

***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.)

**Session IX.**  
**GETTING STARTED**

***“Every Christian family must develop its own ministry of mercy by looking at the needs closest to it and meeting them through loving deeds and a spirit of encouragement.”***  
***( Keller, p. 123)***

**I. The Channels of Ministry**

- A. Family**
- B. Church**
- C. Parachurch**
- D. State**

Note: It is often argued that the state has no responsibility for helping the needy. But pagan kings (Dan. 4:26-27) and Hebrew kings (Ps.72:1,2; Prov. 29:14; 31:9) were held responsible by God to administer justice and mercy to the poor. Joseph (Gen. 47:13-17) was used in a civil government capacity to save thousands of people from starvation.

**II. The Family as Ministry Base**

- Primary responsibility for mercy ministry is the Christian family
- I Tim. 5:8, Lev. 25:25 If we do not care for our own families we are worse than unbelievers
- Lev. 23:22, Ruth 2:9 “Gleaning” gave the poor an opportunity to gather food for themselves
- Deut.16:11 At the Feast of Harvest families were commanded to include Levites, aliens, fatherless, and widows
- Hospitality is primarily the work of the believing family. This includes unmarried people as well!

**III. Beginning Where You Are**

**A. Family**

- Many families care for disabled or chronically ill parents, uncles, aunts, or cousins as their primary ministry of mercy
- *“Far too many evangelical Christians today hide behind the high mobility and privatization of our society to screen themselves from duties of mercy to their kin.”* (Keller, p. 126)

**B. Church**

- Much of the mercy ministry in the local church is not done through official programs or officers but through individuals
- Example: in a modest-sized church, \$10,000 was given to needy individuals in the church and community. But the pastor estimates that individuals within the church gave two to three times that amount in informal, non-programmed ways.

### C. Community

- We need to keep our eyes open!
- The family needs to look in their own backyard before it looks far away
- grief, loss, sickness, divorce, disability, personal problems- all provide an opportunity for mercy ministry
- Personal problems are often more easily identified in urban areas than in the suburbs

## IV. Building Bridges

### A. Dealing with Fears

- Fear often blocks mercy. We are afraid to approach a needy person, we are afraid of failure
- We must initiate contact; develop relationships so there is a safe climate for someone to reveal a need

### B. Neighboring

- Social Gestures to create a sense of neighborliness
  - i. Smiles, waves, facial expressions
  - ii. welcoming new neighbors
  - iii. hospitality. Use your children, pets, and interests

### C. Loving

- Loving deeds open people's hearts
  - i. Till a garden
  - ii. become involved in community social action
  - iii. give some plants away
  - iv. offer rides to the store
  - v. offer assistance with an outdoor project

### D. The Spirit of Encouragement

- *All people hide out of a fear of rejection.* We develop layers of protection such as avoiding confrontation, talking too much, or shyness
- *Encouragement occurs when we help out of love, not fear.* When we are controlled by fear our encouragement is usually superficial
- *Encouragement occurs when we speak to a person's fear without rejecting him.* We can help only if we expose their need in gentle, loving stages and avoid quick solutions
- *Encouragement occurs as we communicate our encouragement nonverbally.* Eye contact, arms and hand open, relax, smile with eyes as well as mouth

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 , the Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service)

Mark **August 20** on your calendars. Two deacons from Covenant PCA (Harrisonburg) will be with us to reflect on their experiences in mercy ministry.