

## ***He Felt Compassion for Them***

Matthew 9:35-38

**Introduction:** Over the next three to five years, we are trusting God to help us more effectively fulfill our mission as a church of making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20) here in Manhattan and around the world. We want to help more and more people come to faith in Christ and then experience God in all of life. Given this mission we believe that God has led us to pursue five strategic initiatives (see attachment). Today we begin our discussion of one of these strategic initiatives, which is called an “Active compassion for those without Christ.”

**Opening Question:** *Imagine that you are sitting in church five years from now; can you see yourself looking around the room and seeing someone else whom you’ve helped lead to Christ? Why?*

1. *What do you sense are some of your main barriers to being involved in helping others come to faith in Christ?*

Steve said:

We hope that you come to the conclusion that as a follower of Christ, you are uniquely qualified to be used by God in this process of drawing people to Himself. Not in isolation from others, but in conjunction with others. You have a role regardless of your gifting, your maturity, your temperament, or your stage of life. That’s because the foundational thing that a person needs to be used by God in helping others find their way back to Him is **compassion**. If there is one thing that should characterize every believer in Jesus Christ, it’s compassion.

2. *Why do you think compassion is a “foundational thing that a person needs to be used by God in helping others find their way back to Him”?*

**Read Matthew 9:35-38**

3. *Where does Jesus go and what does he do?*
4. *What did Jesus feel and why?*

5. *What does it mean that Jesus saw the multitudes as “distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd”?*
6. *Do you tend to look at those around you who don’t know God as distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd? Why or why not?*

Steve said:

The root of the verb “to have compassion” refers literally to the internal organs of the human body: the intestines, the liver, the guts, the viscera. Jesus was viscerally moved to compassion when He saw the multitudes. Jesus was angry when He saw the hypocrisy and legalism of the Pharisees, but He was moved to **compassion** when He saw the multitudes. He wanted them to be taken care of; he wanted them to find clean water and good grass and protection from all the dangers out there.

**Read Matthew 14:13-14; 15:30-32; 20:29-34**

7. *Looking at both the definition that Steve gave and the example of Jesus’ own compassion for others, how would you define compassion?*

Steve asked:

**Here’s the question:** Is this how we think about and feel about people? Are we moved to compassion by the desperate condition of people who are like sheep without a shepherd? Do we feel compassion for people without Christ?

8. *Do you feel compassion for people? Why or why not?*
9. *Is compassion something we can muster up for those around us on our own? Why or why not?*
10. *If you’d like to feel compassion for people, but don’t, what can you do to grow in this area?*

11. *What is the command in the passage (v. 38)?*
12. *How does this command relate to feeling compassion for the multitudes?*

## **Our Vision for Faith Evangelical Free Church**

Fall, 2008

It is our desire that in the next five years, by God's grace, we might *help more people come to faith in Christ and experience God more fully in all of life*. Therefore, we devote ourselves to these five critical areas of vision:

### **A Deepening of Prayer**

*We desire for every member to have a rich, growing life of prayer, and for every ministry of the church to begin in petition and end in praise.*

### **A Plan for Spiritual Transformation**

*We desire to provide clear and effective structures and processes whereby all members can progress toward Christlike character, expressing their growing love for God and others through willing service to both fellow believers and unbelievers.*

### **A Lifestyle of Worship**

*We desire that meaningful corporate worship on Sunday mornings be simply an expression of, and stimulus for, a lifestyle of worship in all our hearts and homes.*

### **A Culture of Welcome and Acceptance**

*We desire to welcome and accept fellow believers and non-believers—whatever their situation in life—and, more than just being friendly, actually cultivate true, growing friendships.*

### **An Active Compassion for those without Christ**

*We desire to cultivate a culture of outreach, whereby all members intentionally develop relationships with unbelievers, inviting them into the life of the church where, with a team approach, each of us plays a role in bringing people to faith in Christ.*

### **Further Explanation of An Active Compassion for those without Christ:**

We want to become a church that lives the lifestyle here at home that we send our missionaries to live in other parts of the world. As we pattern ourselves after our missionaries, it will involve an intentionality toward unbelievers, whereby each member of Faith is aware of the relationships he or she already has with unbelievers, and then intentionally cultivates those friendships while developing new ones. A missionary pattern encourages us to design “forms” for our outreach that are culturally appropriate and effective. A missionary pattern encourages us to think strategically. Finally, a missionary pattern encourages us to think in terms of teamwork, realizing that someone who comes to faith in Jesus Christ has invariably been influenced by numerous believers, and not just by the one evangelist. (For example, no doubt, some believer was this person's friend, someone else warmly welcomed them at the door, someone else set up the tables or cooked the meal for a program like Alpha, someone else prayed for this person by name, and someone else opened up God's healing Word and spoke the Gospel message.) A picture of the measure of this vision's success is when each of us at Faith would be able on a Sunday morning to look across the room and see someone for whom we could say, “I was part of the ‘team’ that brought that person to Jesus.” A vision for a culture of outreach, patterned after our missionaries, will have one additional result—namely, we have a vision for a deeper participation in the lives and ministries of our missionaries, expecting that God will raise up others in our midst to serve in other cultures.