

Mercy:

Tenderness of heart towards those who fall short



We see the mercy of God throughout the Bible. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote: *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness* (Lamentations 3:22-23). God is merciful to us, being tender towards us rather than giving us the death and punishment we deserve. It has been said that grace is getting what we don't deserve, mercy is not getting what we deserve. God, out of His mercy, loves us and takes care of us, when we don't deserve it.

While mercy is an attribute of God and important to Him, we often don't see mercy in marriage relationships. Rather than being tender hearted toward one's spouse, spouses' tend to be harsh and even hard hearted when their spouse falls short. In fact, mercy in the marriage relationship doesn't seem to be addressed very much by the evangelical community. It should be! Mercy *should* be an important part of marriage. Yes, sin and inappropriate behavior must be addressed, but is there a heart for restoration? Or do spouses have more of an attitude of retribution and punishment?

Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Do we want God to be merciful to us when we fall short? We need to be merciful to those around us—especially to our spouse! Again, we cannot excuse wrong behavior—it is the attitude, are we tenderhearted towards our spouse when they fall short in some way? One writer said, "If love is the engine that drives a marriage, mercy is the oil that keeps its many parts running smoothly."

Do you show mercy to your spouse? Your children? As God has lifted you up and loved you when you have sinned and fallen short, have you loved others and lifted them up when they have fallen short? Extend mercy to others, even when they don't deserve it.

Helpful Resources: *Fortified Marriages Resource page:* www.fortifiedmarriages.com