

Series: Special Study
Text: Luke 6:36-38
July 19, 2015: Gospel Community Study Guide

This Study Guide is based on a sermon by Dr. Joshua Mack. You will find the link to the sermon here.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=8315621551>

Getting Started:

During our time together, we want to talk about the importance of being merciful people.

Before we go too deeply into this whole subject however, it's probably important for us to take a step back and define mercy.

What do you think it means to be merciful?

Can you think of an example of someone being merciful to someone else?

What is the opposite of being merciful to others?

Into the Bible:

Have someone read Luke 6:36-38 out loud and then answer the following questions:

In verse 36, Jesus is commanding us to be merciful. In the verses that go before this, Jesus has been talking about doing what? (See especially verse 27!) So while obviously Jesus wants us to be merciful to everyone, here He is even more specifically talking about being merciful to whom?

Many times people use other people's sins or problems as an excuse not to be kind to them, when those sins or problems are actually a reason to show love to them! Mercy assumes that a person doesn't deserve the kindness you are showing them. If they deserved it, that kindness wouldn't be mercy!

Now, to help us understand how merciful He wants us to be, Jesus gives us someone to imitate. Who are we to be as merciful as?

What are some ways God has shown His mercy to us? Take a minute here to brag on your God. There is no one more merciful than He is! So think carefully about some examples of how He has proven He is merciful.

Digging Deeper:

Even though we are all shown so much mercy every day, there still aren't really many people who are truly and consistently merciful towards others! In case you don't believe me, think for a moment about how Jesus defines what it means to be merciful.

In verses 37 and 38, Jesus gives several commands that show us what it looks like to be merciful to others.

What are these four commands?

Now, let's reverse them so you can see the opposite of mercy. A person who isn't merciful towards others does the following things:

- 1.) He looks down on them.
- 2.) He is critical towards them.
- 3.) He speaks evil about them.
- 4.) He refuses to overlook their mistakes.
- 5.) He holds their sins against them.
- 6.) He will not reach out to help them or give them assistance when they are in need.

Before we rush pass these ideas too quickly, why don't you go back through this list and give some examples of ways in which people do this. Imagine someone who has done something wrong. What are some ways people might typically respond to that person? How might they look down on them, be critical towards them, etc?

We often excuse those responses by saying, well, that other person has done wrong, what do you expect me to do? Jesus says He expects you to be merciful!

Pause to Consider:

This first statement, judge not is often interpreted to mean that we aren't allowed to confront someone who is sinning or speak out against doctrinal error. How do we know that can't be what Jesus is saying?

But if that's not what Jesus is saying, what does Jesus mean when he says, 'judge not?'

I think we get a good explanation of what it means to condemn someone in James 4:11-12. What does James say we must not do there? What are some ways people 'speak evil' against others?

More positively, James tells us that being merciful means we are willing to forgive those who sin against us and that we have a giving and generous spirit. What does it mean to forgive someone's sin? If we are to forgive people when they sin against us, obviously we are to have that same kind of loving attitude when they make mistakes or annoy us. What do you think is the opposite of this forgiving and generous spirit towards those who do wrong? Try to get specific. What would it look like to be the

kind of person who doesn't forgive sin or overlook mistakes? How does this person act? What does this person say? How does this person feel?

I am convinced that Christians should be the most forgiving people in the world. We should be the people who are the most patient with others. Can you think of any reasons why this should especially be true of us?

Besides forgiving, Jesus tells us that a merciful person gives. Christians should in other words be giving people. Sometimes when we talk about giving we only think about money. But let's try to go a little deeper for a moment. What does it mean, do you think, for someone to be a giving person? What is going on in the heart of someone who is generous? How does he tend to view other people?

Jesus doesn't only command us to be merciful, He also gives us a number of reasons why we should obey this command. What are the reasons He gives in this passage for us being merciful? What do you think those motivations mean?

Summing Up:

It's not enough to know that we should be merciful. We need to become merciful people! We need to look at our lives and ask ourselves honestly, am I a merciful person? Am I a person who is not critical of others, who doesn't speak evil about others, who is quick to overlook mistakes and happy to forgive sin and who has a generous kind of attitude towards other people? To get more specific, would my children say I am merciful? Would my wife say I am merciful? Would my community say I am merciful? Would my enemies say I am merciful?

And if not, why not?

In case, you are thinking this is not an important issue, remember that this is one of the first commands Jesus is giving those who want to follow Him! And it's clear in the Old Testament that mercy is one of the key characteristics of those who truly worship God!

Read Micah 6:6-8.

To Think About:

What are some of the main encouragements or challenges you have taken from what we have studied together today? Is there any specific word of praise you would like to give to God for what you have learned about Jesus today? How about questions? Do you have any thing you are still wondering from what we have talked about? What are some of the practical differences what you studied makes on your life? What would you like to share with someone else? Is there any specific issue that this study has brought up that you want the members of your gospel community to be praying for you about?

