

**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 XIV**  
**MERCY MINISTRY and CHURCH GROWTH**

“We must integrate evangelism with mercy ministries and provide follow-up strategies that will incorporate new believers from our mercy ministries into the church” (Keller, p. 207)

- As we expend our vision, we can become overwhelmed.
- Question arises – won't mercy ministry retard or impede evangelism and growth?
- Mercy and evangelism have the same goals

I Cultivating the Garden

- Our goal is nothing less than the spreading of the kingdom, which requires that all of the ministries of the church be operating at full throttle and interdependently.

II Looking at the Church Holistically

- We must recognize that worship, fellowship, evangelism, teaching, mercy live in a balance and grow together.
- Not easy to achieve – WHY – a church is a living thing; and its growth must be fully orbited and symmetrical
- Mercy interlocks with all aspects of the church

a. Individual and Corporate Growth

- Just like individual members need to grow, in holiness, assurance, boldness and an understanding of grace and mercy, church must grow “corporately” in internal structure, fellowship, and relationships.

b. Numerical and Diaconal Growth

- Biblical evangelism is very church-centered. The goal is not individual “decisions,” but active functioning members of the body of Christ.
- Diaconal ministry becomes “mature” as a church discerns the nature of the needs in the area, and the kinds of gifts and resources Christ has put within the congregation.

c. Growing together

- It is quite difficult to mount mercy ministries that have staying power unless your church is evangelistically vital and growing.

III The Interaction of Mercy and Evangelism

a. Mercy as Plausibility Structure for the Lost

- Positive image
- Mercy ministries build a “plausibility structure” for the Gospel message

b. Mercy as Bridge Building to the Lost

- brings the church into contact with many non-Christians that it would not otherwise meet.
- Four Groups of non-Christians
  - o “churchy”
  - o “webbed” unbelievers
  - o “distant” non-Christians
  - o “unwebbed” unbelievers
 they are the majority of the non-Christians in your community;  
 they are not in your members’ webs of relationships

they are reached only through felt-need ministries

- c. Mercy as Communication Medium to the Lost
  - highly effective communication channel for the gospel
  - Ministry of mercy “fleshes out” the truth

#### IV Side Doors and Front Doors

- a. Centripetal and Centrifugal
  - front-door church – drawing non-Christians in by attraction
  - side-door church – sending members out to contact the non-Christians
    - o side-door ministries are characterized by orientation to “felt needs”
- b. Fishing Ponds
  - front-door church                    high visibility events
  - side-door church
    - o meet specific conscious needs of a non-Christian target group
    - o “community classics”
    - o friendship evangelism
- c. Dangers
  - front-door churches needs a “pastor superstar” and does not deeply penetrate the non-church culture – the unwebbed unbeliever
- d. A multi-entry Church
  - side-door churches reach a greater diversity of people
    - o less homogeneous
    - o different interests and needs and values being expressed
    - o far more complex
    - o harder to coordinate

#### V Word and Deed in Practice

- HOW can we methodologically set up our church so mercy and evangelism truly do work together and are co-partners in the church’s mission?
- a. Understanding the People

- draw up a “spiritual profile” of a group you are trying to reach
- figure out “pathways” into the church
  - o finding strategy
  - o deed strategy
  - o word strategy
  - o incorporation strategy
  
- b. Finding Strategy
  - Many middle-class people must put forth great effort to find the hurting because we have chosen to live as far removed from human need as we can!
  - Takes a concert effort to do
  
- Incorporation Strategy
  - o Assimilating converts
  - o Side-door ministries – reach people who are culturally different from the majority of your members
  - o Two choices
    - “make” room – special Sunday School class; small group or other subcongregational life must be allowed for the people coming in
    - consciously, carefully and constantly channel new converts into churches which can incorporate them into a body of believers
  - o When choosing target groups to minister to, a church must strike a very difficult and subtle balance.
  
- c. Relating the Strategies
  - Be sure that all the various strategies “dovetail” to address the person holistically.

## VI Conclusion

### Discussion

1. In what ways does the recipient of mercy need to be seen holistically? How does the church need to be seen holistically?
2. What kind of spiritual growth do you need to see in yourself as you contemplate undertaking a mercy ministry? How can you also pray for growth in your church?
3. How can mercy ministries foster numerical growth of a congregation?
4. Describe a front-door church. A side-door church. Characterize your church according to these two types
5. What are ways that you personally can meet needy people?

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)