

Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road

And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And He said to him, "**What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?**" And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." And He said to him, "**You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.**" But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied and said, "**A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. "Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. "On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'**" Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?" And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "**Go and do the same.**"

Luke 10:25-37

Lesson 1: Who is My Neighbor?

* **Note:** Almost everything in these lessons is taken directly from Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road by Timothy J. Keller, published by P&R.

The Dangerous Road

- The road to Jericho is steep and dangerous.
- The path has many places for a robber to hide and attack.
- It is called "the bloody way."

The Two Who Walked By

- The priest and the Levite did not wish to become involved in the man's needs.
- They probably thought, "Surely the safest thing to do is to hurry on to safety and send some official to look after the poor victim." So they ran.
- By helping this man, the priest and Levite might have become unclean by touching someone that was dead or about to die. It would have kept them from doing their duty for seven days. It would have been easy for them to think, "this will get in the way of my higher calling."
- So, they walked by the man.
- In the process, they also passed by the clear teaching of Scripture - to have mercy on strangers in need (Lev. 19:34).

The Biblical Mandate for Mercy

Luke 10:25-37; 6:35-36; Leviticus 19:34; Mark 10:17-22; James 1:27; 2:8, 13-17; 1 John 3:16-18; Proverbs 3:27; 14:21, 31; 19:17; 31:20; 22:9; 21:3; 17:5; Matthew 25:31-46; 11:1-6; 6:1-4; Isaiah 1:10-17; 58:6-7; Genesis 3:21; Exodus 23:10-11; Deuteronomy 15:8, 10; 14:28-29; Job 24:1-21; 31:16-23; 29:16-17; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:5-15; Galatians 2:10; 6:10; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Romans 15:8, 23-29; Ephesians 4:28; Ezekiel 16:49; Psalms 41:1-2; 112:9

The One Who Showed Mercy

- The Samaritan was the sworn enemy of the Jewish man lying in his blood.
- The Samaritan faced the same dangers as the two who passed by.
- All of his training should have told him to step on the victim, not just over him!
- The Samaritan had "compassion" (v. 33).

Ministry of Mercy (v. 37)

- We are commanded to provide
 1. shelter
 2. finances
 3. medical care
 4. friendship
- Our paradigm is the Samaritan, who risked his safety, destroyed his schedule, and became dirty and bloody through personal involvement with a needy person of another race and social class.
- Are we obeying this command personally?
- Are we obeying this command corporately?

- Our Lord attacks the complacency of comfortably religious people who protect themselves from the needs of others.
- In the Samaritan himself, Jesus shows us that the neighbor to whom we must render aid is *anyone* at all in need, even an enemy.
- The law "expert" tried to limit the concept of neighbor, but Jesus expanded the concept by showing that anyone in need is our neighbor.
- The Ministry of Mercy – meeting felt needs through deeds.

Common Objections

- Isn't this a bit extreme?
- Doesn't charity begin at home?
- This is not my spiritual gift or calling.
- This is not the job of the local church.
- I barely have enough money for myself and my family.
- Aren't many of the poor simply irresponsible, undeserving, and sinful?

The Story of Angela

This story is told by a young seminarian in the mid 1980's.

"A once beautiful woman, Angela, is withering away in front of the library on our urban campus. She wears many layers of clothes. They are plastered on her brittle body like clashing layers of peeling paint. She doesn't have socks on, but it's cold and the weather is growing hostile. I offered her food once, but she rudely rejected it. She turns away abruptly when I try to talk to her. Stung with bitterness I recoil. But then I gradually begin understanding how prejudiced we are with expectations of the poor. My arrogant anticipation of gratitude kills the goodness of the deed. She is hungry, exposed and sick; yet I resist reaching out, because she might not welcome me. Which one of us is truly sick? Angela, you're a mirror thrust before us, but can we bear the sight?"

Statistics

- 1 out of 7 North Americans is poor.
- 42% of American children grows up in a low-income family.
- 23% of American children grows up in poverty.
- There are 500,000 homeless in America
 1. Families with children are 40% of the homeless.
 2. Woman and children fleeing abuse are 35% of the homeless.
 3. The mentally ill comprise 25% of the homeless.
 4. Those with substance abuse comprise 23% of the homeless.
 5. 20% of the homeless have a full-time or part-time job.
 6. Children under 18 are 27% of the homeless.
- Of the poor
 1. 1/3 are children.
 2. 1/3 are adults who are working but not making enough to pull them over the poverty line.
 3. 1/6 are elderly, mentally, or physically disabled.

4. 1/6 are single parents home with single children who are able-bodied but do not work.
- Divorce
 1. 27% of all children in America live with a single parent.
 2. In the year after a divorce the man's standard of living goes up an average of 42% while the woman's (and child's) goes down 73%, even counting alimony and child support payments.

Questions

1. What question is Jesus trying to answer by telling the parable of the good Samaritan?

2. Why does the “expert” in the law ask the question?

3. Why did Jesus tell about two religious people who did not have compassion and who walked by the man in need?

4. Was there a danger to the two men who passed by if they had decided to help? What was that danger?

5. Should we put ourselves in danger to serve others?

6. Read each passage of Scripture below and fill in the chart. The first one is done for you as an example. In the Recipients column, take special care to notice whether the recipients are believers, non-believers, or anyone.

#	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Doer of Mercy</i>	<i>Recipients of Mercy</i>	<i>Command / Teaching of the Passage</i>
1	Genesis 3:21	God	Adam and Eve	God clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins to keep them protected and modest. This was the first act of mercy.
2	Exodus 23:10-11			
3	Leviticus 19:34			

#	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Doer of Mercy</i>	<i>Recipients of Mercy</i>	<i>Command / Teaching of the Passage</i>
4	Deuteronomy 15:8, 10			
5	Deuteronomy 14:28-29			
6	Job 24:1-21			
7	Job 29:16-17			
8	Job 31:16-23			
9	Proverbs 3:27			
10	Proverbs 14:21, 31			

#	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Doer of Mercy</i>	<i>Recipients of Mercy</i>	<i>Command / Teaching of the Passage</i>
11	Proverbs 17:5			
12	Proverbs 19:17			
13	Proverbs 21:3			
14	Proverbs 22:9			
15	Proverbs 31:20			
16	Psalms 41:1-2			
17	Psalms 112:9			
18	Isaiah 1:10-17			

#	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Doer of Mercy</i>	<i>Recipients of Mercy</i>	<i>Command / Teaching of the Passage</i>
19	Isaiah 58:6-7			
20	Ezekiel 16:49			
21	Matthew 6:1-4			
22	Matthew 11:1-6			
23	Matthew 25:31-46			
24	Mark 10:17-22			
25	Luke 6:35-36			

#	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Doer of Mercy</i>	<i>Recipients of Mercy</i>	<i>Command / Teaching of the Passage</i>
26	Luke 10:25-37			
27	Romans 15:8, 23-29			
28	2 Corinthians 8:1-15			
29	2 Corinthians 9:5-15			
30	Galatians 2:10			
31	Galatians 6:10			
32	Ephesians 4:28			

#	Scripture	Doer of Mercy	Recipients of Mercy	Command / Teaching of the Passage
33	1 Timothy 6:17-19			
34	Hebrews 13:2			
35	James 1:27; 2:8, 13-17			
36	1 John 3:16-18			

7. Considering that the above list of verses is not comprehensive, what does it tell you about how important of a theme giving to those in need is in Scripture? Does this surprise you?

8. Why should we give to those in need?

9. Both of the religious people in the story tried to practice godliness without showing compassion. Why is this impossible?

10. Are any of the objections listed valid? Why or why not?

11. Can you think of any other questions or objections? If so, list them here.

12. What is a "felt need"? Why are they important?

13. As you read over the statistics on the poor, what part of it shocked you the most?

14. How can we become more compassionate toward those in need?

Lesson 2: Simple / Justice Living

Basic Principles

- The ministry of mercy is costly
- Every believer must be a steward of possessions so as not to become a burden and liability to others.
- It is not enough to give to the poor, we must give bountifully
- Psalm 41:1 says, "Blessed is he who considers the poor", and the word considers means to give careful thought
- We are called to give careful attention to the needs of others, not just perfunctory help
- Christians are called to live a simple lifestyle

Biblical Passages Calling for Simple Living

Matthew 6:19-23; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:6-9; Proverbs 23:4; Ephesians 4:28; Luke 12:19; 14:12-14; Galatians 6:2

Historic Proponents

- Jonathon Edwards
 - Edwards met someone who told him that they had only enough to spare for their family and themselves. Edwards replied, "Rich men may say, they have not more than enough for themselves...to support their honor and dignity, as is proper for the place and degree in which they stand. Those who are poor will say they have not too much and those of the middle sort will say that they have not too much, thus there will be found none to give to the poor."
 - He continued, "In many cases, we may, by the rules of gospel, be obliged to give to others, when we cannot do it without suffering ourselves. If we be never obliged to relieve other's burdens, but when we can do it without burdening ourselves, then how do we bear our neighbor's burdens, when we bear no burden at all?"
 - Edward's three-fold philosophy
 - We must give so that we feel the burden of the needy ourselves
 - We may only keep whatever wealth we need for our calling and ministry opportunities
 - We must not be so generous that we become a burden to others by our giving
- John Wesley
 - When he died his estate consisted of a coat and two silver spoons
 - He earned 1,400 pounds annually from the sale of sermons and books
 - He never spent more than 30 pounds per year for his living
 - His income was 40 times more than his living expenses
 - Wesley wrote, "If I leave behind 10 pounds, you and all mankind bear witness against me that I lived and died a thief and a robber."

- George Mueller
 - Left \$850 at the time of his death
 - Gave more than \$180,000 to the Lord's work, a fortune at the time
- John Newton
 - When asked by a young husband how much to give to the poor, Newton replied in a letter, "For the most part, we take care, first, to be well supplied, if possible, with all the necessaries, conveniences, and not a few of the elegancies of life; then to have a snug fund laid up against a rainy day, as the phrase is...that when we look at children and near relatives, we may say to our hearts, 'Now they are well provided for.' And when we have gotten all this and more, we are perhaps content, for the love of Christ, to bestow a pittance of our superfluities, a tenth or twentieth part of what we spend or hoard up for ourselves, upon the poor. But alas! What do we herein more than others? Multitudes who know nothing of the love of Christ will do thus much."
 - Newton's three-fold philosophy
 - Christians should choose a standard of living which is "barely decent"
 - Above that, we should spend penny for penny on the poor that we spend on ourselves
 - Do not make savings for retirement a higher priority than giving to the poor
 - Newton said, "One would almost think that passage, Luke 14:12-14, was not part of God's Word"
 - Newton did not envision a large portion of income going into savings. He said, "But it may be asked, would you show no regard to the possibility of leaving your wife or children unprovided for? Quite the reverse: I would show you the more excellent way. If you had a little money to spare, would you lend it to me, if I assured you it would be repaid when you wanted? Proverbs 19:17, 'He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay him again.' What think you of this text? Is it the Word of God or not? I dare stake all my interest in your friendship, that if you act upon this maxim, in a spirit of prayer and faith, and with a single eye to His glory, you shall not be disappointed."
 - The extent of savings should be left to a Christian's own conscience

- Thomas Gouge
 - He was presented with this objection, "If I be so generous in giving, I may be in need myself before I die."
 - Gouge responded, "'He that giveth to the poor shall not lack' (Proverbs 28:27)...the poor have a right unto part of thine estate, as well as thy [natural] children, though not unto so great a part. In which respect the Spirit of God calleth that part of the rich man's stock which he can well spare, the poor man's 'due,' unto whom of right it doeth belong; for saith He, 'withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.' (Proverbs 3:27). Whereupon said an ancient father, 'It is the bread of the hungry which moulders in thy cupboard; it is the garment of the naked which hangs useless in thy chambers; it is the gold of the poor which lieth rusting in thy chest' [Basil]. So that thy relieving of the poor is not only an act of mercy, left to thy choice to do or not to do, but also of *justice*, to the performance whereof thou standest bound."
 - Christians are not just called to simple living, but to justice living

Questions

1. How would you define simple living?
2. Do you think the Bible teaches a simple lifestyle for Christians? Why or why not?
3. Explain Edward's three-fold view of giving to the poor.
4. Explain Newton's three-fold view of giving to the poor.
5. Which of the two views is more restrictive? How are they the same?
6. What is justice living?
7. Do you believe that the Scriptures call Christians to justice living? Why or why not?

8. Explain what Matthew 6:19-21 teaches about money and savings accounts.

9. Explain what Luke 14:12-14 means and give some practical ways that you might apply the verses in your daily living.

Lesson 3: The Who and the How of Mercy Giving

The Church and the World

- As a priority, we should give to needy Christians both intensively and extensively until their need is gone
- We must also give generously to nonbelievers as part of our witness to the world
- The majority of texts in Scripture deal with helping poor believers
- God gives generously to the saved and unsaved
- Jesus ministered to thousands and gave them food, both believers and unbelievers
- "Let us do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith." Galatians 6:10
- We are to give to neighbors, strangers, and enemies

Why Show Mercy?

- The Biblical command to love our neighbor as ourself
- The Old Testament required that service be rendered to strangers
- The pattern of God's common grace, which is given even to His enemies
- The pattern of God's saving mercy
- The Biblical definition of love

Word and Deed

- Jesus was mighty in "word and deed" (Luke 24:19)
- We need to proclaim the gospel (Word) and do mercy giving (Deed)
- Peter told Cornelius that Jesus went "around doing good"
- Our ministry of mercy is not simply a way to validate our preaching, it must be done out of pure compassion and love
- We are called to deal with the moral and spiritual roots of poverty, which only the church of the Lord Jesus is equipped to handle

An Example from the Past

- Rev. Thomas Chalmers in the church of St. John's in Glasgow, Scotland.
- His town had 11,513 residents which were divided into quarters
- Each quarter was the responsibility of a deacon
- The deacons were overseen by an elder
- The deacons also had a ministry team that consisted of the elder, deacon, Sunday School teacher, and a lay evangelist
- They provided ministry of mercy (deeds) and the Gospel (word)

Fleshing It Out

- Our aid must begin freely, regardless of the recipient's merits
- Our mercy must increasingly demand change or it is not really love
- It is difficult to speak Biblically of the "deserving poor"
- Our aid is called mercy, not reward
- Our ministry of mercy must be done for a reason, to spread the kingdom of God

- People are commanded to work (Ex. 34:21; Ecc. 3:22; 5:12; 2 Thes. 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:3-10)
- Family of the poor have the first responsibility to help those without
- At first, we should show mercy to anyone in need, as we have opportunity and resources
- We cannot stop there because the goal is to restore the poor person by rehabilitating the whole person

Let Mercy Limit Mercy

- A pastor had a man come to his study and ask for money
- The pastor talked with him and found that he really needed food
- The pastor bought him food
- A week later, the man came to the church again asking for money
- The pastor's response was, "Jim, I will buy food for you again, but if you want us to keep helping you, you will have to let us into your life. I mean that there may be habits and patterns in your life that are involved in why you can't keep a job. If we as a church are to help you, we need to look at your whole life. You may need help in managing finances; you may have some personal problems (you told me that you can't control your temper, remember?). So, you see, it would not be truly loving for us simply to give you money unless you let us minister to you more extensively."
- Let mercy limit mercy!
- We must cut off our aid only if it is unmerciful to continue it.
- Jonathon Edwards, speaking of those who refuse to change and only want to take advantage of us, "If they continue in the same courses still, yet that doth not excuse us from charity to their families that are innocent. If we cannot relieve those families without their having something of it, yet that ought not to be a bar in the way of our charity."

Three Causes of Poverty

- Oppression or injustice
- Natural disaster or calamity
- Personal sin

Channels of Mercy

- Family
- Local church
- Associations or mission's societies
- The state

Bases

- Use your family as a ministry base
- Use your church as a ministry base

Where to Find the Poor

- Family
- Church
- Community
- World

Important Notes

- the number of needs near us, in our own personal "circles of concern" are quite numerous if we only open our eyes to see them
- We must develop a whole new way of looking at the world to become a minister of mercy
- Look in close before you look out far

Some Personal Practical Ideas

- Invite people and church members into your home to fellowship and eat with you
- Offer someone a tool that you have that they need
- Find an elderly couple that needs their lawn mowed, garden tilled, or house painted
- Find a young mother who has young children and offer to clean her house
- Find a couple and babysit their children while they go out
- Buy too many tickets to the big game or too many bedding plants and give them away to someone less fortunate
- Cultivate friendships and encourage people
- Give to your local Christian organization's shelter fund or food pantry
- Don't just give food or money, give time to a relief organization
- Visit those in prison, those shut-in, or those in the nursing home

Some Corporate Practical Ideas

- Establish a Mercy Fund
- Establish a Service Bank
- Establish a Referral System
- Minister to those the Lord has given you instead of looking far away
- Have everyone in your congregation fill a brown bag grocery sack with canned and dry goods. Also include items for personal grooming, socks, etc. Each sack can also contain New Testaments or tracks sharing the Good News. The sacks can be given to those in need by the church directly or given to the local pantry
- Throw a baby shower for an unwed mother from your local Christian crisis pregnancy center
- Adopt an elderly person or group of persons and allow a group in your church to take care of visiting them regularly and giving them gifts of love
- Establish food cooperatives and invite your community to participate, saving them money and giving you a way into their lives

**Be creative in your serving of other.
Learn to delight in thinking up schemes to serve people around you.**

Questions

1. Are Christians to give charitably to other believers or to the lost?
2. Give two examples from Jesus' life of your answer to the above question.
3. Why must the ministry of mercy not be done only to validate our message?
4. Why do some churches or Christians only help who they feel are the "deserving poor"? What is wrong with this manner of ministry?
5. Can you think of any other causes of poverty than those listed above?
6. Does a person always easily fall into one category on the reasons for poverty or might they be affected by more than one at once?
7. What is involved in the "rehabilitation of the whole person" in our mercy giving? How can we structure our giving to accomplish this goal?

8. List at least 2 more things that you can do personally in the area of mercy.

9. List at least 2 more things that your church can do in the area of mercy.

10. Write a prayer to the Lord confessing your lack of mercy below, asking His forgiveness. Also ask Him to see the needs around you and empower and empassion you to meet those needs.