



outreach mission **2008**

youth small group SERVICE PROJECT IDEAS

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



year of SACRIFICE

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
SERVICE PROJECTS
FOR ADVENTIST YOUTH

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

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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 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.¹

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....²

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 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

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

² Adapted from Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*.

[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.³

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 missing the genuine and sacred offering of ourselves, and our worship to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ... We have been surging forward. We are building great churches and large congregations. We are

³ *Ibid.*

boasting about high standards and we are talking a lot about revival. But I have a question and it is not just rhetoric: What has happened to our worship?

Do we consider the sorrow of the city, the country, and the world? What about the sorrow of the homeless people asking for money on the streets..., what about the young men and women dying of AIDS, what about the thousands who live in prisons, mental hospitals, and nursing homes? What about the broken families, the unemployed...?

And when we look beyond the boundaries of our own city and country, the picture of sorrow becomes even more frightening: parentless children roaming the streets of Sao Paulo.... young boys and girls being sold as prostitutes in Bangkok. ... people in Ethiopia and Somalia wandering aimlessly in the eroded desert...millions of lonely, starving faces all over the world, and large piles of the dead bodies of people killed in cruel wars and ethnic conflicts. Whose cup is this? It is our cup, the cup of human suffering. For each of us our sorrows are deeply personal. For all of us our sorrows, too, are universal.

Now look at the man of sorrows. He hangs on a cross with outstretched arms....Jesus, the man of sorrows, and we, the people of sorrow, hang there between heaven and earth, crying out, "God, our God, why have you forsaken us?"

"Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?" Jesus asked his friends. They answered yes, but had no idea what he was talking about. Jesus' cup is the cup of sorrow, not just his own sorrow but the sorrow of the whole human race. It is a cup full of physical, mental, and spiritual anguish. It is the cup of starvation, torture, loneliness, rejection, abandonment, and immense anguish. It is the cup full of bitterness. ...

When the moment to drink that cup came for Jesus, he said: "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death" (Matthew 26:28). His agony was so intense that "his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood (Like 22:44). His close friends James and John, whom he had asked if they could drink the cup that he was going to drink, were there with him but fast asleep, unable to stay awake with him in his sorrow. In his immense loneliness, he fell on his face and cried out: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus couldn't face it. Too much pain to hold, too much suffering to embrace, too much agony to live through. He didn't feel he could drink that cup filled to the brim with sorrows.

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.⁴

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.

⁴ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?*

Introduction

SERVICE

Note

The suggested service projects in this kit 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.

If your group is not already engaged in ongoing service, use this introductory lesson to explore the role of service in the Christian's life and to plan future service projects.

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

QUOTABLE QUOTES

1

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.

– Søren Kierkegaard, *Provocations*

2

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.

– Gustavo Gutierrez

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*

Not long after that, Jesus went to the village Nain. His disciples were with him, along with quite a large crowd. As they approached the village gate, they met a funeral procession—a woman’s only son was being carried out for burial. And the mother was a widow. When Jesus saw her, his heart broke. He said to her, “Don’t cry.” Then he went over and touched the coffin. The pallbearers stopped. He said, “Young man, I tell you: Get up.” The dead son sat up and began talking. Jesus presented him to his mother. *Luke 7: 11-15 (The Message)*

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*



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

- **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. 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.

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SERVING

service *PROJECT* ideas

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- **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*

With amazement the angels beheld the infinite love of Jesus, who, suffering the most excruciating agony of mind and body, thought only of others, and encouraged the penitent soul to believe. While pouring out his life in death, He exercised a love for man stronger than death. Many who witnessed those scenes on Calvary were afterward established by them in the faith of Christ.

(Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, p. 223)

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*



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▪ **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/) 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....



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- **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.
 - **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*

When we have compassion, we do something about those in need. We not only see their need, but we feel it also. We **MUST** act. We **MUST** do something about it. The Bible uses the word compassion and its forms extensively.

Jesus always had compassion on the people He met.

He always found ways to help.

***We, as His followers, must also take up our cross
and follow Him.***

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*



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- **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, www.earthday.net, www.earthdaybags.org, and www.environmentaldefense.org.

[illegible]

What is important, what I consider success, is that we make a contribution to our world. Ben Carson



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SERVING

service *PROJECT* ideas

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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.”

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?

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*

Reflections on *What Compassion Is*

“When the cases of all come in review before God, the question, What did they profess? will not be asked, but, What have they done? Have they been doers of the word? Have they lived for themselves, **or have they been exercised in works of benevolence, in deeds of kindness and love, preferring others before themselves, and denying themselves that they might bless others?** If the record shows that this has been their life, that their characters have been marked with tenderness, self-denial, and benevolence, they will receive the blessed assurance and benediction from Christ: “Well done” “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies - Volume 3*, p. 525)

Compassion is a way of life.



SERVING

service *PROJECT* ideas

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- **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



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- **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*

Compassion is not a set of rules.

Compassion is not an ethical system.

Compassion is not pity or pityful feelings.

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*



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- **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.

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- **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 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 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....

What is important, what I consider success, is that we make a contribution to our world. Ben Carson

Reflections on *Love Your Neighbor*

God calls us to consider and to help those who are in most need of help. As workers together with God, we are not simply to deplore the destitute condition of the Southern people, but we are to seek to alleviate their condition.

—Ellen G. White, *The Southern Work*, (1898, 1901), p. 59

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*



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- **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.

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- **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.”

What is important, what I consider success, is that we make a contribution to our world. Ben Carson

Reflections on *Consider Others Above Yourself*

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*

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*



- **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.

[illegible]



- **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?

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- **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!

Reflections on

Encourage the Brethren Compassion in the Church

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.

– Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*

Reflections on *Encourage the Brethren – Compassion in the Church* SERVICE

Quotable Quotes

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.

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



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- **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.

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- **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)
 - **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.

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

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 glowing round their heads – at least none that human eyes can see. It is not likely that I shall be vouchsafed the vision of Elizabeth of Hungary, who put the leper in her bed and later, going to tend him, saw no longer the leper's stricken face, but the face of Christ. The part of a Peter Claver, who gave a stricken [man] his bed and slept on the floor at his side, is more likely to be ours. For Peter Claver never saw anything with his bodily eyes except the exhausted ...; he had only faith in Christ's own words that these people were Christ. And when on one occasion [those] he had induced to help him ran from the room, panic-stricken before the disgusting sight of some sickness, he was astonished. "You mustn't go," he said, and you can still hear his surprise that anyone could forget such a truth: "You mustn't leave him – it is Christ." ...

To see how far one realizes this, it is a good thing to ask honestly what you would do, or have done, when a beggar asked at your house for food. Would you – or did you – give it on an old cracked plate, thinking that was good enough? Do you think that Martha and Mary thought that the old and chipped dish was good enough for their guest? ...

For a total Christian, the goad of duty is not needed – always prodding one to perform this or that good deed. It is not a duty to help Christ, it is a privilege. ...

– Thomas Cahill, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*

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*



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service *PROJECT* ideas

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- **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....

What is important, what I consider success, is that we make a contribution to our world. Ben Carson



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- **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 from 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*

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?*

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



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- **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.

[illegible]



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- **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.

[illegible]

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

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. ...

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

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



SERVING

service *PROJECT* ideas

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- **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. Also check out www.data.org.



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- **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 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.

[illegible]

Reflections on *Disciplines of the Compassionate Life*

Anyone who sets himself up as “religious” by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this:
Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.

– James 1:26, 27, *(The Message)*

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

- **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....



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