

Lesson 3:

Experiencing the Mercy of God Through Forgiveness

- I. What is mercy?
- A. “Mercy” is “compassion shown to an offender;”¹ it is kindness and forgiveness, especially when shown to a person who doesn’t deserve it.
- B. Ephesians 2:1-7 Receiving God’s mercy means that instead of reaping what we have sown, through faith in Christ we reap what He has sown on our behalf.
- C. However, we cannot experience God’s mercy until we become willing to extend it to others.

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15

1. Hosea 5:15 God uses consequences to bring us to repentance and to teach us His ways.

“We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” I John 4:19-20

¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary ©2004

2. Klaus: “Your failure to love (name) is as sinful in God’s eyes as anything they have done.”

II. How can we receive God’s mercy?

A. James 1:22-25 We must face the truth about ourselves and our sin of unforgiveness.

1. Don’t make excuses or justify your bitterness.
2. Don’t blame anyone else.
3. Recognize your own desperate need for God’s mercy – pray for a revelation of your sin.

B. Make a conscious decision to release your offenders and turn them over to God to deal with as He sees fit.

C. Luke 6:32-36 Become willing to extend mercy to your offenders.

III. Making amends for our sins extends mercy to our offenders.

A. Luke 6:41-42 Don’t just acknowledge you have a plank in your own eye – take it out – by making amends.

B. Take responsibility for your sinful response to your offender. (Refer to last week’s homework). First, forgive them, then humble yourself and go to them, and ask for their forgiveness for the way you’ve treated them. At that time, do not bring up their offense, but allow God to work in their hearts.

Radical obedience brings radical blessing.

Note: Do this only as the Lord leads, since it would not be prudent or possible in the area of some offenses.

- C. Only after you have done this, and if their offending behavior continues, should you tell them how they have hurt you. Speak the truth in love, for the purpose of restoring the relationship.
 - 1. Offenses that are too serious to overlook, such as those causing serious marital problems, refer to Matt.18:15-17, but only after you have forgiven and made amends!
 - 2. Physical abuse is never to be tolerated. It is not only a sin, but a crime as well, and must be referred to civil as well as church authorities.

IV. Being merciful requires that we accept others just as Christ has accepted us.

- A. Our expectations keep us from accepting others as they are.
- B. Our expectations of others set us up for more anger and resentment.

How can we experience God's mercy?

Become willing to extend it to others!

This Week's Memorization Verse: 1 John 4:20

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."

