

LOVE MERCY (Part 1): Bethlehem, Armageddon, and the King (Micah 4:9-5:15)

What the Lord Requires of You

Getting started:

Allow each person to introduce themselves (if needed) and share “high, low, buffalo.” (**High**= something good from the week, **Low**=something not good from the week, **Buffalo**=something surprising from the week, or something random). *Note: Anyone can choose to pass and not participate.*

Expect to experience God in prayer:

Pray together, asking God to open hearts to see his holiness and mercy in making atonement for sin.

Expect to experience God in fellowship:

Choose the Icebreaker Activity ~or~ the Conversation Starter:

Icebreaker Activity:

Materials: Distribute a 3 x 5 card and a pen or pencil to each person in the group.

Activity: You have been exiled to a deserted island for one year and you may bring three personal items with you; essentials, such as food, water, shelter, etc., will be provided.

On the 3x5 card, write the three personal items that you would bring. Once everyone is done, place the cards in a hat and mix them up. The hat is passed and everyone takes a card (take a different card if you select your own).

Take turns reading the items on the cards and try to guess who wrote the card. For each correct guess, collect one million points. The overall winner receives a round of applause!

Conversation Starter:

Watch this [YouTube video](#) of an excerpt (about four minutes) from the 1998 movie Les Misérables. In the clip, a destitute ex-convict, Jean Valjean (played by Liam Neesen) steals silver from Bishop Myriel who had mercifully sheltered Valjean when no one else in the village would. After you watch the clip, discuss how the bishop treated Valjean. Would you have, as easily, acted the same way? Compare and contrast the use of silver in Valjean’s story with Judas’ story. What was the cost of the bishop’s mercy to Valjean? What was the cost of God’s mercy to humanity?

Expect to experience God by reading and discussing God’s Word together:

Background:

God’s mercy means that when we deserve punishment, he doesn’t punish us but instead, blesses us. Mercy is the withholding of deserved condemnation. Throughout the Bible, God gives many illustrations of his mercy. The prophet Micah told the Jews (once again) that God was nearing the ‘end of his rope’ due to their rebellion and unfaithfulness, but God had a plan. Micah reminded them that his plan for redemption was on track: the Israelites would ultimately be delivered by a savior

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from Bethlehem. Micah's prophecies show God's incredible love and his plan for an epic act of mercy through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions (choose from these questions to discuss as a group):

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word, "mercy?" Is there a scene in a book or TV show that comes to mind? Maybe a scene from your childhood?

Read Psalm 103:8-13

2. How does the psalmist describe God's mercy?
3. Think of a time when you received mercy from someone else. How did receiving mercy feel? Was mercy hard to receive?
4. Conversely, think of a time when you gave mercy to someone. How did giving mercy feel? Was mercy hard to give?

In our scriptures today, we read how angry God is with the Israelites. Nothing the Israelites can do will soothe God's anger and yet, God reminds them that we will redeem them through a savior from Bethlehem. The most merciful act in the history of the mankind.

Read Micah 4:9 to 5:15

5. When you rise in the morning, what do you thank God for? Are these God's gifts or his mercies?
6. In what ways do you struggle with balancing justice and mercy in your own life, especially when dealing with those who have wronged you?
7. In light of Micah's prophecies, how can we approach complex social issues with both compassion and a commitment to justice?
8. How can an understanding of God's mercy encourage us in our day-to-day activities and interactions with others? How about our prayer lives?
9. What is one actionable step you can take this week to recognize the mercy of God in your life, and show mercy to someone in your life?

Readiness Check (a simple way to add intentionality to your daily spiritual preparation):

- Take time this week and think of times in your life when God showed mercy. If needed, consider reorienting your prayer life to thank God for his gifts *and* his mercy.
- Through Jesus, we are forgiven for everything we have ever done that wronged God. Our best response to this is to live a life of mercy to others, even when this is hard.
- David wrote in Psalm 23: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Always remember: Faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior gives you eternity with a merciful, loving, and all-powerful God.

Expect to experience God by closing in prayer together:

"Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence." St. Augustine.

Thank you, God for your mercy is made new each day. You will never fail us!