

How to Build a Lifestyle of Mercy

BY RICK WARREN

The Bible describes what real love looks like in 1 Corinthians 13. But whatever is true of love is also true of mercy. And that's what mercy is: love in action. It is not a feeling, an emotion, or a behavior. It's something you choose to do.

So how do you show it? Here are four marks of mercy:

1

Overlook irritations and offenses.

"[Love] does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered" (1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV).

2

Be kind to others—even when they don't deserve it.

"Love is kind and patient . . . Love is always supportive" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7 CEV).

3

Let go of past hurts.

"Love does not keep a record of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:5 GNT).

4

Believe God is working in the lives of others.

"If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him" (1 Corinthians 13:7 TLB).

Do you know what the good news is about these four things?

God does them with you every single day of your life. God overlooks your mistakes, sins, and offenses, and he forgives them by his mercy every day.

He's kind to you when you need it and don't deserve it. He wipes out and forgets all the things you've done wrong when you put your trust in Christ. And he's working in your life even when you don't feel it.

When we turn to God's love and mercy, we can then show that same love and mercy to others.

Quiz: How Merciful Am I?

Sometimes the longer we know someone, the harder it is to show them mercy—especially in our own homes, where it's easier to focus on people's faults.

David understood this when he said, *"I will try to walk a blameless path, but how I need your help, especially in my own home, where I long to act as I should"* (Psalm 101:2 TLB). He knew he needed to work on showing mercy.

Take this quiz to find out how merciful you are with the people in your life:

When the people in my life ...

Get a few details wrong while telling a story, do I ...

- ☐ Interrupt them and correct them publicly?
- ☐ Say nothing and let it go, knowing I've done the same?

Keep making the same mistake over and over, do I ...

- ☐ Become irritated and angry at them?
- ☐ Graciously forgive them and pray for them?

Get more attention than I think they deserve, do I ...

- ☐ Feel resentful and feel the need to bring them down a notch?
- ☐ Celebrate with them?

Say or do something I don't understand, do I ...

- ☐ Assume they have the best motivation for doing it?
- ☐ Question their motivation or think the worst?

And lastly ...

Am I more polite with ...

- ☐ Strangers?
- ☐ My own family?