

## Who Is God?: Lesson 2 *God Is Mercy*

*Learning to know and love God for who He is, His character, attributes and being*

### **Lesson 2: God Is Mercy** (Day One) *Mercy Defined*

In *Lesson 1: God is Good*, we learned that God has a perfect character. Everything He does is right. We may not know how God is working behind the scenes of our lives, but we can be sure He is working out things for our good (Romans 8:28-29). If wrongs are not made right in this life, they will be in the next. All people will be judged and all things will be brought to light (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The second attribute or behavior trait we are going to study is mercy. Just like we say *God is good* and *God is love*, we also say *God is mercy*. As with God's other attributes (behavior traits), mercy is the essence (core, heart) of who God is. None of his attributes are more necessary than another.

Goodness and mercy are related. Since God is good, He has mercy on the people He has made. He cares about the needs of others. People have a sin problem, and God sent His Son to solve it. Mercy is not only feeling sad about someone's condition, but acting to help.

*The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.* Psalm 145:9<sup>1</sup>

1. Read Psalm 145:9. The LORD is good to \_\_\_\_\_; He has \_\_\_\_\_ on all He has made.

**\*\*See end of lesson for repeat of questions and blank spaces for you to write your answers.**

*When all the questions have been completed, return your answer sheets to CLI. You may keep this lesson for your own study or review. You may also pass it on to another or discard.*

God has compassion on all He has made. Compassion is similar in meaning (synonym) to mercy. It means God has deep sympathy and sorrow for people in pain and hardship. He desires to ease our troubles and move on our behalf. He works through our suffering to make us more like Jesus.

Another part of God's mercy is that He gives it freely. No one deserves God's mercy. We do not have a right or claim to make God help us. When God works in or around us, it is a pure gift.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture is from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, INC. All rights reserved worldwide.

A beautiful picture of God's mercy can be seen in Luke 15:11-24. This is the story of the Lost or Prodigal Son. The son asks his father for his share of the estate. The father gives him the money. Today, it would be the same as a son asking for his inheritance while his father was still alive.

The son leaves his father for a distant place and spends the money foolishly in wild living. Afterward, he was alone and hungry. He took a job feeding pigs. However, this job did not provide enough for him to live on, so he was still hungry. He started to think about the goodness of his father. The men who worked for his father had plenty of food.

He made up his mind to go home and ask forgiveness. The son did not expect any kind of special treatment. He only hoped to work as a hired hand.

When the father saw him walking toward home, he ran out to meet him. The young man admits his sin. Immediately, the father had the servants bring a robe, ring and sandals. He called for a feast to celebrate.

The father in this story represents (stands for) our heavenly Father. He allows us to go our own way, but rejoices when we return to Him. The son did not deserve such a warm welcome and neither do we. Like the son, we receive mercy.

Louis Zamperini (1917-2014) is an example of a lost or prodigal son. He was a tough kid who started his own gang. The group would get even with anyone who they even thought looked at them in a wrong way. They would steal, destroy property and fight other gang members. Louis' nickname was "Lucky Louie" because he mostly got away with his rebellion.<sup>2</sup>

When he was 15, his whole class wanted to compete in an interclass track meet. He did not want to, but also did not want to seem weak so he agreed to run. He ended up finishing last and thought, "Never again. Never."<sup>3</sup>

A week later his brother talked him into going to another meet. He did a little better and with his brother's encouragement decided to be a runner. He continued to smoke and drink, but as his running improved, so did his desire for a better life. However, his better life did not include God.

**Definition:** Mercy is being good to people and helping them when they are in need, even though they do not deserve it.

The Bible is divided between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament is about the birth, life and death of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament tells us that Jesus, the Messiah or Savior, is coming.

The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. God always was, always is and always will be. He is the everlasting God and does not change (Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). Therefore, the one, true, living God of the Bible is merciful. He is good to us and helps us when we are in need, even though we do not deserve it.

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<sup>2</sup> Louis Zamperini and David Rensin, *Devil at My Heels* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

God's behavior traits cannot be separated. He is always good, always merciful, always righteous and always just. Sometimes it may seem that God's mercy and justice are in conflict or disagreement. They are not.

However, we can speak of a "holy tension" between certain subjects in the Bible. This means that although it *appears* there are two opposing views, they are kept in balance by God. We need to ask God to show us how to embrace views that seem incompatible (mismatched). There is always a divine solution to understanding and applying God's word. However, we must keep praying for wisdom and guidance. We must also wait patiently for the Lord's answer.

*Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath.* Psalm 78:38 (iniquity - sin, wrongdoing)

2. Read Psalm 78:38. What are four ways that God is merciful?

*Hear my prayer, LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.<sup>7</sup> When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.* Psalm 86:6-7

Read Psalm 86:6-7 and answer questions 3-4:

3. Are you troubled and need to call out to God for mercy? Yes No (Circle One)

4. If you answered "yes" in question 3, write out your request to God in the form of a prayer. If you answered "no," write a prayer of thanksgiving for how God has shown you mercy.

## **Lesson 2: God Is Mercy (Day Two) Old Testament Mercy**

God showed His mercy toward us in the beginning. Remember from *Lesson One: God Is Good*, Adam and Eve sinned and caused people to be under a death sentence. God immediately promised to do something about this death sentence (Genesis 3:15). He planned to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for sin.

**Definition:** Justice is the process of using laws to judge and punish crimes fairly.

5. How does God's justice and mercy blend together perfectly in Christ's death on the cross?

God planned for Jesus to be born in a certain people group at a certain time in history. As time passed, God called Abraham about 2086 BC<sup>4</sup> to be the father of that nation or people. In other words, Abraham's children and their children became the Hebrews. Sometime later they were called the Jews. The nation God founded through Abraham is named Israel.

Abraham was a descendent (offspring) of Shem, one of Noah's three sons. After the earth was populated through Adam and Eve's children, wickedness increased (Genesis 6:5-8). God could have wiped out the entire human race, but God was merciful and spared Noah and his family. The rainbow is a sign of God's promise never to flood the earth and destroy all life. It can also remind us that God is both *just* and *merciful*. He is always just and always merciful.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/abraham/>

Adam and Eve had other children (Genesis 5:4) who most likely married each other. The Bible is not specific but since there were no other people, it makes sense. There was no rule against marrying a brother or sister at that time. Later, when God gave Moses rules and regulations (Law) for the Israelites and all people, it was forbidden (Leviticus 18:9). It still is.

*From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. Acts 17:26-27 (Note: Adam is the one man)*

Read Acts 17:26-27 and answer questions 6-8:

6. All the people and all the nations came from how many people (v. 26)?
7. Where should all these people live (v. 26)?
8. Why did God make everyone from Adam, have them live over the whole earth and mark their time in history and the boundaries of their lands (v. 27)?

You may wonder why we look different from other people if we have a common ancestor. For example, why are there different skin colors? It has to do with genetics.

**Definition:** Genetics is the study of heredity, or how the characteristics of living things are passed from one generation to the next when they reproduce. Every living thing contains the genetic material that makes up DNA molecules. The basic unit of heredity is the gene.

Here is a quick example of skin color. If Adam and Eve were of middle brown color, they could have or give birth to children with a variety of skin tones or color. Dark skinned or very light skinned people only have genes to produce the same color.

When people with the same color genes (or skin color) moved to different or faraway locations, the gene pool got smaller. This would be true of other characteristics such as height, weight and facial features. As they married people from their own villages, there would not be as much variety and differences in skin color and other characteristics.

The Bible tells us and genetics supports that God is the creator of only one race, the human race. We are all descendants (offspring) of Adam and Eve. No matter the slight physical differences, we are one people. Since we are one race, we are all sinners and need forgiveness. God, in His goodness and mercy provided the gospel of Christ Jesus. Also by being human, we receive God's goodness and mercy each and every day. He does not treat us as our sins deserve.

*Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him. Lamentations 3:22-25 (portion - inheritance share)*

9. Read and meditate (think deeply) on Lamentations 3:22-25. How is God's mercy (compassion, forgiveness and goodness) new every morning *for you*?

Louis Zamperini continued to run. He liked the recognition that running brought him and did not want it to stop. Therefore, Louis not only trained fanatically, but also applied himself to his school work.

God was good to Louie in helping him become a championship runner. Two times he was the NCAA mile champion record holder. When he was 19, he went to the 1936 Olympics.

Louie joined the army on September 29, 1941. The United States fully entered World War II when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He trained and was assigned to a bomber crew on a B-24. After flying missions for a couple of years, his plane went down in the Pacific. Three men survived and Louie became the leader or captain of the life raft.

Moses was used by God to lead the Israelites (about 1446 -1406 BC). God's mercy was great to both Moses and the people. Read the book of Exodus in your Bible for a full account.

The Hebrews were given rules and laws to help them live holy lives. Holy means being set apart for God's purpose. All people should be holy because we have all been created for God's purpose. That purpose is to glorify or honor Him.

The law or rules revealed how difficult it is for a person to be pure. It showed how sinful a person can be. The law also illustrated or made known God's continuing favor and mercy.

Remember that Adam and Eve only had one commandment and they failed to keep it. The Hebrews were similar to the first humans. They failed to keep God's law and sinned.

God knew they were not able to keep or follow the whole law. Therefore, God set up a system of sacrifice to pay for the people's sins. He used Moses to set it up and teach the people about it. The sacrificial system pointed the way to Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

**Definitions:** Sacrifice in the Old Testament is the offering of physical items to God through a priest to express loyalty, thanksgiving, or the need for forgiveness. Priests were people chosen to offer the sacrifices and perform other religious duties.

When a person offered a sacrifice to God, he was to give his best material goods (animals, bread, oil etc.). This outward gift was a sign of one's inward love for God. It represented a surrendering or a giving of one's life to God.

*The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught. Isaiah 29:13 (heart in this verse means mind, spirit and emotions)*

**10a.** Read Isaiah 29:13. What did God want from the Israelite people in the Old Testament?

**10b.** What do you think God wants from people today?

The sacrificial system was complex, and so we are only going to review one part. The part of the system we are going to look at is the burnt offering. The burnt offering required the blood sacrifice of a perfect bull, ram, goat, lamb, dove or pigeon. Blood is a symbol of life because the life of every creature is in its blood (Leviticus 17:14).

Animal sacrifices were offered to God before Moses introduced them. But they were not offered in an organized way. God planned the sacrificial method so that sins could be forgiven and relationship restored. The system not only pointed to Jesus as the perfect sacrifice but temporarily helped with people's sin problem.

*You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you. Leviticus 1:4*

Recall from *Lesson One: God Is Good*, atone means to bring together as one those who were enemies. Biblically, it is what Christ accomplished by His death and resurrection. We were enemies of God and Christ's death put us on the same team.

**11.** Read Leviticus 1:4. What outward sign showed a person's sins being transferred to the burnt offering?

The penalty for sin is death. God, in His mercy, gave people a way to avoid the death penalty. He allowed a person's sins to be transferred to an animal. The animal was killed instead. However, this was not a permanent solution. Animals could not remove all sins for all time. Plus they could never be a perfect substitute (stand-in) because animals are not human.

*The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-- not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Hebrews 10:1*

**12.** Read Hebrews 10:1. Could the animal sacrifices take away a person's sins forever (make perfect)? Yes No (Circle One)

Human sacrifices cannot take away sins either. We are sinful and not perfect. An imperfect person cannot atone for the sins made against a holy and perfect God. Plus, God set up rules against human sacrifice and killing another human being (Genesis 9:6; Leviticus 24:17; Deuteronomy 12:31).

Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). He is both human and divine. He alone could atone for the sins of an individual and of the human race.

*First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"-- though they were offered in accordance with the law.<sup>9</sup> Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second.<sup>10</sup> And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10:8-10*

**13.** Read Hebrews 10:8-10. Who sacrificed His own body to take away sins once for all?

God did not force Jesus to give His life for you and me. Jesus went to the cross willingly. He wants all sin to be forgiven. Jesus wants our broken relationship to be reborn in God's love. He wants all of our broken or faulty relationships to be reborn in God's love.

**Lesson 2: God Is Mercy (Day Three) Nations and Individuals**

*Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. Micah 7:18*

**14.** Read Micah 7:18. God does not stay angry forever but delights to show \_\_\_\_\_.

God is merciful to nations and to individuals. God is in control of the universe and decides who receives mercy and when given. This is important. God is good to people even though they do not deserve it. However, God has the right to choose who receives His acts of mercy and when.

*And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Exodus 33:19*

**15.** Read Exodus 33:19. Who does God have mercy on?

God wanted to have mercy on an evil city named Nineveh (pronounced NIN-uh-vuh). He called the prophet Jonah to go to the city and preach against it because of its wickedness. Instead, Jonah ran and jumped on a ship heading in the opposite direction. Jonah may have been afraid for his own safety with the Ninevites, but there was another reason. Later in the book of Jonah, we learn his main motive.

The LORD sent a great wind and everyone on the ship was in danger. Jonah knew this storm was from God and told the sailors to throw him overboard. They did. The people on the ship were saved and Jonah was swallowed by a huge fish, most likely a whale. From the belly of the fish, Jonah cries out to God for mercy and promises to do what the Lord has commanded. The fish vomited Jonah on the sea shore.

Jonah obeyed God and went to Nineveh. For three days Jonah warned the people of God's judgment. They believed the message was from God and did not try and hide their sins. The king and the people urgently called on God and gave up their evil and violent ways. They were hoping and praying for God's mercy.

*Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Proverbs 28:13 (Confess - agree and come clean. Renounce - give up)*

Read Proverbs 28:13 and answer questions 16a-c:

**16a.** Are you trying to hide secret sins from God? Yes No (Circle One)

**16b.** If you answered yes in a, will you confess your sins and give them up? Yes No (Circle One)

**16c.** If you answered no in b, what is keeping you from confessing and giving up your sins?

The LORD saw how the Ninevites turned from their evil (repented) and had mercy on them. He did not bring destruction on them. But Jonah was not pleased and he became angry.

*He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Jonah 4:2 (Relent - to give up or lessen a harsh intention or cruel treatment.)*

Read Jonah 4:1-2 and answer questions 17-19:

**17.** What was the real reason Jonah did not want to preach against Nineveh?

**18.** How does Jonah describe God?

**19.** Is there someone or some group of people that you prefer would be judged and not to receive mercy from God? Yes No (Circle One) If you circled *Yes*, please explain your situation.

Jonah did not want the Ninevites to be forgiven. Therefore he was disobedient. He rebelled against God and went his own way.

Jonah knew God better than most people of his day. He was God's prophet. God gave Jonah words to speak to others. He knew that if the Ninevites repented (turned from sin), God would have mercy on them. So Jonah kept his unforgiveness and disobeyed God.

The LORD was merciful to Jonah in two ways. First, He had Jonah swallowed by a big fish. This helped him to repent of his disobedience. He went to Nineveh and preached against the people's sin. Second, the LORD helped Jonah work through his own unforgiveness. Jonah did not want compassion for these cruel enemies. Most likely he preferred revenge. God listened to Jonah and then explained how He had made and cared for this nation (Jonah 4:7-11).

God made all people. Even our enemies. He loves them and wants them to turn from their evil ways. God also desires for us to have a merciful heart. We cannot do it on our own. We need to ask God for a merciful heart. Ask Him now. Your *CLI Bible Minister* will also pray for you.

**20a.** Who do you need to show mercy to?

**20b.** What good act will you do for this person(s) even though they do not deserve it?

**20c.** Explain what you did and how it worked out.

Louie noted the time and location of the crash and took an inventory of supplies. They had six fortified chocolate bars, eight half-pint tins of water and *no knife*. He was extremely upset about the survival kit not having the most important item: a knife.

Being in 65 million square miles of salt water gave Louie time to think. He considered the possibility of divine intervention in his surviving the crash. He did thank God for saving his life and prayed. He meant his prayers but did not really understand it. In fact, it sounded more like bargaining with God:

"Answer my prayers now, and I promise if I get home through all this and whatever is to come, I'll serve You for the rest of my life."<sup>5</sup>

Drinking salt water is deadly so they caught rainwater in the canvas pump cover. In addition to water, they needed food. They were able to do some fishing, but this attracted the sharks. Many times they were in danger with the larger ones, but they put the smaller ones on their food chain. Louie used the screwdriver end of the pliers from their survival kit to kill the smaller sharks. The only edible part was the liver. Louie had learned in his survival course that eating raw shark would make them sick.

It was difficult to catch enough water and food so most of the time they were thirsty and hungry. One day an albatross landed on Louie's head while he was asleep. He caught it and wrung its neck. He received injuries to his hands from its sharp beak.

Finally after 47 days adrift, they saw a group of islands. One island with two trees seemed to be moving toward them. But no, it was not an island. It was a boat with two masts.

They had drifted about two thousand miles and landed in Japanese territory. One of the three original survivors had died and was buried at sea. So the Japanese blindfolded Louie and Phil and took them ashore to prison cells.

The Japanese had to carry their prisoners because after so much time at sea, they were unable to walk. Louie weighed 67 pounds. He had lost nearly 100 pounds.

At first the Japanese treated their prisoners well. They gave them generous portions of rice and soup. Of course, their stomachs were not ready for big portions. They could only digest a little at a time. The Japanese also asked a lot of questions and were amazed at their tale of survival. They showed an interest in Louie's running career, especially his time at the Olympics.

But the good treatment did not last. After a few days they were taken to another island and thrown into separate cells. Louie was seized with fear (claustrophobia) as he landed in a cell the size of a dog kennel. He writes:

"All my life I had kept my emotions tightly in check when it came to my own troubles, but I could no longer help myself. I broke down and cried."<sup>6</sup>

*...have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long. <sup>4</sup> Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you. <sup>5</sup> You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. Psalm 86:3-5 (Note: The shepherd and king, David, wrote this psalm.)*

Read Psalm 86: 3-5 and answer questions 21-22:

**21.** How does David describe God (v. 5)?

**22.** Who does David put his trust in (v. 4b)?

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<sup>5</sup> Louis Zamperini and David Rensin, *Devil at My Heels* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2003), 99.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 120.

23. In what area of your life do you need God's mercy?

24. Write a prayer to the Lord of mercy and ask for His help.

God has mercy on nations and individuals. But notice God's mercy has a lot to do with them turning away from sin. The Lord will help us obey Him and repent. We do not deserve His help but because He is mercy, He will give it. Following God is the path to joy and peace, no matter the circumstances. It may not always be easy, but it is the only path that leads to everlasting life and joy.

**Lesson 2: God Is Mercy (Day Four) New Testament Mercy**

Mercy is being good to people in need, even though they do not deserve it. God *is* mercy. God is so good to undeserving people, He sent His perfect Son to die for our sins.

Jesus embodies (in visible form) God's mercy. Jesus is mercy. Jesus' perfect sacrifice ushers (guides) us into the New Testament. The New Testament or New Covenant means that animal sacrifices no longer pay for our sins. That was the *old* way. Jesus is the *new* way. He died on the cross for you and for me. He delivered us from sin.

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.* Ephesians 2:1-7 (v. 2 The spirit in the disobedient is Satan.)

Read Ephesians 2:1-7 and answer questions 25-28:

**Defintion:** Grace is God's love in action to undeserving people. The height (pinnacle) of God's grace is Jesus Christ.

25. Were *you* dead in your wrongdoing and sins at one time (v. 1)? Yes No (Circle One)

26. Who were you following when you were *not* following Jesus (v. 2)?

27. Like every sinner, what do we deserve from God (v. 3)?

**Note:** The faster we train ourselves to see sin in ourselves, the faster we can have mercy on others. Self-righteous people look on other people's sin, but not their own. When we recognize all the wrong things we have done, we judge less and forgive more.

28. Fill in the blanks from vs. 4-5: *But because of his great \_\_\_\_\_ for us, God, who is rich in \_\_\_\_\_, <sup>5</sup>made us \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ even when we were \_\_\_\_\_ in transgressions-- it is by \_\_\_\_\_ you have been \_\_\_\_\_.*

**29.** God raises up believers with Christ. Where are believers seated, that is, what is our spiritual position or place (v. 6)?

**30.** Why does God raise up believers and seat us with Christ in the heavenly realms (v. 7)?

The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. In His mercy, God planned for Jesus to take the wrath (anger, rage, fury) that we rightly deserve. Jesus willingly laid down His life for you and me. Mercy is Jesus on the cross. God is mercy. Jesus is mercy.

However, people can be without mercy. We can be uncaring and cruel. Louie experienced this lesson first hand. He writes:

"The rations were so horrible that I had constant diarrhea and dripped mucus from my rear end. Flies got into the mucus and laid their eggs. Some nights it was so bad that I had to curl up in the back of the cell with my naked butt over the hole, leaking. I'd think I had it under control, then five minutes later it would start again, making sleep impossible.

Most people never understand how bad life can be for prisoners of war because no survivor talks frankly and in detail about these horrible experiences from the banquet dais (platform).

I could tell from his groans that Phil suffered similarly two cells away, but the guards did not allow us to talk. Any attempt meant suffering a swift kick or poke with a sharp stick. They also beat us regularly.

My new life was no new life at all. Better to starve me, or send me out to sea again on the raft. At least dying that way would allow me some dignity."<sup>7</sup>

Louie did not know from day to day whether he would live or die. The kind of faith he had on the raft disappeared. The torture from the guards continued.

More than two years later the war ended. Japan officially surrendered on September 2, 1945. Louie and Phil had survived and were rescued by American forces. They were delivered.

## **Lesson 2: God Is Mercy (Day Five) *Kinds of Mercy***

There are many ways God is merciful to us. He comforts, corrects, delivers, forgives, guides, heals, loves, supplies for our needs etc. (and so on). As a child of God, we are to be merciful to others in various ways also. We will look at two examples: (1) Loving and forgiving your enemies and (2) Helping or supplying someone in need.

Jesus completed the most merciful act in history by dying on the cross for our sins. This is a one-of-a-kind act of mercy by our all-merciful God. It cannot be repeated. However, the story of the cross and what it means can be retold. We can share about Christ's sacrifice so others may glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Not everyone may be happy to hear about Jesus. They may even become your enemy. Or you may have enemies for other reasons. Loving and forgiving your enemies is one kind of mercy.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 120-121.

Remember: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16). Jesus willingly died for His enemies. He died so we could be forgiven.

*But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,<sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.<sup>29</sup> If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.*  
Luke 6:27-29

Read Luke 6:27-29 and answer questions 31-32:

31. Jesus commands us to: \_\_\_\_\_ our enemies, do \_\_\_\_\_ to those who \_\_\_\_\_ you (v. 27).

**Definitions:** To bless another person means speaking well of him and praying to God for his good. To curse another person means speaking badly of him; criticizing or insulting in an angry manner.

32. Jesus commands us to: \_\_\_\_\_ those who \_\_\_\_\_ you, \_\_\_\_\_ for those who \_\_\_\_\_ you (v. 28).

During the time of Jesus, slapping a person on the cheek was a physical way of cursing or insulting him. When Jesus commands us to offer the other cheek, He is teaching us not to hit back or get even (retaliate). Taking a coat or one's outer garment could indicate a legal action to repay a debt or theft. Again, Jesus teaches a nonviolent response to the point of giving the person your shirt. We do good to those who deserve punishment. We show mercy.

*Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* Luke 23:34

Read Luke 23:34 and answer questions 33-34:

33. Jesus was nailed to the cross by His enemies and asked God the Father to \_\_\_\_\_ them.

34. Did Jesus practice what He preached (taught) about loving enemies? Yes No (Circle One)

Loving enemies and forgiving them is difficult. It does not come naturally. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with supernatural love for those who insult or hurt us. Even praying and asking God for help may be difficult. We may want to cling to our hate. It is so much easier to hold a grudge (ill will) than to humbly let it go.

*"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.<sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.<sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.<sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."*  
Luke 6:32-35

**35.** Read and think deeply (meditate) on Luke 6:32-35. How will *you* apply these verses to your own life?

When Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone, Jesus replied seventy-seven times. Some Bible translations say seventy times seven. In other words, we must forgive a person over and over again.

Although we must forgive without limit, Jesus does not mean for us to place ourselves in danger. He was not saying you should accept physical or emotional abuse. If you find yourself in a harmful situation, pray for God to lead you through it. If possible, you should remove yourself from the threat.

After Jesus told Peter to forgive without limit, He told them a parable (story with a lesson). He told them about a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. One man was brought to the king who owed him 10,000 talents (millions of dollars). The man did not have the money.

The king ordered that the man, his family and all he had to be sold to repay the debt. The man begged for mercy. The master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

When he left, the servant found another servant who owed him a hundred denari (a few dollars). He demanded he pay the money owed right now. This servant also fell to his knees and begged for mercy. But he refused and had his fellow servant thrown into prison.

*When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.<sup>32</sup> "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.'<sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?"* Matthew 18:31-33

Read Matthew 18:31-33 and answer questions 36-37:

**36.** Why did the master call the servant wicked (vs. 32-33)?

**37.** Is God like the merciful master who forgives our debts (sins)? Yes No (Circle One)

The parable ends with the master sending the wicked servant to jail. He was to be tortured until he could pay back all he owed. Jesus then says, *"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."* Matthew 18:35-19:1

Louie had no interest in forgiving anyone. He had recurring nightmares about prison camp and revenge. In order to control his anger and dull the pain and memories, he turned to alcohol. Louie fell into depression and self-pity. He blamed God and yet he also knew in his heart that he had not kept his promise on the raft. He had not given God much thought in the prison camp or in the year after his rescue. Nevertheless, he hated religion and God, but could not explain why.

Louie married Cynthia and they were pregnant with their second child. He continued to drink and needless to say, the marriage was failing. In September 1946 a new neighbor moved into their apartment building. He invited them to church and to a revival meeting with Billy Graham.

Louie refused to attend, but Cynthia did go and accepted Christ as her Savior. Finally, at her urging, Louie agreed to go. He did not trust Jesus as his Savior. But now his anger was replaced by fear. His nightmare changed. Louie saw a guard's face and Satan's face as the same.

Remarkably, Cynthia talked him into going to hear Billy Graham the next night. Although he was fighting and making excuses through Dr. Graham's talk, at the end he did make a decision to follow Christ. The next morning when he woke up, he realized he did not have any nightmares.

Louie also wants new believers to know that God does not give new believers a steady diet of happiness. He had to go through a period of sadness, doubt and painful self examination. He says:

"The Christian life is not easy. You'll always get a guy who stands up and says, 'Ever since I became a Christian, my life's been a bowl of cherries.'

I've always turned to that guy and said, "you know what you need? You need Christ. Christian life isn't about a bowl of cherries. It's a struggle, and that struggle keeps you dependent on Him."<sup>8</sup>

Although Louie had forgiven the Japanese, in 1950 he felt it was important to forgive his former captors, face-to-face. He knew they were imprisoned at Tokyo's Sugamo Prison and made plans to go. God provided the funds in a variety of ways. God even moved strangers to give for this trip of mercy and forgiveness.

When he arrived in Japan, Louie was allowed to tell his story to hundreds of war criminals in Sugamo Prison. Afterward, he invited them to become Christians. Close to sixty percent raised their hands. Finally, Louie's former guards were invited to speak with him. A group of them came forward. Not all of this group made a decision for Christ. However, one who did said,

"I don't understand how you can come back here and forgive us. Your Christianity must be real, but I don't understand it."<sup>9</sup>

Jesus taught valuable lessons through parables. Parables are simple stories that teach moral or spiritual lessons. Another valuable lesson is through *the Parable of the Good Samaritan*. It is a good example of helping someone in need.

Jesus tells the story of a traveler who fell into the hands of robbers. They took all his possessions, stripped him of his clothes, beat him and left him half dead. Later, two men passed by and did not stop to help. Both were religious leaders.

When a Samaritan (person from Samaria) came to the place and saw the man, he had pity on him. He bandaged his wounds, put him on his donkey and took him to an inn. He paid for the innkeeper to feed and care for him.

*"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:36-37*

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 264.

38. Read Luke 10:36-37. When Jesus said, "*Go and do likewise*," what does He mean?
39. Pray and ask God for someone that you can help. Write what happened and how you showed mercy by helping someone.
40. Memorize Luke 6:36, *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful*.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,<sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,<sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5*

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,<sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions -- it is by grace you have been saved.<sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4-7*

41. Read and meditate on 1 Peter 1:3-5 and Ephesians 2:4-7. What are some ways God has been merciful to you in Christ Jesus?

God was merciful to Louie in many ways. He supplied needs, delivered, corrected, comforted, forgave, guided and healed. Louie writes after his Japanese trip of forgiveness:

"I knew that I had finally come full circle. Except for continuing to tell my story and spreading the Word, a great part of my life was over: the delinquency, the running, the war, the imprisonment, the drinking, the nightmares, the greediness and desperation. the unhappiness. I was completely satisfied with my test of forgiveness and more than ready to move on."<sup>10</sup>

God was also merciful to the cruel guards. Through Jesus they were offered forgiveness and a new life. In Jesus, the undeserving guards were supplied needs, delivered, corrected, comforted, forgiven, guided and healed.

God is merciful to you and me. Through Jesus we are offered forgiveness and a new life. In Jesus, the undeserving (including you and me) are supplied needs, delivered, corrected, comforted, forgiven, guided and healed.

Lastly, in God's great mercy He gives eternal life in Christ Jesus His Son. No one deserves such a perfect and joyful future. However, God in His goodness has made a way for us to be with Him forever in peace, comfort and heavenly bliss.

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-End of Lesson Two-

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 266.

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS Lesson 2**

**CLI Who Is God?: God Is Mercy**

**Fill out your contact information and answer each question. Return your answer sheets to CLI, Box 97095, Raleigh, NC 27624. Your answers will be reviewed and returned to you with helpful comments.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Institution: \_\_\_\_\_ Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 2: God Is Mercy (Day One) *Mercy Defined***

1. Read Psalm 145:9. The LORD is good to \_\_\_\_\_; He has \_\_\_\_\_ on all He has made.

2. Read Psalm 78:38. What are four ways that God is merciful?

(1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you troubled and need to call out to God for mercy? Yes No (Circle One)

4. If you answered "yes" in question 3, write out your request to God in the form of a prayer. If you answered "no," write a prayer of thanksgiving for how God has shown you mercy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 2: God Is Mercy (Day Two) *Old Testament Mercy***

5. How does God's justice and mercy blend together perfectly in Christ's death on the cross?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. All the people and all the nations came from how many people (v. 26)? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Where should all these people live (v. 26)? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Why did God make everyone from Adam, have them live over the whole earth and mark their time in history and the boundaries of their lands (v. 27)? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Read and meditate (think deeply) on Lamentations 3:22-25. How is God's mercy (compassion, forgiveness and goodness) new every morning *for you*? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10a. Read Isaiah 29:13. What did God want from the Israelite people in the Old Testament?

\_\_\_\_\_

10b. What do you think God wants from people today? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Read Leviticus 1:4. What outward sign showed a person's sins being transferred to the burnt offering? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Read Hebrews 10:1. Could the animal sacrifices take away a person's sins forever (make perfect)? Yes No (Circle One)

13. Read Hebrews 10:8-10. Who sacrificed His body to take away sins once for all? \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 2: God Is Mercy (Day Three) Nations and Individuals**

14. Read Micah 7:18. God does not stay angry forever but delights to show \_\_\_\_\_.

15. Read Exodus 33:19. Who does God have mercy on? \_\_\_\_\_

16a. Are you trying to hide secret sins from God? Yes No (Circle One)

16b. If you answered yes in a, will you confess your sins and give them up? Yes No (Circle One)

16c. If you answered no in b, what is keeping you from confessing and giving up your sins?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17. What was the real reason Jonah did not want to preach against Nineveh? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

18. How does Jonah describe God? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Is there someone or some group of people that you prefer would be judged and not to receive mercy from God? Yes No (Circle One) If you circled *Yes*, please explain your situation.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

20a. Who do you need to show mercy to? \_\_\_\_\_

20b. What good act will you do for this person(s) even though they do not deserve it?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

20c. Explain what you did and how it worked out: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

21. How does David describe God (v. 5)? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Who does David put his trust in (v. 4b)? \_\_\_\_\_

23. In what area of your life do you need God's mercy? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

24. Write a prayer to the Lord of mercy and ask for His help. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 2: God Is Mercy** (Day Four) *New Testament Mercy*

25. Were *you* dead in your wrongdoing and sins at one time (v. 1)? Yes No (Circle One)

26. Who were you following when you were *not* following Jesus (v. 2)? \_\_\_\_\_

27. Like every sinner, what do we deserve from God (v. 3)? \_\_\_\_\_

28. Fill in the blanks from vs. 4-5: *But because of his great \_\_\_\_\_ for us, God, who is rich in \_\_\_\_\_, <sup>5</sup>made us \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ even when we were \_\_\_\_\_ in transgressions-- it is by \_\_\_\_\_ you have been \_\_\_\_\_.*

29. God raises up believers with Christ. Where are believers seated, that is, what is our spiritual position or place (v. 6)? \_\_\_\_\_

30. Why does God raise up believers and seat us with Christ in the heavenly realms (v. 7)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 2: God Is Mercy (Day Five) Kinds of Mercy**

31. Jesus commands us to: \_\_\_\_\_ our enemies, do \_\_\_\_\_ to those who \_\_\_\_\_ you (v. 27).

32. Jesus commands us to: \_\_\_\_\_ those who \_\_\_\_\_ you, \_\_\_\_\_ for those who \_\_\_\_\_ you (v. 28).

33. Jesus was nailed to the cross by His enemies and asked God the Father to \_\_\_\_\_ them.

34. Did Jesus practice what He preached (taught) about loving enemies? Yes No (Circle One)

35. Read and think deeply (meditate) on Luke 6:32-35. How will *you* apply these verses to your own life?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

36. Why did the master call the servant wicked (vs. 32-33)? \_\_\_\_\_

37. Is God like the merciful master who forgives our debts (sins)? Yes No (Circle One)

38. Read Luke 10:36-37. When Jesus said, "*Go and do likewise*," what does He mean?

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39. Pray and ask God for someone that you can help. Write what happened and how you showed mercy by helping someone. \_\_\_\_\_

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40. Write your memory verse, Luke 6:36, without looking at the verse in your Bible or notes:

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41. Read and meditate on 1 Peter 1:3-5 and Ephesians 2:4-7. What are some ways God has been merciful to you in Christ Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Next Lesson 3:** Who Is God? God Is Love

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