

Blinking Back Tears: Seeing Through Mercy's Eyes

January 27, 2008

Throughout the minor prophets, we've discovered that God is a defender of the weak, help to the helpless, and just King to the disenfranchised. The prophets' harshest words (and Jesus' harshest words as well), are to those who neglect the most vulnerable members of society. Should that surprise us? Every father's instinct is to protect his children. God's desire for his people is to join him in this task, not as sympathetic observers, but as compassionately engaged providers for men, women and children in need. According to the minor prophets, our love for justice, mercy and righteousness is the best measure of our relationship to God. Faith without action is at best dead, and at worst, a supreme annoyance to God.

Questions for Discussion:

1) Have you ever been homeless, unemployed, without health insurance, or held down two jobs? What is the lowest-paying job you ever held and what kind of help – if any – did you need to improve your situation?

2) Has reading the minor prophets changed your perception of the Christian life?

3) When you're with someone of a lower economic status, what are your primary feelings? (Nervousness, compassion, guilt, frustration, judgement, sympathy, self-consciousness, nothing?)

4) When you think about showing mercy to someone living in poverty, what is your first thought: "I wish I could give and give and give," "I don't want to enable an irresponsible lifestyle," "This is a bottomless pit, why even try" or something else entirely?

5) How do we balance mercy and compassion with what Paul told the Thessalonians about idleness: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat"?

5) Is there a person in your life to whom you could "show mercy and compassion?"

6) Is there another way you'd like to get started with learning to "love mercy?"

(eg. Single "Mom's Night Out", Vineyard Financial class, hosting someone in your home who needs transitional housing, adopting a kid that needs a big brother, big sister, other)