

WEEK 03 · HOLISTIC NATURE OF MERCY

Participating in the work of the Kingdom of God requires us to imitate Jesus as He restored order by engaging in acts of justice and mercy while sharing gospel truths

Preface

Last week, we discussed that our heart's condition and response to the poor test our genuine faith in God. When we value God's grace rightly, it shapes our view of possessions and frees us to give our time and resources when we see a need. Therefore, true faith in God should yield a life that is sensitive to the needs of others, overflowing with love and acts of mercy.

This week, we will explore how loving God and others should encompass all areas of life. God invites us to be in a loving relationship with Him and to participate in His kingdom work, inaugurated by Jesus in His incarnation. As we engage in this work, we ought to imitate Jesus in the way He performed acts of justice and mercy while sharing gospel truths. God's ultimate desire is to bring the kingdom's blessedness and restore order according to His authority.

Warm-up question: Have you ever felt unloved when someone only loves you partially? Do you think love can be meaningful without total commitment?

Study

Tim Keller has established that separation from God results in alienation in four areas of life: **theological, psychological, social, and physical**. These alienations are categorized into two groups: **core needs** (theological and psychological) and **perceived or 'felt' needs** (social and physical). As the names imply, core needs are often overshadowed by felt needs, as people typically recognize their core needs only after their felt needs have been met. Therefore, **meeting felt needs is essential** for effective communication in addressing core needs, meaning we should never neglect ministries of mercy in our kingdom evangelism.

Read James 1:19-27 to answer the following questions.

The Epistle of James is a New Testament letter traditionally attributed to James, the brother of Jesus, serving as a guide to Christian living 101. It encourages believers amid suffering and emphasizes that faith should be demonstrated through actions.

1. Compare and contrast those who merely listen to the word with those who accept the word planted in them. How do their actions differ, and what is God's promise for them?

Note: Compare those who **merely listen** to the word with **the doers** of the word (after they have listened to the word and accepted the word planted in them).

2. How did James describe worthless religion and religion that God our Father accepts?

3. How does James' description of the "religion that God our Father accepts" (Jam 1:27) exemplify and reinforce his instructions in the previous verses?

Read Isaiah 1:10-17 to answer the following questions.

Isaiah 1 overall condemns Israel's hypocrisy and disobedience. This chapter calls for justice, mercy, and repentance, and it concludes with a warning about the consequences of continued disobedience, along with a promise of restoration for those who turn back to God.

4. In the previous verses, the people of Israel were likened to those of Sodom and Gomorrah, but God was gracious to leave some survivors. What were they ultimately condemned for?

Notes: The people fell into the trap of **performing religious rituals and pagan worship** instead of cultivating a heart and attitude of reverence and honor toward God. More importantly, they **neglected** God's command to **love their neighbors** and even **oppressed the marginalized**.

5. What are the three negative commands and five positive commands in Isaiah 1:16-17?

6. What two key values of our faith are emphasized in the passages studied?

Key ideas: **Religious purity**—keeping our hearts clean and unpolluted—and **putting our faith into action**, especially in loving and caring for those in need.

7. Consider **James 2:14-17** and **1 John 3:16-18** alongside the passages studied. How do these texts teach us about the importance of meeting the needs of others, especially the marginalized, as part of our religious expression, and what is the purpose of doing so?

Notes: Meeting the needs of others, especially those marginalized, is an expression of **loving our neighbors** and an action that **demonstrates our faith in God**. As we meet the needs of others, **we communicate God's love** to those who might not have been able to receive it due to their complicated circumstances.

Application

1. What are some signs that you might be focusing too much on meeting others' spiritual needs while neglecting those in physical or social need?
2. Are there areas where you listen to God's word but struggle to act? What steps can you take to become a "doer" in those areas?
3. What practical actions can you incorporate weekly or monthly to care for the marginalized in your community?
4. What role can your community collectively play in supporting marginalized individuals?

Optional Follow-up Exercise: Volunteer at a Local NGO

This week's study encourages us to put our faith into action. God calls us to be His hands and feet in this world, and when we love and care for the poor, we communicate God's love to them, showing that they matter to Him. This week, we challenge you to schedule a time with your care group to serve at a local NGO. If time is a constraint, choose one of the regular care group meeting times and plan to volunteer during that period.