

## Steps for Spiritual Growth

### Don't Be Reluctant to Show Mercy 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

**2 Corinthians 2:5-11 (NIV)** <sup>(2Co 2:5)</sup> If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent--not to put it too severely. <sup>(6)</sup> The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. <sup>(7)</sup> Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. <sup>(8)</sup> I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. <sup>(9)</sup> The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. <sup>(10)</sup> If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven--if there was anything to forgive--I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, <sup>(11)</sup> in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

- **2:7 (gev)** *Instead of continuing to rebuke him for his sin, it is time for you to forgive, comfort and encourage him, so that he will not be overcome by bitterness, discouragement and despair to the point that he will not recover, but giving up.*

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Relationships require giving and receiving mercy. It means giving grace where mistakes and sin is not rubbed in but rubbed out. This happens when mercy wins over **justice**.

1. Examine Micah 6:6-8. What does God require of us?

- **6:8 (gev)** *God has told you how to live for him. He has told you what He requires and expects of you? Do what is right to and for others; show love, kindness and mercy to others and humble yourselves in obedience to God so you will enjoy fellowship with Him.*

- Why do we all need mercy?
- What are some ways you can extend kindness to others?

- Why is fellowship with God important to believers?

We all need mercy, because **we all stumble** and **fall** and **require help** getting back on track. We need to offer mercy to each other and be willing to receive it from each other.

2. Examine Matthew 5:3-10. What does God promise to the merciful in v7?

- **5:7 (gev)** *Those who are kind and merciful are happy because they are blessed by God and they will be treated with mercy.*

The mercy Jesus is speaking about is more than sympathizing with someone; it is more than feeling sorry for someone in trouble. Mercy means compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender. It is putting myself in the shoes of another person. It is trying to see things with his point of view and feeling what he feels. That kind of mercy is difficult to achieve but it is the kind we want to receive, so it is the kind we give.

- How can you show compassion to someone in need?
- How do you put yourself in the shoes of another person?

You can't have fellowship without extending mercy, which is surrounded by **forgiveness** because bitterness and resentment always destroy fellowship. Sometimes we hurt each other intentionally and sometimes unintentionally, but either way, it takes massive amounts of mercy and grace to create and maintain fellowship.

- Why do we need fellowship with others?

3. What does Paul tell us about forgiveness and fellowship in Colossians 3:12-14?

- **12-14 (EXP)** *God loves you and has chosen you as his own children. So be gentle, kind, merciful, humble, meek, and patient. (13) Put up with each other by being tolerant and making*

*allowances for each other's faults. Forgive, instead of holding a grudge against anyone who has done you wrong. Forgive them just as Christ has forgiven you. (14) Above all, be loving. It is more important than anything else. Love is what holds everything together in harmony.*

- What does making allowances for the faults of others mean?
- What does holding a grudge do for us? The other person?
- Why should we forgive others?
- Why is love so important?

The mercy God shows to us is the motivation for us to show mercy to others. Whenever you're hurt by someone, you have a choice to make: Will I use my energy and emotions for **retaliation** or for resolution? You can't do both.

4. What does Paul tell us about retaliation and mercy in Romans 12:17-21?

- **12:17-21 (EXP)** *Don't pay people back with evil for the evil they do to you. Focus your thoughts on doing the right thing. (18) Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody. (19) Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it." (20) Instead, feed your enemy if he is hungry. If he is thirsty give him something to drink and you will be "heaping coals of fire on his head." In other words, he will feel ashamed of himself for what he has done to you. (21) Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.*

Many people are reluctant to show mercy because they don't understand the difference between trust and forgiveness. Forgiveness is letting go of the past. Trust has to do with future **behavior**.

- Why does God say that we should not pay people back for they did to us?
- How can live in peace with others?
- I like what I want. Why can't I insist on getting what I want?

- How does evil get the best of us?

Forgiveness must be immediate, whether or not a person asks for it.  
Trust must be rebuilt over time.

Trust requires a track record. If someone hurts you repeatedly, you are commanded by God to forgive them instantly, but you are not expected to trust them immediately, and you are not expected to continue allowing them to hurt you. They must prove they have changed over time.

So, when someone has hurt you or taken advantage of you, **forgive** them, **submit** your life to God and **resist** the devil by obeying God.

- ***James 4:7 (EXP)** Place yourselves under God's authority, give yourselves completely to him, and let him work his will in you. Then, resist the devil, stand firm against him, yell a loud no him, and he will run away from you.*