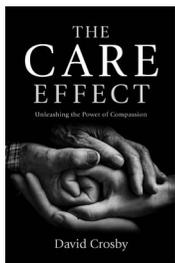


The Care Effect: Unleashing the Power of Compassion

By Dianne Swaim

“Who cares?” say children defensive about misbehavior when they are confronted.
 “Who cares?” shrug adults who say something is of no consequence, doesn’t matter.
 “Who cares?” say teenagers trying to get out of a tight spot, hoping no one cares.

But who really cares? Whom do we care about? What do we care about? Do we really care about those who are hurting around us every day? Do we even know who they are or why they



are hurting? These are questions David Crosby grapples with in *The Care Effect: Unleashing the Power of Compassion* (N164111 • \$14.99).

Through experiences forged on the anvil of

tragedy, Crosby awakens his readers to the needs around them.

Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc, injury, and death in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana in late August 2005. New Orleans was the most populated city hit by the storm. Eighty percent of the city flooded. Death and carnage were on the front pages of newspapers and television screens across the world for weeks and months. Hardly anyone was unaware of the great tragedy. Crosby was acutely aware. He was

and is pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans. Hundreds of thousands of church members from thousands of churches went to help the people of New Orleans in the wake of the storm.

Even outside of a devastating natural disaster, needs exist all around us. This book guides individuals and small groups through a study of discovering needs, why we should meet those needs, and how we can do it. Following are suggestions for how to study and respond to this book.

Time Frame: The book could be studied at adult and student missions organizations’ monthly meetings as a four-part series. It also could be used as a resource for a one-day missions retreat. Either way, the focus should be on action as a result of studying.

Publicity: Before the study, begin to put some teasers in your church bulletin or on bulletin boards around the church (find a poster in this issue of *Missions Leader*). Examples may be “Who is my neighbor?” “Who cares?” or “Where is my neighbor?” Do not attempt answers; simply follow the questions with information about the study’s time and place.

Refreshments: Keep these simple since the study is on meeting the needs of the poor, marginalized, and hurting. For example, serve a meal or snacks in individual paper bags. Ask a young person in your group to research online recent facts on hunger. Make them as local as possible. Write each one on a card and put the cards in the paper bags.

Introduction: At the end of every section, Crosby lists probing questions. Look through these questions and choose enough for all participants. Give each person a card with a question. Ask participants to get in groups of two or three and discuss the questions. Remember the goal is to arouse interest, not to solve problems. Begin each session with questions from the upcoming topic. Be creative in changing approaches per session; for example, draw questions from a basket or pin them on a city or county map with the title “Where Is My Neighbor?”

Session Study Activities: The book is divided into four parts. Devote one session to each part, i.e., one per monthly meeting, or break down an all-day retreat into four time frames. If meeting monthly, assign follow-up activities each month to be presented at the next meeting. If using a one-day retreat plan, close with planning a large group project to discover and address a specific need in your community.

Session One: Broken Seams

This session is short, introductory, and provocative. Ahead of time, ask someone in your group to go online to “Mapping Poverty in America” (nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2014/01/05/poverty-map/), find the poverty rate and poor population of your county or a neighboring county, and bring to the meeting the results of your desired county or counties. Better yet, ask him or her to bring a laptop and demonstrate to the group. Allow participants to see the potential for ministry in your area.

Plan ahead for someone who has read the book to summarize the author’s awakening to the brokenness in the world. Discuss at length the questions on page 28: “Do people still go to church?” and “Do churches still go to the needy?” Is there a difference? If so, what? Then discuss this question on the same page: “What if the church’s visibility was about its work in the community?” There are other thought-provoking questions in that section.

Close with singing or listening to the hymn “Open My Eyes That I May See.”

Session Two: Neighbors’ Needs

This section is the longest, with 11 parts. Ahead of time, enlist several people to summarize one or two subsections and lead a discussion using the questions at the end of each. Or, as an alternative, invite two or three guests from care agencies in your community to share about their ministries and their needs. These may include a foster-care children’s advocate, a school principal, or one who works with the homeless. On a poster board, summarize the needs they bring. Keep this list for your last session.

Close by listening to “The Servant Song” by Richard Gillard, available on YouTube.

Session Three: Loving Deeds

This session could be held around a meal table (one or several, according to your number). Most of the section is devoted to hospitality and Jesus’ teachings around meals. If you meet monthly, this would be an ideal session to host in a home. Ask group members to read the chapter ahead of time, and discuss the questions throughout this section.

Listen to the song “Come and Dine” (sung by Gary Chapman on YouTube).

Session Four: Do Not Give Up on Good

Invite your pastor or a special guest to speak to your group using this chapter as a guide. Remember that your study needs to end with inspiration leading to action. Use your poster board of community needs from Session Two to begin plans for a group ministry project. If you did not use the poster approach, then secure a list from a church staff member or a community member who is familiar with those in need.



 Find a poster for promoting your book study in this issue of *Missions Leader*.

Diane Swaim has answered God’s call to serve as a hospital chaplain in Little Rock, Arkansas.