

Be Merciful

by Vic Zarley

Deuteronomy 14:7 If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. 8 Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. 9 Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land. (NIV)

Jesus expanded on these thoughts in Deuteronomy by telling us in Luke 6:30-36 that we should be willing to give, not lend, to those in need. Here is what He said:

Luk 6:30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and from him who takes away your goods, do not ask them again.

Luk 6:31 And as you desire that men should do to you, you do also to them likewise.

Luk 6:32 For if you love those who love you, what thanks do you have? For sinners also love those who love them.

Luk 6:33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks do you have? For sinners also do the same.

Luk 6:34 And if you lend to those of whom you hope to receive, what thanks do you have? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

Luk 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return. And your reward shall be great, and you shall be the sons of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.

Luk 6:36 Therefore be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (MKJV)

We are to pattern ourselves after our God, Almighty. Jesus, here, is describing God as merciful. We are to be merciful. That is, we are to always be alert to opportunities to give mercy, or forgiveness, or opportunities to overlook debt of any kind. Why? Look carefully at Matthew 7:2 which proclaims that God will do to us what we are doing to others. If we choose to withhold mercy, mercy will be withheld from us.

If we choose to give someone our stuff, rather than sell it or lend it, we are reflecting the attitude of our Father, who gives us everything we need. The Father's attitude has within it a system designed to correct His children from only thinking of themselves. This, in and of itself, is fantastic. Our great and mighty God designed a system that automatically returns to us exactly what we give to others. It is automatic. It works by itself. It constantly keeps track of our hearts' attitudes and reflects those attitudes back to us. Does God have this system in place to anger us? To confuse us? To cause us to be resentful? No, He has it in place so that we, who desire to become more like the Father, can see our faults in the mirrors presented to us by God through others. Incredible to think about, isn't it? What do we do then, when we notice others are treating us malevolently? If our response is merciful and there is no bitterness that explodes in our hearts, then we don't need to do anything. We must only keep on loving, as we are. But, if we find that we are less than merciful, and our hearts our burdened and oppressed by what we are experiencing in the other person, then we have found a sin we must be willing to sacrifice before the Lord. We must prostrate ourselves before the Lord. Humbly we must go to the Lord, and ask Him to relieve this burden we have seen in ourselves, which, by our objective observation of our response to someone else, has been revealed to us.



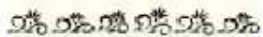
In order to have a healing perspective, it is best to think that God doesn't focus on correcting others. We are only working with our personal God, the Holy Spirit, indwelling us. If we focus on others, we are assuming we know as much as, or more than, God does. We

cannot see that God is working with each of His children, individually and He knows exactly how far each of them has come over the years. He will not prod us to move any faster than we can. He knows how hard it is to change and become more like Him. This is why sometimes He shows mercy even when the other person hasn't shown any. He does not want to drive anyone into serious mental health crisis, He wants to drive them all into being more and more like Him. His pacing is perfect.

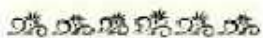
Our fallen nature wants others to get their act together and be merciful like God NOW! But Matthew 7:2 says if we push others, others will push us. It is not pragmatic to be anything less than what our Heavenly Father is: perfect. Therefore, we must take a serious look at how we respond to others' inconsiderateness. If it is with a compassionate heart, then we know we are on the right track. If it is with bitterness, then we must go quietly to our personal place of prayer, away from any disturbance, and humble ourselves and pray for the one who is causing us to feel bitter. This is not done publicly. It is done privately. This is a conscious act. This goes against the grain of our worldly training. We are not interested in worldly training techniques right now. We are interested in becoming more like the Father.

Giving is not limited to money or even things. Giving can involve utilizing our talents and time for others. In fact, if we had a mindset of, not what can we sell, but what can we give today, what would the world be like? Would people take advantage of us? If they did, and it did not cause bitterness in our hearts, then we are fine. But if it caused bitterness to sprout like a weed in our souls, then we must look carefully at how we are treating others and cease taking advantage of them. Remember, it is the attitude of our response that determines if infestation is residing deeply in our hearts. We must pray for others with all our hearts, if bitterness or resentfulness is a product of our relationship with them. Trust that God will adjust the situation. He will, when it is handled with prayer and with humbleness of our spirit. God will never forsake us. Do not forsake Him by treating His children and potential children in anyway less than with the perfect love of Christ.

If you haven't taken the Lord, Jesus Christ, as your Savior, perhaps now is the best time to do this.



Lord, deliver me from the tendency to judge others and expect so much from them. I want to be merciful with others even as they lead me through the fire of what might appear to be an unfair situation. Lord, what You went through on the cross was completely unfair but You went through it for each of us. I want to pick up my cross and extend forgiveness to those who oppress me by their stubbornness, irritate me by their thoughtlessness, and confound me with their lack of spiritual wisdom. I accept You, Lord, as my Savior and I want you to come into my heart and reside in me forever. Amen.



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Thank you, and God bless you.
Vic and Eva Zarley

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