



MERCY

Grace is concerned for man, as guilty; mercy, as he is miserable (Archbishop Trench).

1. Mercy is compassion in action—compassion plus doing something to relieve someone's suffering.
2. There are two kinds of mercy in the Bible—consequent mercy and judicial mercy.
3. Consequent mercy is having compassion for those who *are suffering* and then trying to relieve their suffering. Consequent mercy is shown *after* the suffering begins; that is to say, while a person is suffering. A good example of consequent mercy occurs in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37): a Jewish traveler is beaten, robbed, and left for dead along the Jericho road. A Samaritan, who was traveling along the road, saw him, felt compassion, treated and bandaged his wounds, mounted him on his donkey, took him to an inn, and paid the innkeeper to take care of him. That's showing mercy: compassion plus good works. But it's consequent mercy: the Jew was already suffering when mercy was shown to him. His suffering was accidental and undeserved—which is usually the case in consequent mercy.
4. Judicial mercy is having compassion for those who *are about to suffer* and then doing everything you can to prevent them from suffering. Judicial mercy is shown *before* the suffering begins. The Parable of the Unmerciful Slave is a good example of judicial mercy (Matthew 18:23–35). A certain slave—the minister of finance—owed the king 10,000 talents, but was unable to pay. This huge sum exceeds ten times the annual revenue of Herod the Great's kingdom. So sentence was pronounced: he would be sold into slavery along with his wife and children. But the king had compassion and showed mercy by releasing him and canceling the debt. This court official deserved to suffer—which is usually the case in judicial mercy—but he never did. Mercy was shown before he ever suffered. That's judicial mercy. Salvation is another example of judicial mercy. As sinners we deserve to suffer in the Lake of Fire...forever, but God has shown us mercy before we ever suffer by commuting the sentence (Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5). We'll never suffer in Hades or in the Lake of Fire because judicial mercy has been shown to us.
5. Mercy is one of the weightier provisions of the Mosaic Law (Matt. 23:23).
6. The gift of showing mercy is a God-given supernatural ability to care for people who are suffering. It's a serving gift (cf. 1 Peter 3:11) mentioned only once in the Bible (Romans 12:8). Believers who have this gift have a supernatural compassion or concern far beyond normal human compassion. As we have seen, showing mercy consists of compassion and action—having compassion and doing something to relieve the suffering. Showing mercy should be a part of every believer's life; some believers, however, have a supernatural ability in this area. People who have this gift are unusually loving, compassionate, sensitive, sympathetic, understanding, and patient. They enjoy helping the sick, handicapped, retarded, poor, widows, orphans, hospitalized, elderly, shut-ins, and residents of nursing homes. They should participate in their church's visitation program. You can be a tremendous help to your pastor, deacons, and church's reputation in the community by visiting the sick and infirm.
7. Mercy should be shown cheerfully, not grudgingly (Rom. 12:8).
8. Dorcas of Joppa is a good biblical example of a person who had the gift of showing mercy (Acts 9:36–42). Says Luke, "This woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did" (Acts 9:36). These "deeds of...charity" ("almsdeeds" in KJV) are literally "deeds of mercy" (*ergon...eleemosune*). She made clothes for the poor—especially for poor widows (9:39).
9. Showing mercy often involves a sacrifice of time and money. Flowers and food cost money. Sending cards and visiting takes time. The good Samaritan had to backtrack to Jericho (Luke 10:34) and pay the innkeeper to take care of the brutalized victim (10:35). This sacrifice of time and money should be done cheerfully and not grudgingly (Rom. 12:8).
10. Love and compassion are the motives behind mercy (Luke 10:25–37, especially verses 27, 33, 36 and 37). Our love for one another motivates us to show mercy in times of suffering. This love is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
11. Acts of showing mercy will be rewarded now and in the future. Happiness is one of the rewards you'll receive on earth for showing mercy (Matt. 5:7). People helped in times of suffering won't forget it—or you. They'll reciprocate. They'll help you when you're suffering: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matt. 5:7). You reap what you sow. Believers who faithfully use the gift of showing mercy are the most beloved people in the local church—and the happiest. They have many friends. They will also receive rewards in heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Acts of mercy such as giving food and clothing to the poor will be rewarded because they're good works. The use of this spiritual gift results in rewards—on earth and in heaven.