

# Mercy Missions

What do we do when we see or hear of slavery in Sudan or the destruction of a Tsunami in India or ethnic cleansing in Bosnia? Are we moved to do something?

Matthew 9:36 says, "When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Feelings of pity alone do nothing to help a homeless person on the street. What helps relieve the suffering of a street kid in Rio de Janeiro or a refugee in Nigeria or a homeless drunk in "Hometown America" are feelings that cause us to do something! Compassion is real when it drives us to leave comfort behind and be willing to risk for the sake of relieving suffering and pain here at home and in the world. Sitting on the couch and shedding a tear or two while watching a television documentary about an orphanage in the Ukraine is not enough. Jesus felt compassion, but, as you will see in Matthew 9:35, He also moved with action to relieve suffering: "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom and *healing every disease and sickness.*" God wants us to feel an urgency that moves us toward the suffering people in the world.

Proverbs 24:11 says, "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter."

James 2:15-17 says, "Suppose a brother is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well-fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Of course we should pray for and give toward relief efforts. But we must also be compelled to do something physically. In Matthew 9:38, Jesus said to his disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest (pray) to send more *workers* into the field. That's physical!

Finally, in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus pins us all down with an incredible challenge that makes us squirm under the implication. If our lives are not characterized by merciful action towards suffering in the world, we prove that we are goats, not sheep. The goats' response to Jesus is similar to what we read in the passages above. They chose to ignore the suffering brother or neighbor or enemy. Goats are children of wrath, not children of God. We desperately want our lives to show that we are sheep; not goats.