

# To Love Mercy



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 14

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Matthew 6:25–33; James 1:5–8; Leviticus 25:35–37; Matthew 5:9; Isaiah 58:1–10.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “A light shines in the dark for those [people] who are good, for those [people] who are merciful [show mercy], kind, and fair. It is good for people to be kind and generous [giving] and to be fair in business” (Psalm 112:4, 5, ERV).

**THE BIBLE SHOWS US** many examples of God’s love for the poor. He cares about people who are used and hurt badly by their leaders. He asks His people to help these suffering people. God’s command to us to take care of the poor and suffering will not end until Jesus comes back. Then He will make everything right.

Until then, evil is everywhere. Satan and his angels work hard to make evil happen. They cause people to become poor. Satan and his evil angels cause leaders to hurt their people. The devil causes slavery, selfishness, and greed. In this life, our communities, churches, and families need to stand strong against these evils. It will be hard to do so. But we must do it anyway. We must show love to people. We must have the courage to “be fair to other people. Love kindness [being kind] and loyalty, and humbly [having no pride] obey your God” (Micah 6:8, ERV).



**The devil causes slavery, selfishness, and greed.**

## THE RULES OF GOD'S KINGDOM (Matthew 6:25–33)

Both Jesus and New Testament writers teach us about the rules of God's kingdom. Members of God's kingdom must live by different rules than the people on earth follow.

**Read Matthew 6:25–33. What promise does Jesus give us in these verses? How does that promise change our lives?**

Jesus taught that “ ‘life is more important than food. And the body is more important than clothes’ ” (Matthew 6:25, ICB). Of course, food and clothes are important. But there are other things that are more important. Helping other people is more important than food and clothes. The Bible asks us to take care of the ones who need help. This work should become one of the most important things in our lives. Then we will think less about ourselves and more about helping other people.

This way of thinking will change the way we feel about our leaders. The Bible tells Christians to respect and obey their government (read Romans 13:1–7). But there may come a time when we need to follow what Peter and some other Christian leaders said: “ ‘We must obey God, not men!’ ” (Acts 5:29, ICB). Jesus said we should honor God and our government: “ ‘Pay to Caesar [leader of the Roman Kingdom] the things that belong to Caesar. Pay to God the things that belong to God’ ” (Matthew 22:21, NLV).

Many leaders use force to lead and stay in power. But sometimes we must fight against the evil things they do. Slavery is one example. Ellen G. White wrote about slavery in America. She said, “Sometimes the laws of a country will go against God's law. When that happens, we must obey God's law, even if we are punished for doing so. The law of our country says that we must give a runaway slave to his master. But we must not obey this law. We must accept the punishment that comes from breaking it. The slave does not belong to any man. God is his master. God made him. So, no man can say that he owns another person.”—*Testimonies [special messages] for the Church*, volume 1, pages 201, 202.

**We must obey our leaders. At the same time, we also must help people who are being hurt by our leaders. How do we know when it is the right time to help people who are being hurt by our government?**



**“The slave does not belong to any man. God is his master.”**

## TOO TIRED TO SERVE (James 1:5–8)

Many Christians want to do more to help people. These Christians wonder what they can do to make people's lives better. Here are some ways:

**Love.** The first thing we can do is show suffering people that we see that they are hurt. Today, people talk about being “too tired to serve.” These words mean that people get used to the sorrow and awful things that happen in life. Then they feel too tired to feel love any more for people who need our help. Jesus saw evil and pain all around Him. But He stayed loving. We can too.

**Education.** It is important for us to learn everything we can about the people we want to help. Some Christians try to help other people. But they do not take the time to learn what they can about the needs of the people they are helping. Then these Christians cause a lot of problems. We should try to learn everything we can first about the people we want to help. We should learn about their lives and their needs. Then we will be able to serve them better.

**Prayer.** When we see a problem, the first thing we want to do is fix it. But the Bible tells us that we should start with prayer first. Our prayers can change the lives of the poor and the suffering. We also can pray for the leaders who have power over the poor and suffering (read 1 Timothy 2:1, 2). We also must ask God to show us the best way to offer these leaders our help (read Proverbs 2:7, 8).

**Choices.** We must be patient when we help other people. We hope that the things we do for them will help them make the right choices. But that does not always happen. Sometimes the people we help will make bad decisions. We must respect their choices. Jesus said, “ ‘Do for other people the same things you want them to do for you’ ” (Matthew 7:12, ICB). We must let this rule guide whatever we do to help other people.

**Read James 1:5–8. These verses talk about prayer. How important is prayer in all that we do as Christians? What does James 2:15, 16 say we can do to help God answer our prayers for other people?**

---



---



Today, people talk about being “too tired to serve.”

## HAPPY TO GIVE (Leviticus 25:35–37)

“God loves those [people] who are happy to give” (2 Corinthians 9:7, ERV). Giving is an important part of our lives as Christians. Giving is about more than gifts of money. There are other things we can give to God too. The Bible says, “Good things will come to those [people] who are fair in everything they do” (Psalm 112:5, NIV).

**What do the verses below tell us about why we should give to people in need?**

Leviticus 25:35–37 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 119:36 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 8:12–15 \_\_\_\_\_

1 John 3:16–18 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Timothy 6:17–19 \_\_\_\_\_



**Giving is about more than gifts of money.**

Paul often talks about how much God loves to give. He gave us His Son to die for our sins. This gift is the reason for our Christian hope. Our faith in Jesus’ death is the reason we give to other people: “I pray that the faith you share will make you understand every blessing we have in Christ” (Philemon 1:6, ERV).

So much in our lives causes us to keep as much as we can for ourselves. Most people today live for “me, me, me.” But our faith will cause us to live more for other people. Our faith helps us see people as God sees them. God sees both their good and their bad parts. He loves them anyway. God’s love for other people causes us to want to help them, even if helping them is hard work.

Our giving money to help the poor is good. But our giving money does not always mean that we are unselfish (read Mark 12:41–44). Giving goes deeper than our wallets or purses. It goes to our hearts. True giving changes our lives on the inside. Most people are born selfish. They do not know how to give.

We need God’s love to change our hearts first.

## PEOPLE WHO MAKE PEACE (Matthew 5:9)

**Read Matthew 5:9. What does Jesus say to do in this verse? How can we live this truth today?**

War and fighting cause much suffering. War destroys lives. War also costs a lot of money. Think of all the people we can help with that money! But our leaders spend it on weapons. These are the big wars between countries or between people from the same country. But there are small “wars” fought every day in families and communities too. That is why we, as Christians, must not only work to make things fair. But we also must remember to work for peace too.

The Good News about Jesus is a message about peace. The Good News is Jesus’ act of bringing peace between God and humans (read 2 Corinthians 5:18–21). Jesus connects us to our Father in heaven. Together, we can work with Jesus to help other people become one with God too.

### How do we live the truth in Isaiah 52:7?

Yes, the Good News offers us peace. That peace causes us to want to bring peace to this earth. “The heart that is at peace with God has the peace of heaven. A person at peace with God will share this blessing everywhere. Then the spirit of peace will rest in hearts that are tired because of all the troubles happening in this life.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 28, adapted.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “ ‘Those [people] who work to bring peace are happy. God will call [name] them his sons’ ” (Matthew 5:9, ICB). What do Jesus’ words about peace really mean? For the answer, let us start by looking at Matthew 5:21–26. Jesus commands us not to kill. He also says we should not be angry. We should forgive. We also must love our enemies. We should pray for people who hurt us (read Matthew 5:43–48). We should do everything we can to help them. That is what it means to be at peace with other people.

**What are ways that your local church can work to bring peace in your community?**



**We should pray for people who hurt us.**

## THE HANDS AND THE FEET OF JESUS (Isaiah 58:1–10)

Solomon wrote, “There is a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7, ERV). Solomon was right. For us, the hard part is knowing the right time to do the right thing. Maybe we, as a church, have not done enough to help the needy.

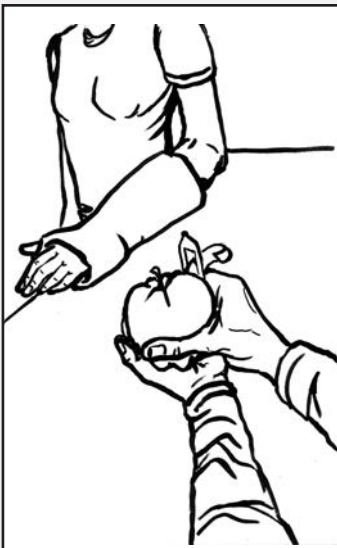
Christians talk about being the hands and feet of Jesus. That means that we must obey Jesus’ command to help people. But God asks us to protect people. We must fight for the people that God wants to help and protect (read Psalm 146:6–10).

**Read Isaiah 58:1–10. What is the message in these verses? What does it say to us today? How much has changed between the time when Isaiah wrote this message and our time today?**

Isaiah was a prophet. Prophets are God’s special messengers. God often sent His prophets to warn His people to change their lives and be fair. Many people did not want to hear these messages. But the prophets understood that God wanted His people to be fair. So, the prophets helped the poor. They tried to make their lives better. The prophets’ work to help people often put them in danger (read 1 Peter 3:17). They made leaders angry. These powerful men did not want to change.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have many good things to offer people. God gave us many blessings. He gave us the Good News. He asks us to show Jesus in our lives. God’s gifts to us can help solve some of the problems on this earth. One of those problems is helping the poor.

“As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that God asks us to help the poor. Our helping the poor is an important part of our work as Christians. The Bible clearly shows that God cares very much about the poor. He expects His followers to take care of people who need help. All humans show that they are copies of God. He gives His blessings to everyone (Luke 6:20). We follow Jesus’ example and teaching when we help the poor (Matthew 25:35, 36). Seventh-day Adventists must “open [their] mouths for those [people] who cannot speak [we must defend them and ask our leaders to give them what belongs to them by law]” (Proverbs 31:8, NLV).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Official [important] Statement on Global [worldwide] Poverty [being poor]*, June 24, 2010.



**Christians talk about being the hands and feet of Jesus. That means we must obey Jesus’ command to help people.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Ellen G. White, “A Higher Experience,” pages 503–516, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “Duty to the Unfortunate” and “Man’s Duty to His Fellow Men,” pages 511–526, in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 3; “Doing for Christ,” pages 24–37, in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2.

“We must show mercy to people who need our help. These works of mercy show a powerful truth. It is the truth about Jesus. There is no other truth shown in heaven and earth that is more powerful. It is part of the Golden Rule. God asks us to do for other people what we want them to do for us. Christians must show this truth in their lives. When they do, God will give the church the power to preach the Good News. It will be the same power He gave to the church during the New Testament times.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 137, adapted.

“We must love God more than we love anything else. We also must love each other with unselfish hearts. This love comes from our Father in Heaven. It is the best gift He can give us. This love is more than a feeling. It is God’s own power. It is His law. The heart that is not saved cannot make this love on its own. This love comes only from the heart of Jesus. . . . We must take this love deep into our hearts. Then our lives will be sweet. We will have the power to change the lives of other people around us.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 551.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① As we learned this week, the Good News about Jesus continues to be an example for Christians. It teaches us how to live and help other people. How has the Good News given you a deeper understanding of how God shows His love for us? In what ways does the Good News make you thankful for everything God does for us?
- ② Sometimes in our work to make peace and help the poor we may need to take a stand against things that are not fair. When is it wrong to speak out in public about this? When is it right for us to do so? What is the difference?



“God asks us to do for other people what we want them to do for us.”