

Central Study Hour – Sabbath School Lesson Notes

“The Least of These”: Lesson 12, “To Love Mercy”

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read the title.

Read the Memory verse. Notice the last two words, “**with discretion.**”

*What’s the significance of being “**full of compassion,**” dealing “**graciously,**” and lending “**with discretion**”? Can charity become damaging or corrupting and ruin people? Do we need to avoid “toxic charity”?*

What’s toxic charity? An example would be feeding wild animals so that they become dependent and can’t survive on their own. Animals that become dependent on tourists’ handouts at our National Parks easily perish in the winter.

Can toxic charity ruin people, as well?

Share the paragraph about “toxic charity” from Teachers’ Comments, page 161, under Part III: Life Application (“Well-intentioned and merciful people....as well as to an individual”).

While charity programs are truly needed, have they sometimes created dependence and weakened people rather than helping them find a new beginning and self-sufficiency?

Government programs have often had this effect.

What about our church programs? Are they long term solutions or more like a band aid to just stop the bleeding?

What can we do as a church to offer long term solutions?

If our community service programs develop people rather than hand over food, money, or clothing, we will do greater good (Hand them a fish, help for a day; Teach them to fish, help for a life time).

*What kind of community services programs develop people? **Teaching people skills,** such as; reading, writing, cooking, finances, computers, gardening, and English as a 2nd language. These skills can help people to reduce costs at home and enable individuals to be more employable.*

Share the **Illustration** in the Teachers’ Comments, p. 160 (Adopt-A-Family to Pride for Parents).

Do we need more outside of the box thinking on how best to help people?

Share highlights from the narrative on the Sabbath Afternoon page.

SUNDAY: “Kingdom Priorities

The teachings of Jesus establish that “as members of the kingdom of God,” we choose to “live by a different set of values and priorities than does the world.”

Read Matt. 6:26-32. *What is the reassurance we are given in these verses? God knows that we need food, water, clothing and shelter, and He cares about us more than birds and flowers.*

Read Matt. 6:33-34. *How should this reassurance impact our priorities? We should trust God to take care of our basic needs and concentrate on walking with God in His ways. Don’t worry about all the cares of life.*

Food, clothing, and shelter are important, “but we must see them in the light of the kingdom of God.”

Share from the 2nd paragraph (“When we recognize the call....more on others”). Because God is meeting our needs, we let Him use us to meet the needs of others.

What about when government policies oppress people? Has that happened in U.S. history? Yes! One really unfortunate example is the Fugitive Slave Law in the 1850’s. This law required people in the free northern states to return escaped slaves to the slaveholders in the southern states.

What were Christians to do?

Romans 13:1-7 says we are to respect and obey governments as far as possible, but Peter wrote that there may be times when **“We must obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29).**

Read the last paragraph of the narrative (including 1T 201-202).

Here we see that EGW gave positive instructions not to obey the Fugitive Slave Law.

If Time: *What law of God was being obeyed by refusing to follow the Fugitive Slave Law?*

Exodus 20:13. “Thou shalt not kill.”

How does that fit? The positive side of not killing is to promote life and happiness; “To love your neighbor as yourself.”

Would forcing an escaped slave back into bondage be on the side of hatred or love?

John wrote that **“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15).**

Besides that, we have a direct command in **Luke 6:36** to **“Be ye therefore merciful even as your Father in heaven also is merciful.”**

MONDAY: “Compassion Fatigue”

How do we resist the possibility of letting our good intentions be overwhelmed by “all the trouble in the world”? How do we resist compassion fatigue?

1. **Compassion.** Maintain compassion by “recognizing and sympathizing with the pain of those who are hurting” so that it leads us to action.

What is compassion fatigue? Use this paragraph to get a definition.

Can people get tired of thinking about all the problems everywhere? Can we learn to just ignore most it?

Read the last sentence of this paragraph (“Jesus was keenly....”).

2. **Education.** Share highlights from this paragraph.

We must learn what really helps in the long run. *Does a lack of certainty that we are really helping people possibly add to compassion fatigue?*

3. **Prayer.** *What are two ways prayer helps?*

For the downtrodden person directly, and also prayer for the best way to help.

4. **Expectations.** Share the highlights of this paragraph.

Share the story of the boy saving starfish (Teachers’ Comments, p. 159 middle).

TUESDAY: “Generosity”

Read the opening paragraph of the narrative.

Read Lev. 25:35-37. *What do these verses teach about generosity? What is the key point not to do when helping and lending to a fellow believer? Do not charge usury. Usury is charging*

interest. Do not charge interest if you need to loan to someone in need.

Read 1 John 3:16-18. *What do these verses teach about generosity?* Let's not just talk about love, but put it into action for those in need.

Share highlights from the narrative. (For the last paragraph, the widow's mite is an example.)

Ask the question in the box at the bottom of the page. Giving time, helping with a project, working for a food pantry, sharing skills in doing something for someone that they cannot do for themselves, etc.

WEDNESDAY: "Peacemaking"

Cite Matt. 5:9. Ask the two questions following the verse. With wars and rumors of wars, we know that there is only so much that we can do for peace.

Is there some peace we can offer in some way to people?

Share highlights from the 1st paragraph. *What can we do?*

Read the first sentence of the 2nd paragraph ("At the heart...").

We can experience peace, but can we offer it?

Read Isaiah 52:7. *How can we live out this text too?*

For answer: Read the following paragraph ("The gospel of peace....with worldly strife.").

THURSDAY: "A Voice for the Voiceless"

Share highlights from the first paragraph.

Read Isaiah 58:6-7, 10-11a.

Ask the questions that follow the Isaiah reading. The call is clear, isn't it? "The Bible clearly reveals God's special interest in the poor and His expectations as to how His followers should respond to those who are unable to care for themselves."

Read the 3rd paragraph of the narrative ("The prophets call...").

"Seventh-day Adventist believe that actions to reduce poverty and its attendant injustices are an important part of Christian social responsibility."

"In working with the poor, we follow the example and teaching of Jesus" and the teachings throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Close the lesson:

Share or read Part II: Commentary from the Teachers' Comments on pages 158-159 (the first three paragraphs finishing with the Henry Drummond quotation about people caring more for religion than for humanity in contrast with Christ way of caring).

For a lesson entitled "To Love Mercy," there can be no better concluding quotation than *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 137. This is the first one on Friday's page.

Read MB 137 (from Friday's page).