

# Mercy

## **BIBLE PASSAGE – Matthew 5.7**

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

Showing mercy to others? What's all that about? Mercy is undeserved kindness. Let's hear about two examples of mercy.

### **True story from the US Civil War**

On Christmas Eve in 1875 the great hymn writer Ira D Sankey was on a boat and was asked to sing. The song was powerful and people were moved. One man came up to him and asked if he had been in the Union army (the army in the North of the USA during the civil war). Sankey said he was. The other man said he was on the opposite side in the war (the Confederate Army) and went on to share an incident that had happened during the civil war.

One night this man saw a Union soldier and was about to kill him when suddenly the man had started singing "We are thine, do Thou befriend us, be the guardian of our way." The song was so moving and the words so powerful that the Confederate soldier was unable to kill him, such was the truth about God. The man lowered his weapon and did not shoot. He then travelled far and wide after the war trying to find this singer. When he heard Sankey sing on the boat in 1875 he realised the Union soldier had been Sankey. The man then asked to know Jesus. Sankey threw his arms around him and the man gave his life to Jesus.

### **Another true story...**

There was a traveling preacher in the States who was caught speeding for the 3rd time and faced the possibility of losing his license which would stop his preaching ministry. He said to the sheriff, 'I deserve to lose my license and receive justice but I just ask you for mercy.'

The sheriff told him he'd never heard anyone say this before and let him off. That's mercy – someone treating you with a kindness that you don't deserve. That's why we say God is 'merciful'.

## Questions

Can you think of a time when you should have been punished but you were let off? Can you think how you felt, how grateful you (should) have been?

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Showing mercy – list ways you and I can show mercy to others:

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Take a look at Romans 12.13-21 and write down ways you can show mercy:

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Now take a look at Romans 12.8 (the last sentence). This is about spiritual gifts and it gives one other qualification when talking about mercy. What is it?

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Q. How would you react if someone different came to your group – would you ignore them or would you treat them as one of the group? Can you think of examples?

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What would Jesus do? (Go to Luke 7.36-50). Write down what happened (in summary), what Jesus said and the points that Jesus makes:

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There is a phrase that many people say: 'what goes around comes around.' What they mean is that whatever we do comes back to us. The Bible calls this 'sowing and reaping'. My sister planted some tomatoes in her greenhouse and after looking after them, loads of tomatoes grew on the vine – she reaped what she sowed. The Bible says we should show ('sow') mercy. Sowing good, God things into the people around us shows what God is like. What ways can you do this?

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THINK: How can you change to be more like Jesus? Are you willing to change? Write a prayer or statement of commitment to God.

Remember, if you promise something to God and really mean it he will expect you to see it through. But he'll also help you to do it!

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