

1 Peter 4:10

1Pe 4:10 (NKJV) As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Ro 12:8 (NKJV) he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

In this study we are going to look at the last of the seven gifts identified in [Romans 12:6-8](#) and it is the gift of showing mercy. It is a spiritual gift that is founded on God's mercy towards us as sinners, as men and women who were poor and wretched and blind and miserable in our sin. Every single one of us needed the deepest measure of mercy possible – of God not giving us what we actually deserved. The words “**show mercy**” are a verbal participle and are actually just one word in the Greek language. It is the Greek word “*eleon*” and is translated as “**showing mercy**”. Many times a participle can be recognized by the ending “ing” – running, praying, helping, loving, showing. All of those are verbal participles. What is important about this is that this word is not the noun for mercy (*eleos*), but the verb form of the noun which means it is an action word, or something that a person does. It is in the present tense, active voice which basically implies that this is a way of life for the individual with this gift.

Showing mercy is simply another way for being compassionate in what someone says and what they do. It means to have pity on people that are less fortunate than we are.¹ It implies that when someone is suffering or is in some kind of misery, that you become sympathetic for them, but it is a sympathy that is manifested by some kind of action that is taken to minister to their hurts. That is why it is translated as “**showing mercy**” and not just “having mercy”. The person with this gifting has a spiritual sense about them which recognizes when someone is hurting, when they are lonely, and when they are suffering in some way. Someone's distress is like a spiritual magnet to the person with this gift, and it is very, very difficult for them to simply ignore these kinds of spiritual needs. The person with this gift will always be drawn to those individuals in the body of Christ who often times may seem marginalized and neglected, who do not seem as far up the ladder as others.

Obviously, Jesus was the supreme example of mercy in the Scriptures. Story after story reveals how utterly merciful He was to those who had needs. From blind Bartimaeus to the widow's son who had died, he was always moved with compassion. [Matthew 20:29-34](#) gives just one of those glimpses into His heart.

Mt 20:29 (NKJV) Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. ³⁰ And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" ³¹ Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" ³² So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" ³³ They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." ³⁴ So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

It should be more than evident that any of us can actually become “hardened” when we see people in need. I think the story of the Good Samaritan exemplified what happens when someone does not show

¹ Strong, #1653, ep.

mercy. At times, it can almost be cruel. If you remember that story, Jesus was responding to the question of a certain lawyer who was wanting to justify himself. I have consistently pointed out that when Jesus' enemies asked Him questions, it never turned out very good for them. It was dangerous to ask Him a question simply because He always cut to the heart and revealed the sins of those asking Him the questions. Listen as I read this story in [Luke 10:30-37](#) and what Jesus said about who is our neighbor.

Lk 10:30 (NKJV) **Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' ³⁶ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" ³⁷ And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."**

The word for “**he had compassion**” (v33) is not the same Greek word we are studying, but it actually means that “**he was filled with compassion**” (Greek Interlinear). It comes from a word that means to have the bowels yearn, and thus to become filled, overflowing, and bursting with compassion and mercy for someone.² The AMP Bible says “**he was moved with pity and sympathy for him**”. The ASV, ISV, and YLT say that “**he was moved with compassion**”. Now all of that is well and good, but my fear is that too often I may be more like the priest and the Levite – and just keep on walking, look the other way, turn aside if I see someone struggling, or just ignore the person. I know that it will cost me time, cost me energy, and even cost me something financially. I understand that at times it may be hard to discern who to minister to, and I am not inclined to think that any of us are equipped to even try and meet the needs of everyone we encounter that may have needs. That would be an impossible task. However, in this story in [Luke 10](#), this man had been left for dead. If no one ministered to him, then he was most likely going to die. That is much different than someone just looking for a handout or struggling to make ends meet one month.

People do have legitimate needs that cannot just be ignored. For instance, [James 2:15-16](#) says,

Jas 2:15 (NKJV) **If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?**

This would be a complete lack of mercy – to see a spiritual brother or sister who was naked and destitute of daily food, and then just walk away from them. There is no biblical justification for that. We cannot just tell people “Well, God bless you”, or “I will pray for you”. At that point, those words are utterly empty and meaningless and have no value whatsoever – and that is exactly what James is saying to us. There are obvious times when you do not even have to pray about being merciful to someone just because

² Strong, #4697, ep.

it is so obvious that they need your help. Jesus told us in [Matthew 5:7](#) that if we want to receive mercy that we have to first be merciful to others.

Mt 5:7 (NKJV) Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Stated negatively, if we are not willing to be merciful, then we should not really expect mercy or compassion from others. If we show mercy, then people will be merciful to us. Mercy involves so many things and one of those is forgiveness for wrongs that have been enacted on us. Forgiveness is generally a litmus test for every Christian and cannot be ignored. Generally, this is needed the most in families, between marriage partners and between siblings and parents.

Probably the most important attribute for the person with this gift is that of spiritual discernment. They are just drawn to those who are hurting, to those who are outcasts, and so they make decisions based much more on their emotions rather than good judgment. If they base everything on how they “feel”, they will find themselves ministering to people who have no intention or desire of changing. It has just become a way of life for many people that they are not willing to take any initiative to change. If that is the case, then mercy is not the answer because all that person is doing is enabling people to continue in their poor behavior. Struggles in life are a normal part of God’s sanctifying work in every believer. So, if someone is always struggling, very often it is because they are always resisting God’s work in their life. Their struggle may very well be God’s actual discipline in their life, and we could be found to actually be thwarting God’s deeper work for that person.

So often, the person with mercy is always “rescuing” someone from every struggle and every trial they are facing. That is not good. They feel sorry for the person, and often times cannot see the real causes of a person’s distress. The person with this gift must see that just relieving the pressure that someone is under because of bad decisions and very poor choices will not help that person, but simply continues to enable them to be irresponsible and unresponsive to their deeper needs.

The person who has this gift of showing mercy is an individual who will do two things. First, they will actually feel a kind of deep empathy and pity for a person’s legitimate misfortunes and associated misery. It is like deep inside they just hurt for this person. Then secondly, they will do something to help relieve that misery – which may not always be the best thing. Of all of the gifts that we have studied, this is the one gifting that can be taken advantage of more than any other. I love [Colossians 3:12](#) because it says the following,

Col 3:12 (NKJV) Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

The NASB says to “**put on a heart of compassion**”. The NIV and ISV say to “**clothe yourselves with compassion**”. YLT says to “**put on...bowels of mercies**”. God wants us to be compassionate and to truly care for other people and their needs, but that does not mean that He wants us to be unwise in how we help them. As stated earlier, they must exercise spiritual discernment and be willing to listen to the advice and counsel of other believers. They often times simply lack that discernment.

The person with this gifting is someone who is very sensitive to words that can hurt other people, or words that will cause tension between people. It is that insensitivity that just makes them cringe on the inside, and that is probably why people with this gifting are rarely confrontational. They hate

confrontation, just hate it, and because of that, they are always trying to soften something said that was harsh or just insensitive. I believe that [Ephesians 4:29](#) is appropriate here when it says,

Eph 4:29 (NKJV) Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

When this person hears someone speak to someone else in an inappropriate way, they want to say something to the person that was hurt that will edify them, that will strengthen them, and that will help remove the hurt of harsh words. Every church needs these kinds of people because they are the ones that bring peace in a church. They are kind and gentle. They are sensitive to people's needs, to what hurts people, to what irritates people. It is their sensitive spirit that compels them not to take sin lightly in their own life. They love the unlovable, the person that no one else wants to be with, people in distress. These are the people in the body who are always showing mercy to others by forgiving them when they fail. Their weakness, though, is that because of their sensitivity, they can become very introspective and overly sensitive to their own shortcomings. They often times become their own worst enemy. They have a tendency not to be firm when maybe they need to be firm and are always defaulting back to just being merciful and showing mercy, and once again that is not always the best thing.

[Romans 12:8](#) says that the person with this gifting shows mercy with "**cheerfulness**". It is the Greek word "*hilarotes*" from where we get the word "hilarious", and it is the only time it is used in the New Testament. However, hilarity does not convey its true meaning, so we do not want that to distract us. In this context, it simply means that when this individual does demonstrate mercy that they do so with a great deal of joy and they receive great personal joy when they are empathetic for someone and actually help them out of their distress. Their joy motivates them to show mercy.

What I love about all of these gifts that we have studied up to this point is that it takes everyone in the body of Christ to make it work properly. These gifts are not limited to those in "the ministry" – never. The work of the ministry is the work of everyone in the body of Christ, and because of that simple reality, it is so important for each and every one of us to exercise with diligence the gifts that God has placed and developed in our lives. If we choose not to do that, then in some way that I do not fully comprehend, the whole body is impacted. It is like robbing the body of Christ and hindering the body of Christ when we do not use the gifts that God has placed in us. Whatever our spiritual gift or gifts may be, it is important that we find multiple ways to use those gifts.³ I want to read a passage of Scripture found in [1 Corinthians 12:15-27](#), so please listen carefully as I read,

1Co 12:15 (NKJV) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? ¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they *were* all one member, where *would be* the body? ²⁰ But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³ And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we

³ Precept, *Romans 12:8*, ep.

bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable *parts* have greater modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

What we have consistently seen in this portion of our study in [1 Peter 4](#) is that each of us should be exercising all of these spiritual qualities in our living – proclaiming the Word faithfully, ministering to others, teaching others the Word of God, exhorting both believers and non-believers, being grateful that we can give both to God and to others, being organized and not sloppy in our work, and showing mercy to everyone we meet. Every one of the spiritual gifts that are listed in [Romans 12:6-8](#) simply represent attributes to which we all should strive.

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