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**Leader's Bible
Study
Guides
Week 1 &
Week 2**

16:8 Compassion Bible Study – God is Compassionate

Question: Why do you think God mentions that He does not leave the guilty unpunished?

The answer is in the text. It says “yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished” - in other words, he has emphasized how gracious and compassionate He is so much that you might get the mistaken impression that God even forgives those who do not want forgiveness.

This week, we’re going to look at how God experiences compassion for us and for others, and how we ought to experience compassion in response to that.

God Has Compassion For Our Spiritual Suffering

In the passage from Exodus, it is clear that one of God’s primary concerns is for our spiritual well-being. His compassion is partly about forgiveness for our sin.

Observe how David prays in Psalm 51:1-2

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great **compassion** blot out my transgressions.² Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Question: have you ever experienced spiritual compassion from God? What was that like?

God Has Compassion For Our Physical Suffering

It would be wrong to assume that God’s compassion is only directed towards our spiritual plight. We are complex beings, people with both bodies and spirits. God cares about both your body and your spirit.

Let’s look at some verses about that.

In Exodus 22:26-27, God warns those who might be tempted to take advantage of their

countrymen.

26 If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, 27 because that cloak is the only covering your neighbor has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am **compassionate**.

In other words, God’s compassion moves Him to hear the prayers of those who are in physical misery. And Hosea reminds us that God cares for those who are in rough situations

Hosea 12:3d - “in you the fatherless find **compassion**”

And notice that hunger is one of the specific things that elicit God’s compassion:

Matthew 15:32

Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.”

Question: what physical situations do you think elicit God’s compassion right now?

Examples: hunger, abuse, slavery, torture, etc.

There’s this quote that floats around the Internet. I’m not sure who said it first, but here’s one version of it:

“Sometimes I would like to ask God why He allows poverty, famine and injustice in the world when He could do something about it... but I’m afraid He might ask me the same question.”

16:8 Compassion Bible Study: The Offering

Last week we began by looking at Proverbs **16:8** which says “better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.” So in the past **168** hours, our goal was to raise enough money to feed **168** children in Nicaragua.

This week we’re going to continue looking at the issue of compassion and generosity in the Bible. Last week we focused on the character of God and how that is the foundation for our compassion. This week we’re going to focus on a story hidden in plain sight in the New Testament.

Remember how Paul got arrested in Acts because people thought he had brought a Gentile into the temple? Did you ever wonder what he was doing in Jerusalem in the first place? He was warned that trouble was waiting for them there. Well, when he made his defense before Governor Felix, he tells us:

After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. (Acts 24:17)

What drove Paul to Jerusalem was compassion. These gifts for the poor that Paul speaks of are the result of an offering similar to the one we are taking in our Chi Alpha ministry. We know from another passage that the reason Paul kept raising money for Jerusalem was to alleviate hunger.

Read Acts 11:27-30

-This is not the main offering that we’re studying tonight – but it is, as far as we know, the first time that Paul was engaged in compassion ministry to Jerusalem. There was a famine and people were hungry, so the churches rallied to bless the poor in Jerusalem.

-Paul’s experience in Jerusalem apparently gripped his heart, because a significant part of the rest of his ministry involved raising additional money for his “brothers living in Judea” and he was committed to it that he was willing to be imprisoned and face death rather than back off on his commitment to the poor.

So the guidelines that Paul lays out are extremely relevant to us tonight. Paul mentions this offering three times in his letters. In 1st Corinthians 16:1-4, in 2nd Corinthians 8:1-9:15 and in Romans 15:25-32. We’re going to look at each in turn.

Read 1st Corinthians 16:1-4

-Question: This first passage is quite short. What principles stand out to you from the text?

-Possible follow-up: why do you think so much of the passage is devoted to the logistics of giving?

The next passage is quite a bit longer. We’re going to study it in chunks.

Read 2nd Corinthians 8:1-5

-So Paul begins by describing what the churches in Macedonia are doing.

-Question: what does it mean to give beyond your ability (vs 3)?

-Question: Paul says the church in Macedonia suffered from extreme poverty. They should have been the recipients of charity. Why do you think they gave?

-Question: Do you sometimes think that because you’re just a college student you shouldn’t give in offerings?

16:8 Compassion Bible Study: The Offering

Read 2nd Corinthians 9:12-15

Question: Paul says generous giving leads to worship. How do you think that happens?

The final reference to this offering is in Romans.

Read Romans 15:25-32

-Paul says: "Indeed they owe it to them"? What happened to "give freely and not under compulsion"? Is there a contradiction here?

-If the group gets stuck, help them out. No. There is not a contradiction. Giving is simultaneously an obligation and an opportunity. It is something we must do and something we are free to do. There is no tension between these perspectives. Good parents are obligated to provide for their children and love to provide for their children. It's about relationship. Also, notice that Paul isn't commanding the Romans to give. There would be a contradiction if Paul said to the Corinthians "don't give under compulsion" and then Paul told the Romans "I compel you to give." His message is simple: "you ought to give but I won't make you do it."

-Tonight, no one can make us give. That's called a tax. And while you should pay taxes, it's not an act of virtue to do it. Tonight we have a chance to participate in something Paul called "fellowship", "service", "grace" and "blessing." We give not because we must but because we can.

Does anyone else have any questions?

Now let's receive the offering.