



## [Matthew 25:34-40](#)

(34) Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (35) for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; (36) I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." (37) "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? (38) When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? (39) Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to *You*?" (40) And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me."

*New King James Version*

When we show pity, compassion, and [kindness](#) to those in difficult straits, we are practicing the [merciful](#) attitude that [God](#) expects each of His children to exhibit at all times. Of course, He does not want us to be so soft-hearted that we become an easy mark for those who would take advantage of us, but He does want us to develop a keen sense of discernment that realizes when mercy is a better option than the strict application of rules.

Undoubtedly, each of us would lend a helping hand to another who was in physical need, but there are other situations in which a physical need is not apparent that also require us to extend mercy. Particularly, we need to learn to employ mercy in our dealings with each other on a daily basis. To put it into today's language, everyone has bad-hair days, and on some days, even a normally lovable person can be very difficult to live with.

Age differences lend themselves to misunderstandings. We may still carry prejudices that rear their ugly heads from time to time, causing friction. Oftentimes, we just do not think before we speak. Mistakes made in the past can seem to hang over us like a cloud and never go away, and thus we do not feel forgiven, affecting our attitudes. And of

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course, we all have different backgrounds and came from situations in which we perhaps lived our lives in certain shameful ways. Each of these problems can ignite trouble with our closest family members and friends.

The problem that all of us face in making righteous judgments is that we cannot see into the other person's heart; we do not really know their intentions and attitudes. We have a hard enough time understanding ourselves, let alone someone else! In Jesus' comments about judgment in His [Sermon on the Mount](#), He cautions us about being too critical: "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" ([Matthew 7:3](#)). Therefore, if we have to make a judgment call, it is far better to lean toward [patience](#), forbearance, and mercy.

So, when we find ourselves offended by anyone, rather than responding in kind, we should apply the principle of giving a soft answer ([Proverbs 15:1](#)), turning the other cheek ([Matthew 5:39](#)), and extending tender mercies ([Colossians 3:12](#)).

[Satan](#) would like us to hang on to evil thoughts about another, to hold a grudge against a brother, or to arrive at church with a resentful attitude toward a fellow Christian, but [Jesus Christ](#) wants us to remember [Matthew 18:35](#): "So My heavenly Father will [pass judgment against] you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." Just as He forgave each of us from the heart, He wants us to learn to forgive others in the same generous, merciful way.

In my forty-plus years in the church, I have made almost all of the mistakes a person can make with his mouth, and realizing this, I have truly appreciated those who have extended mercy and [forgiveness](#) to me. They have taught me a great lesson by their spiritual maturity: that I, too, had better extend mercy and kindness to others.

What does God require of us? He tells us plainly in [Micah 6:8](#): "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, to [love](#) mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

— John O. Reid

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[Mercy: The Better Option](#)

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