

TRUTH

“... Your word is truth” (John 17:17)

May 2025

“BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL”

The Master declared, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*” (Matthew 5:7). If you and I want to be happy and please our Creator, we need to demonstrate mercy in our dealings with other folks.

In Matthew 5:7, “merciful” is an adjective, while “obtain mercy” is a verb. This verb comes from a Greek word (“ἐλεέω/eleeō”) which means “to have mercy on; to help one afflicted or seeking aid; to help the afflicted, to bring help to the wretched; to experience mercy” [Thayer, no. 1653 via e-Sword]. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of NT Words* says this about “merciful” and “mercy”: “to feel sympathy with the misery of another, and especially sympathy manifested in act ... the outward manifestation of pity” [www.studylight.org/dictionaries/eng/ved.html]. Thus, if one is merciful, he/she feels *sympathy* with what others are facing in life and shows *pity* by *helping* such individuals. Pity plus action equals compassion.

In addition to what we read in Matthew 5:7, the message of Luke 6:36 makes it plain that our Savior wants His followers to be merciful. After pointing out that the Most High “*is kind to the unthankful and evil*” (Luke 6:35), Jesus told His disciples, “*Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful*” (6:36). Preaching sound doctrine, coming together with other saints to worship God, and refraining from using profanity are all things that He expects His people to do. At the same time, let us not forget this undeniable truth: our God also wants His children to be merciful as they interact with other humans. It is not optional! For those Jews who heard the Master speak, the idea of being merciful was a familiar concept, as under the old covenant God also enjoined His people to “do justly” and to “love mercy” (Micah 6:8).

Being merciful does not mean that we are weak. Time and again, we read in the Bible about Jesus showing mercy (Matthew 9:27-29; 15:22,28; 20:30-33). He certainly was not weak when He did so! When He was merciful, our Lord showed compassion on others, considering their needs and their feelings.

The Christ wants us to imitate God’s mercy (Luke 6:36). The Lord God is “*rich in mercy*” (Ephesians 2:4). Yes, He is “*abounding in mercy*” (Psalm 103:8). If we are going to be like Him, we should not try to

“be skimpy” and show as little mercy as possible.

God’s mercy causes Him to forgive those who truly repent. He forgives those who are ungodly, sinners, and His enemies (Romans 5:6,8,10). I need to learn to be merciful to such imperfect people. Do I want the Lord to extend forgiveness to me? If so, then I must be willing to forgive those who have sinned against me (Matthew 6:14,15). We can learn from the example of Joseph, who was willing to forgive his malicious brothers (Genesis 50:15,19-21).

God shows mercy by giving people second chances. When His people forsook Him, He pleaded with them to return to Him. And, when they did so, He showed mercy and took them back (Jeremiah 3:12-15). If I am going to be merciful like my God, I, too, need to be willing to grant others second chances.

Our Father shows mercy by punishing us less than we deserve. In a prayer, Ezra said, “... *You our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve*” (Ezra 9:13). As I interact with others who have made mistakes, I need to take into account a number of factors, including what they are facing in their life. In some cases, it might be better for me to show them mercy rather than crush them with a hammer.

Another aspect of being merciful is to help relieve the pain of those who are facing hard times, whether it be challenges with their health, emotions, finances, or relationships. “*But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he*” (Proverbs 14:21). We recall the mercy that “the Good Samaritan” showed on an injured man (Luke 10:30-37). This fact also catches our attention: “*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy*” (James 2:13).

The promised blessing from Jesus is that we will “obtain mercy” if we ourselves are merciful. From whom will we obtain such mercy? In general, if we show kindness and mercy to other people, they will treat us in the same way (Luke 6:38). Second, if we are merciful and in other aspects of our life live in harmony with God’s will, we will receive mercy from Him. Under Jesus’ new covenant, God promises to be merciful to His children’s unrighteousness and not remember our sins and lawless deeds (Hebrews 8:12).

-- Roger D. Campbell

TAKEAWAYS FROM 2 SAMUEL 9-10

As 2 Samuel 9 opens, David has firmly established himself as king over all Israel (see 8:15-18). In 2 Samuel 9-10, David attends to a personal matter and then finds himself unexpectedly beginning yet another military campaign.

9:1-4 – David seeks to honor Jonathan. David and Jonathan were the best of friends. Even when Jonathan's father, King Saul, sought to kill David, Jonathan defended David and was loyal to him, realizing David had done nothing to deserve Saul's disdain (see 1 Samuel 19:1-5; 20:1-42; 23:14-18). On one occasion (recorded in 1 Samuel 20:14-17), David made a covenant with Jonathan, vowing to show kindness to Jonathan's house (or, family), even after *"the LORD has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth"* (1 Samuel 20:15).

With the kingdom now secured, David turns his attention to honoring his covenant with his friend Jonathan. David inquires if there is anyone left of Saul's family to whom he may show kindness, and a servant of Saul's house, Ziba, is brought before David. David asks Ziba if there are any relatives of Saul left. Ziba says there is: Mephibosheth, a son of Jonathan.

9:5-13 – Mephibosheth meets the king. David sends for Mephibosheth, who is brought before the king. Mephibosheth surely was terrified to be brought before the man his grandfather had tried to kill on multiple occasions. Also, as a close relative of Ishbosheth, who fought David for the throne (see 2 Samuel 2:8-3:1), Mephibosheth likely feared retribution from David (as commonly practiced by kings toward relatives of any rivals to the throne). However, David quickly alleviates Mephibosheth's fears, assuring him that he merely desires to show him kindness for his father Jonathan's sake. Mephibosheth humbly accepts David's generous offer, and David instructs Ziba and his sons and servants to work the land and use its produce to feed and care for the family of Mephibosheth. Chapter 9 closes with David taking Mephibosheth into his own care in Jerusalem.

10:1-2 – David sends comforters to Ammon. David hears of the death of the king of Ammon and, with all good intentions, sends men to comfort the king's son Hanun (now reigning in his father's place). Again, David shows his godly character, seeking to return kindness previously shown to him (see verse 2).

10:3-5 – David's men are shamefully treated. Some of Hanun's advisers falsely assume that David has actually sent men from Israel to spy out the Ammonites' land and attack them. Hanun foolishly believes his advisers and treats the men sent from David shamefully. This proves to be a grave mistake.

10:6-19 – David defeats Ammon and Syria. Hanun realizes his actions essentially constitute an act of war and begins preparing for battle, hiring Syrian soldiers to aid him. David sends Joab to lead the battle for Israel. Joab divides the Israelite army with his brother Abishai, and they emerge victorious, routing the combined forces of the Ammonites and Syrians. Joab and the Israelite army then return to Jerusalem.

The Syrians are not quite ready to concede, however. They regroup and bring more troops from beyond the Euphrates River as reinforcements to renew the battle. David goes out with the army of Israel this time, and the Syrian army again is soundly defeated. The Syrians submit to David and become Israel's servants. Furthermore, the Syrians determine no longer to give aid to the Ammonites against Israel.

What can be learned from this text for today?

- **A man's word ought to be his bond.** David gave his word to Jonathan that he would deal kindly with Jonathan's family, and he was true to his word. He truly showed himself to be a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22) in this matter. David once wrote, *"I will pay my vows before those who fear Him"* (Psalms 22:25), and he did just that.

- **"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).** David is surely a case study in the truth of this promise Jesus gives.

- **Evil men often assume evil in others.** Hanun's advisers thought the worst of David, failing to consider that he was a good man simply trying to show kindness. Sadly, people often assume in others a motive that they themselves have in similar situations.

- **"Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard" (Proverbs 13:15).** It is no mystery as to why *"the LORD preserved David wherever he went"* (2 Samuel 8:6). Even dealing with hardship earlier in his life as Saul sought to kill him, God favored David and preserved him. But David's later problems came when he failed to keep God first in his life, demonstrating the truth of Proverbs 13:15.

- **Mephibosheth is a picture of humanity.** In him is seen mankind's misery, remedied only by the mercy of God. Like Mephibosheth, we are in a miserable state—caused by sin—and helpless to change such. But, as with Mephibosheth, everything changes when we meet the King of Kings! Jesus offers favor, fellowship, and a future. Mephibosheth would have been a fool to have rejected David's gracious offer; learn from him and follow His example, coming to King Jesus in humble obedience, accepting His offer of **life** (Luke 19:10; John 10:10)!

-- Chad Dollahite

Practical Suggestions for Bible Class Teachers

Whether a person is teaching the Bible to a couple of three-year-old kids or a class filled with adults, it is both an honor and a great responsibility to serve as a Bible class teacher. Teachers need to pay close attention to their own conduct and the message which they impart to others (1 Timothy 4:16).

I am listing below some things that I try to do in the classes which I teach. These are matters which I believe help contribute to good learning opportunities.

- Make your message clear and easy to understand. It is frustrating to students when they are taught something, but the communication is not clear. Jesus taught in a way that was easy to comprehend, so *“the common people heard Him gladly”* (Mark 12:37).

- Ask a lot of questions. Jesus frequently did this (Luke 10:26). Questions cause students to think, bring out responses from them, and help emphasize points.

- Use repetition. The Christ was a master at doing this, as when He told His disciples *“do not worry”* multiple times in one setting (Matthew 6:25,31,34).

- Be enthusiastic! Our students need to see that we are *“fervent in spirit”* (Romans 12:11). If teachers are not excited about the topic(s) they are teaching, it is most likely that their students will not be either.

- Try to make a personal connection with each of your students. Speak to them before class, after class, and outside of class. Take a personal interest in what is going on in their lives and what is important to them. A personal bond helps them see that you care about them as a person (John 11:36), which can cause them to be more receptive to the truth you teach.

- Emphasize certain/main points. You can do this by spending more time on a particular topic, using repetition, asking questions, writing something down/put it on a screen, or simply by saying out loud, *“Now this is the main point . . .”* (Hebrews 8:1).

- Use illustrations. Make sure to use examples that your students understand. When Jesus spoke to Jews living in Palestine, He talked about birds, flowers, grass, and Solomon (Matthew 6:26-30). Why use those topics? They were familiar to His listeners.

- Make application by showing how the lesson(s) can be used in our lives. Like our Lord did, we can say, *“Go and do likewise”* (Luke 10:37).

- Be prepared well (Ezra 7:10). The task of teaching deserves our best effort! Teachers who are unprepared are not very effective. No excuses, please.

- Your demeanor in the classroom is important. Avoid drawing undue attention to yourself, and always speak to students with respect and kindness.

-- Roger D. Campbell

Why do so many marriages end in divorce?

Divorce is a plague that cripples families across the globe. It is not limited to one culture, race, or country. Some who divorce are areligious, others who divorce are devout followers of a false religion, and, yes, some members of God’s church divorce, too.

Some are unaware of what the Bible teaches about who has the right in God’s sight to be married. Due to such lack of knowledge, they may make the decision to permanently leave their spouse, not realizing that Jehovah hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). When the Lord joins a couple in marriage, no human has the right to tear asunder that relationship (Matthew 19:6).

There also are individuals who know exactly what the Bible teaches about who has the right to marry, divorce, or enter a subsequent marriage. Their issue is not ignorance of the Scriptures. They have made up their mind, though, that they are going to divorce and live as *they* please, regardless of what God’s word teaches. Know this: those who choose to live to please themselves can never please Him. Like the Christ did, each of us should strive to *“always do those things that please Him”* (John 8:29).

In some cases, divorce occurs because at least one of the mates is self-centered, caring only about *themselves*, *their* wants, and *their* needs. “I am bored. My feelings for my spouse have changed. I am no longer happy. In fact, I am miserable.” All of those statements are centered around one person. Genuine love (Ephesians 5:25) causes a married person to want what is best for his/her spouse and their marriage, thinking not only about themselves, but also the interests of their partner (Philippians 2:4).

Lack of commitment is a major reason why so many divorces take place. Many married people of this generation look at marriage as a temporary arrangement that easily can be terminated if one or both spouses decide that they no longer want to live together as husband and wife. In their sight, divorce is “no big deal.” They are not committed to what the Lord says about marriage and divorce, they are not fully committed to one another, and they are not committed to the success of their marriage. How sad.

Another factor in the failure of some marriages is one or both spouses fulfilling physical desires in an inappropriate way. God gives His approval to bed relations between a husband and wife (Hebrews 13:4), but when a married person sleeps with a third party, that is called “adultery.” Adultery is a marriage-killer.

In short, *s-i-n* is the reason marriages end in divorce. It may be sin of the heart, sin of the tongue, or sin of the flesh, but divorce is always caused by sin.

-- Roger D. Campbell

JESUS' CONVERSATION WITH HIS BROTHERS (John 7:1-10)

In many of Jesus' discussions, we must spend some time seeking out the context. According to John 6, Jesus has been around the Sea of Galilee, particularly in Capernaum. The beginning of chapter 7 tells us that He remained in Galilee rather than going into Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

The timeframe is laid out for us – the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was about to happen. In the *Pulpit Commentary* on the Book of John, we read, "The last clause (of verse 2, DL) supplies a valuable chronological datum. This great climacteric feast of ingathering and joyful memories of all the goodness of Jehovah was held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:1-44). Consequently, according to John's own statement, six months had elapsed between the transactions at Bethsaida and Capernaum, and those which he now proceeds to describe." Thus, we know when this is taking place.

And we know to whom He was speaking. He was speaking with His half-brothers, the sons of Joseph and Mary. The contextual setting is easily discovered in the first three verses of chapter 7.

This discussion is an intriguing account that causes many Bible readers to question Jesus' Deity, His integrity, and His sinlessness. This begins as a seemingly simple request: "*Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world*" (John 7:3,4). When we read their reasoning, it might feel like they have good intentions, as if they are trying to further His cause by being visible. It should hit differently when we see them provoking Him with the jab, "*For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly*" (verse 4). By the final phrase of their goading, "*If You do these things . . .*," it seems to be like the challenge that the devil issued in the wilderness temptation of Jesus: "*If you are the Son of God . . .*" (Matthew 4:3,6). It is obvious this is not simply a request for Jesus to accompany them to the feast.

Jesus' answer is based on the nature of their approach to Him. Jesus' fleshly half-brothers did not yet believe in Him (verse 5), and He deals with them accordingly. They are calling for Him to display His powers in a very public forum, something they did not believe He could do. His answer is a rejection of their disbelief and dare: "*My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are*

evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come" (John 7:6-8). Lock in on the phrase "*not yet*." He uses this phrase three times in His answer. Some read this and come away thinking that Jesus lied to his half-brothers. He does not say that He is not going to the feast. He says, "*not yet*." Jesus, being God in the flesh, cannot lie (cf. Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:17,18; 1 John 5:20).

Remember, at this point in Jesus' ministry, there were many Jews who wanted to kill Him. If He were to go into Judea at this time, He would be on their radar. So, when He goes to the feast, He will go secretly, not publicly (verses 9,10). The Jews were seeking Him at the feast (verse 11) – why? Because they knew of His faithfulness as a Jew. All Jewish males were required by the law to attend this feast (Deuteronomy 16:16,17). He was faithful in the face of the unwarranted attacks on His character, His words, and attempted assaults on His person. Jesus explained to His half-brothers that He was hated, and He knew that the time was coming for His physical suffering in death. But that time was not yet. Despite the vitriol He faced, He would not remain hidden at the feast. By verse 14, we see that He was openly teaching in the temple and calling the Jews out for their unfaithfulness to the law and their desire to kill Him.

His response to His brothers was not in any way a deception. The discussion was not about whether He would go to the feast, but about how He would go. It was not yet the time for Him to be openly displaying to the Israelites Who He is and what His purpose is. When the time is ready for Jesus to be crucified, He will enter Jerusalem as the Messiah, in a prophesied procession (Matthew 21:1-5; Mark 11:1-3; Luke 19:28-31; John 12:12-15). He will show Himself to be the Messiah, the sacrificial Lamb of God, the Redeemer, the Son of God; indeed, all the things the Scriptures say regarding Jesus will be on display for all to see. But He will do this on God's time, not when someone else demands this of Him, especially when they do so in unbelief. God's "not yet" does not mean "no." It means that God will do His will on His own time and in the best way, even if we don't understand it.

-- Dave Leonard

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