Compassion, no longer merely an eraser of human mistakes, is a force of prayer and action, say the authors--the expression of God's love for us and our love for Him and one another.

The not too well known poet Yosano Akiko wrote, This one thing will I ask you: Are you with the people or apart from them? Depending on your answer, you and I will be forever divided between heaven and earth. This is the heart of Compassion. Nouwen and his co-authors argue that it is only genuine compassion, the ability to go outside of oneself in love for the other, that we find the meaning of God's love in Christ. It speaks directly to the heart of the Gospel, an incarnate faith in a life of compassion. Christ is known in the least of these, in the person who is next to you now, on the bus, in the office, at your home. This is one of the books that I would really like to recommend to any Christian, regardless of their interests in theology or spirituality.

Centered around the self-emptying, kenotic love of God in Christ, the book reminds us that Christianity is not a dogma, or a rule, or some system, but rather a Person. The authors use St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, 2:6-11, as the scriptural touchstone of the book. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus... Dogmas and theologies are footnotes, Nouwen suggests, to the reality of the crucified and risen Christ as experienced by the disciples and his followers. They are essential, but they are not the thing in itself. To come to know the meaning of our lives, our creation, we must enter into the love of God directly through compassion.

Anyone in the field of social services would benefit from this book immensely. Sometimes we lose sight of the value and meaning of our lives. This book is an antidote.

This insightful work is divided into three parts. 1) The Compassionate God-examining the nature and mission of Christ and what he tells us about the Father. 2) The Compassionate Life- the roles and meaning behind community, displacement and togetherness. 3) The Compassionate Way-Patience, Prayer and Action.
Each chapter stands alone and can be profitably used in group studies or for personal reflection.
One of my favorite books! I wish I could give it to you! Enjoy!

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