Beyond the BLUES

April 24 & 25: Compassion

Overview

There are times in life when we all feel like people have deliberately run over us, when we have been knocked down or deeply wounded. In the book of *2 Corinthians*, Paul emphasizes the special resources available to those who are Christians and who are hurting. This letter was written to a troubled church and a hurting people. Throughout the letter Paul encourages the church to remain faithful. Paul himself had faced many hardships; he was able to encourage them because Jesus Christ had transformed his attitude. As we look through *2 Corinthians*, we will see how God can change our perspective and take us BEYOND the blues.

Goals of the study guide:

- To look at the characteristics that are part of being a compassionate leader.
- To recognize that how we relate to and with people is a crucial part of good spiritual leadership.
- To understand what it means to be sensitive to others and encouraging in every situation.

Key points:

- The single most important ingredient in life is how you relate to people.
- The ability to see life from another person's perspective is crucial to good leadership and good relationships.
- Showing respect and expressing affection are vital parts of any good and healthy relationship.

Take a second look … Sermon Summary

We are to help others get *Beyond the Blues*. This weekend let's analyze our compassion for people. This is so important, because the single most important ingredient in life is how you relate to people. So much of almost any job is relating to people ... communicating with people ... understanding people ... motivating people.

We have all known individuals who were very skillful at their trade, but they never made it because they lacked good human relations skills. In *1 Corinthians 1:23-24* Paul demonstrates some indicators of sensitivity.

1. Are you perceptive about the *feelings* of others?

Perceptiveness is the ability to see life from *another* perspective ... to see "the big picture." Paul was very perceptive about the feelings of the Corinthians. In *2 Corinthians 1:23* he writes, *I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.*

We sometimes think of the Apostle Paul as being very severe; and he could be tough sometimes. But Paul was also very sensitive to the feelings of people. He anticipated how *they* would react.

How sensitive are you to the feelings of those around you? All around us are people who need understanding. All around us are people who hurt. They may wear a mask, but they're going through divorce, abuse or financial problems. And there are lesser problems that drag people down everyday. If we are not perceptive, if we don't look beneath the surface, we won't anticipate their feelings or respond to their needs.

2. When in a position of leadership, do you treat your subordinates with *respect?*

2 Corinthians 1:24, Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy...

Paul was an apostle. He could have pulled rank on them. He could have said, "If you don't obey, I'm going to excommunicate you." But he didn't. In *1 Thessalonians 2:6-7*, he wrote to another church, *[6]...As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, [7]but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.*

The most effective leaders are those who understand people and treat them with mutual respect.

Jesus had all kinds of power, but He never lorded it over people. *Matthew 20:25-28, [25]Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. [26]Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, [27]and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave — [28]just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*.

3. Do you openly express *affection* in relationships?

- He admitted his *vulnerability.*

2 Corinthians 2:2, For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? A lesser man would have said, "If you don't like what I'm telling you, I don't need you anyway."

2 Corinthians 2:3a, I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice... He is openly admitting, "You have the ability to make me rejoice or you have the ability to make me distressed. I'm vulnerable."

- He practiced *affirmation*.

2 Corinthians 2:3b, ...I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. Paul had experienced all kinds of trouble with this church, yet he says, "I had confidence in you ... that you would do better."

- He *verbalized* affection.

2 Corinthians 2:4, For I wrote to you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you. Paul expressed his love verbally. Love can be expressed in a lot of ways, but we need to say it too.

John 15:13, Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. So how sensitive are you?

Take it to the source … Bible Study

Introductory question: What event in the news or in stories that you hear stirs your compassion the most? Why? What about that circumstance gets to you and stirs your heart?

Opening thought:
Caring for others and learning to properly relate to others is a vital part of leadership. Many things can get an emotional response from us, but what actually stirs your heart so that you act? Use this question to get your group looking at compassion and the part that it plays in their lives.

Read *2 Corinthians 1:23-24*.

1. Can you relate to Paul's attitude toward this church that had caused him numerous problems? Why or why not?
2. How easy is it for you to see situations from another person's perspective? What practical steps could you take to help you be more perceptive of the feelings of others?
3. Which do you respond to the most—a leader who leads by power and position or one who leads by influence? Why?
4. How would you describe Paul's style of leadership—cooperative, authoritarian, respectful or demanding? Why?

Key points:

• The church in Corinth had been a big problem for Paul. He had already written a strong letter that scolded them for many things that were wrong there. He visited again and saw that things were not getting better. He was going to visit again but decided not to so that he wouldn't reopen the wounds. He was sensitive to their feelings and wanted to give them time to get themselves in order. He was a leader who stood for the truth but who was also sensitive to the feelings of the people.

• Leading by power and position means disregarding the feelings of subordinates, treating them as inferior, leading by intimidation and rigidly enforcing rules. Leading by influence means understanding people and developing mutual respect; it means giving guidance by working with people and leading by example and cooperation.

Read *1 Peter 5:2-3* and *Matthew 20:25-28.*

1. What is the primary difference in motivation between one who lords it over others and one who serves others?
2. What are some of the ways that Jesus served other people?
3. What can we learn from Him as we follow His example in serving others?

Key points:

• A leader who lords it over others always works to elevate themselves. A leader who serves others always works to elevate the people they are leading.

• *Mark 10:43-45*, Jesus served others His entire life and ultimately gave His life. *John 4:7-26*, Jesus overlooked gender differences, racial differences, religious differences and moral differences, and met a woman at her point of need. *John 13:3-15*, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, taking the place of a lowly servant and showing us how we should serve each other.

Read *2 Corinthians 2:2-4.*

1. Would you consider yourself a *closed* person or an *open* person? Why?
2. Do you consider vulnerability a strength or a weakness? How could being vulnerable help you to understand others in their hurt and suffering?
3. Do you express love through correction or encouragement? What is the difference and why does it matter?
4. Why do you think affirmation gets better results?
5. How easy is it for you to express your love for others verbally? Who in your life needs to hear you say that you love and care about them?

Key point:

• These questions should help your group look at some of the ordinary, but extremely important ways, that we show affection, care and regard for others. Such expressions of care and love go a long way toward developing relationships that help each of us to grow and develop in the way God intends.

Take it home … Practical Applications

Ask God to give you a heart of compassion for others.

- Pray that you will be able to see people and their situation from their perspective.
- Make every effort to show respect and thoughtfulness toward those who may be in a lower position or situation than you are.
- Open your heart to people in your life, and express your love and appreciation for them in a way that will be affirming and encouraging.
- Look for one person that you can touch with God's compassion this week.

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All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

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