

4. Jesus Showed Compassion for People

As we develop leaders who are becoming like their Savior, one of the key areas we want to see develop in their lives is compassion. In Matthew 9:36, we read, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” In this verse, we see that Christ saw the people as helpless and hopeless. Christ was greatly moved within Himself as He saw the spiritual condition of people. As He saw the spiritual condition of the people, Jesus recognized that they were weary and scattered. This speaks of the desperate spiritual need of people who have not placed their faith in Jesus. In fact, Christ was so moved, He asked the disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

This compassion is seen so well in Luke 19:41, where we read: “Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it.” Jesus was riding into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey, on the Sunday we call Palm Sunday, just a few days before His crucifixion. Christ again saw the desperate spiritual need of the people. As He saw their desperate spiritual need, Jesus had such sorrow that He cried over the city. As we help developing leaders become like their Savior, we want to see this kind of compassion develop in their lives as they see the spiritual needs of the people around them.

In Mark 6, Christ sent the twelve out in teams of two to share the Gospel. Then, in Mark 6:30, the disciples returned and gave a report of what they had done and taught. Mark 6:30-34 tells us, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.”

In these verses, we see several key principles about the way Jesus developed compassion in the lives of the twelve. First, He had sent them out to share the Gospel. They had shared the Gospel with people in many different towns and villages. As the twelve returned, they reported to Christ the things they had done and the things that they had taught. One of the things we notice is that the disciples focused on what they had done and taught rather than focusing on the spiritual needs of the people they had ministered to.

This is normal in developing leaders. At first, they are more focused on what they are doing than they are on the people Jesus sends them to minister to. However, it creates a problem if these developing leaders do not continue to mature and develop compassion for people. Leaders who focus on what they say and do will eventually make programs, instead of people, the center of their focus. Jesus wanted the disciples to mature and develop compassion for people so that their ministry became people-centered rather than program-centered. Jesus knew the only way to teach

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compassion to the disciples was by example.

In Matthew 9, before Christ sent the disciples out two-by-two, Jesus was moved with compassion, because the people were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd. In that passage, Christ demonstrated the first lesson in how we show people, by our example, how to develop compassion. He revealed His compassion for the people and asked the disciples to pray that the Lord would send forth laborers into His harvest. People will never develop compassion until they really begin to pray for the spiritual needs of others.

Christ demonstrated the second lesson in how we show people how to develop compassion, through our example, by letting the disciples become the answer to their own prayer, as Jesus sent them out to share the Gospel. They did exactly what Christ had sent them to do, but they were focused on what they said and did rather than focusing on the people they were sent to. That is why Christ now takes them aside into a deserted place, so that He can demonstrate compassion again. Of course, Jesus knew that the place would not be deserted by the time they got to the place.

The disciples were looking forward to a time of rest. Instead, a crowd of five thousand people, who had great spiritual needs, met them as they arrived. This gave Jesus an opportunity to demonstrate compassion for a third time. We see that Christ was again moved with compassion as He saw this crowd, because He saw them as sheep not having a shepherd. The fact that both Matthew and Mark record the statement that Jesus saw people as sheep not having a shepherd means that Christ took time at different points in His ministry to describe how He saw people. Jesus told the disciples what He felt and urged them to have that same kind of compassion.

Fourth, Jesus showed the disciples how to respond, in compassion, to the spiritual needs of people. Mark 6:34 says that, “He began to teach them many things.” Christ and the disciples had come to this area to rest. Instead of resting, Christ ended up spending His time teaching the people many things. Christ demonstrated that the way to meet the spiritual needs of the people was to change His plans and teach the people while they were open to having their spiritual needs met.

Fifth, Jesus also used this occasion as an opportunity to show the disciples the need for compassion for the physical needs of the people. Mark 6:35-37a says, “When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and already the hour *is* late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’” Here, Christ was showing them that compassion will cause us to be concerned about the physical needs of people, as well as their spiritual needs.

Christ demonstrated this same compassion for the physical needs of people when He said to the disciples, in Matthew 15:32, “Now Jesus called His disciples to *Himself* and said, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.’” Christ had been meeting their spiritual needs for three days, and now, the people had no food to eat. This time, He told the disciples about His compassion for the physical needs of the people. The result

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was that the disciples joined Him in feeding a crowd that numbered four thousand this time.

Christ also showed compassion by touching people. In Mark 1, a man came to Jesus with leprosy. Mark 1:41-42 tell us, “Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.” Most people avoided lepers so they would not catch their disease. Because Jesus was moved with compassion, He touched this man and healed Him. Many people, who are weary and downcast with their spiritual needs, also need the touch of Jesus in their lives. Jesus has called us to follow His example by ministering to those spiritual needs.

Jesus also showed compassion to a woman whose son had died. Luke 7:12-14 says, “And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried *him* stood still. And He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’” In this case, Jesus showed His compassion to the widow by raising her son from the dead. By His example, Christ showed us the need to minister with compassion to those who are grieving.

Christ also told the parable of the Good Samaritan to show the need for compassion. Luke 10:33-34 says, “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” Christ later taught the importance of compassion in the parable about the lost son. Christ spoke about the father, in Luke 15:20, and said, “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”

Christ provided an example and taught the importance of compassion in many ways. In the same way, we need to show developing leaders how to follow the example of Christ and have compassion for others, whether their needs are spiritual, physical, or emotional. May the Lord richly bless you as you help growing Christians develop compassion for others.