

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday September 6, 2020. "Relationships: Being Better at Being Together- Compassion."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to watch the live stream service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're still gathering in person. A small but dedicated group who follow all the guidelines and were so encouraging with your love and presence gathered with us. If you're still joining us online we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Sunday.

Sunday we began a new series on relationships; ***"Being better at being together"***. This will be such an important and relevant series for this time. First, there has been no moment in recent history in which taking care of the relationships in our lives has ever been more important. The tension, unrest, division, and more, has not only been tearing our country apart, but it also has been destroying families and friendships. It's never been more difficult to navigate the difficulties and complexities of relationships than it is now. Second, we as followers of Jesus have a model, and some powerful teachings, that if we put them into practice, can help us balance that nearly impossible tension of speaking truth into relationships without destroying them.

So, let's just have a conversation about relationships in general.

What makes relationships challenging for you?

Are there certain types of people you find it more difficult to get along with?

What do you think is your greatest strength in relationships?

Where have you found you may need some work in being better in relationships?

The scripture Sunday was short, but loaded with some unbelievably practical nuggets of wisdom. The passage used was Matthew **9:35-36**. Read this passage, we'll answer a few questions, and then jump into the meat of it. Also, the specific relationship topic we're talking about is compassion. So we'll ask a few questions about the passage, then we'll dive into a practical understanding of compassion. And how we can grow our ability to practice this important relationship skill.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What elements from this passage do you believe helped Jesus to feel compassion?

How would you define compassion?

Being truly compassionate is difficult. Where do you struggle in showing compassion?

So, there were some specific things found in this story about Jesus from Matthew 9 that helped him experience true compassion towards others.

1. He entered their world.

The passage said; *“He traveled through all the towns and villages”*. This is physically entering their world, and experiencing their life as if they were that person. Growing the ability to actually put yourself in someone else’s place asking; *“What would I be like, believe, how would I see things and the world, if I had lived the life they’ve lived?”* This is the foundational understanding of incarnation.

John 1:14. (MSG).

“The world became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood”.

True caring means fully entering the world of someone different than you, both physically and emotionally, in order to understand what it is actually like to BE them.

What does it look like to enter into the world of someone else?

2. Discovered what their needs were.

The scripture said; *“He healed every kind of disease and illness”*. We see in previous stories, different needs and types of people Jesus ran into. A man who was paralyzed, Jesus calls a tax collector to follow him, the disciples of John the Baptist question Jesus about fasting, Jesus raises from the dead, someone who’s daughter had died, healed a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years, and a man who had been born blind. Jesus encounters all sorts of different needs and situations.

What do we take from this?

Compassion isn’t you trying to force what you think another person needs onto them. True compassion is, after stepping into their world, experiencing life as they do, then understanding what THEY need. This is actually pulling alongside a person to see what’s really going on in their life.

3. Jesus framed their situation in the most compassionate, least judgmental way possible.

This is so radical. The passage says; *“The people were confused and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd”*. Which is an actual quote from **1 Kings 22:17**. Jesus showed us the most compassionate way to speak real truth, identify people’s situations, how badly their lives were going, and how extended grace, compassion, even in that. This is full on, **“truth and grace”**. *“Yes...they’re in a bad place. We all can see the choices they’ve made to get where they are. But they’re in a bad place because they’ve had no one to guide them, show them the good/better places, and so their lives are a sign of people who are helpless and therefore hopeless”*.

They didn’t choose poorly because they wanted to end up where they did. **They chose poorly because there was no one in their life to help them choose more wisely**. And we can either sit at a distance and judge what we do really well, or we give grace to why someone is caught up in a certain thing. Growing the ability to give grace will strengthen all of the relationships in your life.

4. This led to him having compassion “ON” them.

The Message describes compassion in these terms; “*and it broke his heart*”. His heart wasn’t broken because of their actions, but because they were trying to live the best they knew how out of being lost. True compassion is more than feeling bad for someone. There is action, movement, stirred by your ability to feel true compassion.

And how do you practice compassion “ON” someone?

You ‘understand in love’. True “*compassion on*”, “*have your heart broken*”, is to **suffer together**. I’m not a third person observer looking at your life...judging from a distance. I am literally feeling what it’s like to be you...in all that you’re dealing with. I am so moved by your struggle, even if you probably had something to do with it, I hurt WITH, not just FOR, you. This practice leads to true compassion.

III Challenge.

That’s a lot of information, but we hope it gave you some specifics that you can use in all the relationships in your life. Both the close and intimate relationships you have with family and friends, and also those people who you come into contact with on a regular basis. Two other truths before some closing questions.

One, we know most of our relationships are constantly dealing with this non-verbal negotiation of expectations everyone carries around. These are how we think relationships should go based on previous relationships. We are for the most part, unaware of these carried expectations. And the key to making all of the relationships of our life better is to bring these unspoken, and often unaware expectations, out into the open.

Two, when relationships get tough there are usually two automatic reactions on our part. One is to escape or slide into hobbies, distractions, work, the kids, and unfortunately unhealthy habits or other relationships. The other reaction is to slide into being controlling, and run over the other people in our lives trying to micromanage every little detail of everybody’s lives. Either one can do great harm in relationships, and it’s good for you to know which one you tend to lean towards.

So, some final questions on this first Sunday about compassion.

Of the three steps mentioned above, which lead to “having compassion on” or as The Message describes, “*having your heart broken*”, which of the steps is more difficult for you?

Thinking about this understanding of ‘expectations’, of specific things we’re looking for in our relationships, have you noticed any expectations you have you bring into relationships? And of course these will be both healthy and unhealthy ones, so think about each of those.

Lastly, in the response to difficult situations in relationships do you tend to drift towards escape, not wanting to deal with the difficulties, or control, taking over in relationships?

This was a lot of content, but hopefully it gave you a start on how to grow real compassion in your relationships. Next week we’re going to talk about that ever important issue...communication.