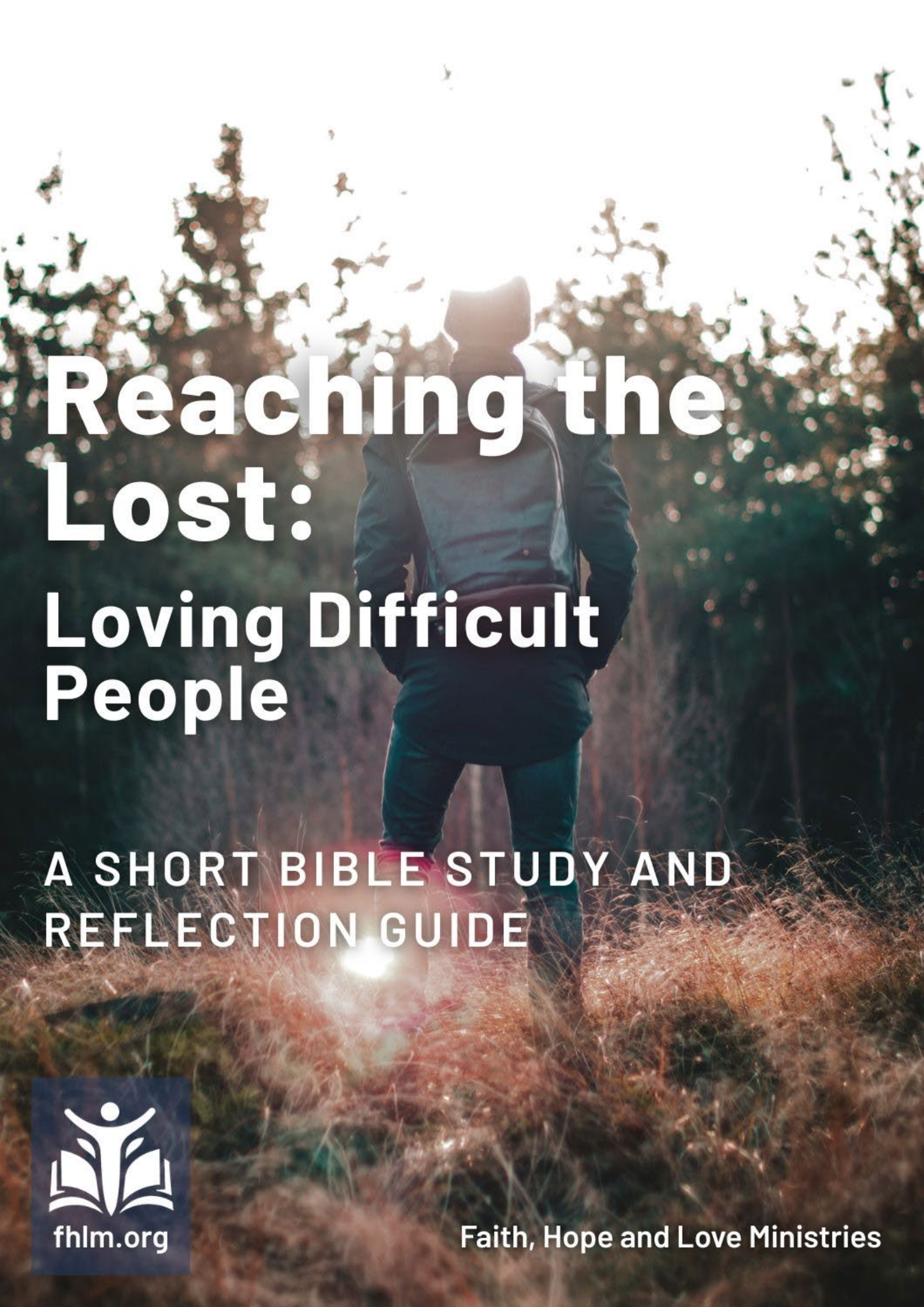




Reaching the Lost: Loving Difficult People

A SHORT BIBLE STUDY AND
REFLECTION GUIDE



fhlm.org

Faith, Hope and Love Ministries

Faith, Hope, and Love Ministries

About Us

At FHLM, we are dedicated to nurturing faith, fostering hope, and spreading love. We provide both spiritual and practical guidance to Christians, students, and Christian leaders. We are not a church, and we do not offer financial support.

We are a small ministry with a simple hope: to put warm, thoughtful, Bible-centred resources into the hands of anyone who wants to grow closer to Jesus — whether you are gathering a group around a kitchen table or sitting quietly with a cup of tea and an open Bible. Everything we make is offered freely, in the hope that it will be a blessing and passed on.

Core Values

Our mission is grounded in the values of unconditional love and unity. We prioritise inclusion and diversity over dogmatism and division, reaching out to people right where they are, and trying our best to follow the example of Jesus.

Contents

This guide is organised into three main sections:

- Leaders Guide
- Bible Study Notes
- Worksheet

Note

This guide is formatted for double-sided printing, to save paper and make for a nicer reading experience.

Stay in Touch

We would love to keep walking alongside you. Explore our growing library of Bible study and reflection guides, and do get in touch to let us know how you are getting on.

License

© 2026 by Faith, Hope and Love Ministries (Ashley R. Deutschmann) is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Leader's Guide

Reaching the Lost: Loving Difficult People

Introduction for Leaders and Solo Readers

Dear Leaders and Solo Readers,

Welcome to “Reaching the Lost: Loving Difficult People,” a short study and reflection guide from all of us at Faith, Hope, and Love Ministries. Whether you are guiding a group or making this journey on your own, we are so glad you are here. Over two short sessions we will explore what it means to love the people we find hardest to love — and the quiet, transforming power of that kind of love.

Each section has been prepared so that you can adapt it to your group or to your own reflection. Please feel free to adjust the content, the discussion points, or even the order of things to suit your setting — you know your people, and we trust you with them.

You will also find a suggested prayer at the beginning and end of each session. Pray them as they stand, reword them, or set them aside and pray from your own heart; they are simply there to help you begin.

We have laid out the sessions to fit on a single, double-sided page — Scripture and notes on one side, discussion and reflection questions on the other — so they are easy to photocopy and hand round.

You can find out more about us, or say hello, at <https://fhlm.org>, or on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

A word on copyright: everything we produce is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. In plain terms, you are welcome to share and adapt it, as long as you credit us, keep it non-commercial, and pass on any changes under the same terms.

A word on Scripture: the verses in this guide are taken from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), used with kind permission. Please read along in whichever translation you love best — we are not endorsing any single one. What matters most to us is that you read for understanding, and meet the Lord in His Word.

Our prayer is that this short guide will be a real blessing as you explore what it means to love difficult people — and that, in the loving, you would come to know a little more of God's boundless love and grace yourself.

In service to Christ,

Faith, Hope and Love Ministries

Session 1: Embracing Compassion and Understanding

Opening Prayer:

"Lord, as we gather today to explore the theme of compassion and understanding, we ask for Your guidance. Open our hearts to receive Your wisdom and love. Amen."

Key Scripture:

John 8:7 (BSB) "When they continued to question Him, He straightened up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her.'"

Supplementary Scripture:

- Romans 3:23 (BSB) "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

Discussion Points:

1. Compassion over Judgement:

- How does the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:7) challenge our own quickness to judge others?
- How does remembering that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23) change the way we show compassion?

2. Compassion in Practice:

- What are some practical, everyday ways we can show compassion to the people around us?
- How can we be compassionate without turning a blind eye to what is right — and can you recall a time someone showed you compassion when you least expected it?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will come away with a renewed sense of how central compassion is to following Jesus — and feel encouraged to show that compassion, humbly and practically, in their own lives.

Closing Prayer:

"Dear God, thank You for this time of learning and reflection. May the insights we've gained help us to be more compassionate and understanding, just as You are with us. Amen."

Session 2: Building Bridges, Not Barriers

Opening Prayer:

"Heavenly Father, as we turn to the work of building bridges and breaking down barriers, we ask for Your wisdom and guidance. Help us to be instruments of Your love and grace. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Mark 2:17 (BSB) "On hearing this, Jesus told them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Supplementary Scripture:

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (BSB) "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no account of wrongs."

Discussion Points:

1. The Bridge-Builder's Heart:

- How does Jesus' willingness to eat with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:17) shape the way you think about building bridges?
- How does the picture of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 guide the way we build relationships?

2. Listening, Praying, Staying:

- Do you find it hard to offer support without rushing in to provide solutions? Why, or why not?
- How can prayer help us build bridges with others — and what is one step you could take to build a bridge in your own community?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this session, we hope everyone will have a clearer sense of how to build relationships on love and understanding rather than judgement — and will feel encouraged to take practical, everyday steps to build bridges.

Closing Prayer:

"Lord, thank You for the wisdom and insight we've gained today. May we be inspired to build bridges, not barriers, and to extend Your love and grace to all. Amen."

Reaching the Lost: Loving Difficult People

*How do we love the people we find hardest to love — with the same
grace God has so freely shown to us?*

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Session 1 – Embracing Compassion and Understanding

One of the hardest things about following Jesus is learning to love others without condition — especially those whom society is quick to label. Whether someone has stolen, been unfaithful, or is caught in an addiction, it is all too easy to pass judgement and quietly keep our distance.

Yet we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves, and that is far easier said than done — particularly when we meet people whose choices or way of life we find hard to understand. Thankfully, the Bible does not leave us to work it out on our own.

Jesus gave us a striking example of how to treat those who were judged harshly by others. In John's Gospel we meet a woman caught in adultery. A crowd stood ready to stone her, but Jesus stepped in: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). He did not excuse what she had done — but neither did He condemn her. He simply reminded everyone present that they, too, stood in need of grace.

Paul says much the same in his letter to the Romans: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). When we are honest about our own failings, it becomes far easier to meet others with compassion rather than judgement. Loving someone does not, of course, mean pretending their sin does not matter; sin has real consequences. But our task is not to sit as judge and jury. As James puts it, "Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

In practice, this means reaching out to those who are lost or struggling, offering a listening ear, and sharing the love of Christ. It is not our job to change anyone — that is God's work. Our part is simply to be a vessel through which His love can flow.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Embracing Compassion and Understanding

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. How do the judgements and expectations around us shape our ability to show compassion?
2. Can you share a time when showing compassion made a real difference in someone's life?
3. Why do you think it can be so hard to show compassion to those who are pushed to the margins?
4. How does the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:7) speak to you?
5. What are some practical ways to show compassion and understanding in everyday life?
6. How does the truth that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23) shape the way you see others?
7. Do you find it easier to show compassion to strangers than to those you know? Why, or why not?
8. How can we hold together the need for justice and the call to compassion?
9. What part does humility play in our ability to be compassionate?
10. What is one commitment you could make to embracing compassion in the way you treat others?

Session 2 – Building Bridges, Not Barriers

The heart of the Christian faith is love and compassion — but how do we live that out, especially with people whose actions we find hard to accept? The New Testament has a great deal to teach us here.

Jesus often shared a table with tax collectors and sinners, to the dismay of the religious leaders of His day. When they challenged Him, He answered, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). Jesus was far more interested in building bridges than in raising barriers; He reached out to the very people others had cast aside, and offered them a way home.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, holds up the transforming power of love: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no account of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). This kind of love does not come naturally; it has to be cultivated. Yet it is exactly this love that lets us approach others without judgement, offering them the same grace we ourselves have received.

So how do we put it into practice? First, we listen. People whose choices we find hard often carry complicated stories, and listening opens the door to real understanding. Second, we offer support rather than solutions; lasting change is a slow work, and finally God’s. As Peter writes, “Above all, love one another deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). And third, we pray. Prayer invites God into the situation and lets Him work in ways we could never engineer: “in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6). Little by little, as we listen, support, and pray, we become people through whom God’s love reaches those who are struggling.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Building Bridges, Not Barriers

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. How do you feel about building bridges with people whose actions you find hard to understand?
2. Can you recall a time when someone built a "bridge" to you, offering compassion and understanding?
3. Why do you think we so often reach for barriers instead of bridges?
4. How does Jesus' welcome of tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:17) shape your view of this?
5. What are some practical steps we can take to build bridges with those on the margins?
6. How does the love described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 shape the way we build relationships?
7. Do you find it hard to offer support without rushing to provide solutions? Why, or why not?
8. How can prayer, as in Philippians 4:6, help us build bridges with others?
9. What part does patience play in building relationships with others?
10. What is one commitment you could make to building bridges and breaking down barriers where you live?

Worksheet

Whether the idea of loving difficult people is new to you or something you have wrestled with for years, this short, two-session study offers a way in. The worksheet that follows is a companion to the study — a way of taking its themes a little deeper and putting them to work where you live.

In a group

If you are leading a group, do give a copy of this worksheet to each person to take home. Explain that it is for personal reflection and practical application. In your meetings, or in quiet times of reflection, you might invite people to share their insights, their struggles, and their experiences — while making clear that completing the worksheet is never required, only offered as a help.

On your own

If you are reading on your own, use this worksheet as a personal guide to reinforce and apply what the study has stirred in you.

The worksheet sets out ten simple, doable steps for the journey of loving difficult people. As you take them up, our prayer is that your relationship with God would deepen and your faith grow.

Ten Steps for Loving Difficult People

By taking up these steps, our prayer is that you will grow in loving difficult people well, and come to know the transforming power of that love in your own life.

1. Reach Out:

Make an effort to reach out to someone you find hard to love — a simple message or a kind gesture is enough to begin.

2. Listen Actively:

Spend time truly listening to someone you would usually avoid, trying to understand their perspective without judgement.

3. A Random Act of Kindness:

Do something kind for a person who has wronged you, or whom you find hard to love.

4. Pray for Them:

Take a few minutes each day to pray for the well-being of someone you find difficult to love.

5. Share a Meal:

Invite someone you find hard to love for a meal or a coffee, and use the time simply to get to know them better.

6. Forgive:

Actively forgive someone who has wronged you — and, if you can, let them know that you have.

7. Seek Accountability:

Share your commitment to loving difficult people with a trusted friend, and ask them to hold you to it.

8. Join In:

Take part in a community event or service project, looking for ways to show love and compassion to those you find difficult.

9. Set Healthy Boundaries:

While showing love, learn also to set healthy boundaries that protect your emotional and mental well-being.

10. Reflect and Adjust:

At the end of each week, take time to reflect on how things have gone, and make any changes that will help you keep loving difficult people well.

May your journey of loving difficult people be a source of blessing and transformation, guided always by the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

Stay Connected with Faith, Hope, and Love Ministries

Thank you for spending this time with us. We'd love to keep walking alongside you — so do stay in touch, and let us know how the study went.

Find Us and Say Hello:

- Facebook: <https://go.fhlm.org/facebook>
- Instagram: <https://go.fhlm.org/instagram>
- LinkedIn: <https://go.fhlm.org/linkedin>
- Website: <https://fhlm.org>
- Email: hello@fhlm.org



Scan here to see our other resources.

Copyright

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. In plain terms: you're free to modify and share this document, as long as you credit the original source, don't use it for commercial purposes, and pass on any adaptations under these same terms.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), used with kind permission. We warmly encourage you to read alongside whichever translation you love best; we don't endorse any single one.

With Thanks

We're deeply grateful to everyone who has supported and prayed for these Bible Study and Reflection Guides.

Pass It On

We love working alongside anyone who shares our heart for serving others. If this guide has been a blessing, please consider donating, volunteering, or simply passing it on to someone else.