



TAKING

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IT TO THE

**LESSONS FROM A LIFE
OF URBAN MINISTRY**

STREETS

Taken from *Taking It to the Streets* by Harry Louis Williams II.

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or a name badge is necessarily going to work in the harvest field. Just like in ancient Israel, the harvest fields of inner-city America are brimming over and crying out for authentic believers who are committed to bringing the message and touch of Jesus Christ to the masses. People lost in the streets are searching not so much for orthodox church members as members of the resistance—Jesus-followers who are not going to trip when people come into the church with their pants sagging or the scent of marijuana emanating from their clothes. They are looking for believers who aren't afraid to greet them on the avenue, and ask how they are doing and mean it.

WHERE DO YOU START?

Matthew 20:29-34 recounts the story of two men on the side of a dusty road in ancient Palestine. Though sightless, they can hear the excitement as the great teacher and healer who has become rather famous in their world draws close. They call out to Jesus. The crowd, thinking Jesus is too important to take up time with these men, tells the men to quiet down. Undaunted, they cry out all the louder. Finally, Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do?" They answer, "We want our sight."

Jesus touches the men and heals their vision. However, before this great miracle is performed, we find one of the most poignant phrases in the Scriptures: "Jesus had compassion on them."

I urge you to look up the word *compassion* in the Gospels. You will find that every time Jesus is moved with compassion, a miracle occurs. Compassion is more than someone looking at tragedy and saying, "Aw, isn't that too bad?" Jesus had unspeakable empathy. When Jesus experienced compassion, he

was moved in his guts, in the very core of his being, by the plight of the person in front of him. When Jesus was filled with compassion, he responded with all of his power to meet the need.

Compassion is the opposite of apathy. Compassion is the fuel of the resistance. It is the heart that beats for the other. Compassion compels us to the streets.

Be filled with compassion. Let it envelop you. Let it encircle you. Let it surround you. Let it pour through the membranes of your skin. Let it glow in the pupils of your eyes. Be like Jesus. Let compassion be the prevailing force behind your motives and movements.

Compassion will press you to find answers that must be searched through late-night study. It will force you to go beyond what some might think reasonable. Compassion is the godly grace that will press like the hands of God on your back when you are tired and the situation appears hopeless.

If you want to be successful in urban mission, godly compassion is not the only tool you'll need, but it well may be the essential one. If you possess it, you won't have to tell anyone. Everyone will see it. Compassion will help you to make sense of what you're about to read. You need it. If you don't possess it in measure, you must crave it. Pray for it.

In the coming pages, I will take you face to face with some deep problems that confront people in the inner cities. Some of you will be startled to find out that people in the United States live in such squalor, deprivation, and hunger. You may even be tempted to put this book down and stick your head back in the sand. I want to encourage you to resist that urge and keep reading. However,

instead of reading this book like a theologian or a sociologist, I want you to put on what I call your “Jesus glasses.” Look at the world I’m laying out for you through the lenses of Christ’s compassion. Pray that God will peel away the layers of unseen apathy that might hinder you from seeing his children as Jesus sees them.

Remember apathy is the great enemy of our cause. It must be resisted. We need to strip it off like grave clothing. Have you chosen to do so? Then welcome to the underground network of believers called the “resistance.” Let’s take it to the streets.

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