

Loving our  
Neighbors as  
ourselves...  
  
with the  
**passion** and  
**compassion**  
of Jesus

# passionate & compassionate

## opening prayer

To open the group time, we invite you to spend at least five minutes in prayer. Start by reading the passage of scripture below. Then move on to pray the themes presented in the verses. Prayer suggestions are provided to guide you.

*2 Corinthians 5:18-20*

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

Other translations state this scripture these ways:

*But all things are from God, Who through Jesus Christ reconciled us to Himself [received us into favor, brought us into harmony with Himself] and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation [that by word and deed we might aim to bring others into harmony with Him]. (verse 18, The Amplified Bible)*

*So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" (verse 20, New Living Translation)*

### Prayer Suggestions:

1. Thank God for reconciling us to Himself.
2. Offer ourselves to be Jesus Christ's ambassadors.
3. Ask God to fill us with His passion and compassion for the people we encounter.

## journey warm up

### The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep

**Jesus is passionate to save the lost ones.**

*(For this story, you might have everyone close their eyes and imagine this story as one of your more animated group members reads this aloud. Adapted from Luke 15:1-7.)*

It's a beautiful sunny day with fresh blue skies and just a hint of some storm clouds on the horizon. You are watching over the sheep in your care. You have known each one since it was born. Your heart was pained as you notched your mark into their ears when they were little, but you needed to be able to know your sheep from a far way off—and everyone else needed to know that these little ones were yours alone. These sheep have been on your mind and on your heart throughout their entire lives.

Then, as you count them—as you are in the constant habit of doing—your heart jumps within you. One is missing. There are only 99 of your 100 sheep. You know the one that is missing—you can picture the lost sheep in your mind. You have watched over her for many seasons. You know all of her ways and she is precious to you. You go, leaving all the other sheep in open country, and you search **until you find her**. You look because you are the shepherd. You look because of your character—you do not lose sheep. You look because the sheep is of great value to you.

You look in the common places—by the water, in the brush—and you look in the not-so-common places—climbing into rocky crevices and peering into tiny caves.

At last, you find her! After all that seeking, you joyfully put the sheep on your shoulders and carry her home with you. Even though you are exhausted and you are now bearing the weight of the wayward sheep on your shoulders, your step is lively because your heart is light. When you return, you call your family, friends, and neighbors together to celebrate heartily, and rejoice with you because you have found the lost sheep.

***Have you ever lost someone? What did you go through to find them? What would you have been willing to do to find them?***

Jesus is passionately pursuing so many of the people we encounter every day. He is willing to do all it takes, as He showed when He died on the cross, to make a way for each member of His flock to be with Him.

## snapshots

Share highlights from your **Snapshots Portfolio**—the reflections and short stories from the Scenic Overlooks and Side Trips you did since the last time we met.

In Luke 15:7, Jesus finishes this passage about the lost sheep with these words: “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Jesus is passionate about His sheep. He is passionate that they be found, that they repent, that they are saved, and that they are with Him. He rejoices when they turn to Him, when they are found.

### **Jesus is passionate not to condemn, but to save the world.**

Please read **John 3:16-17** and listen for God’s passion for the lost ones.

*What does this passage say about why God sent His Son into the world?*

Please read **John 8:2-11** and pay attention to how Jesus treats the woman in this passage.

*What does Jesus say to the woman after everyone leaves?*

A woman is caught in adultery and brought to Jesus. This is an obvious case of sin and God’s righteous law being broken. As a holy teacher and the Son of God, Jesus had the authority to condemn the woman—and yet He does not condemn her. Instead, He tells her, “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Jesus’ response to the adulterous woman points to His role as a minister of reconciliation: “. . . God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:19-20)

God is passionate to see people reconciled to Himself through Jesus Christ, and He is making His appeal through us. We hear the passion of God expressed through Paul’s heart and words here: “we implore you.” The NASB translates these words as “we beg you.”

*Do we have this passion to see people reconciled to God?*

*Will we become Christ’s ambassadors by following in His footsteps, His example?*

### **Let’s look at how we can follow in Jesus’ footsteps.**

Please read **Luke 19:1-10**.

Let’s identify what Jesus did in this passage and the ways we can follow His example to join people in their spiritual journeys.

## **+** following in Jesus’ footsteps

### **Noticing People / Going Out**

Jesus led a highly accessible lifestyle.

*Where was Jesus when He saw Zacchaeus?*

*What could have kept Jesus from noticing Zacchaeus?*

Jesus spent a lot of His time out in the marketplace, in the countryside. Here we see that He was in contact with people such as Zacchaeus. If we are going to travel with others on their spiritual journeys, we’ll need to go out and notice people, too.

## **▲▲** roadblock

**We do not always notice people.**

## **🌉** building bridges

**What does Jesus see when He looks at people?**

Please read **Matthew 9:35-36**.

## scenic overlook

Take a moment to ponder how God has forgiven you—and maybe confess what needs to be confessed. Thank Him for His forgiveness and cleansing.

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*1 John 1:8-9*

## scenic overlook

Take a moment to ponder where Jesus went to find you.

How did He look for you *until He found you*? Where did He have to go?

*Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?*

*Luke 15:4*

*What do you think Jesus saw when He looked at Zacchaeus?*

*Think about the activities of the last week. Where did you spend your time? What people did you encounter? Share some examples.*

## † following in Jesus' footsteps

### Beginning Relationships

*How did Jesus initiate relationship with Zacchaeus?*

Loving our Neighbor will sometimes require us to take the first step. Here we see Jesus initiating relationship with Zacchaeus. We are going to talk about connecting with people and beginning relationships more in the next lesson.

### Tax Collectors:

- Worked for the occupying Roman government to collect taxes
- Often collected more than what was required and kept it
- Despised
- Harsh
- Greedy
- Deceptive

*Torrey, R.A.  
The New Topical Text*

## † following in Jesus' footsteps

### Engaging Outsiders

*Why do you think people started muttering when Jesus decided to go to Zacchaeus' house?*

*In what ways was Zacchaeus an outsider?*

*Who do you think are the people who most feel like outsiders today when it comes to church and Christianity?*

*What did it cost Jesus to interact with Zacchaeus?*

*In light of this, why do you think Jesus was willing to go to Zacchaeus' house?*

## † following in Jesus' footsteps

### Loving our Neighbors and Offering Mercy

*How did Jesus show love to Zacchaeus? How did He offer mercy to him?*

Jesus loves His Neighbors. He is compassionate toward them and offers them mercy, without regard for His reputation.

Helpless and harassed people, like sheep without a shepherd, can often be hard to be around. Perhaps it will take the passion and compassion of Christ within our own hearts to overcome the roadblocks to loving our co-traveling Neighbors. Jesus' passion motivates us to look for and engage our Neighbors. His compassion provides the tender mercy to bear with and forgive others, though it is challenging and costs us time, effort, and sacrifice.

The word "compassion" is formed from two Latin words: *pati* meaning "to suffer" and *com* meaning "together" or "with." Compassion has within it a sense of suffering. It costs us to love people. It is not easy, but it is what the Lord has called us to do.

*Who do you need to show compassion to?*

As we conclude, let's reflect on what can happen when we:

- **B**egin Relationships
- **E**ngage Outsiders
- **L**ove our Neighbors
- **O**ffer Mercy
- **N**otice People
- **G**o Out

## Small Steps

*Brenda realized that her life had become safe. She decided to intentionally put herself near people who were hurting and in need of Jesus. She began to volunteer at a local non-profit organization and her life began to intersect with young women whose lives were crumbling because of their choices or the choices of others. This is her story:*

*As Brenda became friends with Cindy, she discovered that her family desperately needed a new roof but had no way to pay for one. She also discovered that Cindy's dad often struggled with drinking. When he drank, Cindy's parents ended up fighting—most often about the roof and the fact they couldn't afford a new one. Cindy's mom was considering divorce. Things were serious.*

*Brenda found herself in the middle of this situation—a family with a huge need. She didn't have the resources to pay for a new roof, so she looked for others who could help.*

*After some searching, she found an organization that would supply finances. When Cindy's parents went to apply for the money for the roof, they connected with a woman who invited them to church. It was in that church that they surrendered their lives to Jesus.*

*Through Brenda's perseverance, a couple of local organizations supplied the materials and labor and the roof was completed before winter. But that was just the beginning. Brenda did what she felt led to do, which was to help with the roof, but her concern went far beyond that. There were deeper needs, deeper hurts, and deeper longings. God worked through Brenda's simple friendship and her desire to help and He brought along other people to help her. Through Brenda's compassionate heart and her steps of faith, this family not only got a roof—they came to follow Jesus.*

In this example of Brenda and Cindy, how did Brenda:

- **B**egin Relationship with Cindy?
- **E**ngage Outsiders?
- **L**ove her Neighbors?
- **O**ffer Mercy?
- **N**otice People?
- **G**o Out?

In the following lessons we will see how we can engage with Neighbors by:

- Connecting with people.
- Listening to our Neighbors.
- Participating and serving together.
- Building authentic, two-way, enjoyable, and enduring friendships.

## side trips

Choose two and bring back stories to share next week during the Snapshots time at the beginning of the study. Decide now which ones you want to do, so that you do not forget to complete them and so that you can ask others to pray for you before you leave!

**1. Memorize** Matthew 9:36-39.

**2. Notice** how people you encounter are harassed, helpless, or like a sheep without a shepherd. Come back with examples to share.

**3. Ask** the Lord to send you to be a worker in His harvest field by following Jesus' example:

- **B**egin Relationships
- **E**ngage Outsiders
- **L**ove your Neighbors (and even like them!)
- **O**ffer Tender Mercy
- **N**otice People
- **G**o Out

**4.** Take time to read and ponder the *scenic overlooks* on your own.

**Wait! Before you finish the group for today!**

## refuel and directions

Pray for power and guidance—ask the Lord to help you be filled with both the passion and compassion of Christ, showing love and mercy to those He brings in your path. *(This can be done in the large group or in smaller groups of two to three people.)*

What *roadblocks* do you still have concerns about? Ask the group to pray for you.

**1. We do not always notice people.**

## snapshots portfolio

What have you done this week to:

- **B**egin Relationships?
- **E**ngage Outsiders?
- **L**ove your Neighbors?
- **O**ffer Mercy?
- **N**otice People?
- **G**o Out of your comfort zone?

What **Side Trips** did you choose and how did they go?

**Side Trip #1:**

**Side Trip #2:**

