

CONSECRATED IN THE CHAOS

Chapter 5: Tender Mercy

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”

Matthew 5:7

PROSPECTING FOR GOLD

The Main Idea – The Big Questions

1. How is mercy characterized in Scripture?
2. What are ways people withhold mercy from those in distress or in need?
3. What’s the difference between forgiveness and mercy? Can you give an example of each?
4. Does an offensive person need to ask for forgiveness before expecting or receiving a merciful response? Why or why not?
5. What are some of the ways people withhold mercy from those who have hurt or offended them?

MINING FOR GOLD

Making it personal – real life challenges – what do we learn?

6. What goes through some peoples’ minds when they see people standing on a busy street corner with a sign asking for money?
7. Suppose you learned a nearby family (neighborhood or city) lost most of their belongings in a house fire – do you think most people would reach out to help them? Why or why not? What are some things you might do?
8. Should there be a difference in how we respond between the person on the street corner and the family whose house burned down? Explain.
9. Is it okay to put limits on how much we are willing to help those who are distressed and need help? Explain.
10. Do you think there are sometimes misplaced motives for helping people? Explain.

11. Considering various scenarios, is it sometimes difficult for people to withhold mercy from those who have wronged them? Explain.
12. Have you ever offended someone and then been extended mercy by that person? If so, what feelings did you experience?
13. Have you ever been denied mercy from someone you've hurt or offended? If so, how did it affect you?

EXTRACTING THE GOLD

Discovering the True & Pure Meaning of Jesus' Words

14. Considering the characterization of mercy in Scripture, did Jesus ever withhold mercy from anyone?
15. What is our motive for helping anyone in need? (John 13:34)
16. How does Jesus lift up broken and bound up people today? (John 15:12; Luke 3:10-11; Gal. 6:2; Heb. 13:16)

"Isn't it beautiful how Jesus loves to lift up the broken, the addicted, the afflicted, the bound up: oh the beauty of Jesus. Jesus has mercy on someone that, in the eyes of man, does not deserve mercy."

Cassidy Campbell, Consecrated in the Chaos, page 69

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Drawing from other examples in Scripture – what do we learn?

Read the following Scripture passages and answer the questions that follow:

Mercy Extended – Matthew 25:31-40 MSG

"When He finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all His angels with Him, the Son of Man will take His place on His glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before Him and He will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to His right and goats to His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by My Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was

sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are You talking about? When did we ever see You hungry and feed You, thirsty and give You a drink? And when did we ever see You sick or in prison and come to You?’ Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was Me—you did it to Me.’”

Jesus used parables to illustrate moral or spiritual lessons using earthly situations. He had just told two parables He likened to the kingdom of Heaven. In the parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13) He reinforced the call for readiness of His second coming. In the parable of the talents (25:14-30) He gave implications of not being faithful and trustworthy servants of God until that time. The importance of the messages in these parables becomes evident in these final verses of chapter 25, as Jesus illustrates what His return and judgment will be like. His core message is that those who love Him are His true followers, who will love others as He did and does (see John 13:34-35; Gal. 5:6).

- ❖ Who are the sheep in this illustration and how are they identified as such?
- ❖ How did these followers show mercy to the people who were in need?
- ❖ What do we learn about the sheep and their motivation in verses 37-39?
- ❖ What do we learn from the King’s response in verse 40?

How does that affect the way we should see and act toward *the least of these*?

What does the King (Jesus) say about the sheep in this illustration (v. 34)?

- ❖ Who are the merciful according to this beatitude in Matthew 5:7?

A Pharisee and a Sinful Woman – Luke 7:40-47 NIV

“Jesus said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to tell you.’ ‘Oh? Tell me.’

‘Two men were in debt to a banker. One owed five hundred silver pieces, the other fifty. Neither of them could pay up, and so the banker canceled both debts. Which of the two would be more grateful?’

Simon answered, ‘I suppose the one who was forgiven the most.’

‘That’s right,’ said Jesus. Then turning to the woman, but speaking to Simon, He said, ‘Do you see this woman? I came to your home; you provided no water for my feet, but she rained tears on my feet and dried them with her hair. You gave me no greeting, but from the time I arrived she hasn’t quit kissing my feet. You provided nothing for freshening up, but she has soothed my feet with perfume. Impressive, isn’t it? She was forgiven many, many sins, and so she is very, very grateful. If the forgiveness is minimal, the gratitude is minimal.’”

The Message reads as follows: “Simon, a Pharisee, had just said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is – that she is a sinner’ (v. 39). Jesus then took the opportunity to make a point before saying, ‘For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.’ Jesus then turned to the woman and forgave her sins.”

- ❖ What does this tell you about the depth of Jesus' love for sinful people?
- ❖ Do you think this was an eye-opening moment for Simon that changed his life, or do you think he might have at some point dismissed what Jesus was saying?

REFINING THE GOLD

Personal Journey – the Challenges and the Connection to God

As Christians, we *are* the church. As vitally important as it is to worship God together and build up each other, we are not confined to a building for a few hours a week. As Cassidy says, “*The mercy of God shown to us is the mercy He wants us to offer the world around us.*”

18. When you walk out of your house every day and go out into the world – to work, to the grocery store, taking a walk around the neighborhood, etc. – what distinguishes you as a lover of Jesus?

19. In what ways are you showing God's mercy to those in the world around you?

Do these things take time – time you don't really have? Do them anyway. Remember, during His ministry on earth, Jesus had only three years to tell thousands of people the Good News, giving them an understanding of the Kingdom of God and the eternal hope they had through Him. This was His primary purpose, *telling* people about the reality of God. And He did it all without the modern conveniences of radio, television, vehicles to get Him from place to place, and so on. Yet *He took time* to heal the lame, the blind, the deaf, the bleeding, the lepers, and even those with swollen feet (dropsy). *He took the time* to cast out evil spirits. *He took time* to feed thousands of hungry people. *He took time* to raise people from the dead (*Lazarus & a little girl who had “fallen asleep”*). In His humanness, He had to be tired, hungry, and thirsty much of the time. Even so, He took the time!

20. Why did Jesus take time to do all these merciful things?

21. What impact did Jesus' acts of mercy have on the people who were on the receiving end of His miracles and on those that witnessed them?

Think about events like the Holocaust in Germany, the genocide in Rwanda, and the crucifixion of Christ. Perhaps you've read about them or seen movies or shows that depicted these events (*Schindler's List, Hotel Rwanda, The Passion of the Christ*). As you read Scripture, as you read the history books, as you watched the movies that depicted these events, what moved you more? What put pictures in your head you couldn't get out? What brought you to uncontrollable tears?



This is so important. What are you doing, or what will you do every day to be Christ to a fallen world? *If you are not moved to do more, perhaps you may want to go back to the fourth beatitude (5:6) ☺*

This week:

Spend quiet time every day meditating on the loving nature of our Savior. Close your eyes and imagine in your mind Jesus showing mercy to people:

the woman at the well . . .

the man with the epileptic son who struggled with unbelief . . .

the centurion with the sick servant . . .

the demon-possessed man tormented and in chains . . .

the leper who said to Him, *“If you are willing, you can heal me.”* Can you imagine the love in His heart for that man when He responded, *“I am willing”?* . . .

the crowds who continually followed Him – *all those lost people* . . .

Peter when he denied Him . . .

and the people who condemned Him and watched Him hanging on a cross, suffering in agony, and dying for their sins so they wouldn't have to! Remember His words, *“Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.”*

Think about reading or studying what the Bible says concerning the Millennial Reign of Christ.

