

Redeemer Presbyterian Church

“Ministries of Mercy- The Call of the Jericho Road”

(A study of the book by Timothy J. Keller, P&R Publishing, 1997.)

(A special note to my brothers and sisters at Redeemer: This week’s chapter is a tough one. As I assemble these notes and prepare to teach this material, I must confess that it is challenging and sobering, and yet I’m not sure how to apply it- or perhaps I’m not sure that deep in my heart I really want to apply it!) JHB

Session V.

GIVING AND KEEPING: A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.” (Luke 10:35)

“Christians must give sacrificially, until their lifestyle is lowered. However, giving must be in accord with calling and ministry opportunities. Also, every believer must be a steward of possessions so as not to become a burden and liability to his or her family”

(Keller, p. 67)

The service the Good Samaritan rendered was **EXPENSIVE** in terms of time, safety, and inconvenience. Initially the Good Samaritan gave the innkeeper a few weeks’ rent- but in the end, his mercy was open-ended, as he said “I will pay you for any expenses he incurs.”

Bountiful Giving: Deut. 15:7-8 (KJV says “Open thine hand wide unto him...sufficient for his need.)

Giving that lacks generosity: likened to covetousness by the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 9:5)

Ps. 41:1: “Blessed is he who *considers* the poor”

We are to ponder the condition of the poor and seek ways to bring them to self-sufficiency.

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**Fundamental Question: Is it possible for middle-class Americans to undertake the ministry of mercy without radically altering our lifestyle?**

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I. Simple Living

A. Modern Proponent: Ron Sider Local congregation: Reba Place Fellowship

1 Graduated tithe (% increases as income increases)

- 2 Live Communally
- 3 Buy no clothes for 2-3 years
- 4 Radically lower standard of income
- 5 Shared cars
- 6 Food co-op
- 7 30% of all wage earners give over 50% of earnings to the church

B. Historic Proponents:

John Wesley

- 1 “If I leave behind 10 pounds, you and all mankind bear witness against me that I lived and died a thief and a robber.”

John Newton’s guidelines for the ministry of mercy

- 2 Choose a standard of living which is ‘barely decent’
- 3 Spend a penny on the poor for every penny we spend on ourselves
- 4 Newton went so far as to discourage Christians from entertaining other Christians or showing hospitality to other Christians
- 5 Later, Newton moderates a bit and says that **Luke 14:12-14** teaches us to show preference to the poor in the matter of hospitality

II. Biblical Contentment

A. Moderation

- 1 **Heb. 13:5** :”Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”
- 2 **I Tim 6:6-9** : “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap.”
(Paul is saying that we need a lifestyle that is sufficient to preserve our health.)

B. Contentment

- 1 The Christian trusts God for material provision
- 2 This does not remove motivation for hard work and increasing income
- 3 We do not toil to acquire wealth (**Col. 3:22-25; Prov. 23:4**)
- 4 The Christian is called to excellence in work to the glory of God
- 5 The Christian is called to increase income to be fruitful in good works (**Eph. 4:28**)
- 6 Accumulation of wealth: strictly for ministry of mercy and for spreading the kingdom (**Matt. 6:19-21**)

III. Wealth and God's Calling

A. I Tim 6:17-19

- 7 The rich are directed to develop a sound theology of wealth. God gives riches- and the means to acquire them
- 8 The wealthy must use their money so as to be rich in good deeds

B. Reconciling I Tim 6:6-9 with 6:17-19

- ⌚ Does Paul lay out two different standards for two different classes of people?
 - While there may be *rich* Christians there may not be *rich living* Christians
 - Middle and upper level income Christians are not required to give away all their capital but must invest it in good deeds rather than their own comfort.
 - The call to contentment is given to all: rich and poor

IV. Guidelines for Justice Living

A. Sharing the Burden

- 1 **We must give so that we feel the burden of the needy ourselves.**
- 2 **We may only keep whatever wealth we need for our calling and ministry opportunities**

As we begin to reach out to the poor, we may discover a calling we had not perceived before. **Is God calling you to a special ministry??here is a simple test:**

1. Is there a *desire* to do it??
 2. Is there an *ability* to do it??
 3. Is there an *opportunity* to do it?
- 1 **We must not be generous in such a way that we or our families become liabilities to others**

V. Summary

- 2 Christians are called to be content with a moderate standard of living**
- 3 God approves of hard work!**
- 4 Your giving should cut into your lifestyle so that you feel the burden of the needy.**
- 5 Analyze your desires, abilities, and opportunities and find God's calling for you and your family in the area of Mercy Ministry**

Note: All of these study notes are drawn from *Ministries of Mercy- The Call of the Jericho Road*, written by Timothy J. Keller. P&R Publishing, Second edition 1997. (available on Amazon.com; also on cvbbs.com (Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service)