

WEEK FOUR: NEW MERCIES

This week Joe and I are packing suitcases for a trip around the world to visit the amazing people we've been blessed to work with for the past five years. Right now, it feels like the entire house is in disarray as we try to figure out how to cram everything we need for a month into two suitcases. I have visions of bouncing up and down on top of mine to get it closed, only to hear that it is over the weight limit when I check in. Surrounded by irritated travelers looking at their watches, I throw things out helter-skelter, no time for rhyme or reason. (This may or may not have happened to me a time or two in the past).

That suitcase seems an apt metaphor for the way many of us feel about life today. Hemmed in on every side, pressured by things that must be done and decisions that can't wait, we end up tossing things out helter skelter, oblivious to what we're losing in the process. Driven by the tyranny of the urgent, we fall into bed at night exhausted, only to wake up with dread that we have to do it all over again.

The effect of this kind of stress on our spiritual journeys cannot be overstated. Over ten years ago I became increasingly troubled by how people seemed almost incapable of practicing spiritual disciplines essential for a relationship with Jesus—things like reflection and silence, solitude and meditation, quiet reading and contemplation.¹ As a digital immigrant (one who knew life before and after the internet), I wrote a book, in part to raise an alarm but also offer some alternatives to the permeating presence of *digiphrenia*.² Today, as I work with young people and watch my grandkids moving into adulthood, I feel this even more profoundly. As AI spreads its tentacles into every part of life, I can easily go down a rabbit hole of hopelessness at the spiritual plight of future generations.

This has been my predicament as I've pondered how to write about *new mercies*. *Mercy* is the word I felt the Lord whisper to me for 2025, and I've spent a fair bit of time studying and meditating upon it this month. The word is rife with depth and meaning, but in short, biblical mercy encompasses three facets: tender affection, deep love, and active compassion, all of which come from the very bowels of God to you and me.³ The reality is that our souls need a new dose every day.

Let me ask you this. When you read of "spending time alone with God," what comes to mind? Does it feel like one more thing that you are trying to cram into that overstuffed suitcase? When push comes to shove and you have to throw things out, is sitting at Jesus' feet the first thing that goes? Or

¹ See my book, *The Wired Soul: Finding Spiritual Balance in a Hyper-Connected World*.

² A term coined by author Douglas Rushkoff in 2013 to explain the feverish lifestyles the internet was producing. (*Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now*).

³ H7356 - raḥam - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (esv). Retrieved from <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h7356/esv/wlc/0-1/>

have you forced time with God in through sheer determination, only to feel betrayed by the continued sense that you are over your limit?

What if your perspective were to change, and rather than viewing time alone with God as an add-on to an overfull life, you started seeing it more like one of those expanding zippers that magically creates extra room for all the things you need? What if instead of bearing the burden of busyness as you go to bed each night, you could rest in peace, grateful for the balance that came about because you experienced God's mercy as you started your day? What if you knew at the core of your being that God waits for you, ever ready to pour out new mercies?

Mercy is an intimately personal word and herein lies the problem: You can't learn mercy by tuning into a podcast, or listening to a Sunday sermon, or perusing some uplifting blog (not even this one!). Mercy is not simply an attribute of God to add to a list, but an action he longs to take on your behalf.

Think of it. The God of the Universe longs to show you his tender affection, deep love and active compassion, to flood your soul with the wonder of it. What might it take for you to create space for him to do so? How might you shed the demands of a driven culture and lay aside the compulsions of digital engagement for something so profoundly powerful as receiving new mercies for the day? The experience of mercy not only touches our souls in the deepest way, but it also has the power to transform our lives. Why not give it a try for the next few days?

W4-DAY 1

READ

Quietly read Lamentations 3:17-26. Read them one more time, aloud if possible, hearing Jesus speak directly to you.

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- How would you describe Jeremiah's emotional state?
- What does Jeremiah remember about God? About mercy? Write each thing down.
- What does *remembering* produce in his soul?

Pray:

- Thank God for each thing that Jeremiah spoke about him.
- Consider the meaning of mercy: tender affection, deep love and active compassion. Where do you feel the need for each of these in your life right now? Physical circumstances? Relationships? Purpose? Peace? Share these with God.
- Sit quietly as you ask God to give you new mercies for today, in just the places you need them most.

RESPOND

- What can you do to remind yourself of God's mercies as you go throughout this day?
- Plan to engage in an act of remembrance as you go to bed, reminding yourself of how God revealed his mercy in a new way.

W4-DAY 2

READ

Quietly read Isaiah 30:1, then skip down to 18-22. Read these one more time, aloud if possible.

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What is God's indictment against his people?
- What does this tell you about God's mercy?
- What happens when we experience it? (verse 22)

Pray:

- Consider ways that you have failed to follow the Spirit's direction and gone your own path.
- Sit quietly, picturing God waiting for you to come to him so he can pour out his mercy, even in light of these things. How does your heart respond?
- Ask God: *What are the idols that are keeping me from experiencing all you want to give me?*
Spend some time repenting and envisioning yourself destroying them in God's presence.

RESPOND

- What is one step you can take to rid yourself of an idol you listed?
- What can you do to remind yourself of God's mercies as you go throughout this day?
- How can you create space to hear God's voice as you go today?
- Plan to engage in an act of remembrance as you go to bed, reminding yourself of how God revealed his mercy in a new way.

W4-DAY 3

READ

Quietly read Psalm 103. Read it one more time, aloud if possible.

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What does this tell you about God? List each thing?
- What does this tell you specifically about God's mercy?
- What are the promises you can cling to here?

Pray:

- Spend a few minutes using this Psalm as a time of praise by going through each line. For example: *Lord, I praise you with all that I am, I praise your holy name with my whole heart...*
- Choose 2-3 of the promises in this passage, including the promise about mercy. Sit quietly and ask God to reveal his heart to you as you ponder these realities. Ask him: *Lord, what is the most important thing for me to experience about you from this?*
- Wait before God with what he has shown you as you give him space to reveal himself.

RESPOND

- What can you do to remind yourself of God's mercies as you go throughout this day?
- Plan to engage in an act of remembrance as you go to bed, reminding yourself of how God revealed his mercy in a new way.

W2-DAY 4

READ

Quietly read Ephesians 2:1-4, 1 Peter 1:3-4, and Titus 3:3-7. Read them one more time, aloud if possible.

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What was true about you before you knew Jesus?
- What has mercy done for you? List each thing

Pray:

- Offer a heart of gratitude and praise by thanking God specifically for every thing that mercy has done for you.
- Quietly ask God to show you his mercy in a new way today—his tender affection, deep love and active compassion—as you think deeply of the things you’ve seen.

RESPOND

- What can you do to remind yourself of God’s mercies as you go throughout this day?
- Plan to engage in an act of remembrance as you go to bed, reminding yourself of how God revealed his mercy in a new way.

W4-DAY 5

READ

Quietly read Hebrews 4:12-16. Read it one more time, aloud if possible.

REFLECT

Ponder these questions:

- What do you see about who God is here?
- What does it tell you about his word—both Scripture and the things he speaks to you)?
- How does the writer of Hebrews call you to respond?

Pray:

- Knowing God feels mercy (tender affection, deep love and active compassion) towards you, let the words you’ve read speak deeply to your heart. Is there anything to confess? Anything to receive?
- Envision your own high priest, standing before the throne on your behalf, offering himself as a sacrifice so that you can run boldly to God. Take the time to receive the mercy you need today. What does it look like? How can you embrace it? Rest in the wonder of this.

RESPOND

- What can you do to remind yourself of God’s mercies as you go throughout this day?
- Plan to engage in an act of remembrance as you go to bed, reminding yourself of how God revealed his mercy in a new way.