

His Mercy Class 6

Go and Do Likewise: Acts to Revelation

Review: From the Garden to the Gospel...

- God met people's needs in the garden. God cares about people's needs. God cares about **your** needs.
- Through Moses, he worked to establish a classless society, where everyone was equal, everyone was a landowner, people were free from debt, and people were treated with justice and dignity.
- But the Israelites wanted to be like the other nations. Their kings chased pleasure and accumulation.
- People took advantage of the oppressed and disadvantaged—the aliens, the orphans, and the widows.
- The prophets equated economic oppression with a rejection of Yahweh and a sign that people did not know their God. So, God gave Israel over to their wishes. The temple was destroyed. The nation was exiled. They're only hope was that someday a Messiah would come.
- When Jesus came onto the scene, he baffled the people in power. He was born and raised with poor people. He preached to audiences who were predominantly the poor and the needy. His message was to renounce power, authority, and every effort to find satisfaction in material things at the expense of others. His lifestyle centered on sharing mercy and compassion with people in need. He rebuked those who valued authority, disarmed the spiritual forces of evil, and healed the sick.
- Through his death, he destroyed the power of sin over our lives.
- Then Jesus called his followers to imitate him.

The Disciples' Lifestyle: Acts to Revelation

- They preached the kingdom of God and lived it out through compassion. [Acts 2:38-46]
- "There were no needy persons among them." [Acts 4:32-37]
- Jesus-followers were distinct because of their compassion and mercy for people in need. [p. 134,136]
- Paul and the apostles preached the gospel and "remembered the poor." [Gal. 2:10]
- Christians were recognized by their fruit—the fruit of the Holy Spirit. [Gal. 5:22-23]
- Peter, James, and John called them to live as aliens [1 Pet. 2:12] and show God's love by meeting physical needs [James 2:15-16, 1 John 3:17-18].
- All our labor will come to fruition on THAT Day, when every need will be met, every tear wiped dry, and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord in the New Heaven and the New Earth! [Rev. 21-22]

Life-defining questions for us as individuals

- What does it mean to be a Christian? [e.g., to have a relationship with God and the meaning of "saved"]
- If following Jesus is only about reading our Bible, praying, and sharing our faith, then why did Jesus and his disciples spend so much time helping the poor and needy?
- How can you tell if someone is a Christian? [John 13:34-35, Jer 22:31, p.134,136]
- How is that different from what we previously emphasized? [e.g., doctrine, ticket to heaven]
- Why are benevolence and compassion so important?

Questions to answer as a congregation of Jesus-followers

- What does it look like to live as a Jesus community?
- Is the mission of the church to convert people or to bring compassion and care to people in need?
- Who is (should be) the leader of our church? Do we bear His fruit? [Gal. 5:22-23]

What opportunities do we have to live out Jesus' calling to the needy in our lives today?

- How can I better understand my own needs?
- How can I become a more merciful spouse, roommate, parent, neighbor, or friend?
- How can I be a messenger of His mercy in my job, through serving people, and sharing His mercy?
- How can we make our church more of a beacon of His mercy?

His Mercy: Personal Inventory and Activity Guide

*These suggestions summarize the activities identified throughout the entire book.
Pray and consider practicing any that you find helpful. Not every idea will be appropriate for you!*

1. Take a personal inventory of your own needs

1. Identify anything impeding your relationship with God and people.
2. Let people know what your needs are and that you need them!
3. What does this mean to you: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6)?
4. Describe your current habits for prayer, fasting, and giving to people in need.
5. Be honest about any addiction, greed, loneliness, anxiety, or despair with someone you trust.
6. Review your financial situation with someone you trust in a comparable position.
7. Live within your means, embrace simplicity in your lifestyle, and fight consumerism.
8. Pray about ways to use your career to serve people in need.

2. Write a prayer list thinking about people’s needs in your family, neighborhood, work, and church

1. Praise God for something other than circumstances. Invite the Holy Spirit to fill and guide you.
2. Pray honestly through the Psalms, being willing to express emotion, lament, and grieve.
3. Pray to connect with the people you interact with today.
4. Pray for new parents, people in life transitions, the unemployed, and the chronically ill.
5. Pray for senior citizens, single parents, widows, orphans, and immigrants.
6. Pray for the persecuted, the starving, those facing injustice or tragedy.
7. Pray for children who lack educational opportunities, adequate nutrition, and healthcare.

3. Connect with people in need and listen to their stories

1. Identify someone with a heart for people in need and let them inspire you to grow.
2. Work on your listening skills to better understand other people’s backgrounds and stories.
3. Find ways to interact with people in need in your family, job, neighborhood, and church.
4. Reach out to someone who has recently moved or is an immigrant.
5. Listen to the stories of people from different ethnic, racial, or socio-economic backgrounds.

4. Consider volunteer opportunities

1. Make a list of ways you are currently reaching out to people in need.
2. Identify opportunities to serve through your church or a local charity.
3. Research ways to connect with local senior centers, shelters, food banks, or prison ministries.
4. Develop your own plan for how you will respond to people who ask for help.
5. Treat someone to an experience they wouldn’t normally have the opportunity to.
6. Sign up for a local or international volunteer service project (e.g., Mission Trip, Habitat for Humanity, Red Cross, HOPE worldwide).
7. Research Urban Rest Stop (<https://dtjax.com/poi/urban-rest-stop/>), Sulzbacher (<https://sulzbacherjax.org>), and Beaches Homeless Coalition (Tracy gebeauxt@gmail.com)

Go and Do Likewise

We have done our best to convince you that you deeply need God’s Mercy and that following Jesus means living in that mercy and sharing that mercy with others. This is not the same as “getting saved so I can go to heaven.” This is a lifestyle where we pursue a transformative relationship with God and share that actively with people in need. They say it takes 30 days to establish a habit. We’ve given you 42 days of devotionals to help you reflect on His Mercy and consider how you will live out that life of mercy with those around you. May God transform us into disciples who are known for our love, compassion, and lives full of His Mercy!

*Holy Father, have mercy on me,
Give me the strength to be the person you created me to be
And to bring shalom (mercy, peace, wholeness, completeness) to many.
May your glory be all, and my glory be you.*