

This week we focus on dramatically escalating our Christlike compassion. We look at the story of Acts 6 where the needs of a marginalized group of people within the church were being neglected. When this issue was brought to church leadership, they responded with compassion and strategic wisdom, adapting the church's structure to serve all its people.

SESSION 4

Our Next Level of Compassion

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

—1 JOHN 3:17-18

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

—JAMES 1:27



ACTS 6:1-7

Read Aloud in Your Group

¹ In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

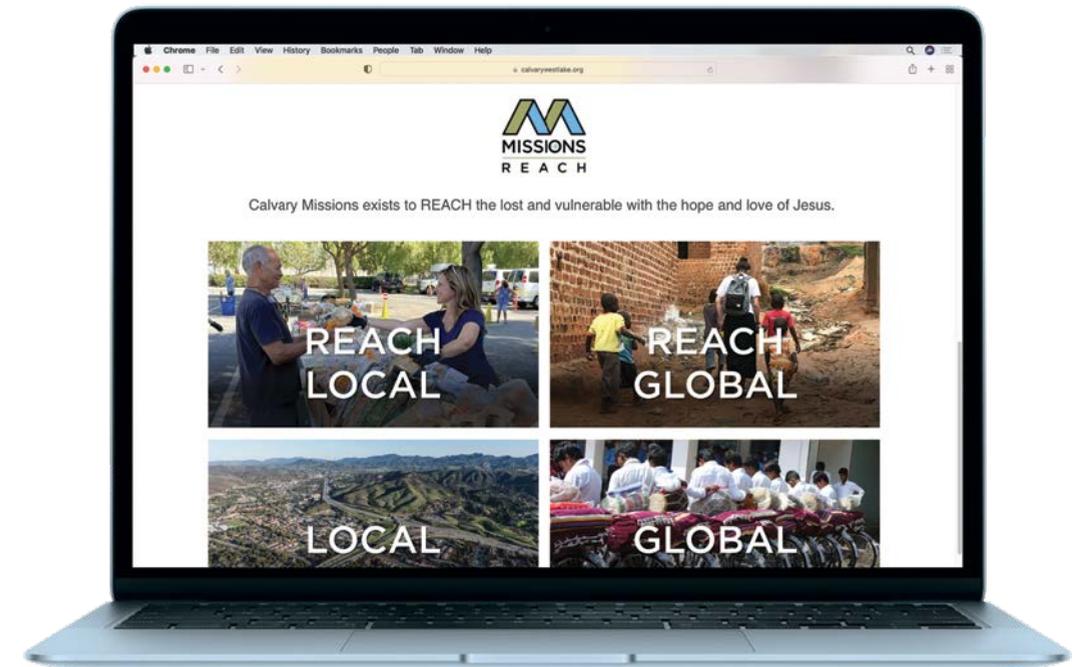


FOR DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION: How would you define “compassion?”

1. When we think of compassion, we immediately think of those with visible needs such as the homeless, poor, mentally ill, or those with disabilities. What are other groups of people in our community who might need compassion?
2. In this passage, the apostles faced a problem and solved it. What do we learn from their process and wise resolution?
3. What has helped you develop and grow in compassion (i.e, “to suffer with”) for others?
4. What are some obstacles to showing up and responding in compassion?
 - How do we overcome our self-righteousness or judgmentalness toward people different from us or those we deem “undeserving”?
 - Share a story of when God stretched you to meet the need of another person to whom you were not naturally drawn toward.
5. Share a time when someone showed you compassion. What did they do?
6. Reflect on Mother Theresa’s famous quote “We can’t all do great things but we can do small things with great love.”
 - Brainstorm a list of small things we might be able to do this week with great love.
 - Pick something from that list and commit to doing it this week!

7. Go to Calvary’s REACH page and pick out a serving opportunity or project for your group to do together: calvarywestlake.org/reach





TAKE 5

SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

Brian Field, Missions Pastor

MATTHEW 9:35-38

Key Verse: *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. —Matthew 9:36*

Living in Southern California, we don't get to see a lot of sheep or shepherds but most of us understand the important role shepherds play in the life of a sheep. They provide care, protection, provisions, and can account for every member of the flock. What we do see, however, are many people struggling to navigate the complexities of the ever-changing world around us and those who may need help. They are lost sheep in need of a shepherd.

Lostness is not always pretty. It leads to disorientation, chaos, fear, doubt, anxiety, sin, and brokenness. Often our tendency can be to see the brokenness in others and want to avoid it because it is messy and inconvenient. Jesus saw the brokenness around Him and it moved Him toward compassion, toward the brokenness. As the Great Shepherd, He also knew that the real Enemy who is the one doing the harassing.

Jesus calls each of us to follow in His footsteps. To co-labor with Christ in pouring out compassion onto a world that is in great need of a Shepherd. The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few!

What would it look like for you to move more toward the 'lost sheep' around you?

Pray that God would give you eyes to see those being harassed and who are helpless and that you, too, would be moved to compassion.



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