

# WHAT IS MERCY MINISTRY?

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**TO THE GROUP LEADER:** This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. If someone asked you to explain, “What is mercy ministry,” how would you answer?  
*Have the class share what they wrote down prior to reading the text.*
2. If your church found itself stepping over people sleeping in the doorway to your church each week, what might you suggest the church do about it? [5-6]  
*This is a major question every church should answer relative to its own unique situation. With this understanding, every church has opportunities to perform acts of mercy in its own neighborhood.*
3. With all the advancements we have seen leading us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, why is there still a need for mercy ministries? [7-9]  
*When Adam sinned, ALL of creation felt the effects of sin. There is no part of life and nature left unscathed. Too often God gets blamed, when the blame belongs to man for his sin and its consequences on all of us.  
After they read the booklet, have the class explain the difference between “natural” and “moral” evil.*
4. What do “God coming in the flesh” and “God’s image reflected in us” have in common? [10]  
*Jesus’ willingness to come to our aid by becoming like us was and remains the ultimate act of mercy displayed.*
5. What do you think the Westminster Confession means by, “[All of us] are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil?” [10]  
*Total Depravity does not teach that the result of Adam’s sin made us completely evil. It means that every aspect of life is tainted and drawn to sin. In Romans 6:17, Paul says we were slaves to sin before we came to Christ.*
6. What should be our motivation for doing acts of mercy? [10-17]  
*Everything God did for us after the Fall was an act of mercy. If He had acted in justice, we would have gotten what we deserved – Hell! Instead, He promised Adam a way for their broken relationship to be restored, which was through the coming Savior. Jesus’ coming in the flesh was an act of mercy. Therefore, to talk about the Gospel, and not include mercy, is not the Gospel of God!*
7. The Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 5, tells us about those attributes (characteristics) we have in common with God, as part of the image of God in us. They are: being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Which of these display God’s mercy, and therefore, ours also? [10-17]  
*They all do! Ask the class to think through each of these characteristics we share with God, and for examples of God/Jesus/Holy Spirit displaying acts of mercy, and how we emulate these in our lives.*
8. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. How many acts of mercy can you find in these verses? [12]  
*Grace includes mercy and more. Salvation shows God’s mercy, which is totally undeserved. Being seated with Him is beyond anything we could earn. Through the work of the Spirit we have been given the faith to believe. He has saved us to do works of mercy.*

9. What would you say is more important – worship or showing mercy? After thinking through this question, re-read Ephesians 2:8-10. [14 & 17]  
 We need to understand that worship is much more than just what we do on a Sunday morning. Through worship we reflect the image of God in all we do and to all we meet, especially those the Holy Spirit leads us to help; remembering they also are made in God's image.  
 Calvin said doing acts of mercy *is* offering worship to God. Read the Matthew 25 passage on page 17 to the class, and ask them to explain how these two concepts are the same.
10. What examples can you think of where Jesus showed acts of mercy during His ministry on earth? [14-15]  
 There can be many, so ask the class to briefly share a few.
11. What do **we** get when we serve others? [30]  
 Read the first full paragraph on page 30 and discuss these.
12. Which is more important to God, serving locally or overseas? [30-32]  
 The key here is the word **serv**ing. If we are not willing to serve where we are, what would make us think we would do anything different 8000 miles away? We need to prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to develop a lifestyle in us which will reflect His image.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class. Write down other questions you might have here...

## APPLICATION

1. Personal: Answer the following questions from the last paragraph on page 34:
  - a. Who is the recipient of *my* mercy?
  - b. Is my compassion helping to transform anyone's life?
  - c. Am I driven to show mercy to others, or am I dominated by my own pleasures and ambitions?

If you find yourself falling short in any of these areas, don't despair. Instead, pray about what you should change in your life and lifestyle (including your family's) to better reflect the image of God in our world of need.

2. As a church: Answer the following questions from the last paragraph on page 34:
  - a. Who is the recipient of our planned acts of mercy? Who should be?
  - b. Is anyone's life being transformed by our compassion?
  - c. Are we driven to show mercy to others, or are we dominated by our own projects and plans?

Make a list of every ministry in which your church is currently involved. In what ways might these ministries be more involved with mercy outreach? In what new ways can we better reflect the image of God to a lost and dying world?

## For Further Study

*Ministries of Mercy, The Call of the Jericho Road*, Tim Keller, P&R, 1997.

*Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace*, Harvie Conn, P&R.

*Tangible: Making God Known Through Deeds of Mercy and Deeds of Truth*, Chris Sicks, Crossway, 2013.

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