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Ministering to the Hurting

**“Biblical Counseling and Mercy Ministry”**

- I. *What is mercy ministry?*
  - A. People have many different ideas about what mercy ministry is.
  - B. My understanding of mercy ministry is fairly broad.
    1. In fact, there is a sense in which I have a hard time answering this question because really all of ministry should be mercy ministry.
    2. The term mercy is itself a very broad biblical word. “The biblical meaning of mercy is exceedingly rich and complicated, as evidenced by the fact that several Hebrew and Greek words are needed to comprehend the many-sided concept. Consequently, there are many synonyms employed in translation to express the dimensions of meaning involved, such as “kindness,” “lovingkindness,” “goodness,” “grace,” “favor,” “pity,” “compassion,” and “steadfast love.” Prominent in the concept of mercy is the compassionate disposition to forgive an offender or adversary and to help or spare him in his sorry plight.<sup>1</sup>”
    3. And some would suggest that mercy in particular has to do with compassion to one in need and helpless distress, without expecting anything in return.
    4. And if you think about it for a while, really what ministry doesn’t involve that, at least to a certain extent?
      - a.) Definitely counseling is mercy ministry.
      - b.) Evangelism is a kind of mercy ministry.
      - c.) Even church discipline is a kind of mercy ministry.
    5. When we talk about some of the specific activities of mercy ministry later on, I want you to understand we are not talking about something

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<sup>1</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (1440). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

qualitatively different than what is supposed to be going on all throughout the church in all the different ministries.

C. But you know obviously, it is a little too broad for us to talk about all kinds of ministry as mercy ministry, so we will try to narrow it down a little. What is the kind of mercy ministry we are discussing together today?

- 1.) Ministering to the hurting
- 2.) An intensified form of biblical hospitality
- 3.) **Basically it is focused and sacrificial love for people who are in situations the world might consider hopeless, for people who are in especially vulnerable circumstances, for people who are in crisis kinds of situations.**

II. *Why is mercy ministry important?*

A. Is it important for us as individual Christians?

1. Eight proofs that mercy is important for us as individuals.
  - a. The Scripture teaches that God cares for the vulnerable.
    - 1.) Deuteronomy 10:17 and 18
    - 2.) Psalm 10:14
    - 3.) Psalm 103:6
    - 4.) Psalm 146:7-9
    - 5.) Tim Keller, "It is striking to see how often God is introduced as the defender of these vulnerable groups. Don't miss the significance of this. When people ask me, 'How do you want to be introduced?' I usually propose they say, 'This is Tim Keller, minister at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.' Of course I am many other things, but that is the main thing I spend my time doing in public life. Realize then how significant it is that the Biblical writers introduce God as 'a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows.' This is one of the main things he does in the world. He identifies with the

powerless, he takes up their cause. It is hard for us to understand how revolutionary this was in the ancient world. Sri Lankan scholar Vinoth Ramachandra calls this 'scandalous justice.' He writes that in virtually all the ancient cultures of the world, the power of the gods was channeled through and identified with the elites of society, the kings, the priests, and military captains, not the outcasts. To oppose the leaders of the society was then to oppose the gods. But here in Israel's rival vision, it is the orphan, the widow, and the stranger with whom Yahweh takes his stand. From ancient times the God of the Bible stood out from the gods of all other religions as a God on the side of the powerless and justice for the poor."

6.) We see God's concern for the vulnerable in the commands He gave to Israel.

- a.) Exodus 22:21-27
- b.) Exodus 23:9
- c.) Leviticus 19:9-13
- d.) Leviticus 19:34
- e.) Deuteronomy 14:28-29
- f.) Deuteronomy 15:2-11
- g.) Deuteronomy 24:10-12,20-21
- h.) Deuteronomy 26:12-13
- i.) Deuteronomy 27:19
- j.) Jeremiah 22:3
- k.) Zechariah 7:10-11

b. God says that He is merciful to those who are merciful.

- 1.) Matthew 5:7
- 2.) Psalm 18:25

3.) James 2:13-16

c. Mercy is often mentioned in Scripture as an essential characteristic of a godly man.

1.) Psalm 37:21,26

2.) Psalm 113:5

3.) Proverbs 14:31

4.) Proverbs 21:26

5.) Job 29:4/12-17/31:13-28

6.) 1 John 3:17-19

7.) 2 Corinthians 8:8

8.) Micah 6:8

d. We are repeatedly encouraged to show mercy throughout the Scriptures.

1.) Proverbs 14:21

2.) Proverbs 19:17

3.) Luke 12:33

4.) Luke 14:13-16

5.) Proverbs 28:27

6.) 2 Corinthians 9:6,7,8

7.) Proverbs 22:9

e. A lack of mercy is given as a mark of wickedness.

1.) Isaiah 1:16

2.) Ezekiel 16:49

3.) Proverbs 14:31

- 4.) Amos 4:1
- f. God offers stern warnings to those who are not merciful.
  - 1.) Proverbs 28:27
  - 2.) Deuteronomy 27:19
  - 3.) Amos 1:3ff, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:13
- g. Concern for the vulnerable is not only an Old Testament concept.
  - 1.) Acts 6
  - 2.) 1 Timothy 5
  - 3.) Acts 9:36-41
  - 4.) Acts 4:36-37
  - 5.) 2 Corinthians 8:3-6
  - 6.) 2 Corinthians 8:16-17
  - 7.) Galatians 2:7-10
  - 8.) Acts 11:27-30
  - 9.) Luke 10:37
  - 10.) 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8
- h. Mercy is a test of the reality of our religion.
  - 1.) Proverbs 19:27
  - 2.) Jeremiah 22:15-16
  - 3.) James 1:27
  - 4.) 1 John 3:17
  - 5.) Timothy Keller explains, "...the poor and needy are a test. Our response to them tests the genuineness of our faith toward God... a sensitive social conscience and a life poured out in deeds of mercy to the needy is the

inevitable outcome and sign of true faith. By such deeds God can judge true love from lip service."

- 6.) There is a sense in which mercy is a test of how well we "get the gospel."
- 7.) It is also great apologetic to the reality of the gospel.

The writer George Grant explains and really summarizes all we have been saying so far,

"Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great Victorian pastor, not only was a masterful pulpiteer, a brilliant administrator, a gifted writer, and a selfless evangelist, he was a determined champion of the deprived and the rejected. He spent more than half of his incredibly busy schedule on one or another of the sixty organizations or institutions he founded for their care and comfort.

Once, a skeptic accosted Spurgeon on the street outside a market in London, scornfully challenging both the practicality and the genuineness of the preacher's faith. Spurgeon gracefully answered the man by pointing out the failure of contemporary "free thinkers" to put forward workable models of care for the needy thousands of the city. In contrast, he pointed out the multitudinous works of compassion that had sprung from faith in Christ: George Whitefield's mission, George Müller's orphanage, Thomas Barnardo's shelter, Thomas Sutton's charterhouse hospital. He then closed the conversation by paraphrasing the victorious cry of Elijah, boisterously asserting, "The God who answereth by orphanages, let Him be God."

Spurgeon's retort was hardly hollow rhetoric. The reality is that wherever the spread of the gospel has taken believers, throughout Europe, into the darkest depths of Africa, to the outer reaches of China, along the edges of the American frontier, and beyond to the Australian outback, a selfless care for the needy has been in evidence. In fact, most of the church's greatest heroes across the centuries have been those who willingly gave the best of their lives to the sick, the hurting, the poor, the unloved, the despised, and the rejected. Service has always been their hallmark. Mercy has always been their emblem.

Whether following disastrous earthquakes and tsunamis, amid terrible plagues and epidemics, or through horrific wars and conflicts, Christians have always been at the ready to offer healing and hope. This is the natural fruit of the gospel itself.

The Lord is merciful, gracious, and kind. He works righteousness and justice for all ([Ps. 33:5](#)). Morning by morning, He dispenses His justice without fail ([Zeph. 3:5](#)) and without partiality ([Job 32:21](#)). All His ways are just ([Deut. 32:4](#)), so that injustice is an abomination to Him ([Prov. 11:1](#)). Thus, He is adamant about ensuring the cause of the meek and the weak ([Ps. 103:6](#)). Time after time, Scripture stresses this important attribute of God ([Pss. 9:7–9](#); [12:5](#); [68:5–6](#); [Isa. 41:17–20](#)).

Because God cares for the needy, His people are to do likewise. He desires that we follow Him ([Matt. 4:19](#)). We are to emulate Him ([1 Peter 1:16](#)). We are to do as He does. In effect, we are to do unto others as He has done unto us. That is the ethical principle that underlies the “Golden Rule” ([Matt. 7:12](#); [Luke 6:31](#)).

If God has comforted us, then we are to comfort others ([2 Cor. 1:4](#)). If God has forgiven us, then we are to forgive others ([Eph. 4:32](#)). If God has loved us, then we are to love others ([1 John 4:11](#)). If He has taught us, then we are to teach others ([Matt. 28:20](#)). If He has borne witness to us, then we are to bear witness to others ([John 15:26–27](#)). If He has laid down His life for us, then we are to lay down our lives for others. If He has given us healing and hope, then we are to dispense the hope of His healing ([James 5:13–16](#)).

Whenever God commanded the Israelites to imitate Him in ensuring justice for the wandering, the alien, and the sojourner, He reminded them that they were once despised, rejected, and homeless themselves ([Ex. 22:21–27](#); [23:9](#); [Lev. 19:33–34](#)). It was only by the grace and mercy of God that they had been redeemed from that low estate ([Deut. 24:17–22](#)). Thus, they were to exercise compassion to the brokenhearted and the dispossessed. They were to serve.

Jesus taught that the principle still holds true for His disciples. Those of us who have received the compassion of the Lord on high are to demonstrate tenderness in kind to all those around us ([Matt. 18:23–25](#)).

The needy around us are thus living symbols of our own former helplessness and privation. We are therefore to be living symbols of God's justice, mercy, and compassion. We are to do as He has done ([John 15:1–8](#)). God has set the pattern by His gracious working in our lives. Now we are to follow that pattern by serving others in the power of the indwelling Spirit ([John 14:15–26](#)).

In other words, the gospel calls us to live daily as if people really matter. It calls us to live lives of selfless concern. We are to pay attention to the needs of others — in both word and deed, in both thought and action, we are to weave ordinary kindness into the very fabric of our lives ([Deut. 22:4](#)). We are to “put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering” ([Col. 3:12](#), NKJV). We are to become “a father to the poor” and to “search out the case of the stranger” ([Job 29:16](#)). We are to love our neighbors as ourselves ([Mark 12:31](#)) and “rescue the perishing” ([Prov. 24:10–12](#)), thus “fulfilling the law” ([Rom. 13:10](#)). This is, in fact, the very essence of “pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father” ([James 1:27](#)).

In writing to Titus, the young pastor of Crete's pioneer church, the apostle Paul pressed home this fundamental truth with a clear sense of persistence and urgency. The task before Titus was not an easy one. Cretan culture was terribly worldly. It was marked by deceit, ungodliness, sloth, and gluttony ([Titus 1:12](#)). Thus, Paul's instructions were strategically precise and right to the point. Titus was to preach the glories of grace, but he was also to make good deeds evident. Priestly mercy and selfless servanthood were to be central priorities in his new work (2:11–14).

Paul told Titus he should actually build his entire fledgling ministry around works of mercy: He was “to be an example of good deeds” (2:7). He was to teach the people “to be ready for every good deed” (3:1). The older women and the younger women were to be thus instructed so “that the Word of God might not be dishonored” (2:5), and the slaves were to be likewise instructed that “they might adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (2:10). They were all to “learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they might not be unfruitful” (3:14). There were those within the church who professed “to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and

worthless for any good deed” (1:16). These Titus was to “reprove severely that they might be sound in the faith” (1:13). He was to “speak confidently, so that those who had believed God might be careful to engage in good deeds” (3:8).

As a pastor, Titus had innumerable tasks that he was responsible to fulfill. He had administrative duties (1:5), doctrinal duties (2:1), discipling duties (2:2–10), preaching duties (2:15), counseling duties (3:1–2), and arbitrating duties (3:12–13). But intertwined with them all, fundamental to them all, were his servanthood duties. And what was true for Titus then has been true for Christians at all times and in all places, for “these things are good and profitable for all men” (3:8).

Whenever and wherever the gospel has gone forth, the faithful have emphasized the priority of good works, especially works of compassion toward the needy. Every great revival in the history of the church, from Paul’s missionary journeys to the Reformation, from the Alexandrian outreach of Athanasius to the Great Awakening in America, has been accompanied by an explosion of merciful service. Hospitals were established. Orphanages were founded. Rescue missions were started. Almshouses were built. Soup kitchens were begun. Charitable societies were incorporated. The hungry were fed, the naked clothed, and the unwanted rescued. Word was wed to deeds. Whenever there has been plague, famine, or devastation, Christians have invariably stepped into the gap with courage and care. The church has been the nursemaid to the world, caring for the least and the last.

This fact has always proven to be the bane of the church’s enemies. Unbelievers can argue theology. They can dispute philosophy. They can subvert history. And they can undermine character. But they are helpless in the face of extraordinary feats of selfless compassion. “And so the Word of God spread rapidly” ([Acts 6:7](#)).

- B. Is mercy ministry important for us as a church?
  - 1. An important distinction to understand
    - a. The church is a group of individuals who are made up of people who confess Jesus as Lord

- b. The church is also an institution that has a certain structure and has a certain mission and has a certain role in the world
2. Mercy is obviously important for us as a group of individuals living out our lives in this world, but is it important for us as church as an institution, does it have anything to do with our mission?
3. Now, it is obviously important for the church when it comes to other believers and especially other believers within the church.
  - a. Example of early church
  - b. Role of deacons
  - c. What Paul writes about widows
  - d. Explicit commands
  - e. Matthew 25
4. But is it important for the church to be concerned about making plans to show this kind of sacrificial love to those outside the church?
5. We need to make sure we understand this concern!
  - a. We do need to be clear about uniqueness of the church
  - b. The church's primary mission

"The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples in churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father." DeYoung and Gilbert
  - c. "Pillar of truth"
  - d. Colossians 1:28-29
  - e. The sad historical reality is that churches have sometimes given up word for deed.

- f. And so there is a real concern that as a local church places an emphasis on mercy ministries that it leads them astray from their primary purpose in this world.
- g. The church as an organization must not trade the ministry of the Word for simply doing good things.

6. On the other hand, there are several reasons I think it is important for leaders in the church to spend time carefully thinking about how help their members engage in this, regardless of whether it is an organized ministry of the church or not.

- a. **The leadership of the church needs to think carefully about how to help their people engage in mercy ministries because they want to help their people live in wise ways.**

Proverbs is a book given by God to help us know how to live wise lives in this world. And one of the characteristics that the writer of Proverbs makes clear distinguishes a wise person from an unwise person is his concern for the poor. Let me identify several reasons from the book of Proverbs why leaders should want to help their congregation have at least some concern for those who are suffering:

- 1.) Leaders love their people and want the best for them.

Proverbs 11:17

Proverbs 11:25

Proverbs 11:27

Proverbs 21:8

Proverbs 21:13

Proverbs 28:27

- 2.) Leaders love their people and want them to be happy.

Proverbs 14:21

3.) Leaders love their people and want them to honor God.

Proverbs 14:31

Proverbs 19:17

4.) Leaders love their people want them to be righteous.

Proverbs 19:22

Proverbs 21:3

Proverbs 29:7

b. **The leadership of the church needs to think about how to help their people engage in mercy ministries because they want to help their people live holy lives, and that means they are going to be concerned about helping them show mercy to the needy.**

1.) Righteousness is more than what you don't do.

Bruce Waltke, wrote a commentary on Proverbs and Proverbs has a lot to say about righteousness, in fact one of the ways he explains Proverbs is that it is an intensification, explanation of how to live the law of Moses out in everyday life, so it is like it is showing us what it looks like to be a righteous person in our day to day lives.

He defines righteousness like this,

“After studying in the book of Proverbs every use of the terms involving righteousness, I drew the conclusion that the conceptualization of righteousness should be subsumed under the umbrella concept of doing what is right in a social relationship as defined by God's standard of what is right behavior. J.W. Olley similarly defined righteousness: “to bring about right and harmony for all, for individuals, related in the community and to the physical and spiritual realms. It finds its basis in God's rule of the world.” I also drew the conclusion that according to Proverbs this socially acceptable behavior of doing what is right in social relationships as defined in the Bible's teachings entails depriving self to benefit others. As Solomon expressed it: “The righteous

give without sparing [literally, ‘without holding back’]” (21:6b). This qualification of the book’s aim to know wisdom entails feeding the enemy and the poor, protecting another’s reputation, and so forth. Righteousness in the book of Proverbs is equivalent to the Mosaic teaching to love your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:18), for the one who loves self looks to be fed by capable and willing people when hungry and to be protected when slandered. Having defined the concept of righteousness in Proverbs as expending oneself to serve one’s neighbor, let me highlight the definition by coining a proverb:

**The wicked advantage themselves by disadvantaging others, but the righteous disadvantage themselves to advantage others.**

Most English speakers, I suspect, when they think of wickedness, think in terms of the Ten Commandments. For most wickedness refers to murder, adultery, stealing, and lying. But in Proverbs wickedness pertains to the finer points: of not feeding the poor when you have the power to do so, of not honoring the honorable, of not stopping gossip in its track, and so forth.

This proverb to disadvantage self to advantage others puts wisdom in shoe leather. As is the case with proverbial sayings, it can be carried into many social situations. In the classroom, it means that when a professor assigns a book that is no longer in print, the student does not rush to the library to take the book out to earn an A and so deprive the rest of the class of that advantage. To selfishly possess the book is wickedness. Rather, the wise and righteous student makes sure that classmates have access to the book, even as he or she would desire in their same situation. This wisdom-in-shoe-leather can be applied to the highway. One does not cut into a line of cars to save one’s own time at the expense of the time of the cut-off drivers. The proverb can be carried into a public rest room. The wise and righteous person leaves the facility clean for the next person.” The point is that because righteousness involves the way we relate to others and especially to those in need, then of course as a church, and as leaders we need to be concerned about it.

2.) In particular we as leaders need to really think about helping our people engage in mercy ministry because we live in such a self-centered world, and our people are going to need help putting off that habitually selfish way of looking at the world.

**c. The leadership of the church needs to think about how to help their people engage in mercy ministries because they want to help their people love others in ways that are wise, and there are few areas where it is more difficult to truly be wise in the way you love others than with mercy ministry.**

III. *What should motivate mercy ministry?*

A. This is an important question for several reasons:

- 1.) Motivation is one of the things that makes biblical mercy ministry unique.
- 2.) Motivation is of great concern to God.
- 3.) Bad motivations can easily destroy good actions.
- 4.) Without motivation, all of these commands and all of this instruction will just go in one ear and out the other.

B. There are several inadequate reasons for becoming involved in mercy ministry.

- 1.) Self-interest
- 2.) A natural sense of pity
- 3.) The fact that all men are made in the image of God
- 4.) Law

C. The ultimate motivation for being engaged in mercy ministry to others begins with being overwhelmed with God's mercy to you.

- 1.) Ephesians 5:1 and 2
- 2.) The connection between mercy and worship

D. What we can learn from the way Paul motivated the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 to be engaged in mercy ministry.

- 1.) Leaders need to instruct their people in mercy ministry
- 2.) Leaders need to lead through a godly example
- 3.) Leaders need to give their people specific opportunities
- 4.) Leaders need to remind their people of the importance of mercy ministry
- 5.) Leaders need to be praying
- 6.) Leaders need to anticipate excuses
- 7.) Leaders need to strive to help their people experience real joy that is not dependent on circumstances
- 8.) Leaders need to get excited when their people show concern for others
- 9.) Leaders need to be careful they aren't content with forcing their people to go through the motions of mercy without the heart
- 10.) Leaders need to keep holding up Christ's example of generosity
- 11.) Leaders need to remind their people of the benefits of sacrificial living
- 12.) Leaders need to encourage their people with reminders of their own love for them
- 13.) Leaders need to help our people sense their family like relationships with other believers they haven't met
- 14.) Leaders need to remind their people of the goodness and sovereignty of God

IV. *What are some common mistakes people make when they engage in mercy ministry?*

- A. Not believing you are saved completely by the work of Christ on your behalf.
- B. Thinking of yourself as the hero who sweeps in to save the day.
- C. Not appreciating the complexity of sin, how people can be victims and sinners all at the same time.

- D. Thinking of everyone you meet as the same as the last person you met.
- E. Not believing in the miracle of the new birth.
- F. Thinking that people's biggest problems are physical.
- G. Not understanding that some of people's problems are physical.
- H. Thinking of being radical as a place you live or an activity you do, instead of simply exercising faith in the place God has put you.
- I. Not fighting being self-absorbed.
- J. Having a poor understanding of being poor.
- K. Trying to separate truth and mercy.
- L. Not being realistic in your view of life and ministry.
- M. Thinking of mercy primarily as projects instead of people.
- V. *What are some of the basic keys to engaging in effective mercy ministry?*

- A. Actually for the sake of time, I am only going to talk about one key to effective mercy ministry and I want to emphasize this because it is one of the most important and that is seeking to build and establish a sincere, biblical friendship.
- B. One reason I want to emphasize relationships is because they are so valuable, another reason I want to emphasize relationships is because they are so neglected, especially when it comes to mercy ministry.
- C. Let's look together at six principles for developing these kinds of life-transforming relationships.
  - 1. Be willing
    - a.) Why we should be willing:
      - 1.) The nature of Jesus' own ministry
      - 2.) How God changes us
      - 3.) James 2
      - 4.) The gospel logic of Luke 14
      - 5.) Modeling Galatians 6, James 5
    - b.) Why we aren't willing:
      - 1.) Time
      - 2.) People don't notice
      - 3.) A distorted understanding of the ministry
      - 4.) It can be hard
      - 5.) Lack of faith honestly
      - 6.) Laziness
      - 7.) Ignorance
      - 8.) Poor ministry priorities
  - 2. Be loving
    - a. Paul Tripp:

“I am deeply persuaded that the foundation for people transforming ministry is love. Without love our theology is a boat without oars. Love is what drove God to send and sacrifice his Son. Love led Christ to subject himself to a sinful world and the horrors of the cross. Love is what causes him to seek and save the lost, and to persevere until each of his children is transformed into his image. His love will not rest until all of his children are at his side in glory. The hope of every sinner does not rest in theological answers but in the love of Christ for his own. Without it, we have no hope personally, relationally or eternally. This love is not a band-aid attempting to cope with a cancerous world. It is effective and persevering. It is jealous, intent on owning us without competition. It faces the facts of who we are and how we need to change and simply goes to work. Any hope for the problems we face-with our own hearts and with a dark and corrupt world-is found in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. This love offers hope to anyone willing to confess sin and cry out for transformation. Yet this is where we often get stuck. We want ministry that doesn't demand love that is well, so demanding. We don't want to serve others in a way that requires so much personal sacrifice. We would prefer to lob grenades of truth into people's lives rather than lay down our lives for them. But this is exactly what Christ did for us. Can we expect to be called to do anything less? The love of Christ is not only the foundation for our personal hope, but our incarnation of that love is our only hope for being effective for Christ with others. Sadly many of us have forgotten this and we are resounding gong people in cymbal clanging relationships. There is a whole lot of noise but not much real change.”

- b. What does this kind of love look like?
  - 1.) We need to put off old sinful habitual patterns.
  - 2.) Not only do we need to put off certain behavior if we are going to show people the love of Christ, we also need to put on certain kinds of behavior.

3. Be humble

- a.) Galatians 6:1ff
  - b.) Come from alongside and not from above
    - 1.) 2 images of helping people:
      - 1 – I am up here and you are down there, let me pull you up
      - 2 - I am not way up there, I am here, let me come alongside of you and see how I can help
    - 2.) When it comes helping people, it's the second approach we have to take.
  - c.) Now let me walk you through exactly what that means. Because it is obvious that we shouldn't help others in a prideful way but we often do because we haven't thought specifically about what helping others in a prideful way looks like. So let's look at the text and ask, **what does it mean not to be prideful as you seek to help someone else? What does it mean not to come from above, but to come alongside?**
    - 1.) Coming alongside means you come gently, not harshly.
    - 2.) Coming alongside means you remember you are a sinner too.
    - 3.) Coming alongside means not having too high an opinion of yourself.
    - 4.) Coming alongside means you don't compare yourself with the person you are helping, instead you focus on honoring God with your actions.
4. Be listening
- a.) There's a big difference between having a casual understanding of somebody and really understanding somebody. Sometimes we think we know people when we really only have a superficial understanding of who they are and what they are about.
  - b.) One of the big problems in our lives is that we have only casual relationships. Obviously there are different levels of friendship right? But it is a problem if all of our relationships are only casual. And what I mean by that is, we have all these relationships where all we basically

know about people are the outside facts, like who they are married to, how many kids they have, where they work. And we think because we know that stuff, we know them but that's only the surface stuff, and you know when all we know is the surface stuff about each other, there's ground for all kinds of misunderstandings and not a whole lot of ground for really helping each other grow.

c.) WE HAVE TO WORK ON MOVING PAST THE CASUAL AND COMING TO REALLY KNOW PEOPLE BY GATHERING THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO MINISTER EFFECTIVELY TO THEM.

d.) Look with me at some of the ways Proverbs highlights this:

1.) 18:13

2.) 18:15 (explained in 16-19)

3.) 20:5

4.) 15:2; 15:28

5.) Not just Proverbs though, we can add to that the:

\* Example of Jesus

\* Besides the example of Jesus, we can see the importance of getting to know others by simply applying biblical principles to the way we relate to others.

-If I don't gather information, I'm not really showing love to the other person.

-If I don't gather information, I'm acting like I'm more important than the other person.

-If I don't gather information, it's going to be really difficult to truly hear what the other person is saying

-If I don't gather information, it's likely the other person won't listen to me.

-If I don't gather information, I may end up saying things that do not relate to the issue the person is talking to me about.

-If I don't gather information, it's going to be hard for me to know how to serve the other person.

-If I don't gather information, it's going to be hard for me to know what to say that will really help the other person.

-If I don't gather information, I'm not treating the other person the way that I would want to be treated if I were in their shoes.

-If I don't gather information, I'm not acting like Jesus, because I know he does an awful lot of listening to me.

-If I don't gather information, I'm treating the other person like a problem to be fixed rather than a person to be helped.

e.) Practical steps to learning about the person you are serving.

1.) One of the ways you can be of great help to people is by asking them good questions.

2.) But what is a good question?

-Open ended question that cannot be answered with a yes or no.

-A combination of survey and focused questions

-Always remember that certain kinds of questions reveal certain kinds of information.

-Define terms

-Clarify what they mean with concrete, real life examples

-Ask them to explain why they responded to you as they did

-Ask a progressive line of questions, in which each question is based on information uncovered in previous questions.

5. Be teaching

6. Be applying

- a. Set goals
- b. Determine responsibility
- c. Establish accountability