



Fuller Youth Institute

TEACHING TEENAGERS COMPASSION FROM THE INSIDE OUT

A DEVOTIONAL FOR YOUTH MINISTRY LEADERS

DEAR YOUTH LEADER,

YOU WANT TO TEACH YOUR TEENS HOW TO LIVE LIKE CHRIST. OUR RESOURCES CAN HELP.

At the Fuller Youth Institute, our latest research highlights an important truth that you've probably already noticed: teaching teens how to grow in Christ-like compassion doesn't just happen by talking about it.

You already know that teens can spot inauthenticity a mile away. They can tell when an adult is going through the motions—they've probably tried that themselves! You may have found that even your best ministry activities are only going to get them so far in their journey of faith.

What compels them to keep going is *you*.

Your stories about opportunities to grow in compassion that come your way.

Your honesty about small wins and everyday setbacks.

Your example of life lived in pursuit of Christ-like character.

That's why we created *Compassion from the Inside Out*: A 4-week youth ministry curriculum inspired by our study of the most effective environments for nurturing character development in teenagers. Based on research with over 350 ministry leaders like you and field-tested by youth groups around the U.S., this curriculum is your roadmap to equipping students for a lifelong journey of faith-filled compassion.

IF YOU'RE READY TO TEACH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT COMPASSION FROM THE INSIDE OUT, START BY TAKING THESE FAITHFUL STEPS OF YOUR OWN.

Here are four quick reflections that will help you nurture even more compassion in your own life. Use these during your daily or weekly devotional time to keep you growing with—and for—your students so that you can show them what compassion looks like from the inside out.

We're with you as you lead your teens to nurture faith that lasts beyond youth group,

The FYI Team

FAITHFUL STEP 1:

DARE TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

READ: Matthew 14:13-21

REFLECT: If you've been in ministry for long, you've probably told kids and teens this Bible story a time or two. Jesus miraculously heals the sick people in the crowd and feeds *everyone*.

But the passage's very first verse offers important detail that's often overlooked: Jesus had just received the news of the brutal, needless death of his beloved cousin. No wonder the scene opens with Jesus in a boat, taking time to be by himself.

There are people in need of healing, and feeding, and teaching. But Jesus knows that no matter how much compassion he feels, he can't care for others unless he cares for himself too.

In fact, Luke 5:16 tells us that "Jesus *often* withdrew to lonely places and prayed." It wasn't only something Jesus did to recharge when he was tired or sad. It was a regular practice in his life.

Self-compassion is remembering that you're worthy of love and compassion, just like those you care about. It's reminding yourself that God lovingly handcrafted you, and calls you "beloved." We see this Jesus' story, too: at the very start of his ministry, God calls him a "dearly loved son," in whom God is well pleased (Mark 1:11).

Before Jesus did a single act of ministry, God was already pleased with him.

Let's let that sink in for a moment, because it's true for you too.

Consider your rhythm for taking time out, resting, and connecting with God when you're drained. What growth have you experienced in seasons when you've shown compassion for yourself? Are there ways you might benefit from showing yourself care in this season?

PRAY: Spend a moment offering yourself this truth: before you do a single act of ministry, God is already pleased with you. Talk to God about how this knowledge makes you feel, and ask that you and God might grow even deeper in friendship as you explore, model, and practice compassion with your students and leaders.

FAITHFUL STEP 2:

PAY ATTENTION

READ: Mark 10:46-52

REFLECT: Compassion is often contagious. When Jesus pauses to respond to Bartimaeus with dignity, the crowd's treatment of Bartimaeus changes.

But what's most unexpected are Jesus' first words to the man.

Jesus could offer healing to Bartimaeus in a number of ways. But he doesn't jump in and go to work. Instead, he asks this game-changing question: *What do you want me to do for you?*

Jesus doesn't make assumptions. He doesn't "fix" the problem based on his own opinions or experiences.

He invites Bartimaeus into conversation.

By listening and simply being present for Bartimaeus, Jesus removes the labels everyone else has given him: *blind*, *lonely*, and *beggar*. Jesus elevates Bartimaeus's voice, and shows the crowd—and all of us—what compassion looks like.

Is there anyone in your life who shows care just by giving you their full attention?

Take a moment to notice the effects of that person's presence in your life: Do you feel more relaxed or confident because of their thoughtfulness? More loved and accepted?

PRAY: Spend a moment in gratitude for the ways compassion has impacted your life. Invite God to be present and at work in you as you explore, model, and practice compassion together with your students and leaders.

FAITHFUL STEP 3:

PAUSE FOR PAIN

READ: John 11:17–37

REFLECT: Whenever this story is read, it can be really easy to skip to the action—the part where Jesus brings Lazarus back to life. Because we know that Jesus has the power to do miracles. He can fix this situation.

In life, there are problems we might have the power to fix, too.

Although we may not be able to bring back people from the dead like Jesus did, it's human nature to want to resolve things—often by offering advice or getting straight to the solution.

But it's really important that we don't miss what happens before the miraculous moment.

Regardless of whether or not Jesus could heal Lazarus...Mary and Martha had just lost their brother. No doubt they were incredibly sad. Even if Jesus had walked straight to the tomb and healed Lazarus right away, Mary and Martha's pain would still be there.

Of course, when Lazarus is raised from the dead, they're overjoyed to have him back. But they had still experienced deep loss.

In a similar way, our inner experiences need to heal, too. Often compassion starts by simply sitting with someone and seeking to understand their pain—just as Jesus did for Mary and Martha. When we take time to listen to someone and feel their feelings with them, we're living into the way of life God calls us to.

Think back on moments in your life when you grew in empathy and understanding as you sought to know another person's pain or struggle more fully. What were some of the biggest lessons you learned?

PRAY: Spend a moment in gratitude for the ways compassion has brought growth and deeper relationships to your life. Invite God to be present and at work in you as you explore, model, and practice compassion together with your students and leaders.

FAITHFUL STEP 4:

EMBRACE COMPASSION WITH YOUR HEAD, HEART, HANDS, & FEET

READ: Matthew 14:13–21

REFLECT: When you see someone in pain or witness people being treated badly, what physical responses do you feel? Do your hands or jaws clench? Does your chest get tight or your stomach start to hurt? Maybe you feel the need to take a walk to release some tension.

The ancient Greeks believed compassion was something that is felt in the body—specifically in the heart (your pulse), the liver and kidneys (your “guts”), and the lungs (your breath). In this story, Matthew uses the same Greek word to describe what Jesus felt toward the crowd.

The compassion Jesus experienced was felt in his whole body. Because of it, he was compelled to respond—and the people receiving his care have a whole-body experience too.

In this story, everyone who is sick experiences healing. Jesus’ anxious disciples are empowered and equipped to meet people’s needs. And the entire hungry crowd is fed.

When we allow compassion to get us moving, both those who give it and those who receive it are changed.

In churches today, we often talk about compassion as something enacted with our hands and feet. But perhaps, as Jesus shows us, the call of compassion is to engage our whole selves.

How does the compassion you experience in your head and heart inform the ways you might serve people around you with your hands and feet? Is there a next compassionate step God is calling you to take in this season of life or ministry?

PRAY: Spend a moment in gratitude for the ways compassion has impacted your life. Invite God to be present and at work in you as you explore, model, and practice compassion together with your students and leaders.

TEACH YOUR TEENS

COMPASSION

FROM THE

INSIDE OUT



Compassion from the Inside Out is a 4-week high school ministry curriculum that invites your students to dig deeper and explore compassionate interaction as you look at how Jesus modeled a life lived with compassion. Together you'll share your own stories, grow closer as a prayer-filled, caring community, and equip your teens for lifelong compassion with their heads, hearts, hands, and feet.

WE'VE PACKED THIS 4-WEEK HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY CURRICULUM WITH RESOURCES THAT HELP YOU PUT FYI'S FAITH BEYOND YOUTH GROUP CHARACTER FORMATION COMPASS INTO ACTION:

- Powerful **testimony-based discussion starters** and **video interviews** with young people mobilize your team to model growth and inspire meaningful conversations.
- Bible-based **weekly scripts and slides** equip you to teach for transformation.
- Weekly **interactive prayer and reflection activities** compel your volunteers and students to practice compassion together.
- Thought-provoking **small group discussion guides** and **student take-home sheets** help your students make meaning as they learn.
- A **comprehensive leader guide** invites you and your leaders to reflect and grow alongside your students.
- **Social media tools** keep your community practicing compassionate interaction all week long.

Find it at FullerYouthInstitute.org/curriculum