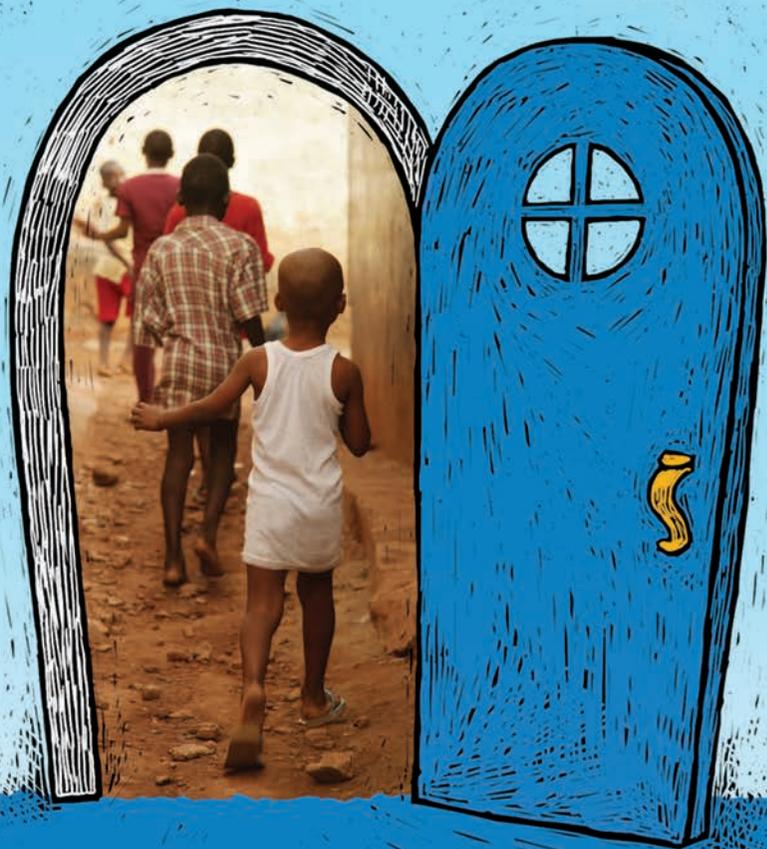


PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

HOSTED BY
ANN
VOSKAMP



Stepping through God's Open Door

When Compassion Meets Action

JOHN ORTBERG
SANTIAGO "Jimmy" MELLADO
with Ashley Wiersma

When Compassion Meets Action Participant's Guide

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When Compassion Meets Action Participant's Guide: Stepping through God's Open Door

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Contents

A Note from Jimmy and John	<i>ix</i>
How to Use This Guide	<i>xi</i>
SESSION 1	Decisions, Decisions <i>1</i>
SESSION 2	The Real Reason You're Here <i>21</i>
SESSION 3	The Power of "Your People" <i>37</i>
SESSION 4	The Church at Its Best <i>57</i>
SESSION 5	When "Yes" Spreads <i>75</i>
APPENDIX 1	Ten Ways to Pray for Children in Poverty <i>93</i>
APPENDIX 2	Activate Your Team <i>99</i>
About the Authors	<i>103</i>

A Note from Jimmy and John

FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS NOW, we have enjoyed the kind of gut-level friendship people dream about but often don't know how to pursue—the type of connection that picks up each time right where it left off, that goes deep fast, and that leaves a meaningful residue long after the conversation ends. Along the way, our friendship has endured changes in careers, changes in geographical locales, changes in life stages, and changes in roles. Incredibly, all that upheaval seemed to strengthen, not weaken, the bond.

At each pivot along the way, we've shaken our heads in gratitude for the gift of this link we share. In a world that prizes the fleeting—convenience, self-gratification, easy answers, microwaves—our friendship stands steady and sure. For someone to have your back, no matter the situation, no matter the risk, is a rare treasure indeed, and as our two-decades-long trajectory bears out, we are committed to being “that friend.”

We share all this friendship history with you as something of a case in point of what this five-session experience is all about. Twenty-something years ago, on a Thursday afternoon, one of us approached the other at the church where we both worked with a nonchalant invitation to grab lunch the following day. This led to an every-Friday lunchtime appointment for years to come. That first invitation provided something of an “open door,” and while it seemed fairly inconsequential at the time, saying yes to stepping through that

door changed both of our lives for the better and delivered to each of us the gift of a lifelong friend.

In this group experience, you will be invited to walk through a similar door of opportunity—one with even higher stakes. You are being invited to take a look at an issue that is hamstringing millions upon millions of innocent kids and have your eyes opened to the realities of extreme poverty—the tastes, the smells, and the lack. See if you see what we see—that while the problems rise tall, our collective ability to solve them stands taller still. Say yes to engagement. You never know where that simple response might lead.

We are united in our belief that if you were to net out the central purpose of life, that purpose wouldn't center on having the "right" career or living in the "right" neighborhood or vacationing in all the "right" spots. Rather, it would center on a seemingly peculiar goal: that of becoming an excellent chooser. In our estimation, that's the purpose of life. It's all about opportunity management—learning to spot divine invitations, gathering the courage to say yes to them, and then reaching back to help others to do the same. This is the journey we are inviting you to embark on today, and the implications of your engagement are far more significant than a weekly lunch date, as gratifying as that can be. The stakes here are nothing short of life and death, and a significant portion of our world's population hopes and prays you'll say yes.

Come. Have a look. Let the reality of kids in poverty wash over you. Consider engaging in their plight. Step through the door that has been opened for you. It's a move you'll never regret.

*Santiago "Jimmy" Mellado, president and CEO of Compassion International,
and John Ortberg, pastor of Menlo Church*

MAY 2017

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is for Santiago "Jimmy" Mellado, and the signature on the right is for John Ortberg. Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

How to Use This Guide

WELCOME TO THE VIDEO-BASED CURRICULUM for *When Compassion Meets Action: Stepping through God's Open Door*. Throughout these five sessions, you'll be exposed to the plight of the poor in our generation and invited to deepen your level of engagement with those suffering in poverty. Whether this is your first contact with the hard realities faced by 400 million kids around the globe or you have stayed apprised of these challenges for years, our hope is that this study will spur you on toward greater love and deeds on behalf of those in need of more resources, more compassion, and more hope.

BEFORE YOU GET GOING

To get the most out of this group experience, we recommend that you gather the following resources prior to diving in:

- *When Compassion Meets Action* five-session DVD and a means for playing the disc
- your Bible (this guide references the New Living Translation, but feel free to use the translation you're most comfortable with)

- a pen and a notebook or journal, in case you need more space to log your thoughts

(Note: If you'd like to go deeper into the concepts discussed in this curriculum, you may want to obtain a copy of John Ortberg's book *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?* Reader cues appear at the start of each session, alerting you as to which chapters will be covered.)

In terms of group configuration, if you are not already plugged into a church-based small group that wishes to work through these sessions together, consider rallying a few friends, family members, or colleagues who might benefit from the experience. You can also work through the content on your own, but growth tends to be more effective in community rather than in isolation. While speaking vulnerable truths and exposing your fears might seem like a terrible idea at first, the support and strength you'll gain as a result of letting others in far outweighs those risks.

Once you confirm who will be joining you for the journey, choose a time and dates to meet. This guide has been arranged according to five sessions. You might want to meet every week for five weeks or at another interval that makes sense for your group.

Regarding facilitation, you might rotate leadership responsibilities, or you might decide on one member to be the point person for all five sessions. Facilitation cues appear in gray scale at the beginning of each section, making it easy for anyone to lead. There are six categories per session for a leader to be aware of:

- **This Session:** an overview of the theme covered that session
- **Open Up:** a prompt for brief discussion among your group prior to screening the video

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- **Take Note:** space to capture your reflections or memorable quotes from the video segment
- **Talk about It:** questions for your group to answer and discuss
- **Activate Your Compassion:** a closing challenge for your group to read, reflect on, and consider accepting
- **Between Sessions:** questions, exercises, and journal prompts for you to complete between group meetings

If your experience is anything like Jimmy's and John's, then your choice to more fully engage with the plight of the poor will be one of the most gratifying decisions you'll ever make. Are you ready to see where this open door before you leads?

SESSION I

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

I have opened a door for you that no one can close.

REVELATION 3:8

THIS SESSION

Reader Note: If you are reading along in John Ortberg's book *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?*, please read chapters 1 and 2 prior to the session 1 group meeting.

Have a group member read the following paragraphs aloud to center everyone's thoughts on this session's topic:

Life is full of choices. There are the daily, mundane choices we make with barely a second thought—what to wear, what to eat, what route to take to work—and then there are other, weightier decisions: *How will I spend my time today? Where will I invest my energies? What will I focus my attention on, and what will I allow to fall away?*

It's not likely that choosing a striped shirt over a solid one will carry great consequences for you, today or ever. But the choices about those latter things—your investments of time, energy, and focus—have the power to change everything, both for today and for eternity, both for you and for those impacted by the selections you've made.

In session 1, you'll be asked to assess the decisions you've made regarding engagement with one of the greatest threats of our generation: global childhood poverty. What do you know about this issue? How deeply do you care about it? How open are you to investing in erasing this societal scourge?

OPEN UP

Take a few minutes for each of your group members to respond to the following prompts:

- Describe an “open door” you have walked through—an opportunity that seemed divinely placed in your life.
- Did this open door lead you into a new role, a new career, or a new relationship? Did it lead you to a new competency or a new part of the world? Did it lead you to a new level of maturity or spiritual growth?
- Describe the fears and the joys that went along with this experience.

TAKE NOTE

Play the video segment for session 1 and have the group use the prompts that follow to log their thoughts and notes.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

The decisions we make in a day:

The mission of Compassion International:

The meaningful ministry of a Pacific Transit bus driver:

Carlos's question ("Can I come to the party too?"):

"What's your problem?":

Living an open-door life:

TALK ABOUT IT

*Discuss as many of the following questions
as time and group interest permit.*

1. Which idea from this session's video content resonated most with you, and why?
2. What thoughts came to mind when you heard John mention the "seventy decisions" we make each day? Are you the type of person who really deliberates over decisions and feels the weight of these choices, as host Ann Voskamp said she is apt to do, or are you more prone to taking things as they come, going with your gut or your intuition as you make your decisions?
3. If it's true that we are the sum of the decisions we make across a lifetime, then what two or three big decisions would you point to in describing who you are today? Maybe you'd point to your choice of a school or a geographical locale or a marriage partner. Perhaps you'd point to a spiritual decision, such as the choice to follow Christ, or a career decision, such as agreeing to take over a parent's business. You might single out a hobby you picked up years ago, such as skiing, painting, or cooking.
4. As you reflect on the person you are today, what decisions have been most influential? Complete the grid on the next page, noting those key decisions and their significance. Then share one or two observations with the group. An example has been provided.

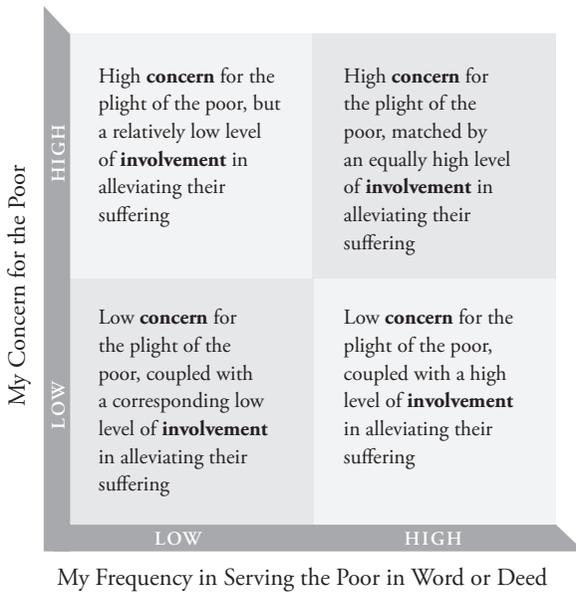
DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Decision That Has Made Me “Me”	Why It Was So Significant
<i>Example: Returning to live in the town where I grew up.</i>	<i>Allowed my family to be close to relatives. Reconnected me to my roots.</i>

5. In the video segment, Jimmy mentions that he made one of his life’s most influential decisions recently, when he accepted the presidency of Compassion International. It was then that he felt like his values—serving the church, caring for the next generation, reestablishing a connection with his own impoverished roots—became more closely aligned with his daily life.

On the issue of fully engaging in the plight of the poor, Jimmy says that although he previously cared about the challenges faced by those living in poverty, he didn’t begin to truly demonstrate that care until he made this giant shift in his career.

Perhaps you can relate to the dissonance Jimmy experienced, which always exists when our stated values don't exactly line up with the actions we take day by day. Thinking specifically about your current level of engagement in the plight of the poor, where would you say you fall on the graph below? Mark the box that best reflects your answer.



6. It has been said that a lack of a decision is in itself a decision: if we engage in some aspect of life, then we choose to do so; if we fail to engage, that also is a choice. What decision would you say you've made regarding childhood poverty up to this point? Check the box from the following list that most resonates with you:

- I'm deeply engaged with the plight of the poor. This is something I think about, pray about, and act on with great frequency. It's part of who I am.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

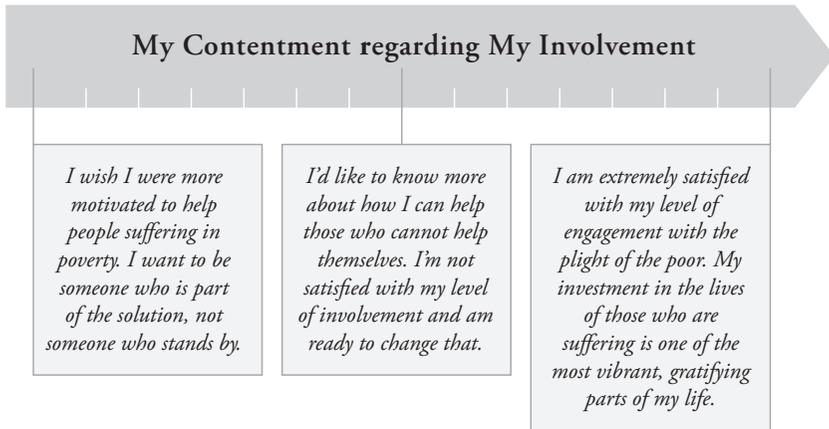
- I would say I'm anecdotally involved in alleviating the burden of those living in poverty. Whenever an opportunity such as a charitable 5K, a fund-raiser to help dig freshwater wells, or one of my church's serving days arises, I try to carve out time, money, and energy to participate as best I can.
 - Whenever I encounter further evidence of what life is like for those living in extreme poverty, I feel prompted to do something about it, even though I'm not sure where to begin. I care about this reality. I just don't know how to translate that care into action.
 - To be honest, I've never thought that much about those living in extreme poverty. I'm not heartless; I just have my hands full with other priorities.
7. What beliefs, conversations, or firsthand experiences have informed your attitude toward the plight of those in poverty? Take a moment to log your thoughts in the space below, and then share your conclusions with the group.

People who develop the capacity for deciding wisely make a fundamental decision early on that mostly life will be about serving—"How can I bless other people?"—rather than "How can I make choices that will enrich me?"

—John Ortberg

8. As you survey your responses to the previous questions, how does your current reality sit with you? On the contentment spectrum below, place an X in the spot that most accurately reflects the way you feel about your attitude toward those in need.

EXTREMELY DISSATISFIED EXTREMELY SATISFIED



9. If you are not content with your level of involvement in lifting the burden of poverty, what assumptions or fears do you think have kept you from engaging in this issue more fully? Select any from the list below that are true for you, and then discuss one or two of your insights with the group.

- I don't have time.
- I don't know where to begin.
- I have enough problems of my own.
- The problem seems too big for me to be able to offer any real help.
- I'm not really cut out for this type of work.
- Something else:

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

10. If you are completely content with your level of involvement (in other words, if you selected the third box on the contentment spectrum), what might be holding you back from helping your friends, family members, work associates, and neighbors deepen their level of engagement with the poor? Discuss your thoughts with the group.

11. In this session's video, Jimmy speaks of Carlos, the boy who peeked over the wall of the Compassion development center, hoping to be invited in. The team's eagerness to go find the young boy and usher him into the party brings to mind Jesus' words to his disciples in Matthew 25, just before he hosted the Last Supper. Have a group member read aloud the text below:



When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me."

Then these righteous ones will reply, “Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?”

And the King will say, “I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!” (Matthew 25:31-45)

Think back on your life to a time when you extended kindness or tangible resources to someone who, like Carlos, was on the outside looking in. Maybe you helped a motorist stuck on the side of the road with a flat tire. Or perhaps you offered to care for a sick friend's children while she recovered at home. You may have delivered full grocery bags to someone's front porch or loaned a vehicle to someone in need or texted encouraging words to someone who was down. What choice did you make, and what came of the situation? How did it feel to be the conduit of goodness and grace? Share your story with the group as a way to conclude this session's group discussion.

Kingdom economics are different from world economics. It is freeing to live in the space where we are valuing those things that God values.

Jimmy Mellado

ACTIVATE YOUR COMPASSION

Have a group member read aloud the following challenge, and then take some time to discuss it before closing in prayer.

In the closing moments of this session's video, you met staff and students from Horizon Prep in San Diego, California, who for more than a decade have dedicated themselves to living with compassion by sponsoring children in need, writing letters to their sponsored peers, and hosting annual "Fun Days," in which proceeds from a variety of fund-raisers go toward providing food, clothing, clean water, educational opportunities, and spiritual discipleship for Compassion development centers all around the world.

During that segment, you heard about the "Compassion Corner" located in each classroom, where students are given time to pray for their sponsored friends, write letters to those kids, and simply focus on the needs of someone besides themselves.

For this session's "Activate Your Compassion" challenge, consider creating a Compassion Corner of your own, either literally or figuratively. Like those San Diego schoolkids, you might designate a physical space in your home or office as your corner. You could spend a few minutes there once a day, saying a prayer on behalf of a child in need. (You can find a resource called "Ten Ways to Pray for Children in Poverty" in appendix 1 on pages 93–97.) You could also use this corner to write a letter of encouragement to someone you know is in need of some life-giving words.

Another possibility is to carve out a figurative corner by setting aside a portion of your day, such as first thing in the morning or your lunch hour or your family's Tuesday-night dinner, for prayer and conversation that centers on children in need.

Think about how you would like to structure your investment of time and space, and then jot down your commitment on the next page by completing the sentence prompts.

My Compassion Corner

I plan to implement the Compassion Corner concept this week by

During my time in my Compassion Corner, I hope to

My goals in carving out this time each day include

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Have someone close your session in prayer, asking God to guide you in your decisions this week.

BETWEEN SESSIONS (OPTIONAL)

If you'd like to further explore the concepts presented in this curriculum, complete these "Between Sessions" questions on your own prior to your next group meeting.

The following three sections—"Work It Through," "Weigh Your Yes," and "Walk through the Open Door"—are designed to help you reflect on your current openness to seizing the divine opportunity to join God in restoring the world to its original design, evaluate what saying yes to this opportunity would require of you, and point you toward the courage needed to walk through the open door. Complete each section at your own pace, taking as much time as you need.

Work It Through

In this session's video, the concept of "small-soul" problems is raised. "Most of us live our lives with small souls, and we have small problems, and we walk through small doors," John Ortberg says. "And Jesus comes, and he has this great big problem: 'How do I save the world?' And then Compassion comes along, and they, too, have a great big problem: 'How do we lift children out of poverty in the name of Jesus?'"

Think about your involvements over the past week or month or year—whatever time frame you wish to evaluate. What percentage of your time and attention would you say was captured by "small-soul" problems, and what percentage was focused on "big-soul" issues? Complete the "What's My Problem?" chart on the next page, and then answer the questions that follow.

We all have problems. You can have a big problem or you can have a small problem. A small problem is "How do I be more successful?" "How do I get better looking?" "How do I grow my 401(k)?" A big problem is "How do I join Jesus in saving the world?"

John Ortberg

WHAT'S MY PROBLEM?

Time period: _____

Small-Soul Problems Time/attention captured: _____%	Big-Soul Problems Time/attention captured: _____%
<i>Small-soul problems I've attended to:</i>	<i>Big-soul problems I've attended to:</i>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

As you survey your entries on the chart, what encouraging trends do you notice about how you've spent your time and energy? Put a star beside the activities that brought you satisfaction. Then, in the space below, jot down why you took encouragement from those investments.

Next, think about which entries came as a bit of a surprise to you—as in, “I can't believe that one trivial issue sapped so much of my energy last week.” Circle these items on the chart, and then record your feelings about these entries below.

Take a final look at your grid, noting one aspect of your life where you might be able to expand your big-soul-problem capacity this week. Perhaps you've opened your home to a friend in need; that's a big-soul problem you might invest more time and energy in this week. Or maybe you and your spouse are working through a difficult time; that's certainly a big-soul problem you could add energy to. You might be the type of person who gives money to people who are homeless; this week, might you also focus on having a conversation with those folks? In the space below, log the area you wish to focus on.

The big-soul problem I'd like to invest more time and energy in this week:

Weigh Your Yes

A hard truth of life is that each of us has only so much time, energy, money, and talent to invest. We have only a certain number of hours in a given week—168, to be exact—and only so much effort we can extend before we find ourselves exhausted and in desperate need of a break. And yet an interesting dynamic unfolds, according to Scripture, which turns this thinking on its head.

With the idea of converting a portion of your small-soul-problem energy into big-soul-problem energy this week, take a look at this Scripture passage and answer the questions that follow.

“And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.

“I have never coveted anyone's silver or gold or fine clothes. You know that these hands of mine have worked

to supply my own needs and even the needs of those who were with me. And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

When [Paul] had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them. They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye. They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship.

ACTS 20:32-38

This passage was said by the apostle Paul, spoken to the elders of the Ephesian church. These words were spoken just before Paul left them to sail to Jerusalem—his parting comments, if you will. The words still instruct followers of God today.

According to verse 32, what two things is the grace of God able to accomplish in our lives?

- 1.
- 2.

Referring to his posture of service toward others, Paul mentions several benefits he himself received. Which of these do you most desire for yourself, and why? Select any relevant items from the list that follows, and then explain why you made the selections you did in the space that follows.

- Freedom from covetousness
- The meeting of one's own personal needs
- The ability to meet the needs of others

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

- The satisfaction of expanding one's capacity for hard work
- The deep-seated belief that it is more blessed to give than to receive

How is it possible that serving others is the conduit to knowing soul-level satisfaction yourself? What do you make of this seeming contradiction? Note your thoughts below.

Walk through the Open Door

On page 15, you noted an area where you'd like to up the ante on your investment of time, energy, money, or some other resource this week. Take another look at what you jotted down there, and then answer the questions below.

1. What concerns do you have about investing yourself more fully in the big-soul problem you selected?

2. What most excites you about the prospect of shifting your focus from small-soul to big-soul problems—even for a few days? What do you most hope to gain from the experience, both with respect to the benefits the apostle Paul noted and with respect to your own personal desires?

In his book *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?*,¹ John Ortberg writes, “God doesn’t say, ‘I’ve set before you a hammock.’” In other words, there is an expectation on the part of Christ followers that once we know better, we begin to *do* better—we begin to act. If you’re ready to match your actions to your intentions, consider this your official invitation to walk through this session’s open door. It’s a door of decision—of choosing here and now to engage.

PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

Heavenly Father, thank you for this journey toward more compassionate living. I confess to you the times when I have prized my own needs, desires, and success over those of others, and I ask you to forgive me for those choices. Please give me the strength and conviction to choose differently today—to align my priorities with what matters most to you.

You know all the anxious thoughts I hold regarding shifting my habits and priorities, and yet you also know the good things in store for me, once I boldly make those shifts. Please remind me—through your presence, through your Word, through the people in my life who have my best interest at heart—that you

¹John Ortberg, *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?: God Has Placed before You an Open Door. What Will You Do?* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), 10.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

will make good on your promises to bless and keep me, as I seek your will above my own.

Thank you for your tender mercies that are new each and every day.

In Jesus' name I pray, amen.