“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”
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Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

MATTHEW 5:7 (NIV)
Did you know that mercy is God's number one characteristic in the Bible? More than his sovereignty, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, or any other fancy words about him—more than anything else, the number one attribute of God in Scripture is his mercy.

The world portrays God as a God of anger and judgment. But God shows himself first and foremost as a God of mercy. All the way back when God revealed his glory to Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments, God said, “This is my name: The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth” (Exodus 3:16 NKJV). Notice his number one characteristic is mercy. God did not say, “I am the Lord God, just and righteous,” or “The Lord God, eternal and all powerful.” He said, “This is who I am. I am merciful, gracious, patient, overflowing with kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and truth.”

If mercy is God's number one characteristic that he reveals to us in the Bible—if that is the most important thing he wants us to know about him—then it must be the most important thing for us to learn about him. And it must also be the most important character trait that God wants to develop in us. God is merciful, and he wants us to be merciful too.

We are going to spend the next six sessions learning what God's mercy is all about. In the first session, I will introduce the five marks of mercy: mercy forgives the fallen, helps the hurting, is patient with difficult people, is kind to enemies, and cares for the lost. In each of the following sessions, we will explore more deeply these facets of mercy and see how they apply to our lives.

The Bible says we are to be not just hearers of the Word, but also doers of the Word. So in each session, you will find suggestions for how you can put these truths into practice both on a personal level and as a small group. At the end of each session, you will also find Bible verses and journal pages for your daily devotions. I encourage you to take five minutes each day to read the verses and talk to God about them.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Let’s take the next forty days to see what mercy really looks like.

Pastor Rick
HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

Here is a brief explanation of the features of this study guide.

- **Checking In:** Open each meeting by briefly discussing a question or two that will help focus everyone's attention on the subject of the lesson.

- **Memory Verse:** Each week you will find a key Bible verse for your group to memorize together. If someone in the group has a different translation, ask them to read it aloud so the group can get a bigger picture of the meaning of the passage.

- **Video Lesson:** There is a video lesson for the group to watch together each week. Fill in the blanks in the lesson outlines as you watch the video, and be sure to refer back to these outlines during your discussion time.

- **Discovery Questions:** Each video segment is complemented by several questions for group discussion. Please don't feel pressured to discuss every single question. There is no reason to rush through the answers. Give everyone ample opportunity to share their thoughts. If you don't get through all of the discovery questions, that's okay.

- **Putting It into Practice:** This is where the rubber meets the road. We don't want to be just hearers of the Word. We also need to be doers of the Word (James 1:22). These assignments are application exercises that will help you put into practice the truths you have discussed in the lesson. There is a personal application and a group application in each session.

- **Diving Deeper:** This section contains directions for your group members' daily devotions.

- **Prayer Direction:** At the end of each session, you will find suggestions for your group prayer time. Praying together is one of the greatest privileges of small group life. Please don't take it for granted.
• **Daily Devotions and Journal Pages:** There are seven daily devotions and seven journal pages at the end of each session in your study guide. Use these for your daily quiet times throughout the week.

• **Small Group Resources:** There are additional small group resources, such as *Small Group Guidelines, Helps for Hosts, Small Group Prayer and Praise Reports*, etc., in the back of this study guide.

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**A TIP FOR THE HOST**

The study guide material is meant to be your servant, not your master. The point is not to race through the sessions; the point is to take time to let God work in your lives. It is not necessary to “go around the circle” before you move on to the next question. Give people the freedom to speak, but don’t insist on it. Your group will enjoy deeper, more open sharing and discussion if people don’t feel pressured to speak up.
THE FIVE MARKS OF MERCY

SESSION ONE

CHECKING IN

• If this is your group’s first meeting, or if you have any new group members, be sure to introduce yourselves. Before you begin this study, review the Small Group Guidelines on page 153 of this study guide.

• What does mercy mean to you?

MEMORY VERSE

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”

MATTHEW 5:7 (NIV)

WATCH THE VIDEO LESSON NOW AND FOLLOW ALONG IN YOUR OUTLINE.

#MiracleofMercy

THE FIVE MARKS OF MERCY 11
THE FIVE MARKS OF MERCY

Did you know God’s mercy is his number one characteristic in the Bible? More than his sovereignty, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, or any other fancy words about him—more than his anger or justice or judgment—more than anything else, the number one attribute of God in Scripture is his mercy.

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.

EXODUS 34:6 (NKJV)

• Mercy is ___________ in ___________.

MERCY: refraining from harm or punishment; unexpected kindness

The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

PSALM 145:8 (NLT 2005)

THE FIVE MARKS OF MERCY

• I ______________ those who have ______________.

Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

COLOSSIANS 3:13 (TLB)

Mercy triumphs over judgment.

JAMES 2:13b (NIV)
Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:15–17 (NIV)

As Christ’s followers, our faith is merciful to its core. Mercy takes action where others take off.

Whenever you possibly can, do good to those who need it.

Proverbs 3:27 (TEV)

Mercy is not theoretical or philosophical. Mercy is practical. Mercy isn’t something you just talk about. It’s something you do! Mercy gets its hands dirty.

If someone who is supposed to be a Christian has enough money to live well, and sees a brother in need, and won't help him—how can God’s love be within him? . . . Let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions.

1 John 3:17–18 (TLB)

I am _______________ with difficult people.

Encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

1 Thessalonians 5:14b (NIV)

There’s a hurt behind every hang-up. There’s a twist in every story.

Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you.

Romans 15:7 (NLT)

It’s a lot easier to criticize than to sympathize. It’s a lot easier to point a finger than to lend a helping hand. But merciful people are not quick to criticize or judge.
“If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that . . . But love your enemies, do good to them . . . Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”

LUKE 6:33, 35 (NIV)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

JOHN 3:16 (NKJV)

Mercy does all it can to keep people from going to hell. The greatest act of mercy you can do is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

THREE MOTIVATIONS FOR MERCY

• I must be merciful because ________________ ________________.

The Lord is kind and does what is right; our God is merciful.

PSALM 116:5 (NCV)

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

LUKE 6:36 (NIV)

At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. But now, by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends.

COLOSSIANS 1:21–22 (TEV)
• I must be merciful because ________________________________.

No mercy will be shown to those who show no mercy to others.

JAMES 2:13 (GW)

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”

MATTHEW 5:7 (NIV)

Mercy is a two-way street. When you refuse to show mercy to others, you’re burning the very bridge you have to walk across to receive God’s mercy yourself.

• I must be merciful because ________________________________.

Your own soul is nourished when you are kind; it is destroyed when you are cruel.

PROVERBS 11:17 (TLB)
DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Please don’t feel pressured to discuss every discovery question. It’s okay to choose the questions that are right for your group. The point is not to race through the session; the point is to take time to let God work in your lives.

- Mercy is God’s number one characteristic in the Bible. How does that truth affect the way you think about God?

- How does God’s mercy affect the way you think about others?

- Which of the five marks of mercy is the most challenging for you?

- Share a time when someone showed mercy to you. How did their unexpected kindness impact your life?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

This is where the rubber meets the road. We don’t want to be just hearers of the Word. We also need to be doers of the Word (James 1:22). These assignments are application exercises that will help you put into practice the truths you have discussed in the lesson. There is a personal application and a group application in each session.

PERSONAL

What opportunity do you have to show mercy to someone this week? Does someone need your forgiveness? Does someone need your compassion? How about your patience or kindness? Do you know someone who doesn’t know Jesus? Choose one of the five marks of mercy and answer these questions. Be specific.
The Five Marks of Mercy

- Who will it be?
- What will I do?
- When will I do it?
- Where will I do it?
- How will I do it?

Group

We don’t want to be just hearers of the Word. We must be doers of the Word. The Bible says, “Faith that does nothing is worth nothing” James 2:20b NCV. What can your group do to show God’s mercy to someone in need?

During this Miracle of Mercy study, we encourage your group to serve together in a Mercy Project. A Mercy Project simply provides a practical way for you and your group to show Christ’s love and mercy to people in your community. Here are your first steps:

- Brainstorm ideas with your group. Think about people in your neighborhood or community that are in need spiritually, relationally, physically, mentally, emotionally or financially. People who are struggling and could use your support and encouragement. Here is a short list of common life struggles:
  - Anxiety
  - Chronic illness
  - Death of a loved one
  - Depression
  - Divorce
  - Drug Addiction
  - Financial Stress
  - Grief
  - Homelessness
  - Loneliness
  - Loss of a job
  - Poverty

- Come up with some ideas to consider. You don’t have to make a final choice today. Just talk about the options. You can make your final project decision next week.

- Identify a Mercy Project champion in your small group:

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________
• The champion does not have to do all the work. Their job is to gather more information about the options you’ve come up with, and help coordinate the selection and completion of your service project in the weeks to come.

• Agree with your group that between now and your next session, you will all pray about which Mercy Project to take on.

DIVING DEEPER

*Miracle of Mercy Daily Devotions.* On pages 20–33, you will find Bible verses about mercy, along with prompts for journaling your thoughts. Make the commitment with your group that you will give at least five minutes every day this week to read and meditate on these verses. Follow the prompts and write down your responses.

PRAYER DIRECTION

We recommend that larger groups break into subgroups of three or four people for prayer. If you are a coed group, subgroup by gender. This will give everyone ample time to share and pray together. If praying in a group is new or uncomfortable for you, we encourage you to start by praying single sentence prayers. Don’t worry about how fancy you sound. God isn’t looking for eloquence. He just wants honesty. Talk to God like you talk to a friend. Give everyone a chance to pray, but don’t insist on it. Over time, you will all feel much more comfortable praying together.

• If you prayed with Pastor Rick at the end of his message and opened your life to Jesus Christ, be sure to tell your group and let them celebrate your decision with you.

• Break into smaller groups of two or three and pray for each other about the personal steps you wrote down in the *Putting It into Practice* section. Ask God to help you be merciful this week.

• Ask God to show you how he would like your group to serve in a Mercy Project.
• Share your prayer requests with your group and pray for each other. Be sure to record your prayer requests on the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report on page 156 of your study guide.

BEFORE YOU GO

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. Turn to the Small Group Calendar on page 158 of this study guide. Fill out the calendar together, at least for next week, noting where you will meet each week, who will facilitate your meeting, and who will provide a meal or snack. Note special events, socials, or days off as well. Your Group Host will be very appreciative, and everyone will have a lot more fun together. This would be a great role for someone to coordinate for the group.

Collect basic contact information, such as phone numbers and email addresses, for your group members. The Small Group Roster on page 161 of your study guide is a good place to record this information.
Read this Scripture passage several times, slowly. Emphasize a different word or phrase each time you read the passage. Underline keywords or phrases that are especially meaningful to you. Then take a few minutes to write your thoughts on the journal page. Finish with a prayer.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

MATTHEW 5:7 (NIV)
WHAT DID YOU HEAR?
What did God say to you as you read today’s Bible passage? What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?


WHAT DO YOU THINK?
What does this passage mean to you? How does it apply to your life?


WHAT WILL YOU DO?
How will you put this verse into practice?


NOW YOU PRAY
This is where you turn your thoughts into prayer. It could be a prayer of gratitude or praise. It could be a prayer of confession or a request for God’s help. It’s up to you. But take a minute to write a prayer of response to God.


THE FIVE MARKS OF MERCY 21
THE FIVE MARKS OF MERCY

Read this Scripture passage several times, slowly. Emphasize a different word or phrase each time you read the passage. Underline keywords or phrases that are especially meaningful to you. Then take a few minutes to write your thoughts on the journal page. Finish with a prayer.

The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

PSALM 145:8 (NLT2005)
WHAT DID YOU HEAR?
What did God say to you as you read today’s Bible passage? What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?


WHAT DO YOU THINK?
What does this passage mean to you? How does it apply to your life?


WHAT WILL YOU DO?
How will you put this verse into practice?


NOW YOU PRAY
This is where you turn your thoughts into prayer. It could be a prayer of gratitude or praise. It could be a prayer of confession or a request for God’s help. It’s up to you. But take a minute to write a prayer of response to God.
THE FIVE MARKS OF MERCY

Read this Scripture passage several times, slowly. Emphasize a different word or phrase each time you read the passage. Underline keywords or phrases that are especially meaningful to you. Then take a few minutes to write your thoughts on the journal page. Finish with a prayer.

Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

COLOSSIANS 3:13 (TLB)
WHAT DID YOU HEAR?
What did God say to you as you read today’s Bible passage? What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
What does this passage mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?
How will you put this verse into practice?

NOW YOU PRAY
This is where you turn your thoughts into prayer. It could be a prayer of gratitude or praise. It could be a prayer of confession or a request for God’s help. It’s up to you. But take a minute to write a prayer of response to God.