

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

AUTHENTIC LOVE IS MERCIFUL/FORGIVING

THEME VERSE

Matthew 5:44 "But I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"

PASSAGE: Acts 16: 25-34

Warm Up

The opposite of mercy is revenge. What's a memorable revenge/payback song or movie?

What is Mercy and How it Found Us (1 Peter 2: 10)

Mercy is often defined as someone not getting the punishment they deserve, which is what God offers people. **What does it mean for people seeking God that God is merciful?**

So We Must Be People of Mercy (Hosea 6:6)

Jesus often reminds people that God is more pleased when they show mercy to others than when they follow rituals. **What would a lifestyle of showing mercy look like in today's world?**

Mercy for the Enemy (Luke 10: 33-35)

Jesus uses the parable of a Samaritan who saw a man in need and had a heart and ability to help even though he was an enemy. **In our lives today, which is more challenging: to see enemies in need OR to have time and resources for enemies OR to have the heart to help enemies?**

Mercy for the Persecutor (Acts 16: 25-34)

Paul and Silas stay in jail even though they could've escaped, saving the jailers job and life, and the jailer is shocked by this forgiveness. **How can forgiveness/mercy be shocking?**

Reflection Question:

Showing sacrificial, hospitable, and compassionate love to our friends and family makes sense, but to forgive and show that same love to our enemies doesn't make sense unless you have God in your life. **Who can you show mercy to with authentic love? Pray for God's strength to do it.**

Operation Unity #4

9-25-22

Love That Is Merciful/Forgiving

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-8 Lar: Missions. M2N. Men's. Mom's. R&R. When She Leads. Min Fair.
- B. Slide9 Israel Mtg: Today 1:30-2pm & 2-2:45.
- C. Slide10 Scripture: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of **MERCIES** and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* 1 Cor.1:3,4
 1. Prayer: Your mercies are new every morning. They are grace-shaped for every circumstance. & are exactly what we need to show mercy to others.

II. Intro: Love That Is Merciful/Forgiving

- A. We can show *authentic love* by embodying: *sacrificial love, hospitable love, compassionate love, and now today ... merciful love.* [esp towards those who persecute us or toward our enemies] (AP wrap up Wed w/1 Sam.24 *David letting Saul live*)
- B. **Mercy** = compassion for the miserable. Its object is misery. *Easton's Bible Dict.*
 1. Spurgeon said, *Followers of Jesus Must be men of Mercy; for they have found Mercy, & Mercy has found them.*
- C. These famous lines from *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare are true in every way. *Mercy always comes down. It starts with God and moves to man, it begins in heaven and ends on earth. You don't bargain for mercy because to make a bargain you've got to have something to offer, and we have nothing to offer God.*

III. Slide11a MERCY DEFINED

- A. **Mercy is** connected with those who may be *easily ignored* in society.
 1. The blessing lies not only in **doing a merciful act**, but in **being merciful in disposition.**¹

¹ Spurgeon Quote

2. It's better to give others a piece of your **heart** than a piece of your **mind**.

B. Slide11b Good definitions: **Justice** is getting what you deserve. **Mercy** is not getting what you deserve. **Grace** is getting what you don't deserve.

1. **Mercy** & **Grace** are actually forms of **nonjustice**, but they are not acts of **injustice**.
2. **Mercy** is always **Voluntary** [If its is **obligated**, then its **justice**, not **mercy**]

IV. Slide12a **MERCY FOUND US**

- A. **God Has Shown Us Mercy.** In the *Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor* (a man that owed the king a million \$, was going to be thrown into debtors prison, begged for mercy, it was shown him. *Be patient, I'll pay it back. And his master was filled w/pity for him, & he released him & forget his debt*). But then goes out & finds a guy who owed him a few dollars, grabbed him by the throat & demanded instant payment, threw him in prison. Then the king went and found him, *You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?* Mt.18:33 NLT
- B. Slide12b *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* 1 Peter 2:10
1. **Mercy** is part of **Gods character**, and we are then agents of **mercy**.

V. Slide13a **SO WE MUST BE PEOPLE OF MERCY**

A. **God Commands Us to Be Merciful**

1. Micah 6:8 nkjv *He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?* [It's a requirement! Heb. doresh, to demand]
2. God also says **mercy** is more important to Him than showing Him **worship**. Hosea 6:6 nkjv *For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*

a) Now, this verse is **so important** Jesus quotes it **2 times** in His ministry:

(1) Mt.9:11-13 *NLT* [when Jesus called Matt from the tax collector's booth. Was invited to din, w/tax collectors & other disreputable sinners.]

*Slide13b But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?" 12 When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor - sick people do." 13 Then he added, Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show **mercy**, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are **righteous**, but those who know they are **sinners**."*

(2) Mt.12:7,8 [disciples were hungry broke off some heads of grain and ate them in the grain fields on the Sabbath. It was the Pharisees that protested]

*Slide13c You would not have condemned my innocent disciples if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show **mercy**, not offer sacrifices.' 8 For the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"*

(a) The problem is Jesus, *you're hanging out with the wrong crowd.* Jesus says, *your problem is that you don't understand the true nature of mercy.* That's why I went to this party! I am building bridges of **mercy** to the unpopular, the person that nobody wants to work with, those not in w/the in-crowd, those diff than the rest.

b) God's basically saying, *I want a flexible heart over an inflexible ritual.*

c) Do we really think it blesses God to raise hands worshiping Him on Sunday and then go treat your co-workers or family like dirt on Monday?

B. *Slide14* We'll build our **Outline** from *the Good Samaritan's 4-sided Mercy:* [quick recap]

C. *Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the*

innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' Lk.10:33-35 NLT

1. 15 The Good Samaritan saw distress - *came along & when he saw the man.*
2. 16 The Good Samaritan had a heart of pity - *he felt compassion for him.*
3. 17 The Good Samaritan had hands to help - *all 34,35.*
4. 18 The Good Samaritan in spite of it being an enemy - *despised Samaritan.*

D. Slide19 HAVE EYES THAT SEE DISTRESS

E. Be sure of this saints, you'll always have opportunities to show Mercy. *We never grow out of this privilege. Put on Jesus' merciful eyes.*

1. Mercy in the abstract means nothing. *It must be incarnate in human flesh.*
2. The world cannot see mercy apart from the people who experience & share it ... *We are those people!!!!*

F. Do you see them? Do you see those who need our mercy?

1. How does the parable of the good Samaritan end? *Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?* (priest, levite, good Sam) 37 He said, **"The one who showed him mercy."** And Jesus said to him, **"You go, and do likewise."** Lk 10:36,37
2. This week you're going to run into people that God will intentionally place in your life *to practice this*. They will have maybe emotional needs, physical needs, a financial need, or maybe need some assistance.
 - a) And as this happens, God doesn't only watch what you're going to do, but also will be watch **your attitude**. Rm12:6,8 *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: ... the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

G. HAVE A HEART THAT FEELS PITY

H. *He felt compassion for him*. A heart of pity. Instead of putting layer & layer of callous to protect our heart (eg. Oyster/secretes nacre to cover the irritant), we instead *don't cover it, but expose it*. We allow ourselves to *feel*. *And Jesus wept*.

I. **Mercy** once felt, is also *the outward manifestation of Pity* ...

J. HAVE HANDS THAT PERFORM RELIEF

K. **Mercy** is one of the *special bridges* God has built so that He can relate to you & me. **And Mercy** is a bridge **you & I** must build if we are going to *relate lovingly* to others.

1. **Mercy** was 1st shown to **Lot, his wife & daughters**, as the angels led them by hand out of the city before destruction.
 - a) Gen.19:16 *And while he lingered* (Sodom & Gomorrah), *the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.*
 - b) What about YOU? Ok, *you're right & they're wrong*. What are you going to do? Show your power to *retaliate* or show your power to *show mercy*?

L. AND ALL OF THAT ... EVEN TOWARD AN *EMEMY*

M. **Saul** reigned in *malice & hatred*, **David** reigned in *love & mercy*. Matter of fact, when Saul was killed, *David sang a song of Lamentation* w/**no** mention of Saul's hatred. 2 Sam.1:17-27. *Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen.*

N. **Slide20a Read** Acts 16:25-34. *Mercy Towards an Enemy*

O. **The Story: The Philippian Jailer** - a rugged Roman soldier, prison guard, corrections officer working the jail system, *with a hard heart*. [it's hard job working w/the corrupt of society]

1. This is the 1st recorded episode of an *out-and-out pagan* becoming a believer in **Jesus** (i.e. no exposure to Judaism).

P. Slide20b Paul & Silas Show The Corrections Officer Mercy (their enemy)

Q.(28) Had Paul **not called out** we'd have a man dying ... slipping off to hell.

But Paul called out, which *resulted in* saving his physical life & his eternal life.

R. They cared about their **abusive** prison guard.

1. Up in vs.23,24 they ordered the jailer *to keep them safely*. **But** he chose to put them *in the inner prison and fasten their feet in stocks*.

a) **Feet in stocks** – *wood, stocks*. A Roman Instrument of torture *w/more than 2 holes* for the legs so that they could be forced widely apart unto a position which soon became intolerably painful.²

S. They cared about **his soul**.

1. They not only *called out*, **but they stayed**. See for them it wasn't about *being set free*, **but instead setting another free!** (oh and his fam)

T. The Philippian Jailer Shows Paul & Silas Mercy

1. This man had **a heart so hard** it needed *a great earthquake* to *crack it open*

2. **But then** ... this *brand spankin new believer*, only **an hour old** in the Lord (33) *did what?* He brought them out (30). He washed their wounds (33).

He fed them (34). [*how old in the Lord do you need to be to show mercy?*]

U. **Do Good To Those Who Hurt You**. Lk 6:35 starts with *But love your enemies, and do good ...* and ends with 36 *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful*.

1. Mercy is giving someone what they **need**, **not** what they **deserve**.

It's learning to be *merciful* instead of *critical*.

2. *Who has hurt you the most in life?* They need the most mercy.

3. *Who has hurt you the most recently?* They need your mercy.

a) **Abraham Lincoln** spoke to a crowd in Washington DC from the balcony of the White House. He was laying out his plan for reconstruction. At the end of his speech *senator James Harlan from Iowa* said, "*And what do we do with*

² Linguistic key to the Greek New Testament, pg.304.

these rebels, these Confederates, who started this whole war in the first place.” And the unmerciful crowd shouted “*hang em*”, “*hang them*”.

(1) Hearing this Tad (11 yr) said to his father, “*Oh, no, we must not hang them, but hang on to them.*” President Lincoln responded, “*That’s right, Tad, we must hang on to them.*”³

V. **But can’t you go overboard on Mercy?** Yes ... just like Jesus did ... *all the way to the cross!* *Father forgive them they know not what they do.* That’s the best example of over-the-top mercy ever!

1. Yes there is a **tension** between *mercy and justice*.
2. I know of *no hard and fast rules* in Scripture to dictate for every situation, and I don't think this is an accident.
 - a) The aim of Scripture is to produce *a certain kind of person*, not provide and *exhaustive list of rules* for every situation.
3. **But maybe** we can decide to *error on the side of being too gracious, too merciful, and too forgiving.* **Let’s decide on that side!**
4. **Slide21** May **CM** be known for *the church that’s shows Mercy* [Communicate Mercy]

W. **Prayer:** Father, to whom will **You** send us today to offer *Your compassionate heart, Your tear-wiping hand,* and **Your** nudge to help us walk w/*the grieving, the hurting, those with fresh loses, and those with chronic pain(s).*

You didn’t give us what we deserve (judgment); instead you gave us what we didn’t deserve (Jesus). Thank you. May we just *Marinate in Your Mercy* this week.

X. Keywords: mercy, forgiving, enemy.

³ Ruth Painter Randall, Lincoln’s Sons, p. 161.