

seek wisdom  
*The Free Reformed Study Centre*



# *MEN OF* **COMPASSION**

► *The Courage to Care*

## *More than a Conference*

The Men of Compassion – The Courage to Care conference was never intended to be an endpoint. It was designed to start a conversation that extends beyond a joyful morning of speeches and into the realities of everyday life.

This study guide is intended to help that happen.

Each module is built around a conference message and is designed to be worked through slowly and thoughtfully. The aim is not simply to revisit what was said, but to allow the truth of God's Word to take root more deeply, shaping not only how we think but also how we live. At its heart, this guide is about movement: from hearing to understanding, from understanding to reflection, and from reflection to action. In simpler terms, it is about moving from knowledge to wisdom.

As you work through each study, begin by watching (or revisiting) the message. Read the summary and key truth carefully. Then take time with the questions. Don't rush. Carefully consider real situations and recent conversations. Where possible, write your responses down. Importantly, this process should be prayerful. Ask the Lord to search your heart, reveal what is true, and soften what may have grown hard. Bring your responses honestly before Him, trusting that He is at work through His Word and Spirit.

Each module also invites one clear step of application. This may be a tough conversation to have, a troubled person to approach, or an annoying habit to change. The goal is not to do everything, but to act faithfully in one area, fully dependent on God's Grace.

If used in a group, take sufficient time to reflect together on the previous week. Share briefly, encourage one another, and pray for continued growth.

Above all, this guide is not about self-improvement, but transformation. Our desire is to become men who reflect Christ's compassion in everyday life.

Truly, Men of Compassion.

### ***A note about accountability partners***

At the end of each module there is a section we have referred to as *Accountability*. Finding an accountability partner is optional but encouraged as a helpful way to committing to your goals. Using this accountability framework is great for digging deeper when doing this study as a group. However, we still encourage you to reach out to a trusted friend to walk alongside you if you are doing this as a personal study.

# Course Modules

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This course and study guide have been produced utilising content from the 2026 Seek Wisdom Men's Conference, *Men of Compassion*. The speeches and panel discussions referenced in each module are now available for further listening and reflection. These can be found on our website at [seekwisdom.com.au/project/men-of-compassion](https://seekwisdom.com.au/project/men-of-compassion).

# Introduction

To begin this study, we encourage you to read **Colossians 3:1–20**.

*Read the passage slowly and consider these questions.*

1. According to this passage, what are believers called to “put off” and what are they called to “put on”?

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2. What reasons does Paul give for living differently, and how does our identity in Christ shape our relationships and conduct?

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3. Compassion appears alongside other Christian virtues in this passage. What does this suggest about the kind of men God calls us to become?

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Being Men of Compassion is not a call to become softer men, but Christ-shaped men.

In Colossians 3, Paul reminds believers that because they have been raised with Christ, they are called to put to death the old self and put on a new way of living. At the centre of this new life is a call to clothe ourselves with compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and above all, love. Compassion is not a weakness. It is strength directed towards the good of others. It is the heart of Christ made visible in ordinary life. It shapes how we lead, listen, speak, exercise influence, and care for those entrusted to us.

Through the following studies, we invite you to reflect deeply, engage honestly, and consider again the kind of men we are called to be. Our prayer is that as you work through these sessions, you would not simply grow in understanding, but that by God’s grace, you would grow in becoming men who reflect the compassion of Christ.

# Shaped by Compassion

## *Reflecting the Father's Glory*

### Session Overview

Compassion is at the very heart of who God is and therefore at the heart of who we are called to be. In a world marked by pain, shame, and brokenness, God does not stand at a distance. He draws near. He listens. He enters our suffering through Christ.

As we come to Him honestly and receive His grace, He reshapes us. And in that renewal, we begin to reflect His compassion – learning to listen, to care, and to walk with others in their pain.

**SPEAKER** Rev. Dirk Poppe

► Begin Module 1 by watching the first speech from Men of Compassion: **Shaped by Compassion**.

### Key Points

Many people carry deep pain and hidden shame, even when life appears outwardly fine.

**FURTHER READING** [Psalm 38:4](#) | [Proverbs 14:10](#)

Pain often bends us out of shape, leading to unhelpful and destructive patterns.

**FURTHER READING** [Hebrews 12:15](#)

One of the greatest gifts we can offer someone who is suffering is simple, compassionate presence.

**FURTHER READING** [Romans 12:15](#)

True compassion creates a safe space where people can share both suffering and sin.

**FURTHER READING** [James 5:16](#)

God reveals Himself as compassionate: merciful, gracious, patient, and full of steadfast love.

**FURTHER READING** [Psalm 103:8](#)

Compassion means entering another person's suffering with tenderness and care.

**FURTHER READING** [Luke 10:33–34](#)

In Christ, God has fully entered our suffering so that we might find help and rest.

**FURTHER READING** [Hebrews 4:15–16](#) | [Matthew 11:28](#)

Compassion and truth belong together – high expectations must be matched with deep nurture.

**FURTHER READING** [Ephesians 4:15](#)

A lack of compassion is often connected to pain we have not yet faced or processed.

**FURTHER READING** [Proverbs 28:13](#)

As we humble ourselves and receive God's grace, He forms in us hearts that reflect His compassion.

**FURTHER READING** [Colossians 3:12](#)

### Important Truth

Compassion is not a secondary or weak personality trait. It is important because **it reflects the very character and glory of God.**

*...The LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love...*

**EXODUS 34:6**

## Understand

Take time to consider what God's character of compassion teaches us.

1. What does this study reveal about who God is?

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2. How is God's compassion different from how we often think about strength or leadership?

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3. Why is compassion not optional for the Christian life?

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## Reflect

*Be honest and specific. Try to think about real situations.*

1. What burdens, pressures, or struggles am I currently carrying? Have I brought these honestly before the Lord?

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2. Think of a recent moment when someone shared something difficult with you. How did you actually respond?

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3. When I see weakness or struggle in others, what rises first in me: compassion, discomfort, frustration, or indifference?

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4. Is there pain in my own life that I have avoided or hidden? How might that be shaping the way I relate to others?

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## Real Life Scenario

*A close friend or family member begins to open up to you about something difficult, but you feel uncomfortable and are unsure what to say.*

1. What would it look like to withdraw or move on quickly in that moment?

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2. What would compassionate presence look like instead?

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3. What simple words or questions could help create a safe space?

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## Apply

Take what you have learned and set specific, actionable goals – Lean into understanding your own weaknesses.

One burden I will bring honestly before God:

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One intentional action I will take (e.g. listen, call, visit, ask, sit with):

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One way I will slow down and be present instead of fixing or moving on quickly:

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**MAKE A PLAN** When will I work on this over the next week?

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### This Week's Practice

**PRACTICE** compassionate presence.

**FOCUS** on these key practices:

1. Listen without interrupting.
2. Don't rush to fix or correct.
3. Stay present, even if it feels uncomfortable.

### Accountability

**SHARE** your goal with a trusted friend, or study group.

**BEGIN** your next meeting with a check-in:

1. How did you practice compassionate presence in conversation this week?
2. What went well?
3. What challenges did you face?

### Prayer

Take a moment to bring this before the Lord. Include your own prayer points to make it personal.

Dear Lord, merciful and compassionate Father,

**SHOW ME** where my heart has grown hard or distant.

**HELP ME** to bring my own burdens to You, instead of hiding them.

**FORM IN ME** a heart that reflects Your compassion.

**LEAD ME** toward those who need care, and give me courage to step toward them.

# Redeeming Power

## *From Control to Compassion*

### Session Overview

God entrusts power for the care and flourishing of others. Through the image of shepherding, we see that authority is not given for control or self-interest but for protection, guidance, and growth.

Yet power is often misused in subtle ways, through control, harshness, or withdrawal. Christ calls us to redeem it by moving from power over to power under. As we look to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we learn to use our strength to serve, protect, and pursue others with compassion.

**SPEAKER** Sr Kristen Alkema

► Begin Module 2 by watching the second speech from Men of Compassion: **Redeeming Power**.

### Key Points

God entrusts men with power to care for others, not to serve themselves.

**FURTHER READING** [Ezekiel 34:2–4](#)

The central question is whether our authority benefits us or those entrusted to us.

**FURTHER READING** [Philippians 2:3–4](#)

Power can be misused in subtle ways through control, harshness, or withdrawal.

**FURTHER READING** [James 3:16](#)

Jesus rejects dominating leadership and calls for servant-hearted authority.

**FURTHER READING** [Mark 10:42–45](#)

Christ models a better way by using power sacrificially for the good of others.

**FURTHER READING** [Philippians 2:5–8](#)

Godly leadership creates environments of safety, presence, and growth.

**FURTHER READING** [Ephesians 6:4](#) | [1 Peter 3:7](#)

We shepherd as those who are first shepherded by Christ, the Good Shepherd.

**FURTHER READING** [John 10:11](#)

#### Power Over

- Authority to control, dominate, or self-protect
- Driven by fear, pride, or self-interest
- Creates pressure, distance, or insecurity
- Seeks compliance rather than growth
- Benefits the leader at the expense of others

**MARK 10:42–43**

VS

#### Power Under

- Authority to serve, protect, and build others up
- Driven by love, humility, and responsibility
- Creates safety, trust, and stability
- Pursues growth, restoration, and maturity
- Reflects the heart of Christ

**MARK 10:43–45 | PHILIPPIANS 2:5–8**

## Important Truth

True strength is not shown in power and control but in sacrificial, servant-hearted care. When we do this **we reflect Christ, who came to serve by being the ultimate sacrifice.**

*...Whoever would be great among you must be your servant...for even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...*

MARK 10:43,45

## Understand

Take time to consider what it means to use power in a godly way.

1. What is the difference between *Power Over* and *Power Under*?

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2. Why is servant-hearted leadership so counter-cultural?

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3. How does Christ redefine what it means to be strong?

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## Reflect

*Be honest and specific. Try to think about real situations.*

1. When I consider the influence I have, who benefits most? Is it me or those entrusted to my care?

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2. Think of a recent decision or interaction. What did my use of power look like in that moment?

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3. When I feel stressed or under pressure, do I tend to control, withdraw, or serve?

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4. In what subtle ways might I be using power to protect myself rather than care for others?

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5. Do people feel safe, known, and supported around me? Or pressured and distant?

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## Real Life Scenario

*You are in a position of responsibility (at home, work, or church), and someone under your care is not responding in the way you would like.*

1. What does power-over look like in this situation (control, frustration, withdrawal)?

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2. What does self-protective leadership look like?

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3. What would power-under look like: serving, guiding, and pursuing them with care?

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4. What could you do or say that reflects both strength and compassion?

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## Apply

Take what you have learned and set specific, actionable goals – Focus on creating safety, not just changing behaviour.

One leadership decision I will handle differently where I need to shift from control to care:

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One practical change I will make (e.g. listen more, be present, initiate, encourage, guide):

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**MAKE A PLAN** When will I work on this over the next week?

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### This Week's Practice

**PRACTICE** servant-hearted leadership.

**FOCUS** on these key practices:

1. Be intentional in one relationship.
2. Create space for others to be heard and supported.
3. Use your influence to build, not control.

### Accountability

**SHARE** your goal with a trusted friend, or study group.

**BEGIN** your next meeting with a check-in:

1. How did you use your influence this week?
2. What went well?
3. What challenges did you face?

### Prayer

Take a moment to bring this before the Lord. Include your own prayer points to make it personal.

Dear Lord, merciful and compassionate Father,

**THANK YOU** for the way You shepherd and care for me.

**REVEAL** to me where I misuse my power for my own sake.

**TEACH ME** to lead with humility, strength, and compassion.

**HELP ME** reflect Christ in how I serve and care for others.

# Moved by Compassion

## *Revealing Christ's Heart*

### Session Overview

We are called to examine our hearts in light of Christ's compassion and care for His people. While we often resist emotion, justify hardness, or believe we cannot change, the gospel declares something very different. In Jesus, we see a powerful Saviour whose heart is deeply moved by the suffering and helplessness of others. His compassion is not distant or passive. It leads Him to act, to restore, and ultimately to give Himself for sinners.

As we grasp His compassion toward us, our hearts are softened and reshaped, enabling us to move toward others with the same love.

**SPEAKER** Rev. Hendrik Alkema

► Begin Module 3 by watching the third speech from Men of Compassion: **Moved by Compassion**.

### Key Points

Compassion begins as a heart issue and requires honest self-examination.

Men often resist emotion, leading to suppressed grief and hardened hearts.

The belief that "I can't change" denies the transforming power of the Spirit.

Jesus rejects dominating leadership and calls for servant-hearted authority.

**FURTHER READING** [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)

Jesus is both powerful and compassionate – His strength magnifies His compassion.

**FURTHER READING** [Revelation 5:5](#) | [Matthew 9:36](#)

Christ's compassion moves Him to act in love.

**FURTHER READING** [Matthew 14:14](#) | [Mark 1:41](#)

God's compassion is deeply personal, like a parent's love.

**FURTHER READING** [Isaiah 49:15](#) | [Psalm 103:13](#)

Our hearts are often inward-focused and self-protective.

**FURTHER READING** [Philippians 2:3–4](#)

When Jesus saw people as "harassed and helpless" and responds with compassion.

**FURTHER READING** [Matthew 9:36](#)

Compassion moves beyond fault and blame.

**FURTHER READING** [Romans 5:8](#)

Christ moves toward the broken, not away.

**FURTHER READING** [Luke 5:31–32](#)

Experiencing His compassion is what transforms us.

**FURTHER READING** [1 John 4:19](#) | [Colossians 3:12](#)

### Important Truth

Christ's compassion is not weak. It is powerful, active, and life-giving. We can be reminded then, that when we act in compassion, we are reflecting Christ's strength.

*When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

**MATTHEW 9:36**

## Understand

Take time to consider what Christ's compassion reveals.

1. What does this show about the heart of Christ?

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2. Why is compassion not a personality trait, but a reflection of the gospel?

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3. How does Christ's compassion challenge common ideas of strength?

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## Reflect

*Be honest and specific. Try to think about real situations.*

1. When I see others struggling, what rises first – compassion, irritation, or indifference?

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2. Think of a recent situation: how did I actually respond to someone in need?

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3. Where might I be resisting emotion or keeping distance from others' pain?

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4. Do I believe I can truly change, or have I accepted certain patterns as fixed?

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5. How deeply have I grasped Christ's compassion toward me – and where might that still feel distant or abstract?

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## Real Life Scenario

Someone shares something difficult with you, but your first instinct is to fix the problem quickly and move on.

1. What does problem-solving without compassion look like?

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2. What does emotional distance or avoidance look like?

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3. What would it look like to enter into their experience instead of fixing it?

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4. What simple words or posture could communicate care and presence?

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## Apply

Take what you have learned and set specific, actionable goals – Focus on presence, not fixing.

One person I will walk alongside who is “harassed and helpless”:

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One way I will move toward them (e.g. *listen, sit with, support, reach out*):

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**MAKE A PLAN** When will I work on this over the next week?

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### This Week's Practice

**PRACTICE** entering into someone's experience.

**FOCUS** on these key practices:

1. Slow down before responding.
2. Resist the urge to fix immediately.
3. Stay present in the moment, even if it feels uncomfortable.

### Accountability

**SHARE** your goal with a trusted friend, or study group.

**BEGIN** your next meeting with a check-in:

1. How did you move toward someone this week?
2. What went well?
3. What challenges did you face?

### Prayer

Take a moment to bring this before the Lord. Include your own prayer points to make it personal.

Dear Lord, merciful and compassionate Father,

**REVEAL** the true condition of my heart.

**SOFTEN** areas where I have become hard or distant.

**HELP ME** to grasp more deeply Your compassion toward me.

**FORM IN ME** a heart that moves toward others as You have moved toward me.

# Practising Compassion

## *Listening for the Heart*

### Session Overview

Our words carry the power of life and death. Yet life-giving words do not begin with speaking better but they begin with listening well. When we fail to listen for the heart, even truthful words can wound rather than heal. God calls us to a deeper kind of listening shaped by humility, compassion, and an awareness of our own need for grace. As we learn to listen as God listens, we become people who speak words that bring hope, healing, and the life-transforming love of Christ to others.

**SPEAKER** Sr Kristen Alkema

► Begin Module 4 by watching the fourth speech from Men of Compassion: **Practising Compassion**.

### Key Points

Words have great power to bring life or cause deep harm.

**FURTHER READING** [Proverbs 18:21](#)

Life-giving speech begins with listening well, not simply speaking well.

**FURTHER READING** [Proverbs 20:5](#)

Responding only to surface issues misses the deeper needs of the heart.

**FURTHER READING** [Proverbs 18:13](#)

Compassionate listening is an active expression of love.

**FURTHER READING** [Philippians 2:4](#)

Approach others as fellow strugglers, not as experts.

**FURTHER READING** [Galatians 6:1](#)

God comforts us so that we can comfort others.

**FURTHER READING** [2 Corinthians 1:3–4](#)

Listening begins with humility because we are all need God's love and compassion.

**FURTHER READING** [Psalm 62:8](#)

We are called to listen as God listens, allowing others to pour out their hearts.

**FURTHER READING** [Psalm 62:8](#)

True listening requires attention, presence, and focus.

**FURTHER READING** [Psalm 34:15](#) | [Matthew 9:36](#)

Listening requires restraint in our speech.

**FURTHER READING** [James 1:19](#)

We must learn to draw out deeper motivations and desires.

**FURTHER READING** [Proverbs 20:5](#)

We are called to remain calm and curious, not defensive.

**FURTHER READING** [James 1:19–20](#)

Understanding the heart is essential to speaking words that bring life.

**FURTHER READING** [Romans 12:15](#)

Even when we fail, God listens perfectly and continues His work in us.

**FURTHER READING** [Romans 8:26](#)

### Important Truth

Listening well is not passive. Rather, it is **an act of love, humility, and obedience**.

***Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak.***  
**JAMES 1:19**

### Words of Death

- ▶ React quickly without understanding
- ▶ Focus only on behaviour, not the heart
- ▶ Defend, correct, or dismiss too soon
- ▶ Driven by frustration, pride, or impatience
- ▶ Leave others feeling shut down or unsafe

PROVERBS 15:4 | PROVERBS 25:11

VS

### Words of Life

- ▶ Listen first and seek to understand
- ▶ Draw out the deeper heart behind the words
- ▶ Speak with gentleness, care, and wisdom
- ▶ Driven by humility and compassion
- ▶ Create safety and point others to Christ

PROVERBS 15:4 | PROVERBS 25:11

## Understand

Take time to consider what it means to listen well.

1. Why does Scripture place listening before speaking?

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2. What does it mean to “listen for the heart,” not just the words?

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3. How does God’s way of listening differ from our natural tendencies?

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## Reflect

*Be honest and specific. Try to think about real conversations.*

1. When I think about my words, do they tend to bring life or cause harm? Where have I seen this recently?

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2. Think of a recent conversation – did I truly listen, or was I preparing my response?

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3. How often do I react to surface issues instead of seeking to understand what is beneath?

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4. When I feel defensive or frustrated, what is happening in my heart in that moment?

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5. Do I approach others as someone who also needs grace, or as someone trying to fix them?

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## Real Life Scenario

Someone shares something personal or emotional, and you feel the urge to respond quickly or correct them.

1. What does reacting quickly without understanding look like?

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2. What does defensiveness or frustration look like in your response?

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3. What would it look like to slow down and draw out their heart instead?

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4. What simple questions could help you understand more deeply?

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## Apply

Take what you have learned and set specific, actionable goals – Focus on understanding before responding.

One conversation where I will listen more intentionally this week:

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One habit I will practice (e.g. pause, ask questions, reflect back, slow down):

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**MAKE A PLAN** When will I work on this over the next week?

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### This Week's Practice

**PRACTICE** listening before speaking.

**FOCUS** on these key practices:

1. Pause before responding.
2. Ask one thoughtful question before giving input.
3. Focus on understanding, not fixing.

### Accountability

**SHARE** your goal with a trusted friend, or study group.

**BEGIN** your next meeting with a check-in:

1. How did you listen differently this week?
2. What went well?
3. What challenges did you face?

### Prayer

Take a moment to bring this before the Lord. Include your own prayer points to make it personal.

Dear Lord, merciful and compassionate Father,

**FORGIVE ME** for speaking too quickly and listening too little.

**HELP ME** to see my own need for grace.

**TEACH ME** to listen with humility, patience, and compassion.

**USE MY WORDS** to bring life, not harm, to those around me.

# A House of Compassion

## *Shepherding God's Flock*

### Session Overview

God's church is born out of His compassion and it is called to reflect that same compassion in its life together. This is seen most clearly in how we care for one another when sin and weakness are present.

True shepherding does not ignore truth, but it loses sight of the person. In Christ, grace and truth meet perfectly. As we live out of His compassion, we become a people who move toward one another – restoring the fallen, bearing burdens, and building a church marked by humility, care, and love.

**SPEAKER** Rev. Douwe Agema

► Begin Module 5 by watching the fifth speech from Men of Compassion: **A House of Compassion**.

### Key Points

There has always been a tension between strictness and compassion – but Scripture calls us to hold them together.

**FURTHER READING** [James 2:13](#)

Discipline in the church is not opposed to compassion; it must be shaped by it.

**FURTHER READING** [Galatians 6:1](#)

The church only exists because of God's compassion toward us as sinners.

**FURTHER READING** [Titus 3:4–5](#)

Compassion must be evident within the church through preaching, care, and shared life.

**FURTHER READING** [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#)

Bearing burdens means moving toward those who fall, with the goal of restoration.

**FURTHER READING** [Galatians 6:2](#)

Harshness reveals pride. Compassion reflects Christ.

**FURTHER READING** [Colossians 3:12–13](#)

Christ calls us to focus on those who are struggling, not status or position.

**FURTHER READING** [Matthew 18:12–14](#)

Spiritual leadership is marked by gentleness, humility, and genuine care.

**FURTHER READING** [Psalm 62:8](#)

Office bearers are called to reflect Christ's compassion to His people.

**FURTHER READING** [Ephesians 4:11–12](#)

Truth and compassion belong together – they are not in competition with each other.

**FURTHER READING** [John 1:14](#)

Real care requires knowing people personally and engaging in their lives.

**FURTHER READING** [John 10:14](#)

In Christ, we see the perfect balance of grace and truth.

**FURTHER READING** [John 1:17](#)

### Important Truth

In God's design, **truth and compassion are never opposed** – true care always holds them together.

***Mercy triumphs over judgment.***

**JAMES 2:13**

## Understand

Take time to consider what it means to shepherd God's flock with truth and compassion.

1. Why is it difficult to hold truth and compassion together?

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2. What is the true goal of correction or discipline in the church?

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3. What does this reveal about how God has treated us in Christ?

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## Reflect

*Be honest and specific. Try to think about real relationships.*

1. When I think about correction, what is my instinct? Is it to avoid it, handle it harshly, or pursue restoration? What does that reveal about my heart?

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2. Is there someone in my church who may be struggling or drifting and have I noticed, or have I remained distant?

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3. How well do I really know the people around me? Am I close enough to bear burdens, or mostly on the edges?

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4. In my relationships, do I lean more toward truth without compassion, or compassion without truth? Why?

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## Real Life Scenario

*Someone in your church begins to withdraw. They are less engaged, less present, perhaps struggling quietly.*

1. What does staying distant or uninvolved look like?

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2. What does harsh or overly direct correction look like?

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3. What would it look like to move toward them with both truth and compassion?

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4. What could you say or do to open the door for honest conversation?

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## Apply

Take what you have learned and set specific, actionable goals – Think in terms of restoration, not just awareness.

One person I need to move toward more intentionally:

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One step I will take (e.g. reach out, ask, visit, check in, walk alongside):

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**MAKE A PLAN** When will I work on this over the next week?

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### This Week's Practice

**PRACTICE** moving toward, not away.

**FOCUS** on these key practices:

1. Notice those who may be struggling.
2. Take one step toward them.
3. Prioritise presence over quick solutions.

### Accountability

**SHARE** your goal with a trusted friend, or study group.

**BEGIN** your next meeting with a check-in:

1. Who did you move toward this week?
2. What went well?
3. What challenges did you face?

### Prayer

Take a moment to bring this before the Lord. Include your own prayer points to make it personal.

Dear Lord, merciful and compassionate Father,

**THANK YOU** for Your compassion toward me in my sin and weakness.

**FORGIVE ME** where I have been distant, harsh, or indifferent.

**GIVE ME** a heart that seeks restoration, not avoidance.

**HELP ME** reflect Your grace and truth in how I care for others.

# The Hidden Storm

## Case Study

### Session Overview

The panel discussion explored the difficult reality of hidden abuse within a family that appears outwardly faithful and respectable. Through the case of Dan, Dana, and their children, the discussion highlighted the danger of fear, secrecy, misuse of Scripture, and the misuse of power in the home.

The panel called men, office bearers, and church communities to take concerns seriously, look beneath appearances, prioritise safety, seek truth carefully, and respond with both compassion and courage. True care requires wisdom, follow-up, appropriate help, and a willingness to move toward those who are suffering.

**SPEAKERS** Rev. Douwe Agema | Royce Vermeulen | Richard Suter

► Begin Module 6 by watching the case study discussion from Men of Compassion: **The Hidden Storm**.

### Key Points

Hidden abuse can exist even in homes that appear outwardly faithful, respectable, and active in church life.

Fear in the home is a serious warning sign, especially when family members feel they must walk on eggshells.

Scripture can be twisted and misused to justify anger, control, harsh discipline, or selfish leadership.

Church leaders and members should not live with suspicion, but they must be alert to subtle signs that something is wrong.

We must not hide behind “it is not my business” when a brother, sister, or family member may be in danger.

Reports of abuse, fear, or intimidation must be taken seriously and handled carefully.

The safety of the person being harmed must shape the next steps.

A single home visit is rarely enough when serious concerns arise. Pastoral care requires wise follow up and ongoing engagement.

Compassion must extend to all involved, including the person causing harm. However, compassion does not mean minimising sin or avoiding consequences.

A man who recognises harmful behaviour in himself should seek help, confess honestly, and work with those he has hurt.

Elders and churches need training, resources, policies, and humility to know when professional help or civil authorities are needed.

Children in difficult homes need care, reassurance, and guidance so they do not carry false guilt or believe they are destined to repeat harmful patterns.

*Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

PROVERBS 31:8–9

*Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.*

EPHESIANS 5:11

“*Fear in the home is a serious warning sign...*”

## Important Truth

Compassion does not look away from hidden suffering. Rather, it listens carefully, seeks truth wisely, protects the vulnerable, and walks patiently with those who need help.

*Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.*

ISAIAH 1:17

## Understand

Take time to consider what this story teaches.

1. Why can hidden abuse be so difficult to recognise in a family that appears outwardly faithful?

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2. What does fear in a home reveal about the way power is being used?

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3. Why must reports of fear, control, or abuse be taken seriously?

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4. Why is one conversation or one home visit rarely enough in serious situations?

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## Reflect

*Be honest and specific. Try to think about real relationships.*

1. Where might I be too easily reassured by outward respectability?

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2. Am I someone others would feel safe approaching with painful or difficult matters?

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3. Do people close to me experience my leadership or influence as safe, steady, and compassionate?

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4. Where might I be tempted to minimise harshness, anger, or control because the person involved is well respected or familiar to me?

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5. If I recognise harmful patterns in myself, am I willing to confess, seek help, and change?

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## Real Life Scenario

*A family in your church appears strong, orderly, and faithful. But you have noticed that one spouse rarely speaks freely, the children seem tense, and everyone seems careful around one family member in particular.*

1. What would it look like to ignore or explain away these signs?

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2. What would it look like to respond too quickly or carelessly?

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3. What questions could be asked gently to create space for honesty?

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4. Who else might need to be involved to ensure wisdom, safety, and proper care?

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## Apply

Take what you have learned and set specific, actionable goals – Think in terms of safety, truth, and compassionate action.

One situation where I need to look more carefully beneath the surface:

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One person I may need to check in with, listen to, or support:

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One step I will take to seek wisdom, ask for help, or respond more carefully:

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**MAKE A PLAN** When will I work on this over the next week?

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### This Week's Practice

**PRACTICE** wise attention.

**FOCUS** on these key practices:

1. Notice where fear, silence, or control may be present.
2. Listen carefully without rushing to conclusions.
3. Take concerns seriously.
4. Seek wise help when a matter is beyond your ability to handle alone.

### Accountability

**SHARE** your goal with a trusted friend, or study group.

**BEGIN** your next meeting with a check-in:

1. Where did you choose not to look away this week?
2. What went well?
3. What challenges did you face?

### Prayer

Take a moment to bring this before the Lord. Include your own prayer points to make it personal.

Dear Lord, merciful and compassionate Father,

**GIVE ME** for eyes to see what may be hidden beneath the surface.

**FORGIVE ME** where I have ignored suffering or avoided involvement.

**HELP ME** respond with wisdom, courage, and compassion.

**PROTECT** the vulnerable and lead the hurting toward help and hope.

**TEACH US** as churches to be places of truth, safety, repentance, and care.

# Undermined Efforts

## Case Study

### Session Overview

This panel discussion explores the tension that arises when leadership in the home becomes unclear or contested. The case of Andrew and Annette highlights how insecurity, unmet expectations, and poor communication can lead to frustration and distance. The panel emphasises that true leadership is not about control but about service, listening, and helping others flourish. As husbands grow in their identity in Christ and lead with humility and intentional care, relationships can be strengthened and restored.

**SPEAKERS** Brent Schoof | Rev. Hendrik Alkema | Richard Suter

► Begin Module 7 by watching the case study discussion from Men of Compassion: **Undermined Efforts**

### Key Points

It's a husband's responsibility to lead his wife by listening, understanding, and building a strong relationship.

**FURTHER READING** 1 Peter 3:7

Conflict in marriage is often rooted in identity and insecurity rather than surface disagreements.

**FURTHER READING** Philippians 2:3–4

A capable and gifted wife is a blessing and should be encouraged to flourish for God's glory.

**FURTHER READING** Proverbs 31:10–12

Godly leadership is servant-hearted, it is not controlling or domineering.

**FURTHER READING** Mark 10:42–45

Sudden changes in leadership can feel disruptive and must be approached with patience and understanding.

**FURTHER READING** Ecclesiastes 3:1

Intentional, honest communication is essential for building trust and unity in marriage.

**FURTHER READING** Ephesians 4:15

Asking wise questions can help uncover deeper fears and motivations beneath conflict.

**FURTHER READING** Proverbs 20:5

A husband should prioritise his relationship with his wife above other relationships.

**FURTHER READING** Genesis 2:24

Leadership grows through small, intentional steps rather than grand gestures.

**FURTHER READING** Luke 16:10

Healthy marriages are built on shared expectations that are clearly communicated and aligned.

**FURTHER READING** Amos 3:3

Control for selfish purposes is harmful, but leadership for the safety and flourishing of the family is good.

**FURTHER READING** Ephesians 6:4

Growth in leadership requires humility, patience, and a willingness to learn new ways of relating.

**FURTHER READING** Colossians 3:12–13

“*A capable wife is a blessing to be received with thankfulness, not a threat to be controlled.*”

## Important Truth

True leadership in the home is not about asserting authority but about **serving in ways that build, nurture, and strengthen others.**

***Whoever would be great among you must be your servant.***

**MARK 10:43**

## Understand

Take time to consider what this story teaches.

1. Why is leadership in the home often misunderstood or resisted?

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2. What is the difference between servant leadership and controlling behaviour?

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3. How do identity and insecurity shape the way we respond in relationships?

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4. Why is communication so central to a healthy and flourishing marriage?

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## Reflect

*Be honest and specific. Try to think about real relationships.*

1. When I think about leadership, do I tend to avoid it, control it, or serve others through it? What does that reveal about my heart?

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2. How well do I listen to understand the heart of my wife or others, rather than reacting to surface issues?

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3. In what ways might insecurity or unmet expectations be shaping my responses?

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4. Do I create space for others to flourish, or do I feel threatened when they do?

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5. What have my recent decisions shown about how I use my influence in relationships?

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## Real Life Scenario

*A husband begins taking more initiative in the home, but his wife continues to lead as she has for years. Tension grows, and both feel misunderstood.*

1. What does controlling or forceful leadership look like in this situation?

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2. What does passive or withdrawn leadership look like?

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3. What would it look like for the husband to lead through listening and understanding?

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4. What kind of conversation could help uncover deeper fears and expectations?

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## Apply

Take what you have learned and set specific, actionable goals – Think in terms of building, not proving.

One relationship where I need to listen more intentionally:

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One conversation I need to initiate with honesty and care:

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One step I will take to strengthen trust and understanding:

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**MAKE A PLAN** When will I work on this over the next week?

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### This Week's Practice

**PRACTICE** intentional leadership.

**FOCUS** on these key practices:

1. Take one step to lead through listening rather than speaking.
2. Initiate one meaningful conversation.
3. Look for ways to encourage others to flourish.
4. Focus on building trust, not proving a point.

### Accountability

**SHARE** your goal with a trusted friend, or study group.

**BEGIN** your next meeting with a check-in:

1. What step did you take this week to lead through listening and serving?
2. What went well?
3. What challenges did you face?

### Prayer

Take a moment to bring this before the Lord. Include your own prayer points to make it personal.

Dear Lord, merciful and compassionate Father,

**THANK YOU** for the relationships You have entrusted to me.

**FORGIVE ME** where I have led poorly, whether through control or passivity.

**GIVE ME** a heart that reflects Christ's servant leadership.

**HELP ME** listen well, love deeply, and lead with humility.

**STRENGTHEN** my relationships so that they reflect Your grace and truth.

# On the Front Lines

## *Community Encouragement*

### *Session Overview*

Brokenness is not distant. It is present in our communities, our homes, and even within the church. The realities of family and domestic violence reveal how deeply sin distorts relationships, often in ways that remain hidden behind outward normality.

Men are called not to look away, but to live with quiet courage, see clearly, act wisely, and step towards others with humility and Christ-like compassion. True courage is rarely loud or dramatic; rather, it is often expressed in small, faithful acts of care, accountability, and intervention.

**SPEAKERS** Br Robert Wagenaar

► Begin this module by watching the community encouragement from Men of Compassion: **On the Front Lines**

### *Key Points*

Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) forms a significant part of frontline policing.

Brokenness is often shaped by substance abuse, trauma, and mental health struggles.

FDV is rooted in patterns of intimidation, control, and fear.

Much suffering remains unseen by the broader community.

Brokenness is not only 'out there in the world', but also present within the church.

**FURTHER READING** [1 Corinthians 5:1](#)

Sins can often hide behind familiarity and outward respectability.

**FURTHER READING** [Luke 12:2](#)

We are called to be vigilant, not ignore warning signs.

**FURTHER READING** [Proverbs 27:6](#) | [Leviticus 19:17](#)

Courage is often expressed in small, intentional acts.

**FURTHER READING** [Luke 16:10](#)

True compassion means stepping onto the front lines in everyday life.

**FURTHER READING** [Micah 6:8](#)

### *The Reality on the Front Line*

- Police attend an FDV incident every ~9 minutes.
- There were around 80,500 FDV callouts in the 2024–25 financial year.
- ~65% of all reported assaults are FDV-related.
- Over 7,000 hours annually spent ramped at hospitals for mental health assessments.

#### WHAT THIS REVEALS

Behind these numbers are real people, real families, and real suffering. This reality calls us to be aware, wise, and to act compassionately.

## Important Truth

Courage and compassion are most often **revealed in small, everyday decisions that lead to action** rather than choosing to ignore or avoid.

*Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much...*

**LUKE 16:10**

## Understand

Take time to consider what the key point of this message reveals.

1. What does this teach about the nature of brokenness in our world?

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2. Why is it often easier to ignore or minimise what we see in others?

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3. How does Scripture call us to respond to sin and suffering around us?

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## Reflect

*Be honest and specific. Try to think about real situations.*

1. Where in my life am I tempted to overlook or minimise concerning behaviour in others? Why?

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2. Think of a recent situation where something did not seem right – how did I respond?

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3. What forms of aggression, control, or withdrawal do I see in my own life?

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4. What fears or discomforts might be stopping me from stepping in or speaking up?

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## Real Life Scenario

*You notice a friend becoming increasingly harsh, withdrawn, or controlling in their relationships. Something doesn't sit right, but you feel unsure whether to say anything.*

1. What does ignoring or minimising this look like?

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2. What does fear-based silence look like?

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3. What would a wise and compassionate step toward them look like?

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4. What could you say that is both honest and caring?

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## Apply

Take what you have learned and set specific, actionable goals that you can act on now.

One situation I will no longer ignore, but pay closer attention to:

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One small, intentional step I will take (check in, ask, speak, support):

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**MAKE A PLAN** When will I work on this over the next week?

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### This Week's Practice

**PRACTICE** attentive courage.

**FOCUS** on these key practices:

1. Notice what is happening around you.
2. Don't dismiss concerns too quickly.
3. Take one small step toward someone rather than stepping back.

### Accountability

**SHARE** your goal with a trusted friend, or study group.

**BEGIN** your next meeting with a check-in:

1. How did you practice attentive courage this week?
2. What went well?
3. What challenges did you face?

### Prayer

Take a moment to bring this before the Lord. Include your own prayer points to make it personal.

Dear Lord, merciful and compassionate Father,

**HELP ME** to see clearly and not ignore what matters.

**GIVE ME** courage to act, even in small ways.

**EXPOSE** areas in my own life where I need to change.

**HELP ME** reflect Your compassion in both truth and love.

# Concluding Thoughts

Throughout this study material, the message has been the need to grow in reflecting Christ's compassion and in developing a biblical understanding of what it means to be men who care. Again and again, we have been challenged to consider how we listen, lead, exercise influence, and respond to those who are hurting.

The big question is always, just how are we going to do that?

In every instance, the answer has been to look to and meditate on the person and work of Jesus Christ, so as to become more like Him. That requires careful engagement with God's Word, through which we learn not only what compassion is but also how Christ Himself displays it.

Engaging with God's Word is critical to change. It helps us become men who reflect God's heart, husbands who love as Christ loves His church, fathers who nurture and guide their children, and brothers who walk alongside one another in truth and grace.

Men of Compassion, clothed with the compassion of Christ and given courage to care.

## *Course Review*

1. What are some key learnings I have taken away from Men of Compassion?

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2. What areas of compassion has the Lord revealed I need to grow in?

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3. What action points am I going to make a priority in my life? How will I hold myself to these goals?

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## Explore our Online Courses



Take the opportunity to refresh what you have learned at our Men's Conferences by using our online study guides. Use Seek Wisdom resources for personal study, or start a small group so that we can continue to grow together in love and faithfulness to God and our community.

◀ Scan here to access our resources.