

Zion Church PCA  
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AFC Elective: Shaped By Mercy

### Week 3 Review: A Reformed Theology for Mercy Ministry

### Week 4: Principles of Mercy Ministry

- What is mercy ministry?
  - Gregory of Nyssa: “Mercy is a voluntary sorrow that joins itself to the suffering of another.”
  - Mercy ministry is voluntarily and intentionally coming alongside a person or family, inseparably bringing them both word and deed; serving them until a short-term or long-term need is fully met.
  
- How does God use mercy ministry?
  - To test the genuineness of our faith
    - **1 John 3:16-18:** “By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”
    - **James 2:14-17:** “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”
    - **Proverbs 14:31:** “Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.”
    - **Matthew 25:31-46:** “...as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” ...
    - **Proverbs 19:17:** “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.”
    - **Isaiah 1:10-17:** “Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; ... cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”
  - Mercy ministry is incarnational
    - It should always have relational components
  
- It should involve an inseparable relationship between word and deed
  - **1 John 3:18:** “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”
  
- Who should be involved in mercy ministry?
  - Mercy ministry is not optional
    - **Luke 6:36:** “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

- **Micah 6:8:** “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”
  - All believers are called to personal mercy ministry
    - Beginning with each family
    - Giftedness enhances mercy ministry, but it excludes no one
    - Conscience guides our priorities
  - Official ministries of mercy
    - Do not take the place of personal mercy ministry
- Who are the beneficiaries of mercy ministry?
  - First, fellow believers
    - **Galatians 6:10:** “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”
    - What at least one church in the PCA calls “Congregational Care”
    - Such care of fellow believers brings with it credibility
      - **Acts 5:13:** “...but the people esteemed them highly.”
      - Nonbelievers looking in through the stained glass see sinners
        - But they are loving and caring for one another
    - **Acts 4:32-37:** “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.
    - **Acts 5:1-11:** “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” She said, “Yes, for so much.” Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her

husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.”

- Also, to the rest of the world
  - **Deuteronomy 14:28-29:** "At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.”
- What distracts us from being ministers of mercy?
  - Pride
    - “They don’t deserve mercy”
    - “I don’t want a handout”
  - Self-mindedness
    - Rather than othermindedness
  - Embarrassment
    - Ashamed or afraid what others will think
  - Greed
    - We don’t recognize that God owns all
  - Bad orthodoxy
    - I fail to appreciate God’s mercy towards me
    - I fail to understand the inseparable relationship of word and deed
- What is the role of prayer in mercy ministry?
  - Prayer is the ultimate act of humility and service
    - Mercy ministry begins on our knees
    - We ask God to make us compassionate people
  - Congregational Prayer: 50 days of prayer for mercy ministry
  - Zionist email requests
    - Send a reply right away
      - Encourage
      - Commit to an action
- Mercy ministry is an attempt to bring Christ to humanity
  - It is done in tangible ways
  - It has intangible ultimate objectives
- In sum (and in no particular order)
- Mercy ministry begins with recognizing our own need for mercy
- Mercy ministry involves preparation
- Mercy ministry is the incarnational outpouring of compassion
- Mercy ministry involves keeping resources in reserve
- Mercy ministry involves pairing resources with Biblical conviction
- Mercy ministry involves timely action
  - Sometimes immediate
  - Sometimes long term
- Mercy ministry may involve few words at the onset
- Mercy ministry is hindered by pride

- Mercy ministry is hindered by bad doctrine
- Mercy ministry should start with prayer and personal resources
  - Sometimes it involves collective resources
- Mercy ministry is the business of every Christian
- Mercy ministry is the mark of every Christian
- Mercy ministry is to be directed to anyone in need within reach
- Mercy ministry is first to be directed to fellow believers
  - Until the need is met
- Mercy ministry is relational and incarnational
  - You will usually need to have standing to come alongside someone
  - You will always need to have credibility when offering help
  - Be prepared for the “stiff-arm”
    - Someone who initially rejects your offers
  - Be prepared for getting hit in the nose as you are asked to come close
    - Sometimes people will question your motives, be defensive, or even accuse you of trying to harm them
  - Be prepared for those who are in the “fetal position”
    - Be gentle

### **Preparing to Practice Mercy Ministry**

1. Pray for compassion  
Planted, watered, and sprouted while on your knees
2. Pray for mercy opportunities  
In a fallen world needs are everywhere; pray for eyes to see them  
The result of God’s mercy towards you
3. Re-align your mind  
Strive for good orthodoxy that will properly guide your words and deeds
4. Re-align your resources  
What might happen on your pathways?  
We live in a fallen world; don’t be unprepared for the consequences of sin to present themselves as needs that you could otherwise meet  
Constantly remind yourself that God owns all
5. Re-align your schedule  
Be early so you have time to respond  
Be flexible  
Be willing to make trade-offs
6. Respond  
Voluntarily  
Intentionally  
Timely  
Humbly  
With both word and deed

Until the need is met