

# FOR THE **PERSECUTED** Christ's Care & **DISPLACED**

## mercy for the body and soul

### Bible Study: Session One

*Session goal: Explore how as individual members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12), we show love and compassion to people in need whom God has set before us. We practice deeds of mercy, both planned and unplanned, to bring hope and encouragement to others and to bring honor and praise to the God whose love motivates us to show love to others.*

#### Kindness: How “Random” Can it Be?

Perhaps you have seen the message in a public service advertisement or on a bumper sticker: “Practice Random Acts of Kindness.” This is an idea that has appeal for us as individuals. We seldom form groups and elaborate plans to perform random acts. You and I help fix a flat tire, reunite a lost child in a department store with his parents or carry a neighbor’s grocery bag that was one-too-many because those are needs that often occur when we are by ourselves — and needs to which we can respond as individuals.

What do you think of when you imagine yourself performing a “random act of kindness”? Do you see yourself in the stereotypical “Boy Scout” role, helping a little old lady across the street? Do you see yourself being called upon to respond to an emergency situation?

Large or small, our acts of mercy flow from our living faith in Christ. We respond to His love for us by acting in love and compassion toward others.

List one or more ordinary acts of kindness you have done in your station in life. If it’s helpful to your study, group members may wish to share their experiences.

#### An Unplanned — and Uncharacteristic — Act of Kindness

##### THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Read Luke 10:25–37.

1. Was the act of kindness a “random act”? Discuss. What excuses might have been offered to avoid acting?
2. What was the flaw in the young expert in the Law’s understanding of the Law — specifically the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself?
3. An act of compassion responds to a need. Discuss how the story of the Good Samaritan effectively illustrates this.



#### LUTHER: FAITH DOESN'T ASK IF GOOD WORKS ARE TO BE DONE.

Faith is a divine work in us that transforms us and begets us anew from God, kills the Old Adam, makes us entirely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it.

Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good. Likewise faith does not ask if good works are to be done, but before one can ask, faith has already done them and is constantly active ... Faith is a vital, deliberate trust in God’s grace, so certain that it would die a thousand times for it. And such confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes us joyous, mettlesome, and merry toward God and all creatures (Martin Luther, *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration*, IV. 10f., Tappert, Pages 552-53).

#### LUTHER: BAPTISM, “STATION” AND “ORDINARY ACTS OF KINDNESS”

God has given every saint a special way and a special grace by which to live according to his baptism. But baptism and its significance He has set as a common standard for all men, so that every man is to examine himself according to his station in life, to find what is the best way for him to fulfill the work and purpose of his baptism... (*Treatise on Baptism*, 1519).



# Christ's Care FOR THE PERSECUTED & DISPLACED

*mercy for the body and soul*

## Bible Study: Session Two

*Session goal: Explore how as the body of Christ, i.e., congregations and other Christian entities, we demonstrate love and compassion to those in need. Explore how we share God's love through emergency response in the United States and abroad, as well as through intentional efforts to reach into communities, both domestic and international, to help people improve their standard of living.*

### Many Members, One Body

ACTING TOGETHER FOR GOOD

One of the privileges with which God has blessed the Church is that of caring for people in need. The Church may respond to need in the same way an individual might — alleviating the suffering of one person or family in a single situation or providing funds for emergency supplies in a disaster. But the Church also is equipped to respond to ongoing or chronic needs. Congregations and faith groups bring comfort and hope to countless struggling people by offering a variety of programs, including:

- Counseling
- Housing/shelter
- Food pantries
- Literacy/English as a Second Language
- Job skills
- Immigrant/refugee resettlement

The list is long and illustrates how fervently the Lutheran church has embraced its long tradition of seeing to the needs of those in distress.

### Your Plenty Will Supply What They Need

Read 2 Cor. 8:1-14.

1. Why does Paul tell the Corinthians about the generosity of the Macedonian churches? Discuss other scriptural examples of sacrificial giving. What does I John 3:16-17 say is the motivation for such giving?
2. What was the attitude of the Macedonian churches toward “sharing in the service to the saints” (verse 4)? What is our attitude? A Christian care organization often uses the slogan, “Live simply, so that others may simply live.” How is this idea related to our attitude toward giving?



#### LUTHER: AS ONE BODY, THE CHURCH ACTS IN LOVE.

On the basis of 1 Cor. 10:16-17 (“Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body...”), Martin Luther saw a most profound reason for such acts of mercy in, by and for members of the church as “one body.” ... The blessing of the sacrament is fellowship and love, by which we are strengthened against death and all evil. This fellowship is twofold: on the one hand we partake of Christ and all saints, on the other hand we permit all Christians to be partakers of us, in whatever way they and we are able; so that by this sacrament all self-seeking love is uprooted and gives place to love which seeks the common good of all, and through this mutual love there is one bread, one drink, one body, one community, that is the true union of Christian brethren (*Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament*, 1519).

