

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 X.
PREPARING THE CHURCH

“ ‘Fertilize’ the church for mercy by motivating the whole church. Then do the ‘spade work’ of meeting some basic needs within the church and of surveying the community for felt needs.” (Keller, p. 133)

The Church as a garden...

“If you are a Christian convinced of the importance of mercy ministry, you may be quite unhappy with your own congregation! Very few evangelical churches do much in the way of deed ministry outside of the annual donation of food at Christmas or Thanksgiving” (Keller, p. 133)

Instead of rushing the local church into beginning programs for the needy, Keller’s suggestion is that we (like the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 3) look at the church as a garden. The soil needs to be prepared, fertilized, seeds and plants selected, etc.

I. Fertilizing the Garden

A. Grass-roots motivation

- The key ingredient here is ***motivated lay volunteers***
- Mercy is most effective when it “*bubbles up*” out of the lives of those whose hearts have been made generous and gracious through an understanding and experience of God’s mercy (as opposed to mercy being imposed “*from the top down.*”)

B. Motivating the Congregation

- Expose congregation to what God says about mercy (pulpit, Sunday School class, small groups, study groups)
- Study Keller’s book (or many others on mercy)
- Observe mercy in another evangelical church through a field trip or by inviting speakers to your church
- Lead by example: let others see the mercy ministry of your family

C. Modeling a Servant Heart/developing the mindset of Jesus, the Servant

- self-righteousness destroys any impulses to mercy- mercy leaders must have servant hearts
- **John 13:1-14** Jesus, the model Servant; answering the question asked in **Luke 22:24-27**
- *Deacon*: someone with a special task and a special attitude: a servant heart
- The Servant Heart of Jesus
 - 1. Jesus loved and served **without self-pity**. He washed the disciples’ feet despite his impending death
 - 2. Jesus served **despite the unworthiness** of the disciples
 - 3. Jesus served despite his stature- **a servant serves without pride**

D. Identifying Friends of Mercy

- Identify mercy visionaries and mobilize them for prayer
- Involve leadership; secure permission if you do not get support and seek nonopposition if you cannot secure permission.

II. Digging Up the Garden

If you have identified the friends of mercy, involved the leadership, and the congregation is beginning to show some interest, it is time to dig!

A. Organizing Mercy Leadership

- Possibly a group of mercy friends who band together
- mercy subcommittee ??
- Members of mercy leadership can specialize in a particular area of ministry
- Form ministry teams for support and objectivity

B. Developing Basic Structures for Meeting Needs

- Begin with two simple structures:
 - i. Mercy fund** (money for meeting mercy needs). This should be a separate fund which is expanded by designated giving
 - ii. Service Bank** (an inventory of the skills of members)-such as child care, hospitality, yard work, housecleaning, in addition to specialized areas such as counseling (emotional and financial), legal help, educational help, etc.

C. Establishing a Referral System

- Begin with needs in the church. Communicate with church leadership, small group and ministry leaders, Sunday School classes, etc.
- Another method is through comprehensive telephone care- calling all members and actually asking questions about needs
- “need cards” placed in bulletins or on information tables invite folks to share needs. (The Pastor should refer to these regularly or they will not be used.)

III. Taking a Community Survey

A. Act, Don’t React

- A survey helps a church to respond to hidden distress as well as needs that cry aloud
- To avoid reactive mode, “network to your city.”

B. Set Goals for the Survey

- Discover kinds, degrees, concentrations of, and locations of basic felt needs.

Grids for organizing these findings:

People Groups

- Poor (Gal. 2:10)
- Disadvantaged Children (Ps. 68:5)
- Elderly (I Tim 5:9)
- Disabled (Lev. 19:14)
- Single Parents (James 1:27)
- Prisoners (Heb.13:3)
- Sick (Matt.25:36)
- Victims of Disaster (Acts 11:28-29)
- Aliens (Lev. 19:33-34)

Five “Communities” of Felt Needs

- Spritual/Moral Needs
 - Social Needs
 - Emotional Needs
 - Cognitive Needs
 - Physical Needs
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- Establish a procedure
 - Visit Social Service Agencies
 - Visit individuals who are service providers
 - Visit Businesses
 - Speak to the needy themselves
 - Summarize and assess your findings
 - Construct a spiritual profile of the selected people groups
 - Communicate your findings

Note: motivating a congregation and surveying the community are ongoing tasks!

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.