

# Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the Mission Field Worldwide.

## JUSTICE CALLED AND MERCY ANSWERED

A woman was brought to Jesus by the Pharisees. She had been caught in the very act of adultery. The evidence was beyond a shadow of a doubt. Condemnation and judgment awaited her; the sentence was sure according to the law. Yet, Jesus, the Son of God, gave her a message: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

In 760 BC there was a wicked city called Nineveh. Godlessness, idolatry, perversions, works of the flesh, lies, plunder, violence, and witchcraft pervaded this capital city of Assyria. God sent the prophet Jonah to declare the imminent judgment of God who was going to destroy the city. The king and his people repented and begged for mercy. God turned from His judgment and did not destroy the city (Jonah 3).

Jesus tells the story of a young man in Luke 15 who rebelled against his father. This young man walked away from the good things of home and wasted all his goods with wicked living. He found himself destitute and contaminated with sin. When he came to his senses, he headed for home, planning to ask his father to accept him as just a servant. The father was watching for his son to come home and welcomed him with open arms. This prodigal was forgiven and restored to his place in the home as a son.

Time and time again, the children of Israel refused to obey God and followed their own

sinful ways. Time and time again, God forgave and restored them. "Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God" (Nehemiah 9:31).

At the time of the trial and crucifixion of Christ, the disciple Peter followed afar off. When asked if he was a follower of Jesus, Peter denied even knowing the Lord. He denied Him three times. At the third denial, Jesus turned and looked at Peter, who then went out and wept bitterly. When Jesus rose from the dead, He specifically sent a message to Peter to inform him of His resurrection. Jesus forgave Peter, and fifty days later Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost.

King David committed sin with Bathsheba and had her husband killed in battle. When his sin was exposed, David prayed: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness" (Psalm 51:1). God forgave David of his sin.

Saul, later known as Paul the Apostle, had killed and imprisoned the saints. He was a blasphemer and persecutor, and yet he obtained mercy when he recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

God's mercy to the Gentiles was exemplified even when they were not repentent. God delayed the return of Abraham's descendents to claim their inheritance in Canaan land because the iniquity

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**"Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God" (Nehemiah 9:31).**

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# WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

## Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

## Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

## Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

## New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;  
Eph. 2:1, 5-6

## Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

## Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

## Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;  
Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

## Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

## The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

## Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

## Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;  
1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

## Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

## Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;  
1 Cor. 7:10-11

## Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

## End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;  
Matt 25:31-46

## Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

## Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

## Great Commission

Mark 16:15

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of the Amorites was not yet full (Genesis 15:16). The Amorites were very sinful and yet God withheld judgment by extending time and mercy.

These brief Bible stories have something in common that ties them together. They illustrate the real and practical mercy of God. There was an overriding call for judgment, and punishment was deserved, yet mercy answered the call. God did not and does not give people in this life



“Be the face of God  
and extend His love  
through practical  
mercy. When others  
call for judgment,  
call for mercy.”

what they deserve, but He is longsuffering and extends mercy. His hand of mercy is extended to all people still today. The rebellious, the sinful, the wicked, and the undeserving are not without hope, for God is a God of mercy and forgiveness.

The mercy of God should permeate and be lived out practically in the lives of all people. In 2007 a man was traveling with his family by car. They were hit by a drunk driver. The husband and father turned and saw that the two children in the back seat were dead. His wife in the seat beside him, bearing their unborn child, died as well. As he stared out the broken windshield at the car driven by the drunk driver, he felt the call of God to forgive and let it all go. He extended mercy and forgiveness to the young man who had driven while drunk and taken the lives of his family.

Many years ago, a minister in the Church of God was brutally murdered. The murderer was captured and put in prison. The family testified that they forgave the man who had killed their father.

What wrongs have we committed that were worthy of punishment? How have you sinned against God? What injuries do others bear because of your actions? As God has so graciously forgiven us, so are we to forgive those around us. When people commit egregious acts and bring pain to our lives, they may not be deserving of mercy and forgiveness, but neither were we. Let us be longsuffering and extend mercy in lieu of judgment. Be the face of God and extend His love through practical mercy. When others call for judgment, call for mercy. When others want to cut someone off, call for restoration. When others seek to punish, seek to bring healing.

As our Heavenly Father has shown mercy to us, so should we do likewise to others by His grace. ■

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# Editorial



*Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart. —Proverbs 3:3*

Dear reader, I exhort you as did Solomon, “Let not mercy and truth forsake thee.” Clearly, our world is in the gross darkness of sin, and there is a need for the light of truth to shine brightly. Cleave to the truth and live it, but not to truth alone. Cling also to mercy. It was the mercy of God that saved us, and the mercy we show others will point them to the hope that is in Christ Jesus.

The subject this quarter is ‘Mercy.’ I was profoundly touched as I studied the scripture and meditated on this topic. There is a wealth of verses that teach and demonstrate the necessity and importance of mercy. It is noteworthy that more is said about the importance of mercy than many of the doctrinal subjects which some people hold. As noted above, let us cleave to the truth, but we must not forsake mercy.

Without the mercy of God, none of us would be saved. We did not deserve God’s love and yet He loved us. Even after we start our journey for the Lord, it is His mercy that keeps us, for we all make mistakes and err. Victorious living is a Bible standard, and this writing in no way lends itself to compromise or substandard living; YET how many of us have never had to return to the Lord and ask Him for forgiveness? I was saved by His mercy, and I am where I am today only by the gracious mercy that He has extended to me for my faults and shortcomings. Since living for God is a life of growth, there will always be places where we need His mercy.

As I reflect on the mercy that God has had on people through the years, I am amazed and challenged in my life. I clearly remember coming back from a mission trip and thinking, “I am finished. I will not be coming back to these carnal people.” God spoke to me and reminded me of the parable of the fig tree recorded in Luke 13. God was not finished, and I saw a glimpse into the depth of His mercy. Incidentally, my own mercy was extended by His grace.

In the religious world, you will find many liberal, compromised fellowships touting love and mercy while teaching little truth. That is wrong. It is just as wrong to wave the banner of truth and holiness without a spirit of mercy. When a village of the Samaritans rejected a visit from Christ, the disciples wanted to call down fire on them. Jesus said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” (Luke 9:55). I have observed a judgmental spirit among too many professing “holiness” people. When the norm for people to measure others critically, there is a lack of love and mercy. The irony is that it can be difficult to have mercy on judgmental people.

It is a blessing in our own lives and in the lives of others to be merciful. Mercy is more than a doctrine; it is the practical application of loving, forgiving, longsuffering, seeking for reconciliation, etc. May God help us all seek to be more merciful and less judgmental without sacrificing truth.

Michael W. Smith

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# Bible Study Guide

## Subject: Mercy

**Scripture Reading:** *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.* —Psalm 86:15

**Definition:** Mercy is “a disposition to be kind and forgiving; the feeling that motivates compassion; leniency and compassion shown toward offenders by a person or agency charged with administering justice” (Vocabulary.com).

**Summary:** God is full of mercy and compassion and delays judgment, giving people an opportunity for forgiveness and restoration. Children of God likewise should interact and relate with others from a foundation and spirit of mercy.

### I. A Divine Attribute of God

- A. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 God, the Father of mercies.
- B. Daniel 9:9 Mercies and forgivenesses belong to God.
- C. Deuteronomy 4:29-31 God is a merciful God.
- D. Micah 7:18 God delights in mercy.
- E. Matthew 9:36 Jesus is moved with compassion.

### II. God’s Mercy Is Plenteous and Enduring

- A. Psalm 103:8 The LORD is plenteous in mercy.
- B. Psalm 51:1-2 Tender mercies.
- C. 1 Chronicles 16:34 His mercy endureth forever.
- D. 2 Peter 3:9 Not willing that any should perish.

### III. All Have Sinned and Are Worthy of Judgment

- A. Romans 3:23 For all have sinned.
- B. Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is death.

### IV. Mercy Is Undeserved and of the Will of God

- A. Ephesians 2:4-6 Mercy is not of our merit.
- B. Romans 9:15-16 Mercy is according to God’s will.

### V. Salvation and Eternal Life According to Mercy

- A. Luke 1:78-79 The gospel light came by God’s mercy.
- B. Titus 3:4-7 Salvation not according to works but by mercy.
- C. Isaiah 55:7 God pardons the wicked.
- D. 1 Peter 1:3-4 God’s mercy brings hope of Heaven.

### VI. Mercy Sustains God’s People

- A. Psalm 94:18 Mercy holds up those that slip.
- B. Lamentations 3:21-23 It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed.

### VII. A Merciful High Priest

- A. Hebrews 2:16-18 Jesus a merciful high priest.
- B. Hebrews 4:15-16 Mercy found at the throne of grace.

### VIII. An End to God’s Mercy

- A. John 12:48 Judgment on those that reject.
- B. Matthew 25:45-46 Everlasting punishment to the unfaithful.
- C. Hebrews 10:28-29 Dying without mercy.

### IX. Called to a Life of Mercy

- A. Luke 6:36 Be merciful as God is merciful.
- B. Micah 6:8 Love mercy.
- C. Zechariah 7:9 Show mercy and compassion.

### X. Mercy Better Than Sacrifice

- A. Matthew 23:23 Woe unto those that omit mercy.
- B. Hosea 6:6 God desires mercy more than sacrifice.
- C. Matthew 9:11-13 Jesus would have mercy and not sacrifice.

### XI. Blessings and Judgment

- A. Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful.
- B. James 2:13 Judgment without mercy on those that have no mercy.
- C. Matthew 18:33-35 Forgive trespasses.

### Conclusion

*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*  
—Colossians 3:12-13



# RICH IN MERCY

Many people see God as a divine being with His sword of judgment raised ready to cut people off for any spiritual infraction. This understanding of God is far from the truth, for God is merciful. His arms of mercy are extended to help everyone in their time of sin, failure, need, suffering, and temptation.

“God is righteous and holy and yet forgiveness and mercy belong to Him. Mercy is an integral part of His character, for He is the origin of it.”

## A Divine Attribute of God

The Psalmist David penned: “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psalm 86:15). Mercy is that disposition to be kind and forgiving. It is the quality that has to do with compassion, forgiveness, and leniency where there might otherwise be judgment. Mercy, as a subset of grace, is the gift of God’s undeserved love and compassion when He does not give people the punishment they deserve.

The mercy of God is too often overlooked and underestimated. God is not only the “God of all comfort” but is also the “Father of mercies” (2 Corinthians 1:3). Mercy is a primary, divine attribute of God. “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses” (Daniel 9:9). God is righteous and holy and yet forgiveness and mercy belong to Him. Mercy is an integral part of His character, for He is the origin of it.

The Scripture repeatedly details and exemplifies the mercy of God in His dealings with humanity. When people are in trouble and seek the Lord, He will not forsake them, “For the LORD thy God is a merciful God” (Deuteronomy 4:31). In Micah 7:18, the prophet penned so eloquently: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.” Christ revealed that practical side of mercy as He ministered to the sinners when He walked on this earth. “When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion” (Matthew 9:36).

## God’s Mercy Is Plenteous and Enduring

God is “slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy” (Psalm 103:8). There is a storehouse of mercy

that overrides the call to judgment. It was upon that mercy that David called when he had sinned with Bathsheba. David was broken, guilty, and repentant. He prayed, “According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1). Tender mercies refer to God’s ready, large, and liberal disposition to compassion. David’s appeal was not to justice, but his hope was in the infinite mercy of God. In His mercy, God is delaying the final judgment to give more opportunity for people to be saved. The Lord “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

## All Have Sinned and Are Worthy of Judgment

“All have sinned” (Romans 3:23), done wrong, and transgressed the commandments of God. Due to this sin, we are also all worthy of punishment, for the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Yet, in our undeserving state, God extended His love and mercy through Jesus Christ. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)” (Ephesians 2:4-6). Mercy comes not by the will of man but of the sovereign will of God (Romans 9:15-16). Man does not deserve it, nor can he gain it by merit. Mercy is a gift of God.

## Salvation and Eternal Life According to Mercy

It was because of love that God sent Jesus to die for the sins of humanity. Salvation came, “Not by works of righteousness which we have

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done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). Salvation is not extended to those who are qualified by their own goodness and righteousness. Salvation is given by mercy to the vilest of sinners who will repent and accept this

gift of God. When the wicked forsake their ways and return unto the Lord, "He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). The person that feels unworthy of God's love and forgiveness because of past wrongs will be accepted and reconciled to God because of His mercy.



**"Christians are not just to 'have' mercy, they are to 'love' mercy. Mercy looks beyond one's own feelings to the feelings and needs of others."**

### **Mercy Sustains God's People**

David wrote: "My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up" (Psalm 94:18). For people who are seeking to serve God, there are times of failure and mistakes. God is not going to cut someone off when they fall short of perfection; rather, He will help them and renew them. It is God that restores and holds people up by His mercy lest they fall into ruin. When life is dark and things seem impossible, remember the prophet Jeremiah. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:21-23).

### **A Merciful High Priest**

Jesus took on the nature of man, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17). He understands the difficulties of the flesh and is merciful to people in their struggles. People can go with assurance to that high priest, and "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

### **An End to God's Mercy**

In this life, God is more ready to have mercy than to administer judgment. It would be a mistake to ignore the reality of the coming judgment when there will be an end to God's mercy. Judgment will come to those that reject Jesus and His words (John 12:48). There will be everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:45-46) to those who refuse to accept God's mercy and salvation. As those that despised Moses' law died without mercy, so shall those that despise the saving blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:28-29).

Praise God for His mercy! Through His love and forgiveness, when we repent, instead of the

punishment we so justly deserve, we can find hope, peace, and restoration. God is no respecter of persons, and His mercy extends to all people, regardless of their background and problems.

### **Called to a Life of Mercy**

As God is merciful, so are His followers to be merciful. Jesus gave a clear instruction that should be followed: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Micah 6:8 poses the question, "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy...." Christians are not just to 'have' mercy, they are to 'love' mercy. Mercy looks beyond one's own feelings to the feelings and needs of others. Mercy in its purest form is not begrudging or dutiful but is plenteous and from the heart.

### **Mercy Better Than Sacrifice**

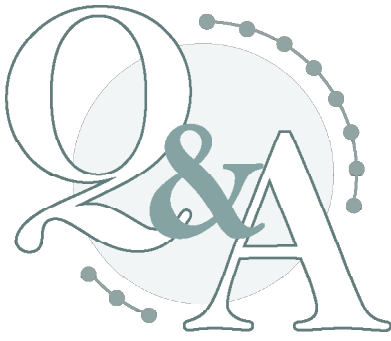
While there is a time of righteous judgment, the child of God should put more emphasis on extending mercy to people that are living less than stellar lives. Just as the Pharisees, too many Christians have focused on the outward manifestation of holiness and neglected the weightier matters of mercy (Matthew 23:23). Both the Old Testament (Hosea 6:6) and New Testament (Matthew 9:11-13) confirm that God would rather have mercy than sacrifice. A spirit of mercy is of MORE importance than the outward sacrifices of holy living. Judgment drives away where mercy compels and gives the opportunity for change.

When people make mistakes or even sin, saints are to communicate and deal with them from a standpoint of mercy and forgiveness. All of us needed and still need the mercy of God. How can God's children be any less merciful with sinners and even with other professing Christians?

### **Blessings and Judgment**

Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). If the child of God does not live a life with mercy for others, God will judge him without mercy (James 2:13). If the followers of Christ do not forgive people in their trespasses and seek for their restoration, God will not forgive them (Matthew 18:33-35).

We are desperate for the mercy of God in our lives, and we should be just as willing to extend that mercy to those around us. ■



## How do I have practical mercy when someone is taking advantage of me?

Having a spirit of mercy does not mean that you indiscriminately allow people to mistreat you. If someone hits me, I need to turn the other cheek as Jesus taught. In other words, I should not retaliate, and I should bear injury; but I will step out of the way if possible. When the crowd was seeking to throw Jesus off the cliff, He evaded the crowd.

If someone is taking advantage of you physically, financially, or otherwise, it is important to recognize the balance of scripture. Part of mercy is forgiving the person who is causing the injury. We must commit that person to the Lord and fully forgive them, no matter how many times they trespass against us. However, that does not mean we need to invite the murderer into the house with our children nor do we give the thief the key to our door. We are to be good stewards of that with which God has entrusted us. Sometimes that means lifting a standard of judgment and establishing guidelines and parameters that must be followed. In those times, we must always maintain a spirit of love. Where there is injustice in the world, we must know that mercy does not have the power to reconcile, but it makes provision for reconciliation.

## How do you reconcile holding a standard of truth with having mercy on others?

My soul is in my hand. I have not the power to change other people, but I have the power by grace to live a holy life in truth before God. We must not compromise righteousness in our own lives because of others around us. Part of the standard of truth would then be having mercy on others who are not living righteously. We should put forth much effort in demonstrating love for others who are not living godly lives.

A lesson that is important for Christians to learn is that acceptance does not mean approval. We can accept someone and love them without condoning their actions. Consider this, if there is no truth to uphold, there is no mercy to extend. Mercy is not needed as much for the one who is doing everything right; it is needed for the one who is making mistakes.

Psalm 85:10 says, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The truth of righteousness exposes sin and requires judgment. Mercy on the other hand seeks peace and restoration. Through Christ, truth and mercy met at Calvary, and in that meeting place we found salvation. We want mercy and truth to merge in our lives as well. Preach, teach, and live the truth that others might see the way of truth; and yet, have mercy and compassion on them in their error. It is that mercy that will draw them to the truth, not a spirit of self-righteousness.

Truth and mercy, or judgment and mercy, are not mutually exclusive. Having righteous judgment, as Christ taught, does not negate mercy.



All the paths of the LORD are **mercy** and **truth** unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. —Psalm 25:10

Just as tracks or ruts that are made by wagon wheels are easily recognized, so should be the tracks of mercy and truth that lead to Christ. Christians must not only acknowledge the path of truth but also the path of mercy.



DID YOU KNOW?

### Signs that you are judging others:

1. When you meet people, you are critically assessing them.
2. You are more “righteously indignant” at the faults or sins of others than you are ashamed of your own.
3. You do not quickly release people from their wrongs.
4. You disregard and separate yourself from people who disagree or are different than yourself.
5. You are free to talk openly about your perception of other people’s needs or spiritual lacks.
6. You struggle to see beyond the faults of others.



A Word  
in Season

## COMMUNE FROM THE MERCY SEAT

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*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat.*  
—Exodus 25:22

During the time the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, they carried with them the tabernacle, a portable sanctuary. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Most Holy Place, which was the innermost chamber of the tabernacle. On top of the ark was a lid which was called the mercy seat. This is where God communed with the High Priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. What a blessed consolation to know that God dealt with His people from a seat of mercy rather than from a seat of judgment. No matter what the sin, when the blood was applied, God extended mercy and forgiveness to the children of Israel.



While the blood of bulls and of goats was imperfect to take away sin, Jesus died on the cross to atone for the sin of all mankind. In this New Testament dispensation, we may still approach the throne of God where He will commune with us from a seat of mercy and love. If there is sin or failure, one can come to Christ, who will bridge the gap to God through His mercy. Rather than judge and destroy, He will provide a path of healing and reconciliation. We need never fear to approach the mercy seat of God, for it is there that we can commune with the King of kings.

We are so blessed to have the privilege and assurance of communing with God from the mercy seat. We as God’s children also have many interactions with people in our lives—family, friends, fellow Christians, co-workers, etc. From what seat do we commune with them? Are we communicating and making decisions in our lives from a seat of judgment or a seat of mercy?

We are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and be partakers of His divine nature. If God communes with us from the mercy seat, how then can we be harsh and judgmental in our actions and spirit with other people? Let us communicate with all people from a standpoint of mercy so that they might see Jesus and find the healing path of reconciliation. ■

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD