

09. The Motivation Gift of Mercy

Spiritual Gifts—God's Way

By Robert Rohlin

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12

Preached on: Sunday, April 17, 2011

First Baptist Church Las Colinas

1930 Gateway Drive

Irving, TX 75038-2405

Website: www.firstbaptistlascolinas.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rrohlin

Well, we are going to look this morning at the motivation gift of mercy and it is best illustrated in the life of the apostle John. I always say you can kind of identify by the major irritation, you know, whether or not you have this gift. And a person with the gift of mercy they get really bugged by the fact that, you know, Christians don't seem to have enough genuine love for others, for other Christians and also for the lost. And they don't like it when, you know, people look down on other Christians or look down on the lost. And this becomes a major irritation for them.

So let's look at kind of a little overview here on the gift of mercy. And it is illustrated best in the life of John.

Now there are some guidelines in Romans 12:15 we are going to get to that we can weep with those who are weeping and then we also want to be able to rejoice with those who are rejoicing and that is the commands that are given to a person with this gift.

Now the principle that is most important for people to understand with this particular gift is the fact that they need to achieve some moral freedom, because it is one of the things that is a problem for these people is that they can have improper relationships. And it is because people with the gift of mercy are so sensitive. They are attracted to people with needs and then other people are attracted to them. And so it is important that this person understands what moral freedom is and how to maintain it.

Now we have used these little cartoons before to illustrate what happens at the dinner. So here is an example of someone who is at dinner and maybe they... someone spills the dessert and the person with the gift of mercy is likely to say something like "Well, don't feel badly. It could have happened to anyone."

And, of course, their motivation is to relieve embarrassment.

If they go to the hospital and visit you there, they are the person that is likely to walk in your room and say, "I can't tell you how badly I felt when I heard you were sick. How do you feel now?" They are just very motivated to help you.

Now there are these seven sense perceptors we have talked about before and of the seven kinds of sense perceptors in the Bible, the one that relates most closely to mercy is the sense perceptor of pain. In other words, it is, you know, it is when we hurt that we have these issues.

And interesting thing to know is that it is possible to ignore a lot of the other sense perceptors, but it is very hard if not impossible to ignore the sense perceptor of pain. Pain is one of those things that we don't... we don't really ignore at all because we, you know, it... when we are hurt we don't want to, you know, we don't want to keep into that. And so that is why it is so important for us to just understand that pain is one of these things we can't ignore. And I think that is appropriate, actually, because I believe that the Bible shows how vitally important it is for us to be aware of the needs of others.

All right. So let's look at a little more in the detail on the sense perceptor of pain. These are things to let you know that damage is occurring in the body. You know, one of the big problems for people that have Hanson's disease which we used call leprosy is that they... the people don't feel pain. And so you have shoe salesman and he buys some nice Italian shoes because he wants to show off the kind of shoes that other men should be wearing and he gets them a little too tight. That is an actual story. And he wore these shoes so tight that because he had Hanson's disease, he lost the sensation of pain in his foot and his shoes were so tight they cut off circulation. He eventually had to have three of his toes amputated simply because his shoes were too tight.

There was a janitor in Carville, Louisiana at the leprosarium that was there that he would sweep and he didn't realize he was holding the broom so tightly when he swept that he cut off the blood circulation in this part of his hand and he had to have his thumb amputated. The thumb is one of those things you don't want to get rid of because you can't grab hold of anything really without a thumb.

And numerous other examples is people don't sense the pain and because they don't sense the pain, they are unable to know the damage they are doing to their body. I had a great aunt who was born with what is called a congenital indifference to pain. My Aunt Valley never felt pain. And the fact is she had three kids, went through normal labor with all of them, didn't really know with any of them that she was in labor until, you know, basically the baby is coming out, just never felt that. A couple of times we had to rush her to the hospital. She would get really, really sick, but she wouldn't know that she was nearly sick to the point of death because she wasn't uncomfortable.

So pain is actually a gift to let us know that something in our body is not working like it should.

Another characteristic... it is significant to know that the other six perceptors can be ignored to a certain degree, but not this one. And a person that has the gift of mercy feels the pain of other people around them and they are not really able to rest until the cause of that pain is removed.

So we are going to look at characteristics of someone with the gift of mercy and the first characteristic about somebody with this gift is that they demonstrate deep loyalty to their friends. They demonstrate such loyalty to their friends that they often react harshly to anybody that attacks their friends. So if they have a friend or a family member that they are very close to and anybody says anything bad about them, there is this tendency to react harshly, because they are very defensive of their friends, very defensive of those people.

Now it is interesting that when John saw the Samaritans reject Jesus after he had gone into Samaria he and James come to Jesus and say, “Should we pray that God sends fire down from out of heaven like he did in the days of Elijah?”

And here he is. This is the apostle of love saying, “Shall we call down fire?” And that seems, at first, to be a little incongruous with us. It doesn’t seem right that somebody who is called the apostle of love would want to pray fire down on people, but you have to understand it is because those people rejected Jesus that he loved so much and because they rejected the one he loved so much, he was ready to pray down fire from heaven.

Luke nine says this. It says, he said:

And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?¹

Another characteristic people with the gift of mercy is that they need deep friendships. They don’t want just surface friends. They don’t just want acquaintances. They want to be very close with someone. They want a close friendship and they want a strong mutual commitment and they want somebody to tell them on a regular basis that, you know, they see the friendship as importantly as the person with the gift of mercy does. They want to know I am still important to you and you are still important to me. They like hearing that closeness reaffirmed on a regular basis.

And it is interesting that John was, you know, he was one of the inner three—Peter, James and John—that were always with Jesus. So out of the 2 there were three that were exceptionally close, but out of those three, John often refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. That was a big deal to him. It is kind of like, ok, you know, these three are a little closer than the rest of the 12, but I am the one Jesus loved. And, you know, he says, “Well, we have ... we have got something special going on. We have a deep friendship between us.”

And look how many times he said it. And here is just some Scripture references.

¹ Luke 49:52-54.

John 13:23. “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.”²

He is talking about himself.

John 19:26. “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!”³

And, of course, then he turns to John and says, “Son, behold thy mother.”

John 20 verse two. “Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.”⁴

Here is two more verses for you.

John 21:7. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.”⁵

So he says, you know, the one who loved Jesus said to Peter, “It is Jesus.”

John 21:20. “Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?”⁶

Now, isn’t it fascinating that this is John’s favorite nickname for himself? I am the one Jesus loved because he had this close relationship.

Here is another characteristic of people with the gift of mercy. They empathize with hurting people. Now people with a gift of mercy sense which individuals are hurting and they kind of share the pain with them. You know, I have often heard it said in wedding ceremonies that one of the beauties about marriage is that it doubles the joys, but it divides the sorrows in half, you know, because you bear them together. And I think people with the gift of mercy come along side you and they really help divide the sorrows in half. And they sense the full scope of motions being experienced by others.

John wrote his first epistle to give joy and fellowship and hope and confidence and cast out fear and torment.

² John 13:23.

³ John 19:26.

⁴ John 20:2.

⁵ John 21:7.

⁶ John 21:20.

You know, if you read 1 John, if you read that epistle, it is... over and over again he is giving people assurance, you know? This is how you know you are saved and this is why you have confidence and perfect love casteth out fear. He is confidently and constantly emphasizing these things.

Now let me show you some emotions in John's epistles. So this is just 1 John, but I want you to see how often he refers to emotions. So 1 John 1:3-4.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.⁷

So, first of all, he says, "I want you to be close. I want us to have fellowship together. But guess what? I also want you to have joy. Again, it bothered John that there were some Christians out there that didn't know the joy of living close to Jesus. He wanted them to know the joy.

1 John three verses two through three.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.⁸

He says, "Not only that. I want you to have... I want you to have hope. I don't want you to be hopeless."

You know, sometimes I just, you know, I get hopeless, brother Carl, just watching the news for a little while. And so I kind of had to kind of quit watching it because it doesn't sound good for our nation right now. I heard a speaker this last week comment, you know, that this could be very close to the end of our nation if it weren't... if it is not for a miracle of God, just the things that are happening because we are losing the blessing of God. We are not following his principles.

1 John four he says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."⁹

He says, "You ought to have love. You ought to have fear."

1 John 5:13. He says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know,"¹⁰ he wants you to have assurance. "...that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."¹¹

⁷ 1 John 1:3-4.

⁸ 1 John 3:2-3.

⁹ 1 John 4:18.

¹⁰ 1 John 5:13.

1 John 5:14.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.¹²

He says, “We ought to have confidence in our prayers. He is building us up.

Now here is another characteristic of people with the gift of mercy and that is that they make decisions very often based on the benefits that they see. For example, prophets and organizers tend to be very firm with somebody who is sinning or causing a problem. So a prophet can basically do what they did to Ananias and Sapphira and say, “Drop dead,” and they do and, you know, an organizer, it is kind of like, well, if you are not part of, you know, if you are not helping, then get out of the way, you know?

But a person with the gift of mercy finds this difficult because they don't want to offend people. They don't want anybody's feelings to get hurt even if they need to be rebuked.

So they only become decisive and firm when they see that greater hurt and offences will result if they aren't... if they don't do something.

So they will correct somebody, but only when they can get it in their head that, hey, boy, if this doesn't stop it is going to hurt that. In other words, they could tell a father, you know, you have to deal with your problem with anger, because they can see the effect it is having on that father's children.

Now John became decisive. John was faced with denying Jesus. You know, of course, Peter denied Jesus three times, right, before the rooster crowed. John was kind of faced with the same thing later, but he found a boldness and decisiveness that made the Sadducees marvel at him.

In Acts 4:13 it says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”¹³

And, by the way, let me just give a little word to you dads and you young people who are of college age. I am not really that worried about college degrees. And that is odd for me because, you know, I went through college and got a bachelor's degree and then got a master's degree and, you know, I have spent a lot of time in the education process. And I think we worry a lot of times, too. You know, we hear about a college and then we say,

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² 1 John 5:14-15.

¹³ Acts 4:13.

“Well, is it accredited?” And that is the first thing we want to know. What we are really asking is: Does the world approve of that college?

Do don't really need to be worried about whether the world approves of it. We should be concerned about whether or not God approves of it. And if you send your child to a college that is going to take away their faith, challenge their faith and they are going to wind up... most college students, by the way, they do, they lose the faith of their parents. They err from the faith. They go astray. You know, that is why we are excited. There is a new university called [?] University. It gives you an opportunity to study God's principles and get a bachelor's degree for it. You know, you don't have to worry about whether or not the degree is accredited if you are not going to go on for a graduate degree later or if you are not going to go on and, you know, you know, try to teach in school later. But you can get a degree without going through all that.

But I think the most important thing is not that, you know, they looked at these two guys, Peter and John, and said, “Well, they were ignorant and unlearned men.” Basically they were fishermen.

Now I kind of resent that because I think going fishing once in a while is a smart idea. You know, I think fishermen are probably smarter than a lot of other folks. But it is like you don't have this degree and that degree and that degree and you didn't go to this school. You didn't memorize this part of the Talmud. You didn't, you know, all these other things. You haven't sat under rabbi so and so. Bu there was something special about these. Why? It says because they perceived that they had been with Jesus.

The most important qualification you can ever have educationally is not a degree, it is whether or not you have been with Jesus. If you spend time in God's Word, you will have the wisdom far beyond what the world can offer. And I would rather see someone that never went to college, but memorized Scripture and meditated on wisdom and forgot the whole silliness of I have got to have a piece of paper with the world's stamp on it. I would rather see a guy like that. And, of course, for those who need a degree, just, you know, for the piece of paper or they are looking at a specific ministry opportunity that requires it, there is places like [?] University where you can go to school for nine dollars a month and get a degree without losing your faith.

Also they... another characteristic is they are deeply sensitive to loved ones. People with the gift of mercy can tell whether or not your love is genuine. They... and, you know, if you are saying you love somebody, but you kind of look down you nose at them, they are going to be aware of that.

So they are. The person with a gift of mercy is more vulnerable to hurts and from those that around them that don't demonstrate sincere love.

Now John, by the way, used the word “love” more than any other New Testament writer in his gospel and his epistles. He refers to love more often than any of the rest of them.

Another thing about people with this gift is they attract people in distress. Now people with the gift of mercy have an understanding of people going through emotional distress. They can kind of feel their hurt with them. And this causes those that are hurting to kind of be drawn to them. I think I have become convinced that my wife has the gift of giving. It has taken me 30 years to figure this out. But I think that is really my wife's gift. But I do know that when people are around my wife, very often if they have got a problem and they have got a hurt, they do seem to be drawn to her and they just, you know, they unload on her and they tell her everything.

It doesn't take long being around someone with the gift of mercy till, you know, you are crying and they are crying with you and there is all this mutual shared pain that goes on.

By the way, sometimes that is the best thing you can do for a person is just cry with them. Sometimes people come and tell you their problems. Don't think when they come and tell you your problems that you have got to solve them. Now, man, that is harder for us because we are problem solvers. We are fixers. We are, you know, we are the guys with the wrench. We want to take out and solve it. Sometimes people don't want you to solve their problems. They just want you to listen. And you need to discern the difference. Sometimes you just need to listen and you need to say, "Let me pray for you," and do it right then. Don't say, "I will pray for you," and then forget it. I don't rust myself anymore when I tell somebody I will pray for them. So when I have the opportunity I say, "Well, can we stop right now and do it?"

That way I can remember to pray at least for one time of them, because I did it right then. If I am on the phone with somebody... it used to be weird for me to pray on the phone. It doesn't bother me anymore. But, you know, I was on the phone earlier this week with someone who is having a lot of pain. And I said, "Can we just stop and pray right now?"

Because I knew if I prayed right then, I would get in at least one prayer for that individual. And that is what you need to do.

But that is something special about the gift of mercy. We all need to practice this idea of being able to just listen and comfort and weep.

I never will forget the mother whose husband died and she said years later the one person she remembered during her husband's funeral was the guy from the church that came in. He went to each of the rooms, got the kids' Sunday shoes and he cleaned them all and polished them all and then put them back in their rooms so they would have clean shoes to wear to their daddy's funeral. And he never said a word and he left.

And she told me years later, she says, "That is the one thing I remember, because it was just a genuine act."

So the problem is that, you know, you hear these people are drawn to you. They confide in you. Just before Christ died, who did he give responsibility for his own mother to? To John. Why? Because she was about to experience the greatest pain. You know, she had

already lost a husband to death. Now she is going to see her eldest son who has been crucified like a common criminal though he has never committed a single crime in his whole life and you have got to know that that woman's biggest question on her mind was: Why? And she was going to go through some pretty rough days the next few days and isn't it fascinating that he says, "Woman, behold your son," pointing probably with his chin to John and, "John, behold your mother."

It is kind of like, hey, you all take care of each other now.

Another characteristic is that they desire to remove hurts. Now if you have got somebody that has the gift of exhortation, they are always trying to motivate people to look for the benefits in their life. So if they are hurt they are kind of like, well, can you name 10 benefits that God has through this situation? And Mr. Gotherd is a person like that and I am thankful that he has helped us all understand that there are benefits even to lousy things.

But a person with the gift of mercy, they are not one to really look of the benefits in it. They are just wanting to take the hurt away. They just want to take the hurt away. The theme of John's first epistle is to stop hurting and stop hating. Isn't that interesting?

1 John three says this. HE says, "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."¹⁴

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."¹⁵

And so he says, "You need to stop hating. You need to love one another. And once we love each other and we quit hating, all the pain will go away." That is his idea.

Another characteristic is that they measure acceptance by closeness. They like to be close to someone. They like to sit next to someone. They like to, you know, be within an arm's distance of someone. And so, you know, a person with the gift of mercy tends to want to that physical closeness in order to be reassured of acceptance, and especially during times of rich fellowship together. So at the last supper Jesus, you know, was there all around the table. They are not sitting in chairs. They didn't have chairs back then when they ate. They leaned on their side, leaned on one elbow usually or they would have pillows that they would lean on and then they would eat while they are laying down. And actually I kind of like that idea. I think nachos would taste even better if I was on my side.

But anyway, so they would lean and John makes the point not only to be close to him, but the Bible records he says that it was the disciples whose head was on Jesus' bosom. So basically he not only was right there next to Jesus, but he is laying his head back on Jesus' chest. That is how close he was. He wanted to be that close.

¹⁴ 1 John 3:11.

¹⁵ 1 John 3:15.

So... and... by the way, I don't know if you remember this. John and James' mother came to Jesus one time and made an unusual request. And, of course, I don't think they understood at this time what kind of kingdom it was Jesus was really going to have. I think they kind of...a lot of people still expected him to be a political Messiah that would take over the Roman empire and so James and John's mother comes and says, "You know, I would like for my children to sit one on your right hand and one your left, right next to you."

And I used to think, "Well, man, this is kind of an arrogant mother, you know?" To think she ought to be asking these kind of rights for her sons. But, you know, I sometimes have to wonder. I wonder if John put her up to that? I wonder if John says, "Oh, mom, would you do this favor? Ask him. I know he is going to be king. Would you ask him if I could sit next to him?"

That could be happening. We don't know that from Scripture, right. It is an interesting idea.

We do know John wanted to be close, though. Look at John 21:20.

It says, "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?"¹⁶

He says, "I am leaning right there."

And Mark 10:35, now this is a different Bible writer, ok. Peter is dictating, I think, to Mark.

It says:

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.¹⁷

So in this case they are asking him directly. It is kind of, "Can we sit on either side of you when you get in your kingdom?"

And Jesus was kind of like, "Do you know what that is going to cost? You know, are you ready to pay the price I am going to pay?"

"Yeah."

¹⁶ John 21:20.

¹⁷ Mark 10:35-37,.

Another thing about people with the gift of mercy is they are often attracted to people who are prophets, ok? It is kind of funny. You know, you have heard that saying, "Opposites attract."

Now in some ways my wife and I are very much alike. You know, we are compatible in so many ways it is unreal actually. But there is other ways in which we are opposite. We think very differently. Opposites attract is certainly true with people with the gift of mercy. Here is a person who wants to love everybody and they usually end up marrying somebody who is quick to criticize people for their hypocrisy.

It is interesting how God usually brings you a mate who will balance you out. How many of you can say that your mate balances you out? Ok? It is a good thing because if you marry somebody who is actually like yourself, you would end up killing him. That is, you know... When I am around people who are just like me, I can't take it for very long.

John spent more time with Peter than with any other disciple. Now it is kind of funny. You look at the 12 again and Peter, James and John were usually kind of the three were off by themselves, but there were two of those for almost always together. There is a lot of times Peter and John are somewhere together and nobody else is around. So Peter and John, they were kind of attracted to each other. Now they are opposites.

All right. Let's look at some misuses of the gift of mercy. And one of the first misuses and I think this is probably the most common is they take up offenses for others. And the Bible warns us in the Old Testament. It says if you take up a reproach for your brother, you are like somebody that grabs hold of a dog by both ears. In other words, if somebody you love is being attacked and something saying bad about him, if you take up an offense for them, if you take up a reproach for them, it is like going to a pit bull and grabbing him by both ears.

Let me tell you something about grabbing a pit bull by both ears. Once you do, don't let go, because the minute you let go with either hand, he is going to bite you.

Ok? And that is what happens when we take up offenses.

How many of you have ever gotten involved emotionally or maybe even got right in the middle of an argument that didn't have anything to do with you, just because you were standing up for a friend? Anybody ever done that? Yeah. You get the hurt. You want to jump in and you don't want to hurt it.

So a person with the gift of mercy tends to be hurt because somebody they love is being hurt. Well, guess what? Let me give you a little clue. It took me a while to figure this out because there has been a lot of times as a pastor that somebody has said or done something that hurt my wife. And that is about the last thing you want to do when you are around me is hurt my wife or say anything bad about my wife. You know, I don't know if you will fog up the mirror the next day, to be quite honest with you. And that is, you know, I am very protective of her. I remember two guys made a pass at her once in a

Chinese restaurant when she was a waitress and as soon as I got there and found out the guys had just left I went out in the parking lot looking for a problem, you know? Good for them they had just driven off.

But, you know, I am protective of her. Well people with gift of mercy are protective of all of their friends, but you know? I have discovered something. None of us will get through life without ever having our feelings hurt. And getting our feelings hurt sometimes is a way we grow. We get a little tougher. We get a little tougher skin. We are able to survive better.

O it is important that we learn how to handle offenses.

A person that has the gift of mercy needs to check, usually with a prophet would be a good idea, before they... if they see somebody that has been criticized or somebody who is being hurt, maybe they need to go check and say, "Do I really need to try to relieve this hurt?"

You know, maybe a prophet needs to check out, you know, what caused the hurt. Why is this person being persecuted right now? Is it because they are standing for righteousness or because they are being a hypocrite?

An exhorter might say, "Well, here are some steps for you to deal with this hurt or here are some steps you need to grow spiritually." But a mercy person can kind of back off and say, "What is God doing through this?" before they jump in and get in the middle of it.

Another thing about people with the gift of mercy is they can become very possessive. They want close friendships. They want deep commitments and they can monopolize the time and attention of others.

And if they experience disappointments in one friendship, then they tend to put even greater demands on a new friendship. So it is kind of like they want that person and they want them all to themselves. It is like they want exclusive access. I think in some ways John wanted that kind of access to Jesus.

They can also give comfort where rebuke is needed. So, you know, sometimes people need somebody to walk up to them and get in their face and say, "You know what? You are sinning. And what is happening in your life is because you are not living for the Lord."

And a person with the gift of mercy doesn't like those conversations. They don't like to hear those conversations. They want to alleviate hurt. They don't want to, you know, they want to have... they don't want to take time, maybe, to do the spiritual discernment to figure out why they are suffering.

And so sometimes they can... they want to take the spanking for somebody or they want to take away the pain that God may be using to get to somebody.

Let me give you an example. In today's world, I think that one of the ways that God chastises his children first and foremost is often through financial need. I think that one of the ways he gets to us is through our wallet because most of us can sense pain pretty good in our wallet. And so something happens that devastates our financial resources. You know, maybe the income doesn't come in or the outgo suddenly is about a bunch of unexpected things we didn't budget for and we suffer that. And God is trying to get our attention. Now if he can't get our attention through that, the next thing that goes may be our health. We may lose some of our health or the health of our kids in order to get our attention that way.

The problem is a person with the gift of mercy it is kind of like they see somebody that is having a financially hard time. They may want to just give to them without discerning whether or not God is trying to speak to them through this thing.

So you need to learn discernment to try to see people through the eyes of the other spiritual gifts. You need to back off before you help somebody if you have the gift of mercy and say, "What would a prophet be thinking right now? You know, what would an exhorter be thinking right now?"

Here is another characteristic. That is that they can fail to be firm. In the position of leadership somebody that has the gift of mercy may not take appropriate disciplinary action. So, for example, if your dad and you are the gift of mercy and your boy really needs the rod of correction applied to the seat of understanding, you may not be able to do it. And so instead what you are trying to do is, you know, ok, son, I forgive you. Try to do better next time.

Let me tell you something. The most merciful thing you can do sometimes for your children is to give them a good whooping. Do you know why? Because when they learn that there are boundaries that need to be enforced and that God has boundaries for our behavior as well, they will be safer for the rest of your life.

Now it isn't pleasant to have to give a whooping. But if I can whoop somebody when they are six years old or nine years old or 10 years old and it saves them from going to jail when they are 20 years old, I think I was merciful. How about you? Absolutely.

So you need to take disciplinary action. And sometimes, you know, pastor of church who has got the gift of mercy. Maybe he will put up with stuff that another pastor wouldn't. You need to be careful not to let sin go on too long because it can corrupt the church.

So as a result of not dealing with the sin, the person who needs to be brought to repentance isn't and so this will cause prophets to kind of react to people with the gift of mercy.

Here is another characteristic and that is that they tend to lean on emotions instead of reason. People with the gift of mercy tend to be emotional people. That is why John refers to emotions more than anything else. They are sensitive to emotions. They tend to base their decisions on emotions rather than the facts or the principles of Scripture.

And see, I... you know, as a teacher, all I want to do when I see something is evaluate it and say, "Well, does that match God's Word or not?"

And I really don't care about anything else. You know, it is a... I... and that is why I have to have people around me to balance me, because what I care most about is what the Bible says. I care more about what the Bible says than I do about the person. And that is not necessarily good. I need to care about the person, too.

But it is kind of like well, how does that match up to the Bible? Well, they need to get in line with the Bible. They are getting what they deserve because they didn't do what the Bible said.

But, you know, the thing here is that I will make my decisions on principles. I don't make a lot of decisions on emotion. I make most of my decisions based on principle. But a person with the gift of mercy can be very emotional. And if they see a Bible doctrine that is a little harsh, well, they may just kind of back off of that and not really apply that because well, yeah, I know God said that, but that just sounds so unreasonable today because they just don't want to do it.

Here is another problem. And that is that a person with the gift of mercy can very easily defraud someone of the opposite sex. Because they are so sensitive, because they sense hurts, because they desire closeness, because they desire intimacy, they can very often attract someone who is hurt of the opposite sex and they can develop an intimate communication. And they are just being genuinely caring.

Well, let me caution you. If you have the gift of mercy and you are a female, then only demonstrate your gift of mercy toward other females until you are married, ok? If you are a person with a gift of mercy and you are a man, then keep it. Show your gift of mercy to other men. Don't share it with somebody of the opposite gender because you run the risk of building relationships that you shouldn't.

Now I don't have the gift of mercy, but I do try to be sensitive. And so when a woman comes to me for counsel, I will have my wife go in the office with me because, for two reasons. One is she can hear them say stuff I won't hear, because she is more sensitive than I am. The other reason is I know that one of the things men find attractive every man wants to be a knight in shining armor that rides up and rescues a woman in distress. So we find women in distress to be very attractive.

By the same token, every woman secretly wants a knight in shining armor and if you are the guy that listens to them when maybe their husband isn't or their dad isn't listening to them and you do, then they start developing an attachment for you. So just as a matter of

policy I don't counsel women alone. I have my wife there because it protects the woman and it protects me. That is just a good, good rule of thumb to do.

So you need to exercise special care in any relationship with a person of the opposite sex. And a prophet is really good. If you have got a prophet around they can help discern your motives in this area.

Another thing is they can react to God's purposes for suffering. The exhorters look at suffering as a means of receiving more of God's grace and growing spiritually. But those with the gift of mercy tend to reject the idea that God would allow a good person to suffer.

There his a guy by the name of Philip Yancey, Y A N C E Y. He wrote a book called *r Why God Let's Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

Now have you ever heard anybody wonder that before, why God lets bad things happen to good people? That is the wrong question. The fact is, Jesus said there is none good, but God. God doesn't let bad things happen to good people. Why? Because there are no good people. Ok? We are all sinners to begin with, right?

And not only that, when bad things happen to us, it is usually because we are violating one of Christ's commands. And so Philip Yancey writes a whole book on the subject and never finds the solution. He looks at bad things happening to good people.

The thing is, you know, what do I deserve? Now if you boil down every good thing I have ever done, what do I deserve? Let me tell you. I deserve eternity in the lake of fire. Brother Carl, it is the gets I can do is to have eternity in the lake of fire. Were it not for the grace of God I wouldn't have anything better.

So a person with the gift of mercy can easily become a little bitter if they don't maintain a proper biblical perspective.

Here is another thing. They may fail to show deference. Now deference is yielding up your rights for someone else. It is letting somebody else go first in the cafeteria line or somebody else eat before you do or somebody else have their way when you really wanted to do such and such. When a person with the gift of mercy, they want to be physically close to a person. They want to have intimacy with a person. And they may fail to see there is other people that need time and attention from these people, too.

No I really try, as a dad, to make sure that my kids have access to me, but they are certain times that I am just not available. You know, I had one of my children share something I think is probably earth shaking, life shattering this morning and I really need to talk to that child, spend some time. But this morning I was in the middle of doing bulletins and uploading PowerPoint slides and other stuff that had to be done.

I said, "We have got to talk about this later. I can't do it right now."

A person with the gift of mercy that got put off like that might be a little upset. You know, they say, “Hey, he doesn’t ever have time for me.”

Well, no, you just... you need to be maybe be able to wait. And not only that, if you are married to somebody in the ministry, whether it is teaching Sunday school or they just have the gift of service and they are trying to, you know, put... run cables through the attic or whatever, you have to realize that sometimes you can’t dominate that person’s life. They ... other people need a chunk of them, too.

God didn’t put us in the world to be dominated by one person. He put us in the world to minister to others. And we all need to understand that.

Now does that mean that we are not supposed to have any priorities? Absolutely not. My wife is my priority. But does my wife sometimes have to be flexible in giving me up to meet other people’s needs? Every day. Every day she does.

John was reproved when he made his request to sit next to Jesus in the kingdom. He was reproved for that. Another thing is they tend to cut off insensitive people. People with a gift of mercy react when somebody says something insensitive about a lost person or insensitive about another Christian and they are being insensitive to feelings and so they are kind of like, hey, well, if you are going to say stuff like that, I don’t really want to be around you. You know, if you are going to be insensitive, then I don’t want that close relationship with you.

Well, let’s close with this. There is one special instruction in Romans chapter 12 and verse 15 with regard to a person that has the gift of mercy. It says this.

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”¹⁸

And I think the reason God put this instruction for people with the gift of mercy, each one of the seven gifts has a corresponding verse for it and this is the verse for the people with the gift of mercy. I think sometimes they do a real good job, if you have the gift of mercy of doing the second part of this verse. It is easy for somebody with the gift of mercy to weep with them that weep. Man, they, you know, they can turn on the water works and start crying with you in a heart beat. But we forget, maybe the other part of it and that is to be able to rejoice with those who are rejoicing. When somebody has got a good something in their life, you should share the joy and not just the sorrow. Otherwise you can go around the rest of your life being morose because you are bearing everybody’s burdens and you are crying about everything everybody else is crying about.

Guess what? There are some things to rejoice about, too. And you need to get involved in rejoicing and in praising God.

Well, let’s go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

¹⁸ Romans 12:15.

Father, thank you for this day. Thank for those with the gift of mercy. They remind the rest of us that are often too busy or too... maybe too principled, those of us who maybe tend to judge quickly and form opinions quickly that there really are people out there that are just hurting and sometimes we look at the exterior of a person and their external behavior and we immediately are ready to pass judgment on them. Because they are not like us. They don't dress like us. Maybe they go around wearing chains and body piercings and tattoos and we immediately look down on them. And it takes a person with the gift of mercy to realize that there is somebody that you created in your image that really are in bondage and just desperately need Jesus.

Father, help us to always be sensitive to the needs of others around us even if we don't have this motivation gift of mercy. Would you just open our hearts to see people with the love that you have? And, Father, may you keep those with the gift of mercy from forming wrong friendships and wrong attachments? May you put a spiritual hedge of protection around about them so they are not involved in relationships they shouldn't be and also so that they don't become bitter by taking up offenses of others.

Now, Father, we ask that you fill our pastor with your Spirit as he preaches to us today. It is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thank you.