

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries

Course of Compassion

Course Objective: The objective of this course is to equip practitioners with a biblical foundation and a technical framework from which to lead, communicate and engage in a spectrum of ministries of compassion across Local Churches, Districts, Fields and Regions.

Module 3 - Foundations of Compassionate Ministry (III)

Module Objective: The objective of this module is for a student to gain understanding God's specific expectations for us how we are to live in readiness for his return. Also, within this module, the student will examine a biblical perspective of the pursuit of excellence in giving and the student will craft a personal philosophy of compassionate ministry.

Learning Outcomes

- The student will examine biblical narrative and be able to articulate ways that God expects us to engage our lives with those in need, as we live in readiness for Jesus' return.
 - The student will be able to describe characteristics of a life lived with a focus on compassion to others
 - The student will be enabled to present to a cohort his/her personal philosophy of ministering with compassion
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Readings

1. Read chapters 7, 8 & 9 of our textbook: *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*
2. Read Matthew 24 & 25
3. Read the attached article: Chapter 8 excerpt from William Law's "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life" (see Appendix A)

Video Clips

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=qJEtyAiAQik&feature=emb_logo

Assignments

Exercise #1 – 250 words

Write out your reaction to the Bible Project's presentation of the compassionate nature of God. [video clip]

Exercise #2 – 250 words

In Matthew Chapters 24:44, Jesus informs his disciples to 'be ready' for the return of the Master. Examine the four parables/accounts that Jesus then presents (Matt 24:45-51, Matt 25:1-13, Matt 25:14-30, Matt 25:31-46). Each parable/account describes one main principle of how we are to live our lives in readiness. Identify and summarize all four main principles, one from each of these four parables/accounts.

Exercise #3 – 250 words

Write out your personal philosophy of compassionate ministry and how such a ministry will serve the mission of the denomination.

Exercise #4 – 500 words total for questions A, B, C & D

Course book application questions - *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* [Chapters 7, 8 & 9]

- A. On page #89 of our *Compassion* course book the authors write: “The compassionate way is the patient way. Patience is the discipline of compassion.”

Describe their position. In what ways do you agree with the authors on this point? In what ways do you disagree with the authors on this point?

- B. On page #106 of our *Compassion* course book the authors ask the question: “What has prayer to do with the compassionate life?”

Describe their position on prayer in the compassionate life. In what ways is your own life of compassion founded on prayer?

- C. On page #120 of our *Compassion* course book the authors write: “Action as the way of a compassionate life is a difficult discipline precisely because we are so in need of recognition and acceptance. This need can easily drive us to conform to the expectation that we will offer something “new.” In a society that is so keen on new encounters, so eager for new events, and so hungry for new experiences, it is difficult not to be seduced into impatient activism. Often, we are hardly aware of this seduction, especially since what we are doing is so obviously “good and religious”. But even setting up a relief program, feeding the hungry, and assisting the sick could be more an expression of our own needs than of God’s call.”

Describe how we can live out a life of compassion, not as an expression of our own needs, but from the call of God.

Exercise #5 – in your local community, identify and pursue a way you can engage with those who are sick, in prison, hungry, thirsty, without adequate clothing or otherwise in need. Describe your journey.

End of Module Summary - 500 words total

What is the most significant thing you learned in Module 3?

What previous experiences relate to what you read and learned?

How has what you learned changed your thinking about this week's topic(s)?

How will you use the knowledge gained this week in your life or ministry?

APPENDIX A

In 1728, William Law wrote “*A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*”. This entire work is in Public Domain and if desired, a PDF copy can be accessed via the following link:

https://books.googleusercontent.com/books/content?req=AKW5QadvkPCmxozlmCht4UoegWrziNOXASBvpV9kVcqZcf_o8T9JBZPYK9N6Txv7z5wXpyu65QRFFW3vI18h1NIN0gcOEwa9qDKjYgs6FGpmqkn4atD__Cef9rtINwVjT4_TSuxW6aPjyGP7j377QeRtLyGVaEI8t_GE1Dr0s-aXR1Zi-fsF9uRZ60bCNLVBmIJJ3Eq3QYXDcTLLvoB-3x1NOcC9d93VsSxbZrfjaSTKx5l7lLjYWvaXB2viHvS-c6Z7Ew64PwmM6R_vCIW3eaSz_0nIFV3oD85yxQMV9OKNkew6Y_7ZhlVk

This book is inspiring. It is interesting to note that John Wesley was greatly influenced by William Law and his writings. *Note: some of the English terms and phrases that were used in the era of the time of writing of the book can be difficult to understand in today’s day-and-age because the English language has changed down through the centuries. As well, cultural norms and expectations of people have also changed. However, Law’s message does come through quite clearly in his works if you carefully read and re-read his writings.

William Law’s writings include important teaching about compassion. In his book “*A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*”, Law illustrates his points through narrative by contrasting the lives of two upper-class sisters. Each sister has received an inheritance/income after the death of their parents. One of the sisters, Flavia, uses her resources frivolously. Her story is recounted in Chapter 7. This can be read by accessing the entire PDF document using the link pasted above. The other sister, Miranda, uses her resources in a godly way. Miranda’s story is recounted in Chapter 8. The following excerpt from that chapter is presented here:

CHAP. VIII. HOW THE WISE AND PIOUS USE OF AN ESTATE NATURALLY CARRIETH US TO GREAT PERFECTION IN ALL THE VIRTUES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE; REPRESENTED IN THE CHARACTER OF MIRANDA.

.....Miranda, the sister of Flavia, is a sober reasonable Christian. As soon as she was mistress of her time and fortune, it was her first thought, how she might best fulfil everything that God required of her in the use of them, and how she might make the best and happiest use of this short life. She depends upon the truth of what our blessed Lord hath said, that “There is but one thing needful,” and therefore makes her whole life but one continual labour after it. She has but one reason for doing or not doing, for liking or not liking anything, and that is the will of God. She is not so weak as to pretend to add what is called the fine lady to the true Christian. Miranda thinks too well, to be taken with the sound of such silly words. She has renounced the world, to follow Christ in the exercise of humility, charity, devotion, abstinence, and heavenly affections; and that is Miranda’s fine breeding. Whilst she was under her mother, she was forced to be genteel, to live in ceremony, to sit up late

at night, to be in to the folly of every fashion, and always visiting on Sundays; go patched, and loaded with a burden of finery, to the holy sacrament; to be in every polite conversation, and to hear profaneness at the play-house, and wanton songs and love intrigues at the opera, to dance at public places, that fops and rakes might admire the fineness of her shape, and the beauty of her motions. The remembrance of this way of life, makes her exceedingly careful to atone for it by a contrary behaviour. Miranda does not divide her duty between God, her neighbour, and herself; but she considers all as due to God, and so does everything in his name, and for his sake. This makes her consider her fortune as the gift of God, that is to be used, as everything is that belongs to God, for the wise and reasonable ends of a Christian and holy life. Her fortune, therefore, is divided betwixt herself, and several other poor people, and she has only her part of relief from it. She thinks it the same folly to indulge herself in needless, vain expenses, as to give to other people to spend in the same way. Therefore, as she will not give a poor man money to go to see a puppet-show, neither will she allow herself any to spend in the same manner; thinking it very proper to be as wise herself, as she expects poor men should be. For it is a folly and a crime in a poor man, says Miranda, to waste what is given him, in foolish trifles, whilst he wants meat, drink, and clothes; and is it less folly, or a less crime in me to spend that money in silly diversions, which might be so much better spent in the imitation of the divine goodness, in works of kindness and charity towards my fellow creatures, and fellow Christians ? If a poor man's own necessities are a reason why he should not waste any of his money idly, surely the necessities of the poor, the excellency of charity, which is received as done to Christ himself, is a much greater reason why no one should ever waste any of his money. For if he does so, he does not only, like the poor man, waste that which he wants himself; but he wastes that which is wanted for the most noble use, and which Christ himself is ready to receive at his hands. And if we are angry at a poor man, and look upon him as a wretch, when he throws away that which should buy his own bread ; how must we appear in the sight of God, if we make a wanton, idle use of that which would buy bread and clothes for our hungry and naked brethren, who are as near and dear to God as we are, and fellow heirs of the same state of future glory!

This is the spirit of Miranda, and thus she uses the gifts of God: she is only one of a certain number of poor people, that are relieved out of her fortune, and she only differs from them. in the blessedness of giving. Excepting her victuals, she never spent ten pounds a year upon herself. If you were to see her, you would wonder what poor body it was that was so surprisingly neat and clean. She has but one rule that she observes in her dress, to be always clean, and in the cheapest things. Everything about her resembles the purity of her soul, and she is always clean without, because she is always pure within. Every morning sees her early at her prayers: she rejoices in the beginning of every day, because it begins all her pious rules of holy living, and brings the fresh pleasure of repeating them. She seems to be as a guardian-angel to those that dwell about her, with her watchings and prayers blessing the place where she dwells, and making intercession with God for those that are asleep. Her devotions have had some intervals, and God has heard several of her private prayers, before the

light is suffered to enter her sister's room. Miranda does not know what it is to have a dull half-day: the return of her hours of prayer, and her religious exercises, come too often to let any considerable part of time lie heavy upon her hands. When you see her at work, you see the same wisdom that governs all her other actions: she is either doing something that is necessary for herself, or necessary for others who need to be assisted. There is scarce a poor family in the neighbourhood, but wears something or other that has had the labour of her hands. Her wise and pious mind neither wants the amusement, nor can bear with the folly of idle and impertinent work. She can admit of no such folly as this in the day, because she is to answer for all her actions at night. When there is no wisdom to be observed in the employment of her hands, when there is no useful or charitable work to be done, Miranda will work no more.

At her table she lives strictly by this rule of holy Scripture, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This makes her begin and end every meal, as she begins and ends every day, with acts of devotion. She eats and drinks only for the sake of living, and with so regular an abstinence, that every meal is an exercise of self-denial, and she humbles her body every time that she is forced to feed it. If Miranda was to run a race for her life, she would submit to a diet that was proper for it. But as the race which is set before her is a race of holiness, purity, and heavenly affection, which she is to finish in a corrupt, disordered body of earthly passions, so her every day diet has only this one end, to make her body fitter for this spiritual race. She does not weigh her meat in a pair of scales, but she weighs it in a much better balance. So much as gives a proper strength to her body, and renders it able and willing to obey the soul, to join in psalms and prayers, and lift up eyes and hands towards heaven with great readiness, so much is Miranda's meal. So that Miranda will never have her eyes swell with fatness, or pant under a heavy load of flesh, till she has changed her religion.

The holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament, are her daily study: these she reads with a watchful attention, constantly casting an eye upon herself, and trying herself by every doctrine that is there. When she has the New Testament in her hand, she supposes herself at the feet of our Saviour and his apostles, and makes everything she learns of them, so many laws of her life. She receives their sacred words with as much attention and reverence, as if she saw their persons, and knew that they were just come from heaven, on purpose to teach her the way that leads to it. She thinks that the trying herself every day by the doctrines of Scripture, is the only possible way to be ready for her trial at the last day. She is sometimes afraid that she lays out too much money in books, because she cannot forbear buying all practical books of any note; especially such as enter into the heart of religion, and describe the inward holiness of the Christian life. But of all human writings, the lives of pious persons, and eminent saints, are her greatest delight. In these she searches as for hidden treasure, hoping to find some secret of holy living, some uncommon degree of piety, which she may make her own. By this means Miranda has her head and heart stored with all the principles of wisdom and holiness: and she is so full of the one main business of life, that she finds it difficult to converse upon any other subject; and if you are in

her company when she thinks proper to talk, you must be made wiser and better, whether you will or not. To relate her charity, would be to relate the history of every day for twenty years; for so long has all her fortune been spent that way. She has set up near twenty poor tradesmen that had failed in their business, and saved as many from failing. She has educated several poor children, that were picked up in the streets, and put them in a way of an honest employment. As soon as any labourer is confined at home with sickness, she sends him, till he recovers, twice the value of his wages, that he may have one part to give his family, as usual, and the other to provide things convenient for his sickness. If a family seem too large to be supported by the labour of those that can work in it, she pays their rent, and gives them something yearly towards their clothing. By this means there are many poor families that live in a comfortable manner, and are from year to year blessing her in their prayers. If there is any poor man or woman that is more than ordinarily wicked and reprobate, Miranda has her eye upon them; she watches their time of need and adversity, and if she can discover that they are in any great straits or affliction, she gives them speedy relief. She has this care for this sort of people, because she once saved a very profligate person from being carried to prison, who immediately became a true penitent. There is nothing in the character of Miranda more to be admired, than this temper. For this tenderness of affection towards the most abandoned sinners, is the highest instance of a divine and godlike soul. Miranda once passed by a house, where the man and his wife were cursing and swearing at one another in a most dreadful manner, and three children crying about them; this sight so much affected her compassionate mind, that she went the next day, and brought the three children away, that they might not be ruined by living with such wicked parents. They now live with Miranda, are blessed with her care and prayers, and all the good works which she can do for them. They hear her talk, they see her live, they join with her in psalms and prayers. The eldest of them has already converted his parents from their wicked life, and shows a turn of mind so remarkably pious, that Miranda intends him for holy orders; that being thus saved himself, he may be zealous in the salvation of souls, and do to other miserable objects as she has done to him.

Miranda is a constant relief to poor people in their misfortunes and accidents. There are sometimes little misfortunes that happen to them, which of themselves they could never be able to overcome. The death of a cow, or a horse, or some little robbery, would keep them in distress all their lives. She does not suffer them to grieve under such accidents as these. She immediately gives them the full value of their loss, and makes use of it as a means of raising their minds towards God. She has a great tenderness for old people that are grown past their labour. The parish allowance to such people is very seldom a comfortable maintenance. For this reason, they are the constant objects of her care: she adds so much to their allowance, as somewhat exceeds the wages they got when they were young. This she does to comfort the infirmities of their age, that being free from trouble and distress, they may serve God in peace and tranquillity of mind. She has generally a large number of this kind, who by her charities and exhortations to holiness, spend their last days in great piety and devotion.

Miranda never wants compassion, even to common beggars; especially towards those that are old, or sick, or full of sores, or that want eyes or limbs. She hears their complaints with tenderness, gives them some proof of her kindness, and never rejects them with hard or reproachful language, for fear of adding affliction to her fellow-creatures. If a poor traveller tells her that he has neither strength, nor food, nor money left, she never bids him go to the place from whence he came, or tells him that she cannot relieve him, because he may be a cheat, or she does not know him ; but she relieves him for that reason, because he is a stranger, and unknown to her. For it is the most noble part of charity, to be kind and tender to those whom we never saw before, and perhaps may never see again in this life. "I was a stranger, and ye took me in," saith our blessed Saviour: but who can perform this duty, that will not relieve persons that are unknown to them? Miranda considers, that Lazarus was a common beggar, that he was the care of angels, and carried into Abraham's bosom. She considers, that our blessed Saviour, and his apostles, were kind to beggars; they spoke comfortably to them, healed their diseases, and restored eyes and limbs to the lame and blind,-that Peter said to the beggar who wanted an alms from him, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee ; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Miranda, therefore, never treats beggars with disregard and aversion, but she imitates the kindness of our Saviour and his apostles towards them ; and though she cannot, like them, work miracles for their relief, yet, she relieves them with that power she hath, and may say with the apostle, "Such as I have give I thee, in the name of Jesus Christ." It may be, says Miranda, that I may often give to those that do not deserve it, or that will make an ill use of my alms. But what then is not this the very method of divine goodness? Does not God make his "sun to rise on the evil, and on the good?" Is not this the very goodness that is recommended to us in Scripture, that by imitating it, we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven, "who sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust?" And shall I withhold a little money or food from my fellow-creature, for fear he should not be good enough to receive it of me? Do I beg of God to deal with me, not according to my merit, but according to his own great goodness; and shall I be so absurd, as to withhold my charity from a poor brother, because he may perhaps not deserve it! Shall I use a measure towards him, which I pray God never to use towards me? Besides, where has the Scripture made merit the rule or measure of charity? On the contrary, the Scripture saith, "If thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink." Now this plainly teaches us, that the merit of persons is to be no rule of our charity, but that we are to do acts of kindness to those that least of all deserve it. For if I am to love and to do good to my worst enemies; if I am to be charitable to them, notwithstanding all their spite and malice, surely merit is no measure of charity. If I am not to withhold my charity from such bad people, and who are at the same time my enemies; surely I am not to deny alms to poor beggars, whom I neither know to be bad people, nor any way my enemies. You will perhaps say, that by this means I encourage people to be beggars. But the same thoughtless objection may be made against all kinds of charities, for they may encourage people to depend upon them. The same may be said against forgiving our enemies; for it may encourage people to do us hurt. The same may be said even against the goodness of God, that by pouring his blessings on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust,

evil and unjust men are encouraged in their wicked ways. The same may be said against clothing the naked, or giving medicines to the sick; for that may encourage people to neglect themselves, and be careless of their health. But when the "love of God dwelleth in you," when it has enlarged your heart, and filled your bowels with mercy and compassion, you will make no more such objections as these. When you are at any time turning away the poor, the old, the sick and helpless traveller, the lame, or the blind, ask yourself this question, Do I sincerely wish these poor creatures may be as happy as Lazarus, that was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom Do I sincerely desire that God would make them fellow-heirs with me in eternal glory! Now if you search into your soul, you will find that there is none of these motions there; that you are wishing nothing of this. For it is impossible for anyone heartily to wish a poor creature so great a happiness, and yet not have a heart to give him small alms. For this reason, says Miranda, as far as I can, I give to all, because I pray to God to forgive all; and I cannot refuse alms to those whom I pray God to bless, whom I wish to be partakers of eternal glory; but am glad to show some degree of love to such, as, I hope, will be the objects of the infinite love of God. And if, as our Saviour has assured us, "it be more blessed to give than to receive," we ought to look upon those that ask our alms, as so many friends and benefactors, that come to do us a greater good than they can receive, that come to exalt our virtue, to be witnesses of our charity, to be monuments of our love, to be our advocates with God, to be to us in Christ's stead, to appear for us at the day of judgment, and to help us to a blessedness greater than our alms can bestow on them. This is the spirit, and this is the life of the devout Miranda; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent sixty hundred pounds in charity, for that which she allows herself, may fairly be reckoned amongst her alms. When she dies, she must shine amongst apostles, and saints, and martyrs; she must stand amongst the first servants of God, and be glorious amongst those that have fought the good fight, and finished their course with joy.