

MAX LUCADO

LIFE LESSONS *from*

MARK

A Life-Changing Story

PREPARED BY THE LIVINGSTONE CORPORATION



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Since 1798

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LESSON ONE

COMPASSION

*Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched
out His hand and touched him.*

MARK 1:41 NKJV



REFLECTION

Compassion describes one of those longings we find easier to feel than to describe. We can see that compassion relates to sympathy and empathy, but it seems deeper. Showing compassion is not so much about how someone feels toward us but is more about how he or she acts toward us. Think of a time when you were hurting or in need. How did someone show you compassion?

SITUATION

As Jesus preached about the kingdom and healed many diseases, his ministry expanded rapidly. Crowds were growing; demands were great. Once in a while, a quick event unfolded that left a lasting impression, such as when a leper came to Jesus. When this leper approached Jesus, he was breaking all the rules. Lepers were “unclean” and weren’t supposed to come near anyone. But Jesus looked beyond that fact.

OBSERVATION

Read Mark 1:40–45 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

⁴¹ Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

NEW KING JAMES VERSION

⁴⁰ Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” ⁴¹ Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” ⁴² As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

⁴³ And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

⁴⁵ However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

EXPLORATION

1. What does the leper’s statement reveal about his belief in Jesus?

2. Jesus could have healed the leper simply by speaking to him. Why do you think Jesus instead reached out and touched him?

3. Lepers were the outcasts of society and were forced to live outside the city limits. Why did this leper approach Jesus?

4. What did Jesus instruct the man to do after he was healed? Why do you think Jesus commanded him to do this?

5. Why didn't the leper obey Jesus' request to keep quiet?

6. What do you think the leper might have felt after Jesus touched him and healed him?

INSPIRATION

Jesus was a master at communicating love and personal acceptance. He did so when he blessed and held . . . little children. But another time his sensitivity to touch someone was even more graphic. This was when Jesus met a grown man's need for meaningful touch, a man who was barred by law from ever touching anyone again. . . .

To touch a leper was unthinkable. Banishing lepers from society, people would not get within a stone's throw of them. (In fact, they would throw stones at them if they did come close!) . . . With their

open sores and dirty bandages, lepers were the last persons anyone would want to touch. Yet the first thing Christ did for this man was touch him.

Even before Jesus spoke to him, he reached out his hand and touched him. Can you imagine what that scene must have looked like? Think how this man must have longed for someone to touch him, not throw stones at him to drive him away. Jesus could have healed him first and then touched him. But recognizing his deepest need, Jesus stretched out his hand even before he spoke words of physical and spiritual healing. (From *The Gift of the Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent.)

REACTION

7. Think of a time you witnessed an act of compassion. How would you describe what you saw?

8. Have you ever withheld compassion from someone in need? If so, what was the reason?

9. Who could be considered the "lepers" in today's society?

10. What would have to change in order for you to better follow Jesus' example and show compassion even to those you find unattractive?

11. What specific person in your life comes to mind to whom you can show compassion?

12. In what ways do you need Jesus' compassionate touch?

LIFE LESSONS

Compassion is one aspect of love. Compassion may grow from feelings, but true compassion represents a practical attention to someone's needs. It doesn't require us to feel; it requires us to act. Sympathy says, "I feel bad that you're hungry." Empathy says, "I know something about how you feel; I was hungry once myself." But compassion says, "Friend, let's go get something to eat." Sympathy and empathy don't require us to do anything, but compassion will cause us to touch, lift, feed, and help those in need as Jesus did for the leper.

DEVOTION

Jesus, you set the bar of compassion high, but you promised to help us meet it. Teach us to practice a different way of seeing people. We look to evaluate, and we look to criticize. We look to feel sorry, and we even look to feel superior to others. But help us instead to look for opportunities to practice compassion. Energize us to move beyond our feelings into the territory of treating people the way you treated them.

JOURNALING

What are some practical ways that you can reach out in compassion to those around you?

FOR FURTHER READING

To complete the Gospel of Mark during this twelve-part study, read Mark 1:1–45. For more Bible passages about Jesus' compassion, read Matthew 8:15; 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 10:13–16; Luke 7:13; 22:51; and John 11:35.