

Don't Ration Compassion Activity

by Robert Alexander

Divide the group into teams of 3 or 4 people each.

Tell each of the teams that they are a Disaster Response Team of **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance**. They have been deployed to a remote part of the world to give aid to a community that has been devastated by a natural disaster.

They have several minutes to make decisions as to how they will respond. Each team has 1000 Compassion Units and must use them all. The cost of Compassion Activities is as follows.

- 1 unit – Food for one day for one person
- 1 unit – a hug and a smile and an encouraging word
- 2 units – 1 blanket
- 2 units – 1 Bible
- 5 units – Emergency First Aid to one person
- 10 units – Shelter for one night
- 20 units – Grief counseling for someone who has lost a loved one
- 20 units – Pray with victims of the disaster
- 50 units – Run a Medical Clinic for one day (vaccinations, etc.)
- 50 units – Lead a worship service with the community members
- 100 units – Dig a clean-water well for one village
- 100 units – Provide resources for a school to operate for one week.

Here are four scenarios taken from world events. **Give one to each group.**

- 1) Torrential Rains hit the island of Haiti displacing hundreds of people. Many are injured from the collapse of homes and schools.
- 2) An earthquake hits a village in China. Thousands are displaced and many killed and injured from collapsed buildings.
- 3) Mudslides from a tropical storm cover villages in Guatemala. Hundreds are stranded and thousands are injured. Disease is rampant from lack of clean water.
- 4) Famine and pestilence hits a village in Ethiopia. Malnutrition from dehydration and diarrhea causes the death of thousands of infants. There is no clean water and no health care.

After each group has spent 10 minutes using their Compassion Units, have them each share with the larger group what they did.

Ask, “What hard decisions did you have to make?”

Leader: Tell the groups that if they used units for “a hug, a smile, and an encouraging word,” “a Bible,” “prayer,” or “worship” that they get to add 50 compassion units for each instance.

Ask the group, “Why would showing compassion in ways that connects people with God give you more compassion to share?”

Share with the group that in reality, there are limited material resources in the world, but when we show kindness to others from a place of love, and the source of that love is Jesus Christ, we can be sure that will never run out.

Read Lamentations 3:22,23

- What are God's mercies?

Mercy and Compassion are often interchangeably used. This passage suggests that God's compassion is new to us every day – we have access to it every morning.

- If it is new to us every morning, how do we access it?

(Prayer, Reading the stories of Jesus, psalms, etc., Listening to and reading the experiences of others)

Closing Prayer

- Close by reading the Lamentations passage again.

- Thank God for the ways that God is faithful to us.

- Ask that God help us to be faithful in serving and in showing compassion to others.