christ? Become a person characterized by the discipline of sacrifice – the ultimate expression of Christlikeness.

## *Become a Living, Breathing, Sacrifice.*

But what does that involve? What *is* sacrifice? The term is so old and so strange to our ears it's like an ancient relic from a forgotten age. And I will admit to you that I was a fully grown man – married, in fact – before I understood the first thing about it. ...

During my final weekend in early January 1958, I was in [the military] preparing to ship out. I had a negative attitude toward life in general and toward God in particular. To be honest, I was borderline bitter. Why on earth would He have allowed this to happen? I was convinced I would never smile again.

[Candidly, I am convinced I am in the Lord's work today because I read Elisabeth Elliot's book about a few men who sacrificed their entire lives on the darkest night of my life up to that point. God used her words to touch my soul and reach my heart with His calling to ministry, a vocation fueled by the discipline of sacrifice.]

I cannot describe the change that swept over me as I watched the morning sun break through the windows. ...Beginning that morning and throughout the seventeen days aboard the troopship across the Pacific, my whole attitude toward life began a transformation. God used this example of selflessness – the sacrifice of those men – to teach me the value of caring more about others than myself. He taught me so many lessons regarding trusting instead of fretting and worrying, seeing His hand at

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

[illegible]

– Charles R. Swindoll, *So, You Want to be Like Christ?*

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. **Discuss:** Sacrifice is the discipline most “closely associated with the character and the mission of Jesus Christ.” Do you agree? Why/why not?

---

---

---

---

2. List elements of your typical day. How can you be a living sacrifice in each of these moments?

---

---

---

---

3. The author notes a “change in perspective [that] made all the difference in how [he] viewed life.” Share any changes in perspective you’ve experienced. Do you still need one?

---

---

---

---

4. The author notes that “living sacrifice” would be deemed an oxymoron by the world. This is what Oswald Chambers would term “Kingdom sense” as opposed to “common sense.” What other examples of Kingdom sense can you find in the Bible that run contrary to what the world would find logical. Why, then, can following “common sense” be dangerous for a Christian?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5. List concrete ways you can cultivate sacrifices (starting small) in personal, relational, and material realms.

***DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS***



# Reflections on *Disciplines of the Compassionate Life* EVANGELISM

## Essence

The compassionate way is the patient way. Patience is the discipline of compassion. This becomes obvious when we realize that the word *compassion* could be read as *com-patience*. The words *passion* and *patience* both find their roots in the Latin word *pati*, which means “suffering.” The compassionate life could be described as a life patiently lived with others. If we then ask about the way of the compassionate life – about the discipline of compassion – patience is the answer. If we cannot be patient, we cannot be com-patient. If we ourselves are unable to suffer, we cannot suffer with others. If we lack the strength to carry the burden of our own lives, we cannot accept the burden of our neighbors. Patience is the hard but fruitful discipline of the disciple of the compassionate God.

At first this may sound disappointing. It really sounds like a cop-out. Each time we hear the word *patience*, we tend to cringe. As children, we heard the word used so often in so many different circumstances that it seemed to be the word that was uttered when no one knew what else to say. It usually meant waiting – waiting until Mommy and Daddy came home, the bus arrived, the waiter brought the food, school ended, the pain decreased, the rain stopped, or the car was fixed. And so the word *patience* became associated with powerlessness, the inability to act, and a general state of passivity and dependence. ... Often, it simply meant that we were not going to be told what was really happening, ...that the only thing expected of us was to wait passively until someone with power decided to move again. It is sad that a deep and rich word like *patience* has such a perverted history in our minds. With such a history, it is difficult not to consider *patience* an oppressive word used by the powerful to keep the powerless under control. In fact, not a few among those in very influential positions have counseled patience simply to avoid necessary changes in church and society.

But true patience is the opposite of a passive waiting in which we let things happen and allow others to make the decisions. Patience means to enter actively into the thick of life and to fully bear the suffering within and around us. Patience is the capacity to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell as fully as possible the inner and outer events of our lives. It is to

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

# BREAKOUT TIME

1. List all the things you think of when you hear the word “patience.” **Discuss.**
2. **Discuss** the idea of “fight or flight” and the third way of patience offered above (p. 162). An example of “fight or flight” follows. Come up with other examples and discuss the three different approaches in each situation:

When we see an accident on the road, something in us pushes the accelerator. When someone approaches a sensitive issue, something in us tries to change the subject. When a shameful memory presents itself, something in us wants to forget it. And if we cannot flee, we fight. We fight the one who challenges our opinions, the people who question our power, and the circumstances that force us to change.

*DIVIDE INTO SMALL GROUPS*





# Reflections on *Disciplines of the Compassionate Life* SERVICE

## Quotable Quotes

This is the true joy of life: being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to others, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for them whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live...

Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

– George Bernard Shaw

Compassion is the ultimate and most meaningful embodiment of emotional maturity. It is through compassion that a person achieves the highest peak and deepest reach in his or her search for self-fulfillment.

– Arthur Jersild



**VISIT** <http://www.hesaidgo.net/index.php> • <http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> • <http://hishands.adventist.org/>

- **Celebrate:** The idea of tithing in the Old Testament does not exactly fit our contemporary bang-'em-on-the-head-to-get-more-bucks model. Back then, tithing was not linked to a building program, utilities or payroll. It was a system that subsidized a party – a great festival honoring Yahweh's goodness, grace and forgiveness. It was a celebration that He remembered the people's sins no more and dealt with the people mercifully.

The Israelites would make their sojourn to the Temple and spend days camping out with family and friends, feasting,...singing and laughing. Smoke rose to the heavens as the firstfruits were sacrificed in thanksgiving to the Lord. The pyre of death was the altar of life, and all of it went to the Lord. (Caring for the physical needs of others came from the coffers *beyond* the 10 percent.)

Sadly, Christians have lost the party spirit. We have lost the celebration of life. We all could learn a few things from the Israelites of old!

For example, why not plan an event around the theme of fun?

The beginning of the new year – the time when most of us make resolutions that we typically break within the first month – could be a night of enjoyment rather than a somber time of setting goals.

You could invite people to decide what would be fun and then accommodate the variety of interests....

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]



# YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!

You know you want excitement, you know you want to see the world, you know you want purpose. Short and long-term missions offers that and much more! Could it be that this is God's will for your life?



**LONG TERM MISSION**



**SHORT TERM MISSION**



**TUTORING & MENTORING**



**HIS HANDS INITIATIVE**

BE LIMITLESS. BE GOD-POWERED.

**HeSaidGo.net**



**OFFICE OF VOLUNTEER MINISTRIES**

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS • 12501 OLD COLUMBIA PIKE, SILVER SPRING, MD 20904 • 800.331.2767

## **OTHER WEBSITES TO VISIT**

- [\*\*http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/\*\*](http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/)
- [\*\*http://hishands.adventist.org/\*\*](http://hishands.adventist.org/)