

<p style="text-align: center;">Moved with Compassion Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC – 5-8-16</p>

We are in a series entitled Miracles – When Heaven Touches Earth. Today is Mother’s Day and I believe that one of the most powerful ways heaven touches earth is through a mother’s love.

For instance, on April 9, 1982, in Lawrenceville, Georgia, a woman named Angela Cavallo was called to the door by a neighborhood kid who said there had been an accident. Angela ran outside where her teenage son Tony had been working under his 1964 Chevy Impala. Somehow the jack slipped and all Angela could see were her son’s legs sticking out from under the car. Tony wasn't totally crushed, but he was out cold.

So Angela yelled to the neighbor kid to get help, then she grabbed the side of the car with both hands and pulled up with all her strength. The news account said she raised the car 4 inches and held it for 5 minutes - enough to take the pressure off her son so her neighbors could reinsert the jack and dragged her son out. Fortunately, Tony recovered without permanent damage.

Angela, who was in her late 50s, said she couldn't have picked the car up under normal circumstances. She attributed her strength to prayer.

I’m sure there could be a natural explanation – there may also be a supernatural explanation - but what I do know for sure is that there is power in love. That’s what moved this mother to action and that’s why I’m preaching today on Moved With Compassion.

We are surrounded by people in need – people who need a miracle. And God wants to use us to help meet those needs. No, we cannot meet every need that is out there - but we can’t let the fact that we can’t help everyone cause us to help no one!

In this series we’ve taught how miracles follow faith. But how do you know when God is leading you to step out in faith so that you can be a channel for His miraculous power?

I’m going to give you two keys to knowing when to move out in faith. One may surprise you because the two keys are love and fear. The first key is love or compassion.

1- True compassion always leads to action!

According to the dictionary – compassion is defined as “sympathy for the suffering of others combined with the desire to alleviate the suffering by showing mercy, giving support or rendering aid.”

Love is not just a feeling – it is an action. So – to be moved with compassion means to be motivated by love to do something to help people in need.

This is what organizations do when they are trying to raise money to help alleviate suffering in Third World countries. They show television commercials of starving children with bloated bellies and they play emotionally moving music while the announcer says, “Pick up your phone and call today. Your call could save the life of a child.’

Why do we see those commercials so often? Because they work! They evoke feelings of sympathy and they move people with compassion to action. If all they did was make an announcement asking people to help starving children around the world – they would not be a fraction as successful. Seeing the pictures and hearing the music arouses feelings of sympathy and pity in people.

But the goal is not just to have sympathetic people! The goal is to move people to action!

True compassion always leads to action! You know that’s true in your relationships. There are people who can tell you they love you all day long – but if what they call love never leads them to act loving to you – it’s not true love. And eventually you want them to stop saying they love you because you know that true compassion always leads to action!

We see that in the life of Christ. The Bible records many times when Jesus was moved with compassion. Mark 6:34 says

And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.

Jesus taught out of a heart of compassion. And we must all share truth with a heart of compassion.

Ephesians 4:15 tells us to *speak the truth in love*.

If we miss either side of that equation – we will not get good results. Some people feel compelled to go around giving their opinion on everything. They don’t care how it impacts other people – they just say whatever they think is true with no concern about how it impacts others. So - we can speak the truth – but if we do it in an unloving way – it will not get good results.

And loving people without speaking truth will not get good results. Some people think we should never confront anything with anybody. But it is not loving to withhold truth from people living in deception. The key is to speak the truth in love! That’s what Jesus did.

Not only did Jesus teach because He was moved with compassion, but almost every time Jesus healed someone or did a miracle, He was first moved with compassion. Here's an example from Matthew 14:14 –

*And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was **moved with compassion** for them, and healed their sick.*

Mark 1:40-43 says

*Then a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." And Jesus, **moved with compassion**, put out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.*

Jesus was moved by compassion. In other words - His love moved Him to action. True compassion always leads to actions.

It was compassion that moved the Good Samaritan across the road to help the man who had been robbed and beaten and left for dead.

It was compassion that moved the father to forgive the prodigal Son.

It was compassion that moved Jesus to help people in need.

He was moved with compassion when He fed the 5,000.

He was moved with compassion when He raised Lazarus from the dead.

And Jesus was most certainly moved with compassion when He came to earth to die for our sins on an old rugged cross!

Aren't you glad that Jesus was moved by compassion!

And He still is moved by compassion! Hebrews 4:14-16 says

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Jesus sympathizes with our weakness.

He understands our frailty.

He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities.

He is moved with compassion for us!

And that compassion moves Him to action.

Now remember – we are being conformed to the image of Christ. Since He was and is moved with compassion – we should be moved with compassion.

1 John 3:16-19 says

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

Other translations say – How can you can you love God and you shut your heart to the needs of others. How can you close your heart of compassion to them?

Wuest's Translations says *Whoever has as a constant possession the necessities of life, and deliberately keeps on contemplating his brother constantly having need, and snaps shut his heart from him, how is it possible that the love of God is abiding in him?*

This indicates that we are very aware when our hearts go out to someone in need. And it takes intentional effort to shut up our hearts to them. But rather than spending effort shutting our hearts to people – we must open our hearts toward people. As people of faith - we must also be people of compassion.

Galatians 5:6 says that *faith works by love.*

We all want to experience the power of God. But we need to see that power and love go together. A lot of people want the power of God – and that's great – but power without love is absolutely nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says we can move in the power of the Spirit and *have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

Faith without love is nothing because faith works by love. When you are moved with compassion toward someone or a situation, that's God moving in you telling you He wants to move through you. Romans 5:5 says

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

God wants to pour His love into us so it can work through us. So let the love of God be shed abroad through you. That's God showing you that He wants to do miracles through you!

Whenever Jesus was felt compassion for someone – that compassion surged out of Him to meet the needs of people – to teach them, feed them, heal them and set captives free.

So, when you feel that compassion, step out in faith.

If someone is down – encourage them.

If someone is hungry – feed them.

If someone is sick – pray for them.

Start small if you need to. If someone is sick, say you'll pray for them. Then check back later and see how they're doing.

Eventually, get to the place where you can pray for them right then and there. God responds to those kinds of prayers because He wants to reveal His love and power to people. We will never see miracles until we step out in faith when we are moved with compassion!

I know it's scary! And that brings us to the second key to knowing when to step out in faith: FEAR! You may wonder what role fear plays in this.

First – let me say that when Angela Cavallo picked the car up off of her son – not only was she motivated by love for her son – but by fear of what would happen to him if he was left under the car. That fear led her to do something instead of just waiting for help. So there is a healthy fear than can motivate us to help people in need.

But here's what I want you to see today –

2- When God wants to move us with compassion, Satan wants to stop us with fear.

Faith always involves risk. And in those risky times, Satan will try to put all kinds of fear on you:

“If you step out in faith you will fail.”
 “People will think you are crazy.”

Fear can paralyze you - that's why it's one of Satan's biggest tools. He uses fear to keep us from stepping out in faith. Fear of failure – fear of rejection – fear of loss.

What I want you to see today is that fear is usually not an indication to turn back, but a sign that you should press forward. 2 Timothy 1:7 says:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

We all quote that – but do you know the context of that verse? Here's the verse that comes before it - 2 Timothy 1:6

I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

These verses are about stepping out in faith to use the spiritual gifts God has given you. God does not just want to do miracles FOR you – He wants to do miracles THROUGH you! And you must overcome the fear IN you if you ever want to see God do miracles THROUGH you!

The point is that whenever you move out in faith – Satan tries to move in with fear. How do you overcome that fear? 1 John 4:18 says

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.

Fear and love cannot coexist. When one comes in – the other must leave.

Here's how this works: the more we love God, the less fear we will have. It's a matter of trust.

When we realize that God loves us and will take care of us – it casts out all fear. Now, I'm not a fearful person. In fact, I had to really wrack my brain to think of times I've really been afraid.

I thought of one time when we lived in Florida, I went fishing in the Everglades with my father. It was pretty cool seeing all the alligators until it started getting dark and our motor wouldn't start. It was pitch black by the time we got back. They were about to send out a search party for us.

I was pretty scared, but having my father there calmed me down. He told me everything would be okay. The presence of my father and the words of my father calmed my fears.

And that's the message I want you to take away today: Just as the presence and the words of my father calmed my fear – so the presence and the words of our heavenly Father calms our fears.

Once we understand the perfect love of God, we have nothing to fear. The Lord is with us wherever we go and His love casts out all fear.

I don't fear death, because my Father has given me eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!

I don't fear lack because my Father meets all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!

I don't fear the devil, because greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.

I don't fear the future because the future's in my Father's hands.

I don't fear what man can do to me because if God is for me, who can be against me?

I don't fear job loss, because Jehovah Jireh is my provider.

I don't fear sickness, because Jehovah Rapha is the Great Physician.

Do you get what I'm saying today?
When you know the Lord – His perfect love casts out all fear!

And when you know that His perfect love casts out all fear – then there is no longer any room for fear!

You overcome fear by practicing the presence of Jesus. You do that by cultivating your awareness that God is always with you.

Our love for God and others must be stronger than our fear! We must be moved by love, not stopped by fear. When you choose to be moved by compassion, not by fear – you will see the power of God move on your behalf also.

Don't wait for fear to go away, but press through with faith.

“But Pastor Joe, you don't know how bad the situation is. You don't know how big people's problems are.”

Maybe not - but here's what I do know: You're looking at the wrong thing!

I know that however big someone's problem is - God is bigger than the problem.
I know that no matter how bad a situation gets, God is always good!
I know that no storm, no problem, no devil in hell is a match for our God!
You will never see miracles until you know God like that! Daniel 11:32 says

The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.

- Joseph faced fear when he was thrown into a pit then into prison, but he knew that what the devil meant for evil, God meant for good!
- Peter faced fear when he got out of the boat – but he walked on water.
- Daniel faced fear when he was thrown into a pit of lions.
- David faced fear with he fought a giant with a sling shot.
- Gideon faced fear when he fought a huge army with a few men.
- Paul faced fear when he took the gospel to places it had never been before.

But God had strategically placed all them to accomplish His plan. And when they faced their fear - God did mighty miracles through them!

And God has strategically placed you right where you are to meet the needs of people around you. You just need to trust God, step out in faith, and God promised that signs and wonders will follow you!

Like Esther – you are here for such a time as this!
Like David – you can serve the purpose of God in your generation!
Like Jesus – you can be moved with compassion!

So - be moved with compassion! Overcome your fear with perfect love!

Step into the river and watch the waters part!

Get out of the boat and walk on water!

Lay hands on the sick and watch them get healed!

Share your faith and watch people get saved.

Speak the truth in love and watch people get set free in Jesus' name!