Lesson 44 - The Character of Merciful

1. Who is our example for being merciful? **Luke 6:36**

   EGW: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." The Lord honors his human agents by taking them into partnership with himself. The heart of Christ is full of forgiving mercy and truth. He is afflicted in all the afflictions of his people. We are to be compassionate, and find joy in coming with a kindly interest to bind up the wounds of those who have been pursued and left half dead by the ruthless hand of the destroyer. We are to be ready to heal the bruises that sin has made. Those who do this are Christ's ministers, and the world has a living testimony of the love of God before them in his representatives. God is revealed before the world in those who practice the works of Christ, and through his messengers he is known as a God of mercy, goodness, and forgiveness. "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? God in Christ is ours, and his bounties of love and mercy are inexhaustible. He desires that every one shall be benefited by the rich provisions that he has made for those who love him; he invites us all to share with him in his glory. The bliss of heaven has been provided for every soul who loves God supremely and his fellow-men as himself. {ST, September 19, 1895 par. 1}

2. How do we know that human beings have the ability to be truly merciful? **Hebrews 2:17 [Referring to the beginning of the verse about Jesus]**

   EGW: Christ alone is able to do this, for "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17, 18). Reconciliation means that every barrier between the soul and God is removed, and that the sinner realizes what the pardoning love of God means. By reason of the sacrifice made by Christ for fallen men, God can justly pardon the transgressor who accepts the merits of Christ. Christ was the channel through which the mercy, love, and righteousness might flow from the heart of God to the heart of the sinner. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). {1SM 395.2}

3. What do those who practice being merciful receive? **Matthew 5:7, Psalms 18:25, 2 Samuel 22:26**

   EGW: The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." There never was a time when there was greater need for the exercise of mercy than today. The poor are all around us, the distressed, the afflicted, the sorrowing, and those who are ready to perish. Those who have

acquired riches have acquired them through the exercise of the talents that were given them of God; but these talents for the acquiring of property were given to them that they might relieve those who are in poverty. These gifts were bestowed upon men by Him who maketh His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the just and the unjust, that by the fruitfulness of the earth men might have abundant supplies for all their need. The fields have been blessed of God, and "of his goodness he hath prepared for the poor." In the providence of God events have been so ordered that the poor are always with us, in order that there may be a constant exercise in the human heart of the attributes of mercy and love. Man is to cultivate the tenderness and compassion of Christ; he is not to separate himself from the sorrowing, the afflicted, the needy, and the distressed. Job declares: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." {ST, June 13, 1892 par. 1}

4. When being merciful, who does it affect? **Proverbs 11:17**

EGW: "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." We are continually receiving rich mercies from the hands of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus has commanded, saying, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." The merciful man does good to his own soul; for the merciful shall obtain mercy. The possession of this precious grace produces the fruit of kindliness and love. The hardness, the coldness of heart that many professing Christians cherish, is a characteristic of the great apostate. Were Christlike mercy exercised by all who profess to be Christ's followers, the world would bear an altogether different aspect. Praise would ascend to God from many voices that are now silent. The love and tenderness of Christ revealed in the characters of those who are his followers, would beget love in others. It is impossible for us to represent Christ, and be cold, unsympathetic, and bound about by selfishness. {ST, September 12, 1895 par. 1}

5. What should the act of being merciful bring? **Psalms 119:76**

EGW: We need not keep our own record of trials and difficulties, griefs, and sorrows. All these things are written in the books, and heaven will take care of them. While we are counting up the disagreeable things, many things that are pleasant to reflect upon are passing from memory, such as the merciful kindness of God surrounding us every moment and the love over which angels marvel, that God gave His Son to die for us. If as workers for Christ you feel that you have had greater cares and trials than have fallen to the lot of others, remember that for you there is a peace unknown to those who shun these burdens. There is comfort and joy in the service of Christ. Let the world see

that life with Him is no failure. {MH 487.3}

6. What do we seek from God to be merciful about that we ought to be merciful towards others that are in a like situation? **Hebrews 8:12**

EGW: The plan of redemption was arranged in the councils between the Father and the Son. Then Christ pledged himself to render an account for man if he proved disloyal. He pledged himself to make an atonement which would unite every believing soul to God. He who lays his sins upon the substitute and surety, thus becoming a partaker of the divine nature, can unite with the apostle in saying: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." In his infinite love Christ devised the plan of salvation. This plan he stands ready to fulfil in behalf of all who will co-operate with him. In their behalf he says to the Father, Do not impute their sins to them, but lay them on me. Be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities remember no more. They have accepted my merits, and made peace with me; and they shall make peace with me. My righteousness is theirs, and for my sake bless them with all spiritual blessings. {RH, May 28, 1908 par. 12}

7. Who is God merciful with showing we ought to be merciful to those in like condition? **Luke 18:13-14**

EGW: God imparts His blessing to us, that we may give to others. And as long as we yield ourselves as the channels through which His love can flow, He will keep the channels supplied. When you ask God for your daily bread, He looks right into your heart to see if you will impart the same to others, more needy than yourself. When you pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner," He watches to see if you will manifest compassion to those with whom you associate. This is the evidence of our connection with God,--that we are merciful even as our Father who is in heaven is merciful. If we are His, we shall do with a cheerful heart just what He tells us to do, however inconvenient, however contrary it may be to our own feelings. . . . {CS 164.3}

8. If a person is merciful like God, what shall we also be slow to become? **Jonah 4:2, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalms 103:8, Joel 2:13**

EGW: The word of God, the Christian Bible, reveals His character. He himself has declared His infinite love and pity. When Moses prayed, "Show me Thy glory," the Lord answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee." This is His glory. The Lord passed before Moses, and proclaimed,

"The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." He "is slow to anger and of great kindness," "because He delighteth in mercy." {BTS, January 1, 1909 par. 1}

9. If a person is merciful like God, what shall we also be great at showing? **Jonah 4:2, Joel 2:13, Nehemiah 9:17**

EGW: When the people of Nineveh humbled themselves before God and cried to Him for mercy, He heard their cry. "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he said he would do unto them; and he did it not." But Jonah revealed that he did not value the souls in that wretched city. He valued his reputation, lest they should say that he was a false prophet. He said, "O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." Now when he sees the Lord exercise His compassionate attributes, and spare the city that had corrupted its ways before Him, Jonah does not cooperate with God in His merciful design. He has not the people's interests in view. It does not grieve him that so large a number must perish, who have not been educated to do right. Listen to his complaint: {SW 79.4}

10. If a person is merciful like God, what shall we bestow upon someone seeking mercy from us? **Psalms 67:1**

EGW: Is your faith practical? Are you doing what the Bible tells you to do? Are you using all your powers in an effort to bring the lost sheep back to the fold? There are thousands upon thousands in ignorance who might be warned. Pray as you have never prayed before for the power of Christ. Pray for the inspiration of his Spirit, that you may be filled with a desire to save those who are perishing. Let the prayer ascend to heaven, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." {RH, May 17, 1906 par. 17}

11. What should we keep as well if God is held to it regarding mercifulness? **Psalms 119:57-58**

EGW: The word of God must be our authority in all things. The testimony of David in this respect was, "Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep Thy words. I entreated Thy favor with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to Thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned

my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep Thy commandments. The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten Thy law. At midnight I will arise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments." {LUH, December 9, 1908 par. 1}

12. At what level is God's mercifulness that we ought to copy? **Psalms 117:2**

EGW: The Lord's merciful kindness is great toward us. He will never leave nor forsake those who trust in Him. If we would think and talk less of our trials, and more of the mercy and goodness of God, we would find ourselves raised above much of our gloom and perplexity. My brethren and sisters, you who feel that you are entering upon a dark path, and like the captives in Babylon must hang your harps upon the willows, let us make trial of cheerful song. You may say, How can I sing, with this dark prospect before me, with this burden of sorrow and bereavement upon my soul? But have earthly sorrows deprived us of the all-powerful Friend we have in Jesus? Should not the marvelous love of God in the gift of His dear Son be a theme of continual rejoicing? When we bring our petitions to the throne of grace, let us not forget to offer also anthems of thanksgiving. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Psalm 50:23). As long as our Saviour lives, we have cause for unceasing gratitude and praise.--The Review and Herald, Nov. 1, 1881. {2SM 268.3}

13. When a person is seeking mercy, even from us, what are they placing upon that being, be it God or ourselves? **Psalms 57:1**

EGW: I am so sorry that men who want to be obedient to God put so much confidence in human sympathy and human help which disappoint so often. But God, the living God, is unchangeable. He is the same kind, tender, pitiful, loving Saviour today, yesterday, and forever. Satan is now working with all his might, and leaving no means untried to unsettle minds because they see men of long experience make mistakes. But Jesus is faultless. . . . Make God your entire trust. Pray, pray, pray, pray in faith. Then trust the keeping of your soul to God. He will keep that which is committed to Him against that day. . . . Walk humbly with God. The Lord sees every sorrow, every grief, every trial that besets the human soul, and He knows how to apply the balm. . . . {TMK 268.2}

14. When a person is seeking mercy, what is actually being asked for regarding the soul? **Psalms 41:4**

EGW: (no comment)

15. When a person is the recipient of mercy, what is the result upon the person asking for that mercy? **Psalms 41:10**

EGW: The Lord Jesus is your personal intercessor. But men who ought to have felt a tender sympathy for their fellow men have lost the love and tenderness of Christ out of their experience. Repeat over and over many times through the day, "Jesus has died for me. He saw me in peril, exposed to destruction, and poured out His life to save me. He does not behold the soul as a trembling suppliant prostrate at His feet without pity, and He will not fail to raise me up." He has become the advocate for man. He has lifted up those who believe in Him, and placed a treasurehouse of blessing at their demand. Men cannot bestow one blessing upon their fellows, they cannot remove one stain of sin. It is only the merit and righteousness of Christ that will avail anything, but this is placed to our account in rich fullness. We may draw upon God every moment. As we turn to Him, He answers, "Here I am." {19MR 214.2}

16. When mercifulness is bestowed upon the sincere recipient, what do they become? **Psalms 26:11**

EGW: Let those who desire to perfect a Christlike character ever keep in view the cross on which Christ died a cruel death in order to redeem mankind. Let them ever cherish the same merciful spirit that led the Saviour to make an infinite sacrifice for our redemption. Let not those who themselves have sinned against God, refuse to forgive a repentant sinner. Just as they deal with a fellow-being who is in spirit or in action has done wrong and has afterward repented, so God will deal with them for their defects of character. He who does not show mercy to his fellow-men can not expect to be shielded by the mercy of God. He himself is dependent on the mercy that God has enjoined him to exercise in seeking to restore every unsaved soul brought within the sphere of his influence. If he refuses to cultivate this divine grace, he himself will suffer the result of his neglect. Sometime, when he is in need of the mercy of God and of his fellow-men, he will find himself beyond mercy. {ST, May 21, 1902 par. 6}

17. When one is sincerely seeking after mercy, what action is not taken? **Nehemiah 9:17 [End of the verse], Deuteronomy 4:31**

EGW: Those who entered the temple courts to seek forgiveness and to renew their vows of allegiance to Jehovah, had wonderful encouragement offered them in the prophetic portions of Scripture. The solemn warnings against idolatry, spoken through Moses in the hearing of all Israel, had been accompanied by prophecies of God's willingness to hear and forgive those who in times of

apostasy should seek Him with all the heart. "If thou turn to the Lord thy God," Moses had said, "and shalt be obedient unto His voice; (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He sware unto them." Deuteronomy 4:30, 31. {PK 334.2}

18. What action shows sincerity of the request in seeking mercy from another? **2 Chronicles 30:9 [End of the verse]**

EGW: How amazing is God's love, how infinite his compassion! He pleads with the wayward to return unto him. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." {RH, January 23, 1908 par. 8}

19. What so serious of a sin may God still have mercy upon us for? **Deuteronomy 21:8**

EGW: To increase the horrors of murder, and aid in the detection of the criminal, the Lord ordained that when the body of a murdered person was found in the land, the most solemn and public ceremony should be held, under the direction of the magistrates and elders in connection with the priests of God's appointment. "If one be found slain in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him; then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain; and it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take a heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley. And the priests, the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord: and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried. And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley; and they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord." {ST, January 20, 1881 par. 14}

20. What goes along with being merciful? What else would we be? **Exodus 34:6**

EGW: The third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and this truth must be brought before the world; but the great center of attraction, Jesus Christ, must not be left out of the third angel's message. By many who have been engaged in the work for this time, Christ has been made secondary, and theories and arguments have had first place. The glory of God that was revealed to Moses in regard to the divine character has not been made prominent. The Lord said to Moses, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee" (Exodus 33:19). "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:6, 7). {1SM 383.1}