

## DAY I

## WHEN MERCY STEPS IN

An officer decides not to write a ticket, even though you both know that 78 in a 65 is a violation. After a few words of warning, he lets you drive away. Mercy.

Three weeks overdue, the clerk waives late charges for your DVD rental with a gentle reminder, "Try not to let it happen again." Mercy.

Doctors scratch their heads and say the disease that has been attacking your body has unexplainably gone into remission. Mercy.

He begs for one more chance and something inside you tells you to give it. Mercy.

God says you're forgiven when everyone else treats you like you're not. Mercy.

**Check the words below that best describe what you think of when you hear mercy.**

- |                                     |                                       |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> kindness   | <input type="checkbox"/> vengeance    | <input type="checkbox"/> compassion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> charity    | <input type="checkbox"/> retribution  | <input type="checkbox"/> goodwill   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> grace      | <input type="checkbox"/> pity         | <input type="checkbox"/> generosity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> punishment | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ |                                     |

When our God who *is* Mercy comes like a shout into your darkness; when the Father stoops down and tenderly picks up the pieces of your broken life; when Jesus steps in front of what you really deserve; and when the Lord of heaven says, "I still want you," after you thought no one would; mercy is the most amazing truth of all.

Mercy provides a life-giving breath for the one who has been holding her breath. The first good night's sleep in the arms of, "It's going to be okay." A moment of unexpected pardon. A lifetime of clemency. An eternal sigh of relief. Mercy, even in its smallest application, let's you breathe.

**Describe a time when you received mercy from God or from another person.**

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*" 'Blessed are the merciful, because they will be shown mercy.' "*

**Matthew 5:7**

### How did receiving that mercy make you feel?

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When I receive mercy, several things happen in my heart. I experience an internal struggle connected to not getting what I deserve. I sigh in relief that the punishment or penalty I could have received is dismissed or reduced. I am overwhelmed with gratefulness—tear-producing gratefulness. I develop a real desire for the people I love to experience this same deep breath.

### According to Matthew 5:7, what happens to the one who shows mercy?

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God returns to you the mercy you give away. The one who gives away mercy never runs out of mercy. You cannot outgive the mercy of God.

To effectively give away mercy we must recognize where we have been given mercy; and we must remember the blessing attached to giving mercy away.

We could talk about mercy a hundred ways, but I want us to camp on the intent of Jesus in this verse—giving it away.

The first place I need to give away mercy is perhaps the most trying, my family. I want my children to know what mercy feels like. I want them to grow up and believe they had a merciful mother. I want them to experience the blessings of giving away mercy. But they sometimes make it difficult.

When my children blow it, sometimes because of their blatant, push-mom-over-the-edge disobedience and sometimes because of immaturity or an accident, I get to decide how I will respond. Because of this passage, I decided years ago I wanted mercy to be woven through my parenting. I want our home to operate under the principles Jesus reflected.

Jesus gives people second chances; we will too. Jesus doesn't keep reminding people of their forgiven sin; we'll stop bringing it up. Jesus doesn't always give the full measure of punishment; we'll follow His lead. Jesus let wisdom guide His mercy; so will we.

### What other attributes of Jesus' mercy could you model?

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#### *Mercy requires that we:*

- keep short accounts of sin and injustice;
- have eyes to see beyond a circumstance and into the heart;
- learn to desire the salve of mercy more than the satisfaction of punishment;
- be willing to lay down our quick judgment and work on becoming compassionate.



*Speak and act as those who will be judged by the law of freedom. For judgment without mercy will be shown to the one who hasn't shown mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

**James 2:12-13**

**What is the biggest hindrance to your giving away mercy at home?**

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One hindrance might be that no one seems to appreciate your mercy. Another might be the sheer repetition of dealing with these same people in this same house.

Sometimes, when I consider mercy, I realize God is asking me to “die to it.” Die to my desire to be right. Die to my desire to have things my way. Die to the unrealistic standards of perfection. Die to my pride. Just die to the arrogance and give mercy.

**If God asked you to “die” to an attitude or an action, what would it be?**

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**End today’s study by praying about those things to which you need to “die.” Ask God to help you lay them as His feet.**

## DAY 2

### BEING MADE PURE

Pure in heart. Every time I write that phrase I feel a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. The squeaky whisper from my honest place says, “How?” Not having sex outside marriage sounds like a breeze compared to being pure in heart. This is huge. Holy. All-inclusive. Body, soul, heart, attitude, thought, motive, innuendo, appearance, communication. Pure in heart encompasses every piece of who you are, and having a pure heart makes everything about you pure.

Does that make you want to give up before we even get started? I’m smiling because that happens a lot. That’s how we miss opportunities and how we miss maturity. We look at a really big idea and immediately think to ourselves, *I can’t*. So we walk away and miss the very thing that could transform our lives.

Being pure in heart is life transforming, mainly because it’s so much bigger than we are. It’s more about God living in us than God ruling over us. I believe this truth is actually going to give you freedom; hang with me.

*“Blessed are the pure  
in heart,  
because they will  
see God.”*

**Matthew 5:8**

*Who can say, “I have  
kept my heart pure;  
I am cleansed from  
my sin”?*

**Proverbs 20:9**