

Extending the Mercy that We Have Received

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"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

--Matthew 18: 32-35

Definitions of Mercy

General Dictionary: Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm, or toward an offender or enemy

Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Forgiving and liberating those who have no right to such blessings; expressing loving-kindness, closely linked to forgiveness. Mercy drives God to pursue a relationship with a people who don't deserve a relationship with him. It is manifested in God's activity in freeing His people from slavery—both from Egypt and from sin.

Flip Side of Grace: Grace is getting what you don't deserve, and mercy is not getting what you deserve.

What It Doesn't Mean: Overlooking or minimizing sin

"No parent gives mercy better than one who is convinced that he desperately needs it himself. . . . As we require ourselves to daily reflect on the mercy we are constantly receiving, need and gratitude soften our hearts and make us more ready and able to give to our children what we have received from our Father in heaven (Tripp 195, 199).

Examining Our Beliefs

Do we believe that we need God's mercy? (Ephesians 2:1-5; Colossians 3:5-10)

Do we believe that He graciously provides His mercy to us? (Psalm 23:6; Psalm 40:11; Psalm 103:4; Psalm 145:9; Isaiah 30:18)

Do we believe that God understands exactly the form of mercy that we need as parents?

"All day long I have held my hands out to an obstinate people."

--Isaiah 65:2

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."

--Matthew 23:27

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

--Hebrews 4: 15-16