October 27, 2026

Compassion Over Criticism

October Series: Love Your Neighbor
Week Focus: For the One

Scripture – Matthew 9:36 (NIV) – *"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."*

Devotional Reflection

WHAT WE SEE IN PEOPLE OFTEN REVEALS WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR OWN HEARTS. In Matthew 9:36, Jesus looked upon the crowds and was moved with compassion. He saw people who were harassed, helpless, and in need of spiritual direction. He did not respond with irritation because of their condition or distance Himself because of their struggles. He recognized their need and responded with compassion. This same heart is evident in Luke 15, where religious leaders criticized Jesus for welcoming sinners. While they focused on the people they believed Jesus should avoid, Jesus demonstrated God's concern for those who needed His grace.

Criticism can become an easy response when we encounter people whose choices, behavior, or circumstances we do not understand. We may quickly identify what someone is doing wrong without considering what they may be experiencing or what spiritual needs remain unmet. We can become so focused on people's failures that we overlook their humanity. Sometimes criticism disguises itself as spiritual discernment, but **DISCERNMENT THAT IS NOT GUIDED BY HUMILITY AND COMPASSION CAN BECOME AN EXCUSE FOR LOOKING DOWN ON OTHERS.** Jesus never compromised the truth, yet His commitment to truth did not prevent Him from demonstrating mercy toward sinners.

The gospel reminds us that none of us stands before God on the basis of personal goodness. We all need the forgiveness and grace made available through Jesus Christ. His sinless life, sacrificial death, and resurrection provide the only foundation for our salvation. We are saved by grace through faith, not because we have achieved a level of righteousness that makes us superior to others. Remembering this truth should change how we respond to people who are struggling spiritually. **WHEN WE REMEMBER HOW MUCH GRACE WE HAVE RECEIVED, WE SHOULD BECOME MORE WILLING TO EXTEND COMPASSION TO OTHERS.** The Holy Spirit transforms our hearts so that humility begins replacing pride and compassion begins replacing unnecessary criticism.

Today, pay attention not only to what you notice about people but also to what happens within you when you notice them. When you hear about someone's failure, do you immediately form a judgment, or does your heart move toward prayer? When you encounter someone whose lifestyle differs from your convictions, do you respond with contempt, or do you recognize an opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love and truth? Compassion does not mean approving everything someone does. It means refusing to allow disagreement or disappointment to erase their dignity or spiritual need. **WE CANNOT FAITHFULLY REFLECT THE HEART OF JESUS WHILE ALLOWING CRITICISM TO REPLACE COMPASSION.**

🔥 FOCUS FOR TODAY

Christlike compassion sees people's spiritual needs without allowing criticism or pride to determine our response.

🛠️ PRACTICE

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any critical attitudes, assumptions, or spiritual pride that may be influencing how you respond to others.
- Before forming an opinion about someone's circumstances, consider what you may not know about their struggles or spiritual needs.
- When you feel tempted to criticize someone today, pause and pray for that person instead.
- Demonstrate compassion through one intentional action, such as listening patiently, offering encouragement, or speaking truth with gentleness and respect.

🙏 PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for demonstrating Your compassion toward me through Jesus Christ. Forgive me for the times I have allowed criticism, pride, or personal assumptions to influence how I view others. Through Your Holy Spirit, transform my heart and teach me to respond with humility, wisdom, and grace. Help me recognize the spiritual needs of those around me and demonstrate Your love without compromising Your truth. May my attitudes, words, and actions reflect the compassion of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

✍️ REFLECTION QUESTION

When I encounter someone whose choices or circumstances concern me, does my heart move toward criticism or compassion, and what needs to change in my response?