

GOD

The 30 Essentials is designed for a small group study. The essential studied should coincide with the sermon. You may divide the study in four weekly studies, bi-weekly or monthly. This study includes a video which should be used to complete the video segment section.

Each session should start with a review of the Pastor's sermon. Discuss the main points, the take away, and scripture references. Then continue with the study below.

MASTER KEYS

Key Question: What about the poor and injustice?

Key Idea: I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to people in need.

Key Verse: Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy: deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

VIDEO SEGMENT QUESTIONS

As you watch the video segment for this session, use the following outline to answer some of the main points.

1. Key Question: What about the poor and _____?
2. Key Idea: I believe God calls all Christians to show _____ to those in need.
3. Key Verse: The weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. _____ the weak and the needy; _____ them from the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:3-4)
4. "Religion that God our Father _____ as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress." (James 1:27)
5. The right question is not "Who is my neighbor?" but "Who _____ to be a neighbor?"
6. Key Application: I will do unto others, as I would have _____ do unto me.
7. Key Application: People do not _____ how much I know, until they know how much I care.
8. When people cry out, "Where is God when it comes to the poor and injustice on the earth? The answer should be, "Look at God's people. They are right in the _____ of it.

EVALUATE

As a group, discuss your thoughts and feelings about the following declarations. Which statements are easy to declare with certainty? Which are more challenging and why? Use a scale of 1-6 to rate how strongly you believe the statements below. (1 = no belief at all, 6 = complete confidence)

_____ I believe that God calls me to be involved in the lives of the poor and suffering.

_____ I believe I am responsible before God to show compassion to the sick and imprisoned.

_____ I believe that I should stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

_____ I believe that Christians should not purchase everything they can afford, so that their discretionary money might be available to help those in need.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In what ways have you experienced compassion from a family member, friend, or stranger?

2. What is the difference between trying to “fix” poverty and injustice and “suffering with someone who is experiencing it?”

3. In addition to a financial gesture, what other compassionate ways are there to comfort someone in need?

4. In what ways can debt and financial stress hinder compassionate generosity? What would it look like to strategically budget, so that an individual is equipped to act generously in times of need and injustice?

BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

All human beings are valuable to God, and he calls us to see people as he sees them. Compassion goes a step further by compelling us to feel their pain. Compassion literally means “suffer with.” God calls us to come alongside people who are suffering.

1. GOD: Full of Justice and Compassion. Read Nehemiah 1-38 Record and discuss some of the ways God showed compassion and justice to the Israelites.

2. Israel: Called to Compassion. Compassion was an important aspect of the testimony of the people of Israel to the world. When God set up the foundational laws for his people, he revealed through Moses specific guidelines for helping the poor and those in need. *Read Deuteronomy 24:10-15, 17-22.* Discuss some of the principles behind the laws Moses gave to govern how the Israelites were to treat others.

3. Jesus: Model of Compassion Throughout his teaching ministry, Jesus frequently and masterfully instructed his followers to show compassion to people in need as the ultimate fulfillment of the Law of Moses. Read Matthew 25:31-46. In your own words, describe how the love for God and the love for others are related.

4. Believers: The Ongoing Call to Compassion The same challenge given to the people of Israel to live a life of compassion was also issued to the newly formed Christian Church after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Read James 1:19-2:13. What are the attitudes that James advocates? How can you adopt those same attitudes?

TAKE ACTION

Memorizing scripture is a valuable discipline for all believers to exercise. Spend a few minutes each day committing the Key verse to memory.

Recite the key idea out loud. As you do, ask yourself, “Does my life reflect this statement? Key Idea: I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need. Answer the following questions to help apply this week’s key idea to your own life.

1.What behaviors help you recognize someone who believes he or she is called by God to show compassion to those in need?

2.What, if anything, hinders you from showing compassion to those in need?

3.What is something you can do this week to demonstrate this belief?

4.Pick a specific situation (i.e. widow, orphan, refugee, homeless person addict) and discuss what it would look like to “suffer with” the individual in need.

5. List some reasons why so many people choose to ignore the needy and oppressed. Then discuss what it would take to break free from the status quo and be a defender of the weak and oppressed.

CASE STUDY

Use the following case study as a model for a real-life situation where you might put this week's key idea into practice.

Cassandra has worked hard to get where she is in life. She grew up in a big family with a meager income but has found a way to be successful despite her modest beginnings. You have been working out together for two years. Before you leave the gym, you always end your time in prayer together. A few days ago, she told you about her brother who has fallen on hard times. She had been avoiding his calls because she doesn't know what to say or how to "fix" his financial problems.

Using the Key applications from this session, what practical advice would you give Cassandra? (If needed, refer to your video notes for a reminder of this session's Key Applications.)

WHAT WE BELIEVE

What about the poor and injustice? We begin by taking our cue from God himself. He showed the ultimate compassion toward humanity by sending Jesus as a sacrifice for sin when we did not deserve it. Throughout Israel's history, time and time again, God showed amazing compassion to rescue his people and provide for their needs. When we look back on our lives, we will see the same pattern.

Israel was given laws to govern them regarding how to show compassion to each other and to strangers. The story of Ruth provides a beautiful example of the spirit of these laws lived out. And Jesus, the ultimate example of one who suffered for our sake, calls believers to a life of compassion, not because the law demands it but because God's love in us compels us. Living such a life begins when we embrace the belief in our heads and our hearts that God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

DEVOTIONAL

Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. PSALM 82 3-4

Freddy was a classmate of mine in junior high school. He had a condition referred to (at the time) as “water on the brain.” The excess fluid around his skull created an over-sized and awkward head for Freddy. Junior high school is an awful place to be different. Immature people create the worst possible names for our apparent weaknesses. Freddy was called Watermelon Head.

One day between classes in a hallway filled with people, a group of boys started on Freddy. They called him names and showed him around. This was the same year I became a Christian. Something was stirring in me, something that wasn't there before—or perhaps I should say someone.

I felt compelled to go and stand between Freddy and the bullies. But in the end, I did nothing. Forty years later I still think about this incident. As a new, immature Christian, I failed Freddy, and he took the abuse with no advocate. I am so sorry Freddy. With God's forgiveness granted, I wake up each day praying for the courage to 'defend,' to 'uphold the cause,' and 'rescue' the Freddy's God puts in my life

PRAYER JOURNAL: You have been pointed to the truths of what it means to think, be and act like Jesus as it relates to Compassion, but it's prayer that will empower you to become all that you were created to be. Whatever you would say or think in a conversation with the Lord at this time write it here.

Injustice/compassion/Defend, Rescue, deliver/accepts/proved/my/them/care/
middle