

8 Questions for Creative Compassion
New Day Conference 2020
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#1 What are we talking about with creative compassion?

The pandemic has forced everyone to get **creative**.

Some ministry models that worked in the past will not work in the short or even long-term. This can be a tremendous opportunity. The pandemic gives you the chance to stop the ministries that you should have stopped a long time ago and to start the ministries that you should have started a long time ago. But this requires courage and creativity.

The churches that learn to adapt their ministries to this wilderness period will multiply their impact for the kingdom. **We desperately need to add creativity to our compassion to respond effectively to the world's complex needs in a complicated time.**

Ask: What are some ministry models that you have never tried before that might fit the complexities of your context? Who do you know that has a creative ministry that you could emulate and learn from?

#2 How can you use your compassion ministries as access ministries for disciple-making?

The pandemic has shut off many opportunities for **evangelism**.

As a compliment to online engagement with outsiders, compassion ministries provide a way to meet outsiders in a context ripe for evangelistic conversations. **As our culture becomes less and less open to Christianity, compassion ministries become a vital way to demonstrate the gospel's transformative power and to disarm people's hesitations about the Christian message.**

Ask: "What ministry would give us access to a part of our community (a refugee population, a school, a neighborhood) that seems ripe for disciple-making?"

#3 How do you engage members in service?

The pandemic has forced many people into *isolation*.

Compassion ministries depend on volunteers. But churches across the board have struggled to reopen ministries because some of our best volunteers still need to avoid large gatherings and other forms of personal contact due to health concerns. **Maybe it's time to think big by thinking small. Mobilize your small groups to do compassion ministry in ways that make sense for them and use their resources and gifts.**

Ask: How could you mobilize your small groups to start their own ministry using their own gifts, passions, and resources? What local ministry could they partner with to serve together for the sake of building relationships and meeting outsiders?

#4 How do you turn existing ministries into disciple-making ministries?

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to *reset*.

Christian ministry seeks to bless the whole person with the whole gospel. While it would be a grievous error to do evangelism without caring for a person's physical, emotional, social, and economic needs, it would be even worse to care for all of those needs and never introduce them to Jesus. **As disciple-makers, every ministry is an opportunity for discipleship.**

Ask: How does this ministry create opportunities for discipleship? How can we change the way we carry out this ministry to focus more on building relationships inside and outside the church?

#5 How can we serve others across socio-economic and racial barriers?

Compassion ministries provide opportunities to cross *barriers*.

The events of the past year have highlighted the gaps that continue to exist in our society across racial and socio-economic barriers. Many churches simply do not reflect the diversity of their communities in significant ways. Compassion ministries gives us opportunities to partner

and form relationships with people across these social lines. **But we have to do this in a way that exalts those we serve and partner with, not in a way that makes us look like the heroes.**

Ask: What social and racial barriers has your church yet to cross in significant ways? How can compassion ministries open doors to cross these barriers?

#6 How do you mobilize your existing resources for the sake of serving your community?

Compassion ministries mobilize unused or underused **resources**.

The pandemic has put a strain on some of our greatest resources. Many churches and individuals have experienced economic hardship as a result of the pandemic. Our volunteers base has been cut in half or more as a result of people needing to avoid gatherings and unnecessary contact. But creative compassion requires us to start not by examining what we lack, but by examining what we have. **Every person and every church has resources that they have not yet mobilized for the sake of disciple-making and compassion ministries.** This includes buildings, relationships, the experience and skills of your members, financial resources, spiritual gifts, reputation in the community, food, volunteers, counselors, etc.

Ask: What resources do you have (personally or as a church) that could bless others? What needs exist in your community right now? Where do your resources match up with the community's need?

#7 How do you develop healthy partnerships with other churches, organizations, and non-profits?

Compassion ministries should avoid reinventing the wheel and instead seek healthy **partnerships**.

No organization can do everything with excellence. You simply have to work with others to accomplish similar goals. As a church, we cannot expect to be equipped to handle the myriad of needs in our community that demand our attention. **We have to depend on other churches and**

organizations in healthy partnerships that enable us to benefit from their strengths in our areas of weakness.

Ask: What organizations already exist in your community that could be a resource to you in your compassion ministries? What resources do you have that may be able to bless existing ministries in your community?

#8 Where do I go from here?

Compassion ministries emerge and thrive when disciples match one of their greatest *passions* with one of the world's greatest *needs*.

In order for a ministry to be sustainable, you have to have members who are motivated enough to see it thrive. As you think about what ministries to start (and which to stop), take some time to evaluate the specific passions that exist in your church or small group. Then take some time to evaluate the greatest needs in your community. **This simply requires curiosity and a willingness to get outside your comfort zone.**

Ask: What are kind of gospel ministry are the members of our church really passionate about? What injustices move us to action? What needs exist in our community? How are other people going about meeting those needs?