

Icebreaker

What is the best thing that happened to you this week?

Please read James 1:17-27 and discuss:

1. In what ways have you experienced compassion from a family member, friend, your church, or even a stranger?
2. James 1:19 says “be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger...” If you were to put a mental stopwatch on your conversations, would you find that you talk more or listen more? How can listening well help us to be compassionate and slow to anger?
3. The mirror imagery in James 1:23-24 reminds us that some look in a mirror and “immediately forget what they were like.” When was a time when you forgot what you were like (you forgot you were a child of God)? What do you do to remember that your identity is in Christ?
4. List some reasons why people choose to ignore the plight of the needy, poor, or oppressed?
5. The definition of compassion is “to suffer with,” what does that mean to you? What could that look like in your life?
6. What motivates you to be compassionate?
7. What is one act of compassion you will engage in this week?

Prayer

As you close in prayer, remember requests from our church family:

> Prayers of healing for Fred Nay.

Reminders for your group:

- > It's IHN time! We will be hosting families May 28-June 4. Sign up to help at zpc.org.
- > Please consider gathering your group to do some work at Str8up Camp. They need groups of 5 or so to do light construction and maintenance. Greg Strand [greg.strand@gmail.com].

Leader's Notes:

One definition of compassion is “to suffer with.” As Christ followers we are called to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. Job needed friends who would suffer with him, not to tell him what he was doing wrong. Compassion can also mean thinking of ways to address the problems of the poor, needy, oppressed, and widows and orphans. In New Testament times, widows and orphans were marginalized. A woman without a husband had no standing to speak up for herself or her children, and no real way of making a living. Even today, we can suffer with those who suffer or who live on the margins of society. We can find ways as Christ followers to be more aware of and to come alongside those who are needy, oppressed, poor, or without mothers or fathers. May God give us the strength and courage to be compassionate.

[Question 1] Help your group to think of ways they have experienced compassion...a time when you have been helped in time of need or when someone has suffered with you in time of need or tragedy, that remembrance can spur you to be compassionate for others with God's help.

[Question 2] We have two ears to hear and one mouth to speak. The stopwatch thought can be a good way to think about how much we listen. Listening can be active. We can lean in to the person who is speaking, make eye contact, not think about what we are going to say next, and try our best to empathize with them. When someone is expressing need, we can even pray silently for them as we are listening, that the Holy Spirit will guide us to have compassion in the ways we might respond.

[Question 3] Looking in a mirror is a way to see what we look like. James uses it as a metaphor to remember who we are. We are children of God, made in his image. As followers of Christ, our identity is in Christ, saved by his grace to do good works prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). So when was a time when you forgot you were a child of God and behaved in another way? There may be spiritual practices you can do such as prayer, meditation, fellowship, and studying the Bible which can help you remember who you are in Christ.

[Question 4] Some reasons might be that the plight of the poor is overwhelming or that we don't know if we can make a difference. We might think if we give people money (the person with the sign on the street corner), that they'll use it for the wrong things. We might feel stressed with debt or paying our own bills like our mortgage, rent, school or college expenses. How can we overcome these obstacles to find ways to give of time, talent, treasure?

[Question 5] “To suffer with” means to have the heart of God to be with someone in their time of need. When a loved one has died, you can't say the right words to make it better. But you can be present with someone to suffer with them as they hurt. You can find small ways to show you care for them in their time of need. “Suffering with” can mean being present, praying, and offering tangible help.

[Question 6] Some motivations to be compassionate: God calls us to live this way, gratitude for what God has done for you, having the mind and eyes of Christ to see someone in need, and to begin to know what you might be or do to offer support and help – to be with them in their suffering.

[Question 7] We know of families who have recently lost elderly parents. We will reach out to them. Who is suffering around you – or who has recently been hurting? Can you offer a phone call, go out for coffee or lunch, send a text or email of encouragement, or offer tangible physical help to someone who is poor, hurting or sick?