

MINISTRIES OF MERCY

The Call of the Jericho Road

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Study Outline

“The ministry of mercy is expensive and our willingness to carry it out is a critical sign of our submission to lordship of Christ.”

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



BRINGING GOD’S WORD AND HIS PEOPLE TOGETHER

Tim Keller's book, *Ministries of Mercy*, is a work full of rich information about a subject that is easily talked about but difficult to put into action. The book is appropriately divided into two parts. Part 1 (chapters 1-7) deals with the principles of mercy ministry using parable of the Good Samaritan as the scriptural base. Part 2 (chapters 8-14) examines the practice of mercy ministry presenting overviews on the establishment and maintenance of mercy ministry in the home, church and community.

The study of any book by a group is always an adventure and is at best successful only if the individuals in the group read the book and try to understand what the author is trying to communicate. Unfortunately the normal approach to such a study by the majority of those attending is to sit back and let the “teacher” lecture and try to get some response from the class. Many times this is difficult and awkward because there are always some individuals who never read the book; those who just don't feel comfortable in expressing their views; and there are those who read the lesson and field all the questions and dominate the discussion. The study of this book need not be a chore. You will find that mercy ministry is an individual effort that turns into a joyous habit. You will be provided a study outline to help you read each chapter, to make notes and be prepared to share in helping the group to glean as much as possible from the pages of the book.

In order to facilitate interest and interaction in the content of the book, the class will be divided into study groups. These study groups are expected to sit at the same table teach Sunday and be prepared as individuals and as a group to give their views and comments on the reading assignment.

PROLOGUE:

THE ONE WHO SHOWED MERCY

The Questioner

What was the status of the questioner?

What was his purpose in asking Jesus the question?

Jesus' Response

Why do you think Jesus answered a question with a question?

The Lawyer's Response

What do you think this response told Jesus?

Jesus' Response

What do you think the lawyer thought of Jesus' response?

The Second Question

Why do you think the lawyer asked this question?

Was he serious?

Was he continuing to test Jesus?

The Parable

Why did Jesus make use of the parable?

Matthew 13:13

The Setting

Who was “a certain man?”

Why use the Jericho road?

Why use robbery in the parable?

The Travelers

The priest - What was expected of a man of his status?

The Levite - What would be expected of him?

The Samaritan - Why did Jesus use the Samaritan in the parable?

What value did the Samaritan have that the priest and the Levite lacked?

Jesus Question

What is unique about the wording of Jesus' question?

The Lawyer's Response

Do you think that his own response stopped his testing of Jesus?

Jesus' Command to the Lawyer and to Us

INTRODUCTION: WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

What was Jesus' Definition of *Neighbor*?

How can we identify with Angela - would we pass by her?

Do we have true "*Good Samaritan*" compassion?

The Growth of Poverty

Defining poverty (Handout)

1996 Welfare Act (Handout)

The Homeless

What are some causes for the growth in homeless persons?

When did you begin to recognize/realize an increase in the homeless?

The Working Poor

What events are labeled causes for the increase in the working poor?

Comment on the author's "breakdown" of the working poor.

"*The poverty line*" what is it? (Handout)

The Children of Poverty

Does the author's description of this category picture a third world country to you?

How does the author's report of this category create concern for civil authorities?

The Youthful Poor

How does divorce contribute to this category?

What are some of the impacts on society with a large percentage of the homeless being under 18 years of age?

The New Ethnics

Are our immigration policies our own worst enemy?

Is the "*world's melting pot*" boiling over?

The Blue Collar Poor

How has technology contributed to creating this category?

The Free Labor Trade Act (Handout - Summary)

Gray America

Gray America - a success story?

Social Security going bust?

Is it wrong to live so long?

The Sick

The AIDS epidemic, is it our only healthcare problem?

Is social medicine the answer to rising healthcare cost?

The Prisoners

Prison population increasing - Is the economy the only reason for the rise in the prison population?

Conclusions

How long is our Jericho Road?

How can the church go to the aid of these victims?

Is it too late for the church to attack the root causes of these social problems?

PART 1 - PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 1: THE CALL TO MERCY

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Luke 10:29

OVERVIEW

Mercy to the full range of human needs is such an essential mark of being a Christian that it can be used as a test of true faith. Mercy is not optional or an addition to being a Christian. Rather, a life poured out in deeds of mercy is the inevitable sign of true faith.

The Essence of Love

John 13:34-35

The Expert's Summary

Summarize Deuteronomy 6:5

The Hebrew expresses totality

Mark 12:30 - Another challenge - same answer

Proverbs 23:26 - Heartfelt love and devotion to the whole person

Summarize Leviticus 19:18

A neighbor is anyone with which you have contact

Matthew 22:39 - Love your neighbor as your self

What was Jesus' strategy with this expert of the law?

Give some parallels between Jesus' conversation with the law expert and the rich young ruler in Mark 19:22

What is the price of total love for your neighbor?

The Riches and Poverty of God

What must we do to receive God's mercy?

How does Matthew 5:3 contribute to your answer? Explain

How are we like the law expert?

Mercy is Not Optional

Describe the difference in the law expert's conclusion to the Good Samaritan parable and Jesus' purpose in telling the parable.

How does the focus of the parable collide with our priority of giving to others?

How does James 2:15-16 and John 3:17-18 apply to your answer?

Mercy Is a Test

What extremes of testing are found in the following:

- 1 John 3:17-18
- James 2:13-17
- Proverbs 14:31
- Matthew 25:31-46

Mercy is Not New

Give examples of the Biblical history of mercy.

- Genesis 2:15 - How does the author relate this verse to mercy?
- Genesis 3:15
- Job 29:15-17
- Exodus 23:10-11
- Are there any modern day examples?

Gospel to the Poor

How could Jesus identify with the poor?

How are Christians charged to remember the poor?

Christ, Our Model

Give and comment on the author's three examples that Christ is our model for mercy ministry.

Give an example of your own.

Conclusion/Discussion

What must happen to bring Christians to see their responsibilities for ministering mercy?

CHAPTER 2: THE CHARACTER OF MERCY

"He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper." (Luke 10:34-35)

OVERVIEW

The ministry of mercy is the meeting of "felt" needs through deeds. As agent of the kingdom, the church seeks to bring substantial healing of the effects of sin in all areas of life, including psychological, social, economic and physical.

The Advocate

What are the characteristics of the attitude of an advocate?

What are examples of relationships demonstrated by an advocate?

Can you add to or improve on the author's "working" definition of the ministry of mercy?

Human Needs

Do you agree with this definition of a need: "A condition in which something necessary is required?"

How does the author tie needs to dependencies?

Four Alienations

Alienation from God

Apply this alienation to the author's definition of alienation

Why do you think nakedness was noted at the first realization of Adam and Eve's sin?

How can we ever breach this alienation from God?

Alienation from self

Why must we humans have something to worship?

What is the result of a misdirected heart? What does it seek?

How do we get our heart back on target? (Colossians 3:5)

Alienation from others

Think of the sudden transition in the relationship of Adam and Eve and God (Genesis 3:12-19)

Have you had a relationship alienated because of some act on your part?

Give some examples of how the "wonderful world" of blame has become the over used excuse for sin today

Alienation from nature

What are some of the examples of man's alienation from nature?

Do the ecology extremists have a point?

The King's Healing Hands

Read the promises of the restoration of natural order

- Psalm 96:11-13
- Romans 8:20-21

The Church and the Kingdom

What is the ministry of the kingdom?

Briefly describe the continuum of the kingdom

Has the kingdom of God begun? Explain

Human Deeds

Felt/perceived needs

How do these felt/perceived needs (social and physical) create an opportunity for communication?

How did God change His way of communicating with his people? (Exodus 20:18-21 and John 1:14)

How did this change meet the felt needs of God's people?

Deed Ministry

How are "word-gifts" more effective in satisfying psychological and theological needs?

How are "deed-gifts" more effective in satisfying social and physical needs?

Which deeds did the Samaritan display?

Which of these gifts do you have?

Conclusion/Discussion

How is a mercy ministry to physical and social needs also a ministry to psychological and theological needs?

CHAPTER 3: THE CALL TO MERCY

"And when he saw him, he took pity on him." (Luke 10:33)

OVERVIEW

The only true and enduring motivation for the ministry of mercy is an experience and a grasp of the grace of God in the gospel. If we know we are sinners saved by grace alone, we will be both open and generous to the outcasts and the unlovely.

The Gospel of Grace

Who were the two major legalist groups in the New Testament?

How did their view of good work differ from Christ's view?

Do you agree with D. M. Lloyd-Jones' explanation of the "Blessed are the poor in spirit" beatitude? Comment

Are we doomed to Isaiah's description of our most righteous acts? (Isaiah 64:6)

Grace and the Outcasts

When and why could we picture ourselves as outcasts?

Compare the physical appearance of an "outcast" with one who is a spiritual outcast

Are there "undeserving poor?"

How can the use of mercy ministry be used to judge between true and false Christianity?

Grace and Generosity

Why is it so unexpected that the Samaritan would stop and give aid?

What qualities did the Samaritan have that the priest and the Levite did not have?

Do you think that the United States is a compassionate country? (Comment and discuss)

What should be the model for our generosity?

The Gospel Self-Image

How does Philippians 2:3-4 reflect the "incarnational lifestyle?"

How does pride make living the "incarnational lifestyle" impossible?

Pushing the Button

What is the revealing connection between grace and generosity?

Conclusion/Discussion

Could you make a case for a comparison between you and the injured man and Christ and the Samaritan?

CHAPTER 4:

GIVING AND KEEPING: A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

“The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. Took after him/ and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have” (Luke 10:35)

OVERVIEW

Christians must give sacrificially, until their lifestyle is lowered. However, giving must be in accord with calling and ministry opportunities. Also, every believer must be a steward of possession so as not to become a burden and liability to his or her family.

How Rich was the Samaritan?

For the sake of the object of the parable did it matter?

What investments other than financial are necessary in bring the poor to self-sufficiency?

Simple Living

Modern Proponents

Comment on Ron Sidner's “graduated tithe” - Is the idea to extreme?

What is your conception of “simple living?”

Historic Proponents

What were John Newton's two guidelines for mercy ministry?

What was his counsel in living a “simple lifestyle?”

Biblical Contentment

How does the focus of John Wesley's sermon clash with today's popular financial philosophy?

Be Moderate

What is your definition of a “moderate life-style?”

How does the love of money defeat the goal of a moderate life-style?

Be Content

How would the absence of commercials and advertisements affect our life-style?

What should be the goal of the financially astute Christian?

Wealth and God's Calling

What does Paul say the rich should do with their wealth?

What type of life-style should the wealthy Christian live?

Guidelines for Justice Living

Sharing the Burden

Why is it necessary to feel the burden of the needy if I am giving over 10% of my budget and am still comfortable in my life-style?

Discerning the Call

How can a "forced" mercy ministry be harmful to an individual, a family or an organization?

Should you feel guilty about your mercy ministry when you read of John Wesley and George Mueller's mercy ministries on page 69?

Supporting our Family

How does the expense of maintaining the health and welfare of a family impact on John Newton's challenge to believers noted on page 71?

Where on the ladder of family financial priorities does mercy ministry belong?

Conclusion/Discussion

Considering the current economy, what felt/perceived "necessities" do you believe the average church member would agree to do without?

CHAPTER 5:

CHURCH AND THE WORLD – A BALANCED APPROACH

"But a Samaritan..." (Luke 10:33)

OVERVIEW

As a priority, we should give to needy Christians both intensively and extensively, until their need is gone. But we must also give generously to nonbelievers as part of our witness to the world.

The Priority of the Covenant

What was the price of social harmony under God in Deuteronomy 7:12-16?

What is the price of social harmony under our government today?

The Family and the Church

In our society what are the roadblocks that disrupt the family covenantal connection?

Bring to class an article or report on mercy ministries sponsored by churches.

The State

In keeping with the covenantal relationship approach, what does the United States do for its citizens?

Mercy to the Outsider

It is a wide span from neighbor to enemy.

Be prepared to give examples of mercy ministries to each category.

God's Mercy and Ours

Is the author being unreasonable when he says that we should study, find and meet basic human needs?

The Deed Ministry of Christ

Jesus' miraculous deed ministry resulted in attracting many to come and hear the Word.

What are some attractions used today to move people to come and hear the Word?

Are they adequate?

The Great Commission

We know our denomination has programs aimed at "going into the world" with words. Are we moving with any efforts toward doing deeds to go with the words?

Historical Models

Give your views on the Knox/Chalmers mercy ministry system. Could this type of system function in your church today?

Conclusion/Discussion

Discuss the methods your church would undertake to fulfill the challenge to study, find, and meet basic human needs.

CHAPTER 6:

CONDITIONAL AND UNCONDITIONAL: A BALANCED JUDGMENT

"When he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds."
(Luke 10:33-35)

OVERVIEW

God's mercy comes to us without conditions, but does not proceed without our cooperation. So too our aid must begin freely, regardless of the recipient's merits. But our mercy must increasingly demand change or it is not really love.

Who Deserves Mercy?

What conditions limit our obligation to give help to the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor?

Do you have difficulty in thinking that there are "undeserving poor?"

The Case Against "Conditions"

We know that our mercy, like God's, should be conditionless. How do the following verses confirm this conditionless giving of mercy?

- Romans 9:15-16
- Ephesians 2:4-7
- Titus 3:5-7

The Case for "Conditions"

How do our unemployment compensation (welfare) programs clash with the scriptural guidance for conditions in helping others?

Two Sides of God's Mercy

Once God's grace is delivered to us unconditionally what must we do to meet the follow-on conditions He sets forth?

Two Sides of Our Mercy

How are we to "manage" our efforts at mercy?

What is our goal?

What is our responsibility?

"Let Us Into Your Life"

Prior to this point in your study of mercy ministry did you tend to be conservative or liberal in your thoughts of helping others?

Let Mercy Limit Mercy

What does it mean to "let mercy limit mercy?"

Some False Limitations

Summarize Edward's thoughts on helping a person:

- Whose poverty is her/his own fault
- Whose poverty is caused by weakness
- Who refuses to change her/his life practices

Three Causes of Poverty

In your opinion which of the three biblical causes for poverty is predominate in:

- The Local Area
- Your Region of the County
- The World

Causes or Categories?

In case one what would your church do to help the family?

In case two what is the most immediate action your church would take for a long-range solution to the woman's problem?

In case three is your church equipped with the resources to aid the man?

In case four what would be the total mercy ministry for your church?

CHAPTER 7:

WORD AND DEED: A BALANCED TESTIMONY

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?
The expert of the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'" (Luke 10:36-37)

OVERVIEW

The ministry of mercy is not just a means to the end of evangelism. Word and deed are equally necessary, mutually interdependent and inseparable ministries, each carried out with the single purpose of the spread of the kingdom of God.

The Great Reversal

Review Jesus' purpose in the use of the parable. (Matthew 13:10-16)

The Grand Apologetic

While our country is, in many cases, generous in responding to situations and nations in need, which of the following verses do you think apply to our efforts?

- Luke 6:32-34
- Luke 6:35-36

The Problem of Precedence

Can you make a case where Wagner's positions B, C, or D could apply in different situations?

Necessary Ministries

Means to an End

In your estimation what dominates mercy ministries today - word or deed?

An Option?

All churches have some ability to help its members, but not all churches have the funds for a mercy ministry outside of the church. Should these churches be shamed for not reaching outside of the church? - Not to studying, finding and meeting basic human needs of non-members?

Next on the schedule

How are we to know if our mercy ministry is producing "rice" and/or nominal Christians?

Inseparable Ministries

Two-Ends Model

Who in the church should determine if the initial thrust of giving aid should be word or deed?

The Single-End Model

In today's society which segment of a mercy ministry will be excepted more readily - word or deed?

Interdependent Ministries

Vain Offerings

Is Yamamori paralleling symbiosis to the single-end model (page 112) and parasitism to the two-ends model (page 111)?

Parasitic Possibilities

Comment on the author's statement that evangelistic churches usually have a small interest in mercy ministry, and that small churches tend to be more concerned with mercy ministries/ social needs.

Radical Ministries

If ministry of the word is to work as a companion to the ministry of deed, what factors determine the employment of one over the other in the administration of a mercy ministry?

Conclusion/Discussion

Read the case study on page 117.

Using the knowledge gained in the study of the principles of mercy ministry, be prepared as a church to make brief responses and discuss each of the board's recorded statements.

Response Notes