

2022 Community Groups

WEEKLY GUIDE

May 1 - Community Guide

As we continue in the sermon series, Five Good Fights, we focus this week on fighting for compassion. Fighting for the right things may be one of the best things you can do for yourself and for your relationships.

Community Prayer:

Lord, You have shown us what compassion looks like through the life and teachings of Jesus. Give us hearts that are filled with compassion as we interact with the people you have placed in our lives so that we might be quick to listen and slow to speak. May we bring your hope to those in pain all around us. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen

Opening Thoughts:

Last week we focused on forgiveness. This is a fight we never want to give up, because we have all been forgiven for so much. As we let God's grace continue to soak and saturate us, our hearts begin to soften which allows us to not only accept God's gift of forgiveness, but also to extend that grace to others.

1. Share about a time in this past week when you needed to forgive someone else or yourself.
2. Which do you find most challenging, forgiving others or forgiving yourself? Why do you think that might be?

Exploration:

This week we focus on the fight to be compassionate. It is easy to become calloused and overly cautious with people because relationships can be difficult. We often build up walls to protect ourselves from pain and hurt but when we do this we miss out on so much of life. If we are going to truly thrive together it will be as we grow and live into the compassion God lavishly offers us. Just like we learned about forgiveness last week, compassion is not just something we receive, but also something we can offer to those around us.

The concept of offering compassion and showing empathy are closely related. Both require us to slow down and listen well, paying close attention to what the other person is feeling, even when it makes us uncomfortable. According to researcher Brené Brown, Empathy is connecting with people so we know we're not alone when we're in struggle. Empathy is a way to connect to the emotion another person is experiencing; it doesn't require that we have experienced the same situation they are going through.



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“When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who instead of giving much advice, solutions or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of great grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not-knowing, not-curing, not-healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares.” ~Henri Nouwen

3. Have you ever had an experience where you were hurting deeply and were desperate for someone to recognize your pain and be willing to ask, “how are you doing? REALLY, How are you doing?”

We can see the compassion Jesus had throughout his ministry. Here are just a few notable examples:

Read each passage as a group and take time to talk about how Jesus showed compassion

- **Matthew 9:36**
- **Matthew 14:13-21**
- **Matthew 15:32-38**
- **Matthew 18:23-35**
- **Matthew 20:29-34**

4. Which of these stories of compassion touches you the most? Why? Share about a time when you showed compassion to someone who may or may not have deserved it by human standards.
5. Do you find your “radar is up” for others who might be hurting? Are you the one who leans or leans out? How does this week’s message change your thinking?

One of the best ways we can offer compassion is to listen to each other, really listen so that we can understand and then to pray for one another. We don’t need to give advice, fix or correct anything in that moment, we simply need to hear and to pray.



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Matthew 11: 28-30 Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

For many of us, this has been a difficult season. There are hurts and pains that we sometimes try to ignore, and we put on a "happy face" to give the impression that we are "fine". But the truth is that we all need support, care and encouragement. Providing a safe place for people to share deeply about their real-life struggles is part of what followers of Jesus do, but it can be scary and it requires a great deal of trust.

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

We want to encourage you to take some time as a group to talk about what is **REALLY** going on in your life right now. For this to be a safe place, there needs to be an agreement among you that whatever is shared will be held privately within the group. It is also important to remember that this is not a time for giving advice or comparing experiences, it is simply a time to share, listen deeply and support each other in prayer.

The Takeaway:

- Life is difficult and we are not meant to do this alone.
- We need each other.
- There are too many hurts in the world! There is more than enough grief to go around!
- But there is more compassion than we can imagine, available in Christ, poured out by His Spirit.

