



Missions Strategies:

Compassionate Ministries

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I chose not to
directions given for this
When I began thinking
paper I knew I wanted
Compassionate
I feel called to this area
this point in my own



floundering a little about what to do when I graduate.

Compassionate Ministries. What
does that mean exactly? What



follow the
paper exactly.
about writing this
to discuss
Ministries because
of ministry. At
journey I am

does one study to do Compassionate Ministries? How does one “get into the field”? Both in my own searching and in research for this paper I realized there is a lot out there. I have too many options to chose from. I honestly don’t know what it is I want to do for the church on the mission field. So I decided to use this paper as a beginning. I decided I would discuss, for my own benefit, some of the possibilities that fit under the heading Compassionate Ministries. I hope this will help me to see my options more solidly before me so I can continue on my journey of deciding what I want to do.

Definition of Compassionate Ministries

What do I understand Compassionate Ministries to be? My definition of Compassionate Ministries is: the many ministries that seek to meet the physical, emotional and mental needs of people and communities as a way of sharing Christ’s love with them; the goal being evangelism for the salvation of the person and community. When I received my call to missions, I felt called to this kind of ministry.

Brief History of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries

Because we trace our theological beginnings as a church back to John Wesley it is appropriate to note Wesley’s approach to missions. Wesley was a person driven by compassion. “Wesley visited with persons who were possessed, obsessed, and oppressed...he established a fund for poor people to obtain small interest-free loans...opened a dispensary for the poor and established a home for aged persons and infirm widows...established a school for poor children. (Hunter, 132)

When the Nazarene Church was formed from the union of several churches it was already active in Compassionate Ministries. It had inner city rescue missions, orphanages, jail ministries, medical outreaches and missionaries on the field. The church

was serious about its approach to ministry and printed its goal to reach the lost through compassionate means in the very first Manual. The focus on Compassionate Ministries was strong until about 1919 when the church began to accept fundamentalism versus “social gospel.” (Truesdale, 105)

Institutional Compassionate Ministries programs declined but the work was still being done all across the country and the focus of overseas missions continued to be reaching out through Compassionate Ministries. Finally the revival of Compassionate Ministries came. In the early 1980’s the Hunger and Disaster Fund was created and the second Sunday in December became Compassion Sunday to raise awareness. In 1984 the Church created the Office of Compassionate Ministries that is housed in the International Headquarters. Once again Compassionate Ministries is a primary way of reaching the lost.

Why Compassionate Ministries?

There are many reasons for using Compassionate Ministries as an evangelism strategy.

- Biblical basis- The Old Testament gives 210 references to the responsibility of God’s people to victims of material poverty (Cook, 37). From Genesis to Revelation God demands that we participate in missions. The scriptures also tell us how we are to minister to those in need in our world. Deuteronomy 15:11 says “There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.” The New Testament is better known for its examples of compassion. Jesus healed the people everywhere he went as he preached to them. He fed the five thousand. He commanded the rich to sell their

possessions and give the money to the poor. There are too many examples to discuss even a selection of them. But it is clear that God wants us to be compassionate and serve the needy.

- Service to the needy gives credibility to the message the evangelist wants to share. Very few can accept a message that is not carried out by the messenger.
- Serving a person shows that you are concerned about their well-being. Trust is gained in the process, which earns an audience for sharing the gospel.
- Discipleship is active. Knowledge of the Christian lifestyle is not what saves. New converts need to “do” their faith and change their lifestyle to be fully converted.
- As people receive grace they are more likely to understand it and share it with others. Those who receive grace in the form of Compassionate Ministries will share grace with others.
- When a person or people is converted and discipled they perceive their circumstances to be different. They are given self-respect, seek education, and have hope for the future. As this spreads whole societies are changed. This change is called Redemption lift, “it is the most effective single proven method of liberating people from disadvantaged and oppression and for reforming a society.” (Hunter, 134)

(Most of this list from Hunter, 133-134)

How Compassionate Ministries?

The Church of the Nazarene coordinates Compassionate Ministries through the Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Office (NCM), which is part of the World Mission Division. The office has defined its types of ministries as: disaster relief, feeding programs, admissions, self-help, medical missions, vocational training, formal and

nonformal education, and refugee assistance. These programs are carried out both by people on the official payroll of the office and by the pastors, missionaries, church leaders and laypersons of the Nazarene church. As of 1986, thirty to forty percent of Nazarene missionaries are involved in some way in Compassionate Ministries (Cook, 17).

Feeding programs: In 1984, thirty-eight percent of NCM funds were spent on feeding programs (Cook, 47). NCM feeding programs always aim to go beyond simply feeding someone a meal. Hunger is a greater problem than just one meal. People need to have food for a lifetime; and they need to have the kind of food that will sustain and strengthen their bodies. They may need medical treatment for conditions caused by their lack of food. They need to be trained for jobs to earn money for food, or they need to be taught how to grow their own food. NCM works to provide these kinds of services to the poor. For example, Hospitals in third world countries don't serve food because there is not enough money to buy food for patients. Patients are required to bring their own food or have it provided by friends or relatives if they want to stay in the hospital to recuperate. NCM works to provide food to these hospitals for those who are unable to bring it themselves. Another example is food programs in the Nazarene sponsored schools around the world. In most places the government sponsors meals for the students, but in some places including Haiti and countries in Africa that is not the case. NCM is determined to provide food for the students. Often it is the only meal the student will get that day.

Agmission: This is a new word for me. I was very excited to learn it. Agmissions is using agricultural technology on the mission field. (Cook, 27) Its aim is teaching

peoples how to improve their lives for themselves. For example, by teaching them to produce their own food and maintain clean water systems. (Sounds like what Steve Saint has to say about teaching the man how to fish, but he never called it this) There is a limit to the money at some point. Simply providing meals to people will never cure the disease; it only treats the symptoms. Agmission programs usually grow out of a feeding program. Solutions come when people can grow their own food and drink healthy water that they kept clean. The cycle of poverty can be broken and entire communities can create a functioning economic system. NCM often provides tools to farm and seeds to plant to start the first crop.

Medical missions: Medical missions is a big part of outreach efforts in third world areas. The focus is on preventative versus curative medicine. A program being used at hospitals in India works toward developing the rural areas not within walking distance of a hospital. It includes providing medical services in the villages, disease prevention, controlling family size, environment hygiene, purchase of food, nutritional training, conducting “Under Five” clinics (which closely monitor children under five years old for weight, food intake, nutrition and immunizations) and providing food to hospital patients.

The following illustration (Cook, 65) is fairly self-explanatory. In third world countries the presence of Christian volunteers working with people in their community has a greater spiritual impact than a patient being treated and released at a hospital. Prevention is best explained and acted out within the environment the person lives.

Another example of NCM's using Medical missions is in Guatemala in the early 80's. The need for a medical missions emphasis was realized. Pastors were unable to assist the people in areas where there were no health facilities. Illness was leading to poverty which led to more illness. NCM stepped in and subsidized the funding for the supplies needed at the facilities that were created.

Refugee assistance: Natural and man-made disasters disrupt the lives and homes of millions of people every year. To help refugees, NCM attempts to resettle them by following a priority placement policy. 1) If at all possible, NCM assists people in rebuilding their homes and lives in the same place they lived before. This might be possible after hurricanes or earthquakes when rebuilding is an option. 2) If unable to resettle in the original place, then NCM seeks to place them in the same cultural area with others from the same background and language. 3) If unable to stay within the same country, then refugees are settled into a similar world area. For example, moving to a neighboring country that has the same language and a similar culture. 4) The first three

are much more desirable than the last option. At last resort, people are moved far from their home culture and language. Many Asians in the war-torn countries of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam have resettled in the U.S. The mission field has now come to the U.S. American Nazarenes are able to minister cross-culturally within the U.S. Some of the refugees who learn of Christ here go back to their home countries and share Christ with their culture group.

Self-help: The self-help approach is to help churches become self-supporting by providing training and initial income. Money is invested by NCM to start a project that will create a net profit over many years in the future. For example, NCM purchased equipment for a church to make decorations out of marble balls in Portugal. A furniture reupholstery shop was also started. In Zambia, NCM gave the districts a grant to create a loan for pastors and congregations to plant plots of land. The money made from selling the crops paid for the pastor's salary or contributed to the church budget. This helped the churches become self-supporting and stop being subsidized by the district. At the Nazarene Indian Bible College in New Mexico a self-help program was started. There were 8 acres of land available for raising animals and growing crops that raised money for the students and the school.

Where Compassionate Ministries?

The Nazarene church is in 138 world areas as of 2001. Everywhere the church is, it is at work using Compassionate Ministries to improve people's lives and to share the gospel with them.

There is something for everyone in Compassionate Ministries. Any skill or career field can be used on the mission field to improve people's lives. In reality, I have discussed only a few options within Compassionate Ministries. I have learned much in my research. Perhaps the most important thing I learned is that there is much more out there than I ever expected. I can decide to do anything, and it will be useful. God works in amazing ways.

Bibliography

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