



## **Encountering Compassion (Luke 7:11-17)**

1. What was the last funeral you attended like? Who was it for? How did you feel after the funeral?
2. Read Luke 7:11-17 about Jesus' encounter with a funeral procession in the town of Nain. What do you find interesting or striking or intriguing about his encounter?
3. Re-read verses 11-12. What details does Luke tell us about the funeral and the family involved? How do you think the people at that funeral felt?
4. Read verses 13-15 about Jesus' response when he saw the mother of the dead man. What was do you think Jesus felt when he saw this woman? Why do think Jesus did what he did?

What do these verses show us about Jesus attitude towards people who suffer or grieve?

5. Look up the following verses in the Bible:
  - Genesis 3:17-19
  - Isaiah 30:18
  - Psalm 86:15
  - Matthew 20:30-34
  - Ephesians 4:32
  - 2 Peter 3:9

These verses give a snapshot of some of the big themes across the bible's larger storyline regarding human suffering and God's response.

What does each verse tell us about:

- a) the source of suffering and death in the world;
- b) God's character and his feelings about suffering?; and
- c) God's plan and purposes regarding suffering and death?

6. Below is a quote about God and suffering from neuroscientist Sam Harris, who is a vocal critic of religion, in which he articulates what is a popular view in our culture:

*'Either God can do nothing to stop catastrophes like this, or he doesn't care to, or he doesn't exist. God is either impotent, evil, or imaginary. Take your pick, and choose wisely'.*

What does Harris assume about:

- a) the source of suffering and death in the world;
- b) God's character and his feelings about suffering?; and
- c) God's plan and purposes regarding suffering and death?

Does this quote accurately describe what Christianity and the Bible believe about God and the origin of suffering?

Is it fair to say Harris has ignored the possibility God may have a reason for delaying his response to suffering? Why/why not?

7. Imagine you had a Christian friend who was struggling with a disappointment or was suffering grief, and said to you "*I don't think God knows or cares about my problems*". How you might use the story of Jesus at Nain to encourage your friend?
8. Re-read verses 16 and 17. How does the crowd respond to what Jesus did at Nain? How do you think you might have reacted if you witnessed this encounter?

End the study by reflecting what this encounter has taught you about who Jesus is, and about how you are to respond to him.