

LIFE CHURCH SERMON SCRIPTURES FOR JANUARY 13, 2013

Today's teachers: Valerie and Al Copeland

Title: "Harvesting: A Labor of Love- Part I"

Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

IDEA: There are crowds of suffering people needing the care a compassionate shepherd. The Father has prepared them to be harvested (or brought in) but there are not enough workers.

PURPOSE: To help listeners to see themselves as laborers in the Father's harvest field by identifying the "crowds" in their lives and understanding that compassion is at the heart of ministry.

Compassion literally means "to suffer together." Among emotion researchers, it is defined as the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering.

Compassion is not the same as [empathy](#) or [altruism](#), though the concepts are related. While empathy refers more generally to our ability to take the perspective of and feel the emotions of another person, compassion is when those feelings and thoughts include the desire to help. Altruism, in turn, is the kind, selfless behavior often prompted by feelings of compassion, though one can feel compassion without acting on it, and altruism isn't always motivated by compassion.

Group Activity: Choose one or combine all, just have fun.

1. Compassion should motivate us to be concerned for those that are lost and hurting, those in need of hope and forgiveness. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees lacked compassion for the condition of the people. But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, had such intense compassion that he actually felt the suffering of others.

Sometimes we lack the compassion necessary to be motivated to see that those in the crowds immediately around us have their suffering relieved by knowing the love of Jesus. Pray for each other to have the compassion of Christ.

2. We need to seek the lost, that means putting ourselves in positions and places to encounter those who are lost and hurting, those in need of hope and forgiveness. How can you make yourself more visible or available for such encounters? Is there a routine you can change such as eating lunch at work in a different place or with different people?

3. Each of us has a "crowd," people that seem to be attracted to us. They may go out of their way to be around us. Have you taken notice of who they are? What needs have you observed them to have?

Understanding The Bible

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Here, for your convenience, are the Bible passages that we will be using in today's sermon at Life Church. We use the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible so that you can read it in modern English. You may have been accustomed to reading or hearing the King James Version of the Bible, which uses older English (with words like "thee" , "thou", "thine", "believeth", etc.). If so, don't be alarmed – the passages below are really from the Bible even though they are in modern English.

The Bible was originally written in three ancient languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. None of the people in the Bible, and none of the people who God used to write it spoke English. In fact, English did not even exist as a language when the Bible was written. The King James Version, first published in 1611, was a translation of the Bible from it's original languages into the every day English that people used back then – almost 400 years ago! They didn't just speak that way in church – they spoke that way with everyone. The King James Version was "modernized" in 1769, but, even so, English has certainly changed a lot since then! Since you probably don't speak Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, you're going to have to read the Bible in translated form. **At Life Church we believe that since you're going to read an English translation of the Bible you might as well use an up to date one – written in the English you speak every day. God wants you to understand his Word so that you can put it into practice!**

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