

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

Complete Identification with Others

Matthew 5:7

1 Our scripture today implies that the Lord wants you to have Complete Identification with Others. 2

Matthew, chapter 5, verse 7 says, Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 3

The Disciple Peter asked the Lord, How many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Lord Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times! He then proceeded to tell this story.

A king discovered that one of his financial managers had defrauded him ten thousand talents ¹ and demanded that he pay up or he, his wife and children would be sold into slavery. The servant fell on his knees and pleaded so desperately that the king finally forgave the total debt!

¹ A talent was worth about 6000 denarii or about 6000 days of common wages. Ten thousand talents would have been about 60 million days worth; over 164 thousand years!

Another servant owed this servant one hundred denarii. ² But the servant who had his huge debt canceled, grabbed this servant by the throat demanding immediate payment. When the king discovered this last incident, it was bad news for the servant who owed the king! ⁴

The king's cancelation of that tremendous debt is a picture of God showing His mercy to you! ⁵

The servant's lack of mercy shows how the world works! It is a "dog eat dog" attitude. Step on whoever you have to in order to get ahead. Life is like a giant game of Monopoly. In order to "succeed" in life you have to crush the others to become the "winner". This is the opposite of what God wants! ⁶

The last verse in this story states, **This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.** ^{3 7}

² Since the denarius was a days wage for a common laborer; this debt could have been paid in a little over 8 months.

³ Matthew 18:35.

I. Showing Mercy Affects Your Relationship with God

Showing mercy affects your relationship with God. ⁸

Matthew, chapter 6, contains what Christians call **The Lord's Prayer**. This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ⁴ ⁹

Towards the end of that prayer, it says, **Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.** ⁵ ¹⁰

Then, tacked on to the end, is a commentary about what this means, **For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.** ⁶ ¹¹

⁴ Matthew 6:9-15.

⁵ Verse 12.

⁶ Verses 14 and 15.

Now, you are saved by grace! This is a free gift given to you from the cross! Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 8, For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

However, receiving Jesus as savior implies surrendering to Him as Lord! Surrendering to Him as Lord means allowing the Lord to mold these character traits into your life. ¹² **Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful.** ⁷ ¹³

II. What Does Merciful Mean?

What does merciful mean? ¹⁴

Mercy ⁸ in the language in which the New Testament was written, Koine Greek, means “compassion”. ¹⁵ But Jesus likely spoke these words in Aramaic. He probably used the closest equivalent, **Loving Kindness**. ⁹ This phrase has the meaning more of

⁷ James 2:13.

⁸ ἐλεήμων.

⁹ אַהֲבָה.

“empathy” and steadfast love. It’s more than sympathy or feeling sorry for someone. It means to crawl under that person’s skin and experience what he experiences. It means to see what he sees and to think what he thinks! Our American expression for this is to step into that person’s moccasins and walk where he walks. ¹⁶

Here is an illustration of the difference. The event recorded in Luke, chapter 10, verses 38 through 42, says, As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is

needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

The Lord needed rest and solitude knowing He would be executed in less than a week. ¹⁷ Martha expressed her love to Him by being the perfect hostess; cleaning the house, making the beds and fixing the best meals she could afford. ¹⁰ But “doing her thing” was being insensitive to the Lord’s real needs! I think most women would understand where she was coming from. ¹⁸ But Mary was simply available to listen and to obey. Lord Jesus appreciated that the most! ¹¹ ¹⁹

¹⁰ Verse 40 - Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

¹¹ Verse 39 - Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. and verse 42 - Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.

III. What Happens When You Really Try to Do This?

What happens when you really try to do this? ²⁰

You make forgiveness and the understanding of the tolerance of others much easier.

My assignment for four years as a chaplain in Germany was a delight. I had my family, and my daughter was born there. My fellowship with my military flock, American missionaries and other chaplains was wonderful. We loved the German people and toured as much as we could in our Volkswagen bus throughout Europe.

There were some challenges, however. One of my supervisory chaplains was difficult to please. He didn't appreciate my complaint about not having a chaplain assistant for several months. I finally found one in one of my units working at another job. The chaplain who was supposed to provide that need was pretty useless.

My office needed a typewriter. Again, several months went by. Requests for this simple item fell on deaf ears. One day his supervisor called us and asked if we had any needs. We replied, “Just a typewriter.” When he heard that we truthfully answered the question, “What do you need?” He called us in to chew us out.

Here is how empathy helped me to understand and forgive. This chaplain and his wife were perpetually sick, his wife seriously. Rather than retire when he probably should have, he chose to remain on active duty. So, anyone who made him look bad (me!) got the mean treatment. It made it easier for me to forgive and tolerate when I understood his condition. ²¹

You make the Incarnation of Christ easier to understand. ²²

At the Lord’s Supper you eat the bread to remind you that God became a man. God took on flesh and became one of us. He had human weaknesses, human limitations and emotions. Lord Jesus lived God’s life

**as a human being to show you it can be done! ²³
That's empathy! That's identification with you! ²⁴**

At the Lord's Supper you drink the cup to remind you that Jesus suffered on the cross as a man. God experienced real pain, real suffering and real rejection! ²⁵ This was His ultimate identification with you! When you understand what the Lord did for you, it becomes easier for you to love Him, praise Him and, obediently, serve Him! ²⁶

God wants to mold into you a merciful attitude; one in which you identify with those around you. ²⁷

Then, contribute to their needs as you are able.

That's mercy!

That's forgiveness!

That's God's grace!