

Interactive Bible Studies



The Love of Jesus

3. The Compassion of Jesus – Matthew 9:36

This study is part of The Love of Jesus series, a 12-week SOAP Bible study journey focused on seeing the love of Jesus clearly, receiving it personally, and learning how His love changes the way we trust, obey, forgive, serve, and love others.

S

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.

Observation

What action of Jesus begins this verse?

What response did Jesus have when He saw the crowds?

What reason does Matthew give for Jesus' compassion?

O

What two words describe the condition of the crowds?

What comparison does Matthew use to illustrate their condition?

What do the words “saw,” “compassion,” “harassed and helpless,” and “without a shepherd” reveal about the way Jesus responds to people in need?

Application

What specific situation has left you feeling harassed, helpless, overwhelmed, scattered, or unsure of what to do?

In that situation, what are you most tempted to believe Jesus thinks or feels about you?

What failure, disappointment, painful experience, or response from another person has helped shape that belief?

How does Matthew 9:36 challenge that belief and change the way you understand the heart of Jesus toward you?

What specific step can you take in the days ahead to bring your need honestly to Jesus and receive His compassion?

Prayer – Write a prayer naming the specific situation that has left you feeling harassed, helpless, overwhelmed, scattered, or unsure of what to do. Tell Jesus what you have been tempted to believe He thinks or feels about you, and name the failure, disappointment, painful experience, or response from another person that helped shape that belief. Ask Him to replace that belief with the truth of Matthew 9:36: He sees your need clearly and responds with compassion. Ask Him to help you bring your struggle honestly before Him, receive His compassionate care, and take the specific step of trust you identified for the days ahead.

A Word for This Week

Matthew 9:36 shows us what is in the heart of Jesus when He sees people who are overwhelmed, vulnerable, and unable to find their way. The crowds were “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus saw their condition with clarity, and He responded with compassion. He did not look at their brokenness with irritation, disgust, or distance. He saw their need, cared deeply, and moved toward them in love.

That truth can be difficult to receive when you are the one who feels helpless. Struggle can change the way you imagine Jesus looking at you. When responsibilities pull you in too many directions, when a problem remains unresolved, or when you repeat a mistake you thought you had overcome, you may assume He is disappointed. You may believe you should be stronger, wiser, or more faithful by now. The reactions of other people may have taught you to expect impatience whenever your needs become complicated.

Matthew 9:36 challenges that belief. Jesus does not see only the outward struggle. He sees what is happening beneath it. He sees the fear, confusion, weariness, grief, and loneliness that others may miss. He understands how the burden has affected you and why you may feel unsure of what to do next. His clear knowledge of your condition does not cause Him to pull away. It moves His heart with compassion.

Take time to name the specific situation that has left you feeling overwhelmed or helpless. Be specific. Name the responsibility that has become too heavy, the relationship that has left you wounded, the decision that has filled you with uncertainty, or the failure that has made you want to hide. Then name what you have been tempted to believe Jesus feels toward you in that place. Do you expect disappointment, irritation, rejection, or distance? Consider what experience or response from another person helped shape that belief.

Now let Scripture correct it. Jesus sees you with compassion. You do not have to hide your need, explain your pain perfectly, or make yourself appear stronger before coming to Him. Bring the real situation into His presence. Tell Him what you fear. Ask Him to help you receive His care and take the step of trust you identified, whether that means praying honestly, asking for help, releasing control, or following His direction.

The goal is not to convince Jesus to care. The goal is to believe what Matthew 9:36 reveals about His heart.

Jesus sees your need and He responds with compassion.

A Personal Prayer for You

Lord Jesus, I pray for this friend as they bring their real need before You. You see the situation that has left them feeling overwhelmed, helpless, scattered, or unsure of what to do. You know the responsibility that feels too heavy, the relationship that has caused pain, the decision that has filled them with uncertainty, or the failure that has made them want to hide. Help them name what they have been tempted to believe about Your response to them. Show them where disappointment, irritation, rejection, or distance has shaped the way they imagine You looking at them. Remind them that the reactions of other people do not define Your heart.

Let Matthew 9:36 speak clearly into that fear. You see their need fully, and You respond with compassion. You do not turn away because their struggle is complicated. You do not grow impatient because they are still hurting. You see what others miss, understand what they cannot explain, and move toward them with care. Give them courage to bring the whole situation into

Your presence without hiding or pretending to be stronger than they are. Help them receive Your compassion personally and take the step of trust they identified. Guide them as they pray honestly, ask for help, release control, or follow Your direction.

Let them rest in this truth: You see them clearly, You care deeply, and You do not turn away. Amen.

Continue the Journey

Carry this truth with you into the days ahead. Jesus does not look at overwhelmed or broken people with irritation. He sees clearly, cares deeply, and moves toward those who need His help. When you feel harassed by responsibilities, remember that Jesus sees you. When you feel helpless in a situation you cannot fix, bring it honestly to Him. When shame tells you to hide, return to Matthew 9:36 and remember the compassion in the heart of Christ.

Pay attention to how you view other people as well. When someone appears needy, confused, difficult, or worn down, ask Jesus to help you see beyond the surface. Compassion begins when we stop looking at people as interruptions and begin seeing the burdens they may be carrying.

This is the third step in The Love of Jesus journey. Romans 5:8 showed us that Jesus loved us before we were strong. John 10:14–15 reminded us that the Good Shepherd knows His people personally and gives Himself for them. Matthew 9:36 now shows us that Jesus sees the broken with compassion rather than irritation or distance.

In the next study, you will look at Matthew 11:28 and reflect on the invitation of Jesus to those who are weary, burdened, and tired of carrying life alone.