

TEXT Matthew 5:6-9,38-48; 18:23-35

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE 1 Samuel 26:7-11

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that mercy is essential to Christian living, that unless we extend mercy we will not receive it.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. — Luke 6:36

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh. — Proverbs 11:17

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

An Unexpected Reaction

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

Mercy

REFERENCE INFORMATION

One cannot reflect on the subject of mercy without thinking about the source of true mercy—our Father in Heaven. In Cruden's Concordance we read that "Mercy signifies that essential perfection in God, whereby He pities and relieves the miseries of His creatures."

From the very beginning, God showed His great mercy when He didn't destroy Adam and Eve for their disobedience. Later He extended mercy to Cain, even though Cain deserved to die because he had slain his brother, Abel. Before the Flood, God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and could have justly destroyed the earth, but He granted mankind another one hundred and twenty years. The Lord instructed Noah to build an ark to the saving of his household and without doubt the mercy of God would have included any who believed the preaching of Noah and turned from their wicked ways.

The outstanding example of God's mercy is the gift of His Son to this world to die for our sins. Pointed to from the fall of man in the Garden, foretold by the prophets, and confirmed in the New Testament, Jesus' death on Calvary is the most memorable example of mercy ever presented to mankind!

As children of the living God, we are expected to be merciful and compassionate to our fellowman also. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). So we see that if we expect to make Heaven our home, we must show forth the fruit of the Spirit which includes the attributes of mercy: love, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness. In Matthew 25:31-46, we read that those who stood before the judgment seat of Christ were judged by how merciful and compassionate they were to their fellowmen.

YOUR OPENER

Mercy

TEXT: Matthew 5:6-9,38-48; 18:23-35

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 26:7-11

KEY VERSE: The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh. — Proverbs 11:17

Mercy is an attribute essential to Christian living, and unless we extend mercy, we will not receive it. Mercy shows compassion and forbears punishment, even when justice demands it. Mercy extends help to the lowly and even the undeserving.

RESPONSES

- 1. Allow time for your students to give their definitions and examples. Some may mention Abraham and Lot, David and Saul, or Stephen.
- 2. If your students base their answers directly on the text in Matthew, they will no doubt bring out that *blessed* means "being spiritually happy," and that being merciful guarantees receiving mercy. Ask your students to list some other blessings that come to those who follow the admonition to be merciful. If, perchance, we do not reap the benefits in this present life, God will surely reward us in the life to come. Help the students recognize that being merciful generally brings blessings day by day.
- 3. Without God's mercy being extended to us we could not receive pardon for sin, for only the Blood of Christ atones for our sins. Works of righteousness do not. Rehearse with your students that the fruits of righteousness are the result of salvation, not the cause of it. Discuss how almost anyone can extend mercy once in a while; but God requires His children to be merciful at all times. See Micah 6:8.

- 1. In your own words, describe *mercy*. Give an example, either from the Bible or from personal knowledge, of one who has practiced this attribute.
- 2. God requires mercy in the lives of His children (Micah 6:8). What are the rewards for possessing this attribute?
- 3. Why is it that our own acts of mercy cannot save us, if the merciful shall obtain mercy? See Titus 3:5.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a well-known example in the Bible of one who showed mercy. Read Luke 10:33-37, then write what specific actions the Good Samaritan did in order to offer mercy. In what ways might being merciful require our time, money, or personal effort?

5. In our text, what was the servant's attitude when the king demanded payment of the debt?

6. How did the king react when the servant had nothing with which to pay the debt? Contrast his reaction to God's forgiveness of the debt of sin.

7. After the servant had been forgiven his debt, he put a fellow servant into prison for a small debt. This was obviously an unmerciful act. Name some ways in which a person might be unmerciful, though not necessarily outwardly so.

8. If you had been the king, what would your attitude have been toward the unmerciful servant? What are some ways you might be able to show mercy?

4. Answers received should include: time on his part to help the injured man, money to provide for his needs, and—perhaps greatest of all—the personal effort on the Samaritan's part to bring the wounded man to a place of safety, as well as to health. In our day, being merciful might include spending time with someone who is ill or lonely, assisting financially when there is a need, or encouraging one who is despondent. It is interesting to note that the Good Samaritan extended his mercy to a Jew, one who under normal circumstances would not have ministered to a Samaritan. We, too, must be willing to offer mercy to everyone. Discuss how mercy is sometimes the response of the heart, without visible manifestation such as Abraham's intercession for Sodom (Genesis 18:24-32). This kind of mercy is commendable, and also needful.

5. He fell down before the king and pled for mercy. Discuss how pleading for mercy made a difference. If he had not done so, the servant's wife, children, and all that he had would have been sold and payment made. Actually, the debt was so great it could never have been paid. Parallel this thought to the mercy needed from God in regard to sin. Nothing a sinner could do, aside from pleading God's mercy, could ever atone for or pay his debt of sin.

6. The king forgave the debt. Have the students take note of the fact that though the servant was loosed from and forgiven the debt, he was still a servant. God forgives sin and removes judgment. But He goes one step further in His boundless mercy, and sets the soul at liberty. Instead of a servant, that one is made joint heir with Christ!

7. The students may bring out that a person might be judgmental and thereby mentally condemn another. An unmerciful, persistent thought can ruin the fellowship of people who have otherwise been friends and at the same time ruin their fellowship with God.

8. This is an open question to stimulate discussion on being merciful. The question can be used to summarize and wrap up the lesson.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How would you define *mercy*?

Why do you think a Christian should be merciful?

Can you become a Christian, or remain one, if you refuse to show mercy to someone?

Name some ways in which mercy, or a forgiving spirit, can be shown in situations that occur in our daily lives.

What should be the attitude or manner in which we show mercy or forgiveness?

How does the attitude of "I'll forgive but I won't forget" fit in with what the Bible teaches regarding mercy and forgiveness?

In our text, how was the unforgiving servant judged by his master?

Considering all we have been forgiven at salvation, can we allow an unforgiving spirit within ourselves?

In our ANSWER story, how was Rich's forgiving spirit toward Dan later rewarded?

What are some of the rewards for being merciful?

THINGS TO DO

Set up a classroom court—select a judge, a jury, and a criminal. After making up a story of what crime was committed, have the judge and jury decide on the verdict and the punishment. Then ask what made them choose that particular punishment.

Bring some newspaper clippings of court cases, and discuss how the class feels about the punishment or lack of punishment that was given. Did the judge use mercy or judgment in the case? Was this good or bad? Explain.

Divide the students into two groups. Pass paper and pencil to each student, or to one person in each group. Using

their Bibles, have one group list Biblical examples of when mercy was shown and have the other group make a list of when mercy was not shown. Set a time limit. Be prepared with examples of your own to augment what the students have found.





Forgiveness is an important part of mercy. Read in class or give out to the students the testimony tract, "For Another's Crime" (No. 79A).

Set up a freeze sculpture by having students come up with poses to illustrate a scene depicting mercy. As an optional departmental activity, have each class present their freeze sculpture to the other classes.

Answers for Answer

Be Like Jesus

As Christians we are to be like Jesus and show mercy to others. What were the results when Jesus' mercy was added to the situations listed below? Look up the texts and write your thoughts on the lines provided.

THIEF ON THE CROSS 	+ JESUS' MERCY (Luke 23:39-43) =	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <u>He received eternal life in Heaven.</u> </div>
TWO BLIND MEN OF JERICO 	+ JESUS' MERCY (Matthew 20:29-34) =	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <u>Their sight was restored when Jesus touched them.</u> </div>
JAIRUS' DAUGHTER 	+ JESUS' MERCY (Luke 8:49-56) =	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <u>The girl was restored to life that day.</u> </div>
ZACCHAEUS 	+ JESUS' MERCY (Luke 19:1-10) =	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <u>Zacchaeus was saved that day.</u> </div>