



SHIFT | From Requiring Justice to Rejoicing in Mercy | Week 3 | September 21 & 22

Matthew 18:21-35, Luke 23:34, Matthew 5:7, Ephesians 4:31-32, Micah 6:8

These study guides are designed for individual or group study but highly encouraged to be experienced in community with a small group or other friends on the journey with Jesus.

Opening: Pastor Dan Meyer makes this statement when talking about our need to “SHIFT” our focus in life, “Because God made us, God understands the essential shifts human beings need to make in order to live into life’s full potential. Do we? What are those transitions? How do we go about making them?” This provocative series will center on the Parables of Jesus and reveal the crucial changes that lead to a greater life.

Setting: Seeking the John 10:10 abundant life we have looked at Vision and Intention of SHIFTING from dabbler to disciple. Last week we examined our attitude toward securing our place and our energy for helping others secure theirs. Our shift this week contrasts another Means by which we might understand our attitudes and motivations in relationship. The SHIFT contrasts Justice and Mercy.

- As you consider your week, how much of your time and energy was spent exercising Justice e.g., Does that work deserve my compliment? Did I do that to an acceptable standard? Was I justly compensated for my effort?
- OR: I wonder if she has a lot going on, she normally would do a lot better job than that. He shouldn’t have said that to me, did he really mean it like it sounded? I’ll bet he’s under some kind of pressure from something.
- Read Micah 6:8. What do these words mean to you? Talk or journal about a situation this week where you chose between justice and mercy? What did you do? Why?

Jesus and Peter: Read Matthew 18:21-22.

- What is Peter really trying to say?
- What is the point of Jesus’ reply?
- When do you have tensions with the answer Jesus gives in relation to how often we should forgive? How do you handle those tensions?

The Unforgiving Servant: Read Matthew 18:23-30

- vs.23-25: “Ten thousand talents” is millions of dollars—it is unpayable. Imagine yourself as the servant—what are you feeling? Have you ever felt that in your life? Journal or share what stirs in you about this.
- vs.26-27: The servant is obviously desperate. Imagine yourself as the king—what are you feeling? What are you thinking? Where in your life have you been in this situation, either figuratively or literally? What happened? As you look back on it, how has the result impacted you and your life?



- vs.28-30: What is your response to this? How would you describe the forgiven servant's actions? Can you imagine what he might be thinking? What is driving his behavior? Have you ever witnessed or been party to this kind of behavior or reaction?
- vs.31-34: Now we have three characters: the King, the witnessing servants and the forgiven servant. What are the witnessing servants feeling and thinking? What do they desire? Which character do you most identify with? Why?
- Why is this like the "Kingdom of Heaven?" (vs. 23)

The Heart of God: Read these passages in succession: Luke 11:4, Matthew 5:7, Luke 23:34, Ephesians 4:31-32

- What is God's heart toward mercy? Why?
- Practically share or journal about how these scriptures shape how you live your life.

Our position of Rest and Gratitude: Pastor Lisa Capazolli pointed us to a quote from Max Lucado, "The key to forgiving others is to stop focusing on what they did TO you and start focusing on what God did FOR you." Our perspective of grace and God's forgiveness is the enabler for us to practice true grace and forgiveness with others.

- How do you bring God's forgiveness to focus on situations in your life? What spiritual practice helps you maintain that mindfulness? Journal or brainstorm with your group ways that might be helpful.
- Often we struggle because something is in the way. We may be angry, or there are past hurts that are unresolved. Is there someone you need to talk to? What block is in the way? How can you remove that so you can focus on forgiveness? Journal or share relevant next steps you are choosing to take in the near future. Where might you need help?

Practice of the Week: Bask in the love, grace and forgiveness of God

Make that SHIFT from "Requiring Justice to Rejoicing in Mercy." Pastor Lisa cites a quote from Henri Nouwen, "Had I really ever dared to step into the center, kneel down, and let myself be held by a forgiving God?" Imagine yourself basking in the love of God's forgiveness. There is no measure of your performance—you are held in His arms. There is no complaint of your inadequacy because it disappears into His love. There is no promising of future accomplishment because only the presence of His love now is real. Rejoice in the Mercy given! Thank God for it.

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts, questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you or your small group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these study guides in your lives.

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