

Donaldson, Dave (with Terry Glaspey), ***The Compassion Revolution (How God Can Use You to Meet the World's Greatest Needs)***, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR (2010)

## **1. Compassion Came Full Circle.**

"For my family, compassion came full circle when my wife and I felt the Lord nudge us to open our home to foster children. We completed the necessary training and became certified by the state of Virginia to be foster-care providers. Before long a local agency called about a young woman who needed a home.

"Our first response was to say no, we already decided that we wanted to provide care for a boy. (We already had two girls of our own.) But the woman from the agency wouldn't accept a quick no. 'You are the only licensed provider in her school district.'

"When we heard that, we knew we couldn't respond so quickly, so we made arrangements for her to come to our home for dinner. Almost immediately our hearts were knit together with this lovely teenage girl. We knew this was God's plan for us. It wasn't what we planned or what we had signed up for, but it was clear what He wanted.

"Days later I remember looking out our front window and watching for the young lady's arrival. After she was dropped off, we watched her approach the house, clearly a little nervous and apprehensive. With one hand she towed along the suitcase filled with her possessions, and with the other she clutched a pillow.

"My eyes filled with tears as I reflected back to the day when I walked up the stony path to the Davis home. Just like this young woman now, I had come in search of security and love and a place to call home. Almost 40 years later, here I was, blessed with a wonderful family and living in a nice home. As a leader in Convoy of Hope, I had been part of helping millions of people around the world. But this was personal, a new and deeper step into a lifestyle of *with*.

"As a young lady reached the door, I swung it open and stood before her with a warm and inviting smile and tears in my eyes. AS she stepped across the threshold, I gave her a hug and said, "Welcome. You are with family, and this is now your home." (p. 35-36)

## **2. Caring for the Elderly.**

Currently, 3.5 million Americans age 65 and older live below the poverty line. Million more barely make ends meet.

Aging Americans are feeling the effects of declining real estate and stock markets, as well as soaring fuel and food prices...The nation's health and social services resources will face unprecedented demand as 75 million people in the baby boomers generation reach retirement age--some with eroded savings and retirement accounts. (Alexandra Cawthorne, "Elderly Poverty: The Challenge Before Us," Center for American Progress, July 30, 2008. [www.americanprocess.org/issues/2008/07/elderly\\_poverty.html](http://www.americanprocess.org/issues/2008/07/elderly_poverty.html).)

Former vice president Hubert Humphrey reminded us of our responsibility to our forebears:

It was once said that the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." p. 48.

## **3. Not With This Bunch**

"One of my favorite stories is about a little girl named Suzie who was sitting in her second-grade Sunday School class when the teacher instructed the students, 'Raise your hand if you want to go to heaven.'

All the students raised their hands but Suzie. Hers remained stubbornly at her side.

'Suzie,' the puzzled teacher asked, 'don't you want to go to heaven?'

Suzie nodded her head, as if in agreement, but then glanced around the room. “Yes, I want to go to heaven--but not with this bunch.” (p. 48)

#### **4. Somebody Else Will Do It.**

“A television show performed an experiment. An actor dressed as a businessman walked down the street of a major American city and suddenly collapsed right in the pathway of other walkers. The show’s producers wanted to see how long he would lay there before someone helped. As the camera rolled, person after person walked by, at most giving a curious stare at the man who had collapsed on the sidewalk. Fifteen minutes passed, and then 30. Finally after 45 minutes a fellow citizen stopped, stooped down ... and stole his watch.” (p. 48)

#### **5. The Bystander Problem.**

“In his book *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell writes of experiments on “the bystander problem,” trying to determine which situations would get bystanders to help out someone in need. In one experiment, a student alone in his dorm room staged an epileptic fit. The results were interesting. ‘When there was just one person next door listening, that person rushed to the student’s aid 85% of the time. But when subjects thought that there were four others also overhearing the seizure, they came to the student’s aid only 35% of the time.’

(Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2002), p. 28) In other words, if people see others around them, they will assume that someone else is handling the problem and not get involved.” (p. 49)

#### **6. No Hope without Jesus.**

“I was asked to participate in a roundtable discussion that included the secular media and faith-based leaders. We wanted to find ways the religious community can work better with the media to educate the general public on the plight of the poor. The group of 30 members of the clergy and 15 representatives from the media convened in Washington DC for what would become a lively discussion.

“‘With all due respect, ‘ a journalist for a nationally known newspaper said, ‘I believe you would be much more effective communicating to the American people if you would communicate less Jesus and more about the needs in the world.’

“I couldn’t let that slide. I stood and made eye contact with the journalist. Many of the clergy turned out to see what kind of religious fanatic would take up that kind of challenge.

“‘The Bible says, ‘Faith is the substance of things hoped for,’ I insisted. ‘that means the root system of hope is faith in Jesus Christ. You cannot have true lasting hope without Jesus. If you take the faith out of ‘faith-based,’ you no longer have ‘the way, the truth, and the life.’ Our service to the poor is *for* Jesus and needs to be *through* Jesus if those in need are to experience a holistic transformation.” (p. 53)

#### **7. Walmart Churches.**

“In the same way, the church can respond to people’s needs of all kinds--whether spiritual, emotional, relational, or physical. the number of these ‘Walmart’ churches in America is growing, and they are becoming epicenters for spiritual and social renewal in their communities.

“One outstanding example of such a vision is People for People, started by a Baptist congregation in north central Philadelphia. Led by Pastor Herb Lusk, this ministry was founded on a vision of bringing transformation to the community. For more than 15 years, People for People has helped low-income individuals leave behind their dependency on welfare through a variety of programs, including help for substance abusers, counseling, education, job training, and teaching computer skills. They have also put a focus on the upcoming generation by developing programs for kids and have worked to help orphans and vulnerable children in both Philadelphia and sub-Saharan Africa.

“Their innovative approach includes a member-owned credit union that promotes the financial well-being of low-income families. In an area where poverty and unemployment are high and the majority of households are single-parent families, the traditional financial institutions are not structured to meet the financial needs of the less privileged. Through education about personal finances, services for those who have never had a bank account, nonpredatory short-term loans, SEED accounts for precollege children, and other initiatives, low-income families are given a hand to lift them up to a new level of financial security and responsibility.

“People for People also offers an extensive mentoring program for kids. Believing that children are the hope of the future, and realizing the emotional deficit to be found in many single-parent homes, the Children of Promise program matches mentors with children who need another responsible adult in their lives to help them toward greater emotional and relational security.

“These are just a couple of examples of the rich variety of ways in which People for People is meeting very practical needs in its community and providing spiritual hope through Jesus Christ. Their impact in their city has been tremendous and transforming!” (p. 55)

## **8. The Battle for Life.**

“Jesus said, ‘The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them rich and satisfying life’ (John 10:10 nlt). The life Jesus speaks of is eternal, but it begins immediately upon receiving Jesus, who is Himself ‘the way and the truth and the life’ (John 14:6). Like a thief, Satan uses his arsenal of violence, disease, hunger, and other effects of poverty to steal and kill. If he cannot kill, he will devalue a human life so a person merely subsists with being productive to society. The enemy also influences our culture to devalue lives that are deemed useful to society, labeling them as expendable.

“From the beginning of time this has been the satanic strategy; to fight a pro-life God by diminishing the value of His creation. The same enemy was at work in the Nazi concentration camps, which killed six million Jews. The thief was behind the slave trade that snatched millions of men, women and children from their homes in Africa and transported them in slave ships across the Atlantic to either the Caribbean Islands or North and South America. Hundreds of thousands died en route, and many more were killed by plantation owners. Today the thief’s weapons of mass destruction are not only abortion and euthanasia but also our unwillingness to do something about the death and destruction of the poorest of the poor.

The world we live in is under siege--three billion are desperately poor, one billion hungry, millions are trafficked into human slavery, ten million children die needlessly each year, wars and conflicts are wreaking havoc, pandemic diseases are spreading, ethnic hatred is flaming and terrorism growing. (Rich Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel*, (Nashville:Thomas Nelson, 2009), p. 238)

“The manifestations of this battle for life might be abortion, euthanasia, sex trafficking, and poverty, but at its root is a spiritual battle for life. The apostle Paul reminds us of the nature of our fight: ‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms’ (Ephesians 6:12). In the face of such a spiritual battle, God wants to deploy His spiritual warriors to defend the rights and dignities of His children. ‘When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him’ (Isaiah 59:19 kjv). We are that ‘standard’ the Spirit of the Lord is lifting up to defend life and help people experience what Jesus described as a ‘rich and satisfying life.’” (p. 61-62)

## **9. Is This Heaven?**

“The Kenya Kids Home in Nairobi is a refuge for kids who have lost their parents to disaster or disease, or who have simply been abandoned when their families could no longer care for them. The founder, Peter Njiri, is a leader I greatly admire for his heart and compassion. Every day he comes face to face with the heartbreaking realities of how lives are destroyed by need and deprivation. His work could become disheartening, but he is often reminded of how much good can be done by meeting the simple but deepest needs.

“One evening, his director for the Kenya Kids Home opened the front door of the orphanage and discovered a filthy, battered, and dangerously malnourished little boy who had been abandoned on his steps. Perhaps

desperate parents had left him there because they had run out of options and could no longer feed and look after him. Or maybe the young boy had been fending for himself for a long time and had finally gone to the only place where he thought he might get help. Either way, he was very weak and frail. Realizing that the young lad could barely stand up, the director scooped him up in his arms and carried him inside.

“Having lived so long on the streets, the boy was afraid to go into the building. But the director and the other workers treated him with great gentleness as they scrubbed of the layers of dirt and gave him a hot meal, which he scarfed down with abandon. He obviously hadn’t eaten much in a very long time.

“Then it was time for bed, so the director led him down the hall to the dorm room, which had several rows of bunk beds. The director laid him down on a vacant bed and told him soothingly, ‘We do not know who left you on our door step, but you are safe here, and we will take care of you.’

“Pulling back the covers, the director slipped the boy’s fragile bony legs underneath. ‘This is your bed,’ he said, and kissed the boy on the forehead. ‘You are safe here. Go to sleep.’

“During bed checks later that night, the director was startled to see the boy’s empty bed. He and his staff search for the missing child. When they found him, he was not outside and had not run away. In the darkness, they had overlooked him lying on the floor beside the bed. The director picked him up and tucked him back in the bed.

“‘Why were sleeping on the floor?’ he asked.

“‘I have never slept in a bed,’ the boy answered quietly. Then with tears filling his scared but hopeful eyes, he asked, ‘Is this heaven?’” (p. 65-66)

## **10. God’s Short List.**

“In the time it takes you to read this sentence, four children will lose a parent due to poverty, disease, violence, or a natural disaster. According to the United Nations, the number of children (between ages three and eighteen) living on the street is about 150 million--and rising daily. This alarming statistic should give us pause, especially when we consider the priority given to caring for orphans in Scripture.. In the letters of James it is actually part of the definition of faith approved by God: ‘Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world’ (James 1:27). This passage of Scripture is like a huge billboard in our path to remind us that caring for orphans is on God’s short list of priorities.

“If you are contemplating your priorities as a church or a denomination, keep this verse in mind. When envisioning a bigger and more beautiful office, employing more staff, or expanding your programs, consider this verse and ask yourself, what about the orphans? When you are planning budgets or considering some new technique for church growth, ask yourself, What about the orphans? How can we read James 1:27 and not make caring for orphans a centerpiece of our mission? Where else in the Bible is it made so clear what kind of faith in action is pleasing to God?” (p.66)

## **11. Who Will Get to Them First?**

“The need is urgent. Every day, every minute, precious young lives are slipping away. The race is not only for the survival of these orphans but also for their rescue before they are recruited by warlords and terrorists. Radical groups like Al Qaeda find an inexhaustible supply of children and youth among orphans to help them carry on their campaigns of terror. Surely the images of small boys carrying automatic weapons and artillery are some of the most disturbing of our time. These boys are recruited into militias, where they get their primary needs met, receive recognition, and find sense of purpose in exchange for becoming young killing machines.

“The innocence of youth is also stolen from young girls, who are pressed into service as prostitutes to serve the sexual desires of the soldiers. ‘An estimated 250,000 children are involved in conflicts around the world. They are used as combatants, messengers, spies, porters, cooks, and girls in particular are forced to perform sexual services, depriving them of their rights and their childhood. (“Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse,”

## 12. Results of Malnourishment.

More than 840 million people in the world are malnourished--799 million of them live in the developing world. Of these, more than 153 million are children under the age of five. And every year, six million of these infants and toddlers die as a result of hunger. Others manage to find just enough food to keep them alive but not enough to sustain healthy bodies, so they develop crippling diseases and ailments are destined to live out our days in pain and need. Undernourishment negatively affects people's health, sense of hope, security, and overall ability to think and be productive. A lack of food can stunt growth, sap energy, and contribute to mental retardation. p. 77.

## 13. War on Terror or War on Poverty

“In his book *The End of Poverty*, Jeffrey Sachs calls us to reevaluate our strategy for making ourselves more secure:

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has launched a war on terror, but it has neglected the deeper causes of global instability. The \$450 billion that the United States will spend this year on the military will never buy peace if it continues to spend around one thirtieth of that, just 15 billion, to address the plight of the world's poorest of the poor, whose societies are destabilized by extreme poverty and thereby become havens of unrest, violence, and even global terrorism.”(Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty* (New York: Penguin, 2006)1.) p. 78.

## 14. Food is Wasted -- 14 % in America!

“Americans have an abundance of food. In the U.S., nearly 100 billion pounds of food--including fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, meat, and grain products--are wasted every year. *One hundred billion pounds!* One 2004 study estimated that the average American household wastes 14 % of its food purchases. With all the pressing need for food, such a large amount of food being lost to waste and spoilage is a tragedy as well as a commentary on our extravagant lifestyles.” p. 79.

## 15. Can We Change Our Priorities?

The United Nations development Program estimates that the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest poor could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year. Animal lovers in the US and Europe spend more than that on pet food each year. (Bread for the World. [www.bread.org/learn/hunger-basics](http://www.bread.org/learn/hunger-basics).) Each of us needs to ask, *Would I be willing to change some of my priorities so that i have more resources to feed the hungry and save the lives of innocent children and their families?*

## 16. God's Plan for Ending Hunger.

“God's plan for ending world hunger is found in His Word, and it begins with you and me making the difference choices about how we live. Everyone is blessed with God-given resources. The firstfruits or first 10 percent of our harvest or income should go to our local church (Malachi 3:10). But that should not be the sum total of our giving. It is just the start. Generosity should be a way of life. Hebrew farmers were to make some of their produce available to the poor: ‘When you reap the harvest of your field, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God’ (Leviticus 23:22). This practice is illustrated in the story of Ruth (Ruth 2). Her relative Boaz obeys God's command and leaves the corners of his field unharvested and the upper branches of their fruit trees unpicked so that the poor will have an opportunity to work and survive.

“If we apply this principle to our own times, it would remind us that a portion of what we have belongs to the poor. Our abundance is not meant to be hoarded for ourselves, but to be shared with others, especially those in need.

“Deuteronomy 24 provides a good summary of this principle:

Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this. (Deut. 24:17-22, niv)

“Not the progression in Deuteronomy 24:

1. *The Need.* ‘Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice’ (verse 17). It is an injustice when anyone, especially a child or an elderly person, is trapped in poverty and malnourishment through no fault of their own. We are responsible to defend the God-given rights of children to be protected and sustained through nutritious food and clean safe water. This is part of what is meant to be pro-life for the poor.

2. *The motive.* ‘Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there’ (verse 18). What does this have to do with helping the poor? In effect, God is saying to His people, ‘I rescued you, I dropped food down from heaven, I provided water from a rock, and I even kept your sandals from wearing out. The best way to show your gratitude and praise is to help others who lack these things.’ Gratefulness is the key motivation for compassion. We give because we have received such blessing in our lives. God has rescued us from slavery of sin to serve others, and we are able to provide our own children with food, water clothing, and shelter. The best way to thank God for these blessings is to bless others out of our abundance. Giving to others is an offering of praise to the Lord for His salvation and provision.

3. *The commandment.* ‘This is why I command you to do this’ (verse 18). God wants us to help the poor out of a heart of praise and thanksgiving. But notice that it is not a suggestion; it is a command.

4. *The reward.* ‘So that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands’ (verse 19). Underscore the word *all*. God blesses every area of our lives--not just our finances--when we help the poor. I can’t fully explain this, but something supernatural happens when we give to those who cannot possibly pay us back. Remember God’s words through the prophet Isaiah:

‘And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.’ (Is. 58:10-11).

‘When we give to the poor, God opens the windows of heaven and blesses *all* the work of our hands. According to the Bible, helping the poor can positively impact every area of our lives. ‘A generous man will himself be blessed for he shares his food with the poor’ (Proverbs 22:9).

‘The biblical pattern clearly goes beyond simply meeting a needy person’s immediate necessities. It charts a course that leads toward sustainability. God provided manna for the Israelites during their desert wanderings, but its purpose was to sustain them as they marched toward a goal--the promised land (Exodus 16:31-35). Once they got there, the heavenly manna stopped coming, and the people raised their own crops.

'We see this echoed in the story of Ruth. Ruth worked in Boaz's field and then was adopted into his household. 'It is interesting that one of things that attracted Boaz was her work ethic--'She worked all day long.' As we will discuss later, relief must be part of a continuum of care that leads a person and family to sustainability. Convoy of Hope feeds the hungry to meet their immediate need for food, but we also make sure that they hear the gospel message and receive training in nutrition and other life skills.'" (p. 80-82).

### **17. Practical Way to Make a Difference.**

Become an ambassador for "One Day to Feed the World" ([www.convoyofhope.org](http://www.convoyofhope.org)) at your church, job, or school. (p. 84).

### **18. Safe Drinking Water a Necessity.**

More than a billion people are without safe drinking water worldwide, and a child dies every 15 seconds from water-related diseases. At any one time, half the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from waterborne diseases. This is an international crisis much bigger than any tsunami or hurricane could ever be. (p. 89)

### **19. Water Enough to Survive.**

In America we simply turn on the faucet, and water comes out to meet our needs. What if you had to carry nearly 70 gallons of water every day from a water source to your home? Let's do the math: One gallon of water weighs approximately 8.32 pounds, so 69.3 gallons weighs more than 576 pounds. Think about the impossibility of carrying 576 pounds of water from a lake or stream to your home each and every day! In most third world countries, women and children usually retrieve the water. If the average person could carry 20 pounds of water, she would have to make 29 trips. Of course, the poor are using only a fraction of the amount of water that Americans use, but much of their lives is consumed with trying to get enough water to survive. (p. 90)

### **20. Dying for Water.**

"One missionary said, 'Over a period of time, when they get less and less rain, people's capacity to rebound is lower, and they finally reach bottom. They die or just give up.' I will never forget the sight of an elderly woman lying dead alongside a road with a container in her hand. She was fetching water for her family, but the weight and the distance were finally too much for her frail body'."

### **21. Unsafe Water Causes Death.**

And often, people draw from water sources that are not clean and safe. Tainted water transports all kinds of deadly germs and bacteria and is responsible for an unbelievable number of deaths every day. UNICEF estimates that 400 million children have no access to safe drinking water and that 1.5 million children die each year from lack of access to safe drinking and adequate sanitation. The result is a plethora of diseases. A UNICEF report states that 'more than 150 million school-age children are severely affected by water borne parasites like roundworm, whipworm, and hookworm.' These children commonly carry up to 1000 parasites at a time, causing anemia, stunted growth, and other debilitating conditions." (*UNICEF Handbook on Water Quality* (New York: UNICEF, 2008). (p.90-91)

## **22. Positive Environment Gives Dignity.**

“Studies show that mixed-income housing areas, which blend middle-class and poor families, are the strongest deterrents against homeless and are very positive for the community. Placing a displaced family in a positive environment does more than just put a roof over their head. It also affords them a sense of dignity--the dignity of home ownership in a good neighborhood in a good neighborhood. It creates stability and security for the children. It also increases the job prospects for the adults in the family and increases the likelihood that the family will build ties to a local church.” (p. 101)

## **23. Churches Expanding Ministries to Our Cities’ Impoverished?**

“What do our churches need to do if we are to expand our ministries to the impoverished in the cities?”

“First we need to do a serious assessment of what the needs are and whether they are being met. Some churches have made the mistake of developing programs without first assessing the actual needs of their city, so they failed to really take aim at the most serious issues. We need to do demographic studies to determine whom we are trying to help: their race, age, income, disabilities, education, level of home ownership, employment, and so on. It might even be a good idea to go door to door, asking the people in our communities what their greatest needs are, what programs currently exist to met those needs, and where the programs are falling short.

“Second, we need to identify what churches, organizations, business, and government agencies are already doing. The local United Way or the Department of Health and Human Services might be able to help you get this information. (But keep in mind that the good works of churches are often not officially listed in the directory of services, so you might have to contact churches directly to find out what they are doing.) The point is, duplicating effective programs while neglecting unmet needs make no sense.

“Third, look at who you have in your congregation that might want to get involved. Consider their abilities, their gifts, and their level of participation. Remember that some people are too shy and retiring to step out and offer or volunteer, but they might be overjoyed to help if you ask them to take a significant role.

“Fourth, don’t get discouraged if you don’t see immediate results. Change takes time--in communities and individuals. I remember my former church working with one homeless man whom we were trying to help replace his bad habits with good ones. His slow learning curve left me exhausted. On some days I felt like the only tree in a dog kennel! Poverty holds on to its victims pretty stubbornly, breaking the bondage can take years. But we can cling to the promise found in 2 Corinthians 5:117: ‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!’ God is continually working overtime to restore and renew His people.

“Fifth, know when to rest and when to quit. Too many well-meaning compassion revolutionaries experience fatigue and burnout from their work with the poor. In a later chapter we’ll discuss ways to avoid ‘compassion fatigue.’

“Sixth, remember that the deepest need of everyone you serve is for them to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If we are not careful, we can get so involved in meeting the complex and diverse needs of our communities that we leave Jesus on the sidelines. Countless churches and charities have made the mistake of exchanging Jesus for a compassion ministry.

“Let’s not forget Jesus’ words to the church at Ephesus: ‘I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance ...You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love' (Revelation 2:2-4). As we seek to be compassion revolutionaries in our cities, let's remember that the most transforming thing we can do is to introduce people to the original compassion revolutionary, Jesus Christ.

"Your church might not be able to stage something as large as one of our Convoy of Hope outreaches, but even the smallest congregation can participate and find other practical ways to offer hope and help to the needy in their community. All it takes is the desire, some creativity, and a little elbow grease. Wouldn't it be great to provide another 'good day' for someone who has all too few of them?' (p.123)

## **24. Work is Worship**

"Work is a central theme in the Bible, with more than 800 references to the value and place of labor. *Avodah* is the transliteration of a Hebrew root word for both *worship* and *work*. Have you ever thought about the close connection of the two actions? The root word of each of them means 'to serve.' An *oved* is a worker. An *eviv* is a slave. *Avdut* is slavery. Work, therefore involves the act of serving someone. *Avodat Elohim* is service to or worship of the true God. And any act of work is an act of serving. It's a helpful way to think about our vocational lives. They are to be lives of service.

"From the very beginning, Adam and Eve were given the mission of tending the Garden and taking care of it (Genesis 2:15). This was their work. And Jesus reminded us that God is continually working: 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too am working' (John 5:17). Work has the divine stamp of approval because it is part of being created in the image of God. Chuck Colson has pointed out the difference between our modern cultural perspective on work and the biblical perspective: 'Much of our culture has a distinctly Greek view of work: We work out of necessity. But, you see, we are made in the image of God, and as such we are made to work-- to create, to shape, to bring order out of disorder.' (Os Hillman, "Faith and Work Facts and Quotes," International Coalition of Workplace Ministries, [www.icwm.net/pages.asp?pageid=203](http://www.icwm.net/pages.asp?pageid=203))

"If work is part of our natural DNA as beings created in God's image, then it only makes sense that we worship God through our labor in the marketplace. Jesus was never afraid of hard work or the business environment--after all. He was raised the son of a carpenter! Many might be surprised that 122 of Jesus' 132 public appearances that are recorded in the New Testament took place in the marketplace. When He chose 12 disciples, He chose businessmen rather than clergy. When He taught the parables, 45 out of 52 had a workplace setting. From a biblical perspective there is not hesitation about mixing business and ministry.. That is the lesson that a growing group of business executives are learning." (p. 126-127)

## **25. Seven Principles of Responsible Compassion.**

"Marvin Olasky advocates seven principles for practicing responsible compassion that can restore the church's moral authority and effectively reengage believers with the plight of the poor.

1. *Affiliation (connect with families and community)*. Responsible compassion begins with first trying to restore family ties.
2. *Bonding (help one by one)*. Effective compassion is often personalized, face-to-face approach.
3. *Categorization (treat different problems differently)*. For example, those who are orphaned, elderly, or disabled receive aid. Jobless adults who are able and willing to work receive help finding a job. (This is something Convoy of Hope endeavors to do at its citywide outreaches.)

4. *Discernment (give responsibly)*. We must help wisely--giving with our heads as well as our hearts.

5. *Employment (give priority)*. Programs that stress employment, sometimes in creative new ways, need greater emphasis and deserve our support.

6. *Freedom (reduce barriers to compassion and enterprise)*. Be intentional in networking charities to enterprise.

7. *God (reliance on the Creator and His providence)*. Successful antipoverty work, past and present, has allowed the poor to earn authentic self-esteem not by offering easy, feel-good praise, but by pointing them to God." (p. 156-157)

## 26. S.H.A.P.E. Up!

"So, what can be done to change this self-destructive mind-set and these systems that keep people trapped in their poverty? I like to say, if you do the right things, right things will happen. We may not be able to change the system all by ourselves, but we can start making personal choices that reflect responsible compassion. Here are four keys to making a difference:

"First, determine what you have to offer. God has empowered you with assets that you can use to make a difference. I like to use the acronym S.H.A.P.E. to help people determine what they might have to give:

- *Spiritual gifts*. You'll find a helpful spiritual gift test at [www.elmertowns.com](http://www.elmertowns.com)
- *Heart's desire*. What is your passion for service?
- *Abilities*. What God-given talents do you possess that you can use to serve others?
- *Participation*. Can you volunteer to the serve the poor through your church or a local community organization?
- *Evaluation*. After several months of service, ask a pastor or lay leader to assess your service and evaluate whether this area of ministry is compatible with your gifts, desires, and abilities.

"Second, decide to use your talents. Some people would say, 'These are good principles to follow, but I'll need more time and money if I'm going to do something about them.' Some may defer getting involved to a later date, when they will supposedly be in a better position in life to help. But you shouldn't wait for the perfect opportunity. It will likely never come. My good friend Tommy Barnett likes to say, 'Find a need and fill it!' Responsible compassion is using whatever you have *right now* to make a difference.

"Third, research nonprofit organizations. Before you give, take the time to learn a little about the needs, who is meeting them, and the organization's goals and philosophies. Some are much more effective and get more bang for the buck than others. Some are based on more biblically solid principles than others. Learn about where your money is going. Don't just send off some money to the most well-known organizations in order to provide immediate relief for your conscience. Make sure to put your money to work where it will work best.

...

"Fourth, volunteer to serve. Get personally involved instead of just paying someone else to do it. You will discover so much joy and meaning in actually getting your hands dirty on behalf of the poor. It is an adventure that will help you grow in compassion, understanding, and grace as you get to know the needy as people, not just statistics!" (p. 158-159)

## 27. Avoiding Compassion Fatigue.

“In late December 2004, an enormous earthquake set off a giant tsunami in the Indian Ocean. It swept along the coasts, leaving a path of death and destruction, with the devastation particularly acute in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand. In some coastal communities, waves reached 100 feet high. In the end, the tsunami was responsible for nearly 350,000 deaths and countless injuries. As images of human suffering filled our television screens, there was a global outpouring of prayer and financial donations to aid the victims.”(p. 161)

## **28. Our Strength Is in God.**

“Plugging into God’s resources doesn’t mean that we can solve all the world’s problems. That is unrealistic. Nor does it mean that we will be able to completely avoid getting tired or ‘weary in doing good.’ That is to be expected from time to time. But I believe we can avoid being overcome by compassion fatigue and losing our heart for helping if we remember that our strength is in God.

“Convoy of Hope is not only faith-based but also based on faith--faith in God for its survival. At times finances have been rather thin, and sometimes the needed funds arrive only in the nick of time. But they have always arrived. We’ve learned that God is neither early or late, but always on time. Many times we have clung to the scriptural promise, ‘My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 4:19). He has always proven faithful and blessed us beyond imagination.

“Over the years we have sometimes found ourselves running on empty both physically and economically ... and then to our dismay, even emptier! These times never made sense to us because we were doing exactly what God has commanded His people to do--helping the poor--but sometimes it just felt hopeless. We would pray but just found ourselves feeling emptier. Now, looking back in the rearview mirror of life, we can see that God allowed us to become empty so He could fill us with His presence, provision, and power. And with His resources rather than ours, we were better prepared to expand His mission of reaching the lost and the least. (p. 165)

## **29. Compassion Involves Interruption and Inconvenience.**

In an excellent article called ‘Welcoming Interruptions,’ George O. Wood reminds us that ‘showing compassion almost always involves interruption and inconvenience.’ He points out that Jesus performed most of His miracles while on the way to do something else. For example, in Mark 5, Jesus is interrupted by Jairus, the ruler of the local synagogue, whose 12-year-old daughter is dying. Jesus leaves off the ministry He is presently involved in and begins the journey to Jairus’ home. But on the way, He is interrupted again when a woman with a bleeding condition presses through the crowd so that she might touch the hem of His garment.” (p. 191)

## **30. Change Situations That Are Unfair and Unjust.**

“As compassion revolutionaries, we will challenge unjust and unfair laws and policies. Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us that being a Good Samaritan is more than just meeting an immediate need. It includes changing situations that are unfair and unjust.

We are called to play the Good Samaritan on life’s roadside...but one day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that a system that produces beggars needs to be repaved. We are called to be the Good Samaritan, but after you lift so many people out of the ditch you start to ask, maybe the whole road to Jericho needs to be repaved.

(Martin Luther King, Jr., “A Time to Break the Silence,” a sermon delivered at Riverside Church, New York, on April 4, 1967.)

### **31. An Extraordinary Life.**

“When I think about the immensity of the task set before those of us who have chosen to be compassion revolutionaries, I consider the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. A large crowd gathers to hear Jesus teach. The day wears on, and being a person of deep compassion, Jesus becomes concerned that the crowd has gone too long without any food. He has been meeting their spiritual hunger, but He wants to meet their physical hunger as well. He tells His disciples to give the people something to eat.

“The disciples are confused and probably just a little frustrated with Jesus. Why can't He be more realistic? They don't even have enough food to feed their own small group, much less a large crowd. Nor do they have enough money to go buy food for the hungry masses. With their meager resources, they couldn't possibly meet Jesus request.

“At moments like these, Jesus turns addition into multiplication.

“All the disciples could dig up was the ordinary lunch of an ordinary boy--five barley loaves and two fish. The boy agreed to offer what he had, and Jesus multiplied it. What would have been just an ordinary lunch became an extraordinary lunch. Jesus took this small offering and used it to feed five thousand people. the smallest seed was turned into an overflowing harvest. When everyone had eaten, there was more food left over than they had started with! God seems to enjoy making a lot out of very little (see Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 13:1-23; Luke 6:38). (p. 197)

### **32. Some Recommended Compassion Organizations**

*Compassion International* provides poor children with food, shelter, education, and health care. 800-336-7676 [compassion.com](http://compassion.com)

*Convoy of Hope, Inc.* mobilizes people and resources to help through outreaches, disaster response, and ongoing relief and development. 417-823-8998; [convoy.org](http://convoy.org)

*Feed My Starving Children* seeks to eliminate starvation by delivering a nutritious food mixture to the poor. 763-504-2919; [fmsc.org](http://fmsc.org)

*Leadership Foundation* offers expert charitable counsel and innovative giving solutions to donors, churches, and charities. 800-251-4443; [serving-leaders.com](http://serving-leaders.com)

Love INC brings churches together across denominational lines to help the poor by meeting immediate needs such as food and clothing, and by offering longer-term programs such as life-skills training and transitional housing. 800-777-5277; [loveinc.org](http://loveinc.org)

*ONE* is a grassroots campaign that mobilizes people to fight extreme poverty. 202-495-2700; [one.org](http://one.org)  
*Opportunity International* is dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty by providing small business loans and business services for entrepreneurs who are poor. 630-242-4100; [opportunity.org](http://opportunity.org)  
(p. 216-219)