

## 18. Building Relationships and the Gift of Showing Mercy

In our last six topics, we have looked at ways to use the spiritual gifts of prophecy, serving, teaching, exhorting, giving and leading to build relationships for the purpose of evangelism. Today, we will be looking at the gift of showing mercy and some effective ways to build relationships with non-Christians if we have this gift. Those of you who have this gift will see some ways that God can use your gift to share the Gospel effectively. Those of you who do not have this gift will have a better understanding of why people who have this gift build relationships in a different way than you do.

We might use the following definition for the gift of showing mercy: “To feel such sympathy with the misery of another that it produces comfort and thankfulness for the opportunity to show mercy” - Matthew 20:30-34; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Romans 12:8. The Christian who has the gift of showing mercy tends to be more sensitive to the inner feelings of others and demonstrates loving concern to those who are in inner distress. The person with this gift is usually effective at offering comfort to those experiencing inner distress.

The word that is translated “to show mercy” means *to have mercy on or to help one who is afflicted*. Since all people, both Christians and non-Christians, have times when they suffer affliction, the person with this gift is able to minister to all people. In Romans 12:8, we see that the person with this gift is to show mercy with cheerfulness. It is usually difficult to minister to those who are suffering from affliction unless we have a cheerful heart. The following are some of the ways that the person with this gift will build bridges to share the Gospel with non-Christians:

1. In Matthew 20:30-34, we see that one of the ways that Christ showed mercy was by having compassion on two men who were blind. This compassion caused Christ to call the men to Him and ask them what they wanted Him to do for them. Here, we see that one of the ways we show mercy and compassion is to listen to those who are suffering or hurting either physically or spiritually. A person who is going through a time of grief or sorrow wants to know that there is someone who cares enough to just listen to them. Christ demonstrated the fact that we show mercy by taking time to listen and ask questions of those who are hurting. The very act of listening and sharing the hurt of those who are hurting will often provide opportunities to share the Gospel. Jude 22 points out the fact that we save some by this very compassion.

2. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 we read, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” In these verses, we see that God is the God of mercy and comfort. He is the one who comforts us in all of our tribulation. The result of His giving comfort to us is that He shows us how to comfort those who are in any trouble with the same comfort with which He has comforted us. The one who has the gift of showing mercy will have a special ministry of being a comfort to those who are experiencing inner distress. This comfort often causes non-Christians to become open to hear the Gospel.

3. In Romans 12:8, we see that the one who has the gift of showing mercy is to do so with cheerfulness or to do it quickly. One of the things to remember about affliction is that it can come at any time and it always has immediate effects. That is why the person who has the gift of showing mercy is told to show mercy quickly. The Good Samaritan immediately began to minister to the needs of the man who had been robbed and beaten. The very fact that one responds quickly to show mercy to those who are hurting or in distress shows that someone cares. Those who are not Christians want to know that someone cares for them before they are ready to hear what the person has to say, so it is important for all of us to show mercy.

4. In Romans 11:29-32, we see that God has shown that all are in unbelief so that He can have the opportunity to show mercy to all whether they are Jews or Gentiles. Here, we see that God gives us an example of looking for ways to show mercy. The one who has the gift of showing mercy will often see opportunities to show mercy to others because the Holy Spirit causes their spirit to be sensitive to the inner spirit of others. This causes them to sense when others are experiencing inner distress. In these verses, we see that one of the purposes of God is to show mercy so that others will be drawn to Christ. We become partners with God in this ministry as we look for opportunities to show mercy to others.

5. In Mark 5:19-20, Christ told the man who had been delivered from the legion of demons, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.” This man went everywhere telling family, friends and other acquaintances what Christ had done for Him and especially how Christ had shown compassion to him. Those who have experienced the mercy and compassion of the Lord are usually the ones who can understand the hurt of others the best. They are able to share what Christ has done in their own lives to show mercy to them. That provides an opportunity to share the Gospel even with people who were formerly hostile to Christ like the people in this area who had asked Christ to leave their area.

6. In Matthew 15:22 and 17:15, we see that Christ showed mercy to two children who were being vexed by demons. The fact that He showed mercy to those who were troubled gave opportunity to share with both the children and their parents. Today, we live in a world of many troubled children. The one who has the gift of showing mercy is especially sensitive to the inner spirit of these troubled children. This provides opportunities to show mercy to both those children and their parents. In the process of showing mercy to those who do not know Christ, the opportunity often opens up to share that Christ is the One who will defeat the power of Satan in the lives of those who repent and place their trust in Christ.

As you can see, Christ does use our spiritual gifts to help us build relationships with those who are not Christians for the purpose of sharing the Gospel with them. Each of the seven spiritual gifts we have studied in Romans 12:6-8 are used by the Lord to help us build relationships with non-Christians as we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit can use the gifts that He has given to us to share the gospel with those who are not yet Christians.

The person who has the gift of showing mercy will be sensitive to the inner spirit of others at all of the times when he is yielding to the Holy Spirit. He will not be sensitive when he is depending on his own strength because he is quenching the Holy Spirit in his life. The same is true for each of the other gifts. We will all use our spiritual gifts effectively at those times when we are yielding to the Holy Spirit because He is the source of those spiritual gifts and empowers them. When we depend on our own strength, we will either not use our spiritual gifts or we will misuse them to benefit ourselves instead of serving the Lord and others. May the Lord richly bless you as you yield to the Holy Spirit so that He can use your spiritual gifts both to serve other Christians and to build relationships with those who are not yet Christians for the purpose of sharing the Gospel.