

### Attitude # 5 Merciful

**Jesus said: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matthew 5:7**  
**I humbly ask God's forgiveness for my sinful past.**  
**I am able to forgive those who have hurt me.**

Mercy is the aspect of God's love that causes Him to help the afflicted, just as grace is the aspect of His love that moves Him to forgive the guilty. Those that are afflicted may be so either because of their rebellion against God or because of circumstances beyond their control.

Mercy - kindness or forgiveness shown especially to somebody a person has power over; a disposition to be compassionate or forgiving of others; a welcome event or situation that provides relief or prevents something unpleasant from happening or the easing of distress or pain.

When we see our world that has been stained, weakened, and horrifically affected by addiction and strongholds, some people look at it with disdain and disgust. Perhaps that approach relieves a person of being any type of participant in the relief of those that are in the struggle. It is a fact that most people who do struggle with addiction can be described as personally responsible for their struggle and personally responsible for breaking free from their struggle. However, if there are no people who have broken free that have compassion and mercy for those who are still in the struggle, then the struggle will only multiply. We could say with confidence that if those who have been set free have a genuine, merciful concern for those who are still trapped, we would see more people breaking free from the horrors of addiction.

This compassionate treatment of others who are less fortunate than we are is a part of the Christian's responsibility. To spend a life ignoring the opportunity and responsibility of extending a hand of mercy to others speaks to our neglect of the gratitude of God's mercy on our own lives.

**Psalms 103:8 - The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.**

We will never find a better resource to learn what God is like than the Bible. If you want to know more about God, the Bible is the absolute best resource that we have to do so. There are so many promises in the Bible that speak of the mercy of God. There are many real-life stories that tell of His mercy. As we look at one of these stories our objective will be to know God a little better, to know about God a little better and to gain a better understanding of God's mercy and how He offers it freely to anyone that has a desire to receive it.

**Luke 15:11-24 - And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.**

I have heard many teachings and preaching of this text over the years. There are so many ways to approach the text in order that we might benefit from this story. We know this story is a picture of our relationship with God and His dealings with His children. We can learn from the mistakes and poor decisions of the son, and we should. We can learn about the temptation of the devil and how he allured the son from a safe place to a place of need and suffering. We can learn of the Father and how he responded to the rebellion of his son and know that God deals with us in the same way.

There is another way that we can learn about the father. We know what the father "did" do concerning the son's departure to the far country and how it played out for the son as well. But what can we learn about God if we look at what the father (God) "didn't" do? As I have taken a closer look at what the father "didn't do" I've found that we can learn as much about God from this viewpoint as we can learn from what the father "did do".

### **What the father (God) didn't do:**

1. **Vs. 11,12 - He didn't keep him from getting what he wanted.** And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

Proverbs 12:15 - The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

2. Vs. 13a - He didn't stop him from going where he wanted to go. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

Psalm 32:8 - I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

- He didn't stop Eve from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and he didn't stop Adam either. **Genesis 3**
- He didn't stop Cain from killing his brother Abel. **Genesis 4**
- He didn't stop Lot from pitching his tent in Sodom. **Genesis 13**
- He didn't stop David from adultery, murder, and conspiracy. **2 Samuel 11**
- He didn't stop Saul from consenting to and witnessing the stoning death of Steven. **Acts 8**
- He didn't stop me from sticking a needle in my arm.....but He sure gave me enough evidence that the choices I was making were not the best choices.

Freewill.....The Bible is clear that we not only have the *ability* to choose, but we also have the *responsibility* to choose wisely. Every call to repent and experience the mercy of God is a call to choose. Jesus identified the problem of some unbelievers when He told them, "**You refuse to come to me to have life**" (John 5:40). Clearly, they could have come if they wanted to; their problem was they chose not to.

3. Vs. 13b-16 - He didn't stop the process of reaping and sowing. and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

Galatians 6:7 - Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

We have the awesome privilege of hindsight from two different perspectives....the good and the bad choices. We can look back at the choices that we have made in the past and ask ourselves, "how did that work out for me?" Good or bad....how did that work out for me?

4. Vs. 17-19 - He didn't let him forget what his father was like. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

John 14:26 - But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

This teaches us the importance of not only knowing who God is, but also knowing how God is.

5. Vs. 20,21 - He didn't make the way back too difficult. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Matthew 11:28 - Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

6. Vs. 22-24 - He didn't reward his rebellion, he celebrated his return. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Gods mercy always says at least two things...."come to me, or, come back to me."