WEEK 06 · LIVING OUT MERCY

As recipients of God's love, we ought to love Him and others with our whole being and be ready to be moved by compassion to help others, especially those in need

Preface

Last week, we explored the call of believers to participate in a holy priesthood, each with a unique role in serving God according to their gifts and building up the spiritual house of God. We also took some time to reflect on our individual callings, acknowledging that each of us is unique and may carry specific burdens and gifts that we are called to steward responsibly.

This week, we will conclude our study by examining the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which Jesus elaborates on the Great Commandment, emphasizing how we ought to love our neighbors with compassion. He defines anyone in need as our neighbor, and our ultimate goal is to restore them to health—regardless of the sacrifices it may require from us.

Warm-up question: When was the last time you cried while reading a story or watching a movie? What kind of story was it, and why did it bring you to tears?

Study

Read Luke 10:25-37 to answer the following questions.

1. According to Luke 10:25-28, what must one do to inherit eternal life?

> Notes: The word "inherit" when spoken by or to a Jew, may imply a special way of receiving eternal life. However, to the Gentile readers for whom Luke wrote, it would have been regarded as synonymous with obtaining eternal life or spiritual salvation.

2. What was the law expert's motivation to have this conversation? (Luke 10:25-29)

3. How did the priest and the Levite respond when they saw the robbery victim? Noting a specific detail of their circumstances, from where was the priest coming? (Luke 10:30-32)

> Notes: A priest, of all people, should have been the most familiar with the Scriptures and their demands. The description of "going down from Jerusalem" implied that this priest had recently been in Jerusalem, the center of worship and spiritual influence. Yet, he did not show any compassion. Jesus' mention of the Levite repeating the priest's act highlighted the man's unloving act, though Jesus omitted his motives.

4. How did the Samaritan respond when he saw the robbery victim? (Luke 10:33-35)

> Notes: The Samaritan was the least likely of the three travelers to offer help, especially since the robbery victim was likely a Jew—a racial enemy of the Samaritan—yet he did so. The phrase "**took pity on him**" is also translated as "**had compassion**". Originating from the Greek word "***splagchnizomai***", this term is often used by the gospel writers to describe the compassion Jesus had when he healed or helped those in need.

5. How did Jesus challenge the "expert of the law" regarding how they ought to live out the Law to inherit eternal life? (Luke 10:36-37)

Read Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34 to answer the following questions.

6. According to Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34, what is the greatest commandment in the Law and why?

7. When the teacher of the law said that to love God and neighbors is more important than “all burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 12:33), what does this imply about the importance of religious practices?

8. How do the responses of the priest, Levite, and Samaritan upon encountering the robbery victim demonstrate or fail to demonstrate the greatest commandment? (Luke 10:30-35)

Application

1. In what ways are we similar or dissimilar to the “expert in the law” in trying to boil down our relationship with God into a set of principles?

2. What is your heart’s natural response upon seeing people in need? Are you moved by compassion, or is your heart calloused?

3. What is hindering you from taking action when encountering people in need? What are some assumptions or prejudices you might hold towards them?

4. How can you and your community make an adjustment in your lifestyle this week to create room for compassion and act upon it?

Follow-up Exercise: Befriending Someone in Need

As discussed in previous weeks, the goal of the ministries of mercy is to restore the kingdom’s order and bring about its blessedness. This can be achieved by meeting others’ needs while communicating the good news of the gospel to also fulfill their spiritual needs—that is, the need for God that has arisen from separation due to sin.

In order to “restore” someone in need to health—physically, circumstantially, and spiritually—we must be ready to establish a long-term relationship with them. We need to know them by name and hear their stories so that we can truly understand their needs and share the good news of Jesus Christ with them when opportunities arise. While the saving power can only be brought about by the Holy Spirit, we can certainly be a part of this work.

By the end of this study, we hope that you have participated in at least one volunteering opportunity and identified some groups of people to whom you feel a burden to minister. This week, we challenge you to sketch a “spiritual profile” of someone you can get to know through the volunteering opportunities you have participated in and continue to establish a relationship with them.

More information about what a “spiritual profile” is and some guiding questions to help you create one are available on the next two pages.

Worksheet

A spiritual profile is a summary of descriptions or facts about someone that helps us view them holistically and see all the ways we can minister to them in word and deed. There are five elements in a spiritual profile: Needs, Hopes, Values, Worldview, and Ministry History.

Here is a list of questions—taken and adapted from Tim Keller's book, Ministries of Mercy—that you can use to help get to know someone and practice the ministries of mercy. While this tool or questionnaire is often used for creating ministry strategies, it can certainly be helpful for personal use in getting to know someone holistically.

1. **Needs:** What are the felt needs of this person? What does he or she see as his or her greatest needs and problems? Which needs appear to be the most neglected?

2. **Hopes:** What are his or her greatest hopes and interests? What does he or she aspire to, and what are his or her greatest fears?

3. **Values:** What common practices or values in him or her seem the most unlike scriptural principles? Which ones seem the most similar?

4. **Worldview:** What is his or her religious perspective or worldview? How much basic Christian truth does he or she know?

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5. **Ministry History:** What existing ministries are there to support him or her? Why are they effective or ineffective? Is there any other needs gap that he or she needs to have met?

Did you identify any dependencies (financial, physical, planning, emotional, skill, relational, social) between this person and a particular organization? How can you encourage him or her to move away from those dependencies toward independence and help restore him or her holistically?

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