

# Mercy Ministries

“Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.”

~ GALATIANS 2:10

**WE BELIEVE** that the church is called to take care of the physical needs of those who cannot care for themselves, but that it must be done *as good stewards of God’s resources, with the real good of the poor in mind, and not as an alternative to the gospel.*

There are four elements to our position on mercy ministries. The first addresses the biblical mandate itself to care for the poor, with the other three points qualifying that mandate in ways that the Bible also clearly addresses. All four elements must be addressed because without each of them, we would not have the entire biblical doctrine of charity in view.

The concept of “mercy ministries,” as they are now often called, used to be called simply “charity” in times past. That word could be confused with the more general virtue of love spoken of in the New Testament. It comes from the Latin *caritas*, not to be confused with the Greek word for grace—*charis*. They are closely connected, but not quite the same thing. We would be wise, however, to understand that all of our works of charity are nothing if they are not motivated by godly priorities. Paul even seems to suggest in that famous love chapter that I can “give away all that I have...but have not love” [1 Cor. 13:3]. Even extreme deeds can be motivated by more base impulses and expectations. That is why such a doctrine needs to be spelled out, to ensure that our practice of mercy is driven by biblical principles and genuine spiritual affections. Put another way, our charities must be shaped by a real charity of the heart.

On the other side of the four elements we will discuss are four temptations. One is to be content with our affluence and heartlessly fail to serve the poor; another is to allow guilt to drive one’s charity rather than stewardship—thereby disabling our ability to continue to help; a third is a naïve view of the soul that allows self-congratulations drive one’s charity rather than calculated results; and a final one involves joining with the Emergent Church and others who would return us to the social gospel of “deeds not creeds.” With those four temptations in mind, we now unpack the four elements of our position.

### 1) The church is called to take care of the physical needs of those who cannot care for themselves...

The principle reason that the church is called to care for the poor is that *it is a picture of what Jesus Christ did for sinners*. It is true that the physical provision—including miraculous healings—were ultimately signposts to how he solves a greater spiritual need. Nevertheless, the story is told in the lives of his disciples by these “greater works” [Jn. 14:12]. It was one form of Jesus’ own mission statement: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” [Mk. 10:45]. There are at least four big ways that our ministry of mercy tells something great about Jesus.

The first way that it pictures Christ is in the act of the **Incarnation** itself. When someone who has more than someone else enters into the poorer man’s world, he is, by definition, “coming down,” just as “the word became flesh” [Jn. 1:14]. As far as society is concerned, the richer man has more—even if all we are talking about is money in the bank. There are many instances of Jesus passing on this mandate to us. One is where—literally in the same breath as he gives the disciples the Holy Spirit—he says, “Even as the Father sent me, so I send you” [Jn. 20:21]. The “incarnational” aspect of the gospel was a big deal to the first century church: eating and consorting with people perceived to be dirty. Paul was willing to have a food fight with the Judaizers over it [cf. Gal. 2:11-14]; and James exposes our real desires in showing partiality to those of higher social status [cf. Jam. 2:1-9]. Jesus himself was constantly dining with sinners and was willing to bear the reproach for it [cf. Rom. 15:1-2].

The second way that it pictures Christ is in the announcement of **common grace** to everyone who is made in the image of God. It is an important part of our doctrine of the kingdom that the way that Jesus ministered in his first coming—*announcing* judgment and mercy (humiliation)—is different than the way he will do things in his second coming—*executing* judgment and mercy (exaltation). The church that expands his kingdom through the gospel in between his first and second coming is a copy of his humiliation. This explains many things about how the church should interact with culture, politics, education, or eschatology. It also explains an awful lot about how we do charity. Note that the Good Samaritan was called good simply because he helped a “stranger,” not necessarily even a Christian. It is true what Paul says, that we are to be “especially” good to our brothers and sisters; yet in that same passage he makes it clear to “do good to everyone” [Gal. 6:10]. Many people think that this is a form of evangelism. That is not quite the case, but much like apologetics or personal testimony it is certainly a powerful case of pre-evangelism. It prepares the poor to hear the message of saving grace, in the same way that the goodness of God the Father in creation to all who do not deserve it prepares the heart to hear from the Holy Spirit.

The third way that it pictures Christ is in how each form of *material* provision becomes a **gospel symbol** of something in God's *spiritual* provision. Note how Jesus blends the two in another of his "mission statements," this one from his very first public sermon:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus healed the blind man, we learned that the sinner is blind to the truth [cf. 2 Cor. 4:4]. When he restored the deaf man's hearing, it showed us that we cannot hear the good news until he gives us an open ear [cf. Ps. 40:6]. When he raised Lazarus or Jarius' daughter, it raises our attention to the fact that when we were dead, God alone made us alive [cf. Eph. 2:1-5]. When he touches the leper or the woman with the issue of blood, we see the filthiness of our own souls. And when he feeds the five thousand, he calls himself the true bread from heaven [cf. Jn. 6:35].

The fourth (and perhaps most obvious) way that it pictures Christ is in the heart of mercy itself. If we would tell the gospel through our acts of kindness, then it must point to this God who is "rich in mercy" [Eph. 2:4]. In other words, our acts must touch a chord in the heart of all who see: the **feeling of mercy** that all human beings share in a vague (as image-bearers) and shattered (as fallen sinners) way with God himself. In modeling this, we are engaging in a kind of proof of the gospel. This bears witness to the credibility of the person and work of Christ both to the one who we touch and to the crowd who sees. It answers the old maxim that people don't care that you know until they know that you care. It is aware of the dangers of pragmatism there; but it has its gospel-answer ready and so it plows ahead in heart-warming kindness anyway.

So, in those four ways—incarnation, common grace, gospel symbol, and the feeling of mercy—our calling to comfort the afflicted is picturing Jesus Christ, and in that light is the worthy calling that it is. Such a rationale also provides a superior motivation than any other so-called motivation for kindness to the poor. There are other alternative motivations; and these false motivations breed faulty programs. The other three components to our position address the biblical corrective to all three false rationales. We should also point out the last part of this first component: "of those who cannot take care of themselves." As we will see, it is one of the chief characteristics of a healthy Christian—man or woman—that they have their nose to the grindstone of God's creation. Man will typically do this in "in the ground" [cf. Gen. 3:17-19] and woman in the home [cf. Prov. 31:10-31]—*typically*, though not always. At any rate, the redeemed soul gains a new appreciation for the

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 4:18-19

glory of worshiping God in work. We begin to see work as the great means of gaining freedom from the various enslaving forces of corruption—one of which is the burden which idleness would impose on the church in general, and the genuinely weak in particular. Therefore it belongs to the biblical practice of mercy ministries to teach the young men in the church the greatness of constancy, rigor, and shrewdness in our approach to the workforce. It is what passionate servants do, and they do it to the fullest [cf. 1 Cor. 10:31].

Whatever the Bible teaches on this matter, the pastor is charged to instruct everyone in. For instance, all pastors must charge those who have abundant resources that they ought to share them with the poor [cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-19]. Any pastor who is intimidated to do this because those people pay his income cannot be an effective pastor. Any pastor who does do it may shepherd a very tiny flock his whole life on account of all the rich Americans he offends. So be it. Great is our reward.

## 2) ...but that it must be done *as good stewards of God's resources,*

The first false rationale for material charity is a negative one. It is defined by what it is *not*. It is not a fully-informed doctrine of work, wealth, and stewardship. Some of it is just a simple lack of understanding in Economics-101: that wealth happens when someone (like Adam) starts putting his mind and his rake to the ground (to work it and keep it). Strictly speaking, in the Garden, there was no economizing because there was no scarcity. There was also a hint later on that God would prevent scarcity—a divine limit on limitations—in the Promised Land for Israel. The words “economics” and “stewardship” are closely related, since one comes from the Greek word for house (*oikos*), while the other (*oikonomian*) is the proper care of the household by the one who has been left as its manager, or steward. The people of God were meant to guard and manage the estate, so to speak, of the family of God.

Two obvious problems can result from not making a good study of this “estate.” One is that church governing boards can allow a nebulous feeling of guilt to dictate how it disburses its funds. The other is that able-bodied people can tend to devalue work—and let’s face it, it is all of our natural tendency to take the path of least resistance in all things—and fail to realize that every unit of resources *not* mined by Adam is a unit that will have to be redistributed from someone else in the Second Adam. The failure to exploit a unit of supply is never a private failure. It negatively affects the whole community—especially those who are weak and who therefore genuinely cannot work at the present moment. Moreover, whoever is lax with the general funds—whether they are the giver or receiver—does not realize that any giver who is less than God has scarcity to deal with. So, both giver and receiver need to be realistic here. If the church gives out of blind liberality, there will be nothing left to give tomorrow. If the church, or any individual in it,

subsidizes an ongoing lack of productivity, he is not only failing to care for the receiver (which we will look at in the next section), but he is cutting off the branch he is sitting on. The purse has to be there tomorrow to be caring for the long haul, and the purchase of one's poverty is also a purchase: a reckless, thoughtless, (yes) *heartless* purchase. Hence, for the church to be caring, it must be smart—"wise as serpents, gentle as doves" [Mat. 10:16]. Luke 16:1-13 is a study in this kind of faithfulness, though the passage is admittedly confusing at first glance.

The apostle Paul specifically addresses anyone who would say that this kind of shrewdness doesn't matter, in his second letter to the Thessalonians:

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons are commanded and encouraged in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.<sup>2</sup>

Paul is talking about able-bodied men who choose the path of least resistance. There have always been plenty of Gnostic teachers who will sell the church on the line that economic failures bear no relationship to the kingdom. They have a low view of the body and the ground because they falsely assume that since the spirit is higher, that lower things are, somehow or other, a mistake or at least an afterthought. This is pure **Gnosticism**. But the kingdom currency works on the "exchange rate" of the currencies of this world. You will also notice that work was ordained prior to the fall. It is good. If we are lax in matters where scarcity exists, then we are taking from the kingdom, slowing down its progress. Those who are able-bodied must, sooner or later, be pressured to see this. Those who are *not* able-bodied (yet possessing other gifts) can take heart in the fact that what they can exchange is valued in the sight of God and the church. The point is that the church must exert wisdom on where to draw the line.

### 3) *...with the real good of the poor in mind,*

That last point brings us smoothly into our second area of false charity, and that comes from a **Materialist** worldview that treats the human recipient of goods and services as just that. The Christian worldview must be brought to bear here and insist that men and women are more than simply material units, but we have souls that can never die. Before we ever get to the deepest need of the soul—i.e. how the

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

poor need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ much more deeply than they need a meal—there is yet another subject that the Christian view of persons in economic life needs to reassert: *Charity that works must, by that same charity, be determined by it working!*<sup>3</sup> If a thing doesn't work, a loving person will stop and ask why. Loving people will change their so-called loving behavior if the numbers (and/or logic that explains the numbers) screams at us that what we are doing is not working. Loving people will change even faster when what we are doing—far from working—is actually counter-productive. But why would this or that charity be counter-productive? And what has the Christian worldview to say about this?

Those are two very good questions. Our answer to both is that our worldview has a great deal to say here. First, we must insist that the biblical doctrines of creation, providence, and the fall are what they are in “all things” [Col. 1:16-17], and that therefore, if any view of mixing money and man does not square with the way reality is, then that model needs to be thrown out before a lot of people get hurt, and God gets defamed by many idols. Secondly, we would point out that the prevailing assumptions about mercy ministries are made by people who, by and large, are persuaded of a materialist doctrine of economics that they carry over into their charity. Thirdly, the Christian who wishes to tell the story of God's love accurately is duty-bound to that same love in providing the alternative. We recognize that this is a “Romans 14 issue,” so that we do not expect Christians to have studied these issues before they start exercising their kindness. On the other hand, there is such a thing as a “tyranny of the weaker brother,” so that while we must give brotherly space to those who give ignorantly, yet *we* as a church are bound by our conscience to give shrewdly. We would never dream of plaguing other Christians with our convictions here, but we must not surrender our own to that plague. It is the Romans 14 balance.

The classic contemporary work on this subject is Marvin Olasky's book, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (1992), the beginning of which chronicles the Puritan model of mercy ministries during the formative years of our nation. As I re-read the first chapter, seven elements of the Puritan model became apparent. They are what I would describe as: 1) generosity, 2) hospitality, 3) discipleship, 4) proximity, 5) family-integrated, 6) supplemental, and 7) pastorally assessed. Let me briefly explain what all of these mean.

As to true **generosity**, the Puritans associated this virtue “not with money but with nobility of character and...with gentleness and humility.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, the Christians who first colonized the New World viewed the disposition of charity as

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<sup>3</sup> What differentiates this from Pragmatism (as we will show) is that the discovery of false charity's *failure to work* is the same higher discovery of *why*—i.e. that the human soul is not the sort of thing that the Materialist worldview, and its resultant expressions of “charity,” would have us believe. So ours is a “workability” that is rooted in the way the world really is. In other words, our right practice is seen to be right in light of our right doctrine. Yet the discovery can be gotten at by empirical, or experiential, means. Practice is not an invalid means of seeking truth, so long as we do not stop at practice.

<sup>4</sup> Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Regnery, Chicago 1992); p. 6

a condition of the heart only *expressing itself* through external actions. This is in keeping with Paul's doctrine of love in 1 Corinthians 13. If there is a way to act in the most extreme instances of love "out there" without its love being real, then it follows that the real thing is defined by something "in here," in the human heart and not by some showing out in society. The act must conform to the essence. Secondly, those early colonists took seriously the Bible's mandate of **hospitality** [cf. 1 Tim. 3:2]: "particularly in the opening of homes to those suffering destitution because of disaster," making "room for widows and orphans."<sup>5</sup> The third component I call **discipleship** to indicate the way in which these Puritan leaders "insisted on 'decent living' on the part of those who were helped...The able-bodied could readily find jobs in a growing agricultural economy; when they chose not to, it was considered perfectly appropriate to pressure them to change their minds."<sup>6</sup> Whether we Americans think it intrusive or not, the Pastoral Letters of Paul strongly suggest that part of the task of shepherds is to train men and women in the art of being an asset, not a liability, to the witness of the covenant community [cf. 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 7, 12, 4:16, 5:7-16, 25, 6:1-2, Titus 1:12-13, 2:2-10, 14, 3:14]. Discipleship is also charitable in that when someone knows that the need to do better for oneself is actually a demand and design of God, then one is more apt to rise to the occasion than if it is merely a heartless program of a human organization. Accordingly, withholding funds was defended by Cotton Mather in the following sermon excerpt:

Instead of exhorting you to augment your charity, I would rather utter an exhortation...that you may not abuse your charity by misapplying it.<sup>7</sup>

You see, for the Puritans, the use of the purse was as much a discipleship issue for the giver as for the receiver.

Next, the Puritan mercy ministry depended on **proximity**. No one could better help a person in need than the person at hand. Someone around the corner can know what the real need is, can pray along with feed, and can follow up. Someone in a distant bureaucracy cannot do any of that. It is not that the person on your block has a better heart than the person in this or that organization; it is that he or she is in a better *position* to care. Fifthly, the Puritans were intentional about being **family-integrated** in their organized mercy. This was so much of how the church has always understood the Proverbs 31 woman, for example, and that mothers could then model how to serve the poor to and with her children. Moreover, the family of the destitute was called up (whenever possible): "Those immediate relatives who would not offer such support were fined heavily."<sup>8</sup> Now we might not

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<sup>5</sup> Olasky, *ibid*, p. 7

<sup>6</sup> Olasky, *ibid*, p. 7

<sup>7</sup> Mather quoted in Olasky, *ibid*, p. 9

<sup>8</sup> Olasky, *ibid*, 13

have the leverage to do such things today, but where the church has the ability to challenge with words, it should.

Next, we see that the old model was **supplemental** in its giving. It did not seek to replace God-honoring work and stewardship with the permanent defeat and dependence of the poor man. If our view of man believes that the right external conditions or other material provisions will change his basic disposition—and if we are wrong about that—then it follows that money and other goods that flow in that direction will subsidize the poor person’s continued failure. All that is wrong (whether a direct result of sin or not) would be encouraged, and all that will get him out of the hole is suppressed by the flow of funds. Mather issued another challenge to his congregation in 1698: “Let us try to do good with as much application of mind as wicked men employ in doing evil.”<sup>9</sup> In short, let us have a doctrine and practice of charity that produces an excellence in subsidizing redemption (lowercase ‘r’)! The Christian is called to calculate their investment in eternal lifestyles, and to shift their investments away from temporal lifestyles. One cannot do that if he does not put his or her mind to it!

Finally, real needs are **pastorally assessed**. That does not mean that they need to be assessed by official “pastors,” but that the needs must be assessed according to the kind of being human beings are. Thus, the help in Puritan New England given was “almost always in kind—food, coal, cloth—rather than cash.” Again, there is a biblical worldview assumption. Our formative doctrines are at work. Nature is the way it is (Creation), the community is instituted the way it is (Providence), and man suffers under his own peculiar nature (Sin), so that one working assumption was “to treat all as human beings, as members of the community with responsibilities, rather than as animals.”<sup>10</sup> Note that for these early American Christians, to be a human being was to be in a covenantal bond, and to loose the moral responsibilities of these bonds was the same thing as to treat people more like animals. Other assumptions are in play. Mather, for example, “did not assume that men (and women) naturally *want* to work.”<sup>11</sup> Now, however those assumptions may grate on you, the first question is whether or not they are true. If they are, then the Puritan model is the one that will naturally fit the way the world is. It will work because it is true to the world, true to the man, and true to the nature of what will lift his spirit.

Olasky’s abiding premise behind his work was that “Cultures build systems of charity in the image of the god they worship.”<sup>12</sup> If the culture is narcissistic and materialistic, then chances are we will not have the categories in our mind for an act of love that is basically covenantal—i.e. an act of mercy that “micro-manages”

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<sup>9</sup> Mather, in Olasky, *ibid*, p. 9

<sup>10</sup> Olasky, *ibid*, p. 11

<sup>11</sup> Olasky, *ibid*, p. 9

<sup>12</sup> Olasky, *ibid*, p. 8

the behavior of its recipient and shepherds the sheep toward a greater taste for stewardship in the kingdom. It is a fact of nature that people treat commodities differently when they produced (or cultivated) it versus when they did not. There is a sense of responsibility at stake in the maintenance of that commodity. Adam was made to stand in the entire flow of the economy—supply and demand—and to the degree that he consumes without producing, he loses more and more of the grip on his image-bearing humanity. When people begin to expect goods and services as an entitlement, they become dehumanized in how they interact with those things. The church needs to understand this as a worship and discipleship issue.

#### 4) ...and *not as an alternative gospel*.

This last temptation is rapidly becoming the most popular. It was the chief abuse in the nineteenth century and went by the name “Social Gospel.” It is back. Fletcher Harper, the founder of the magazine which bears his name, observed in 1854 that, “the tendency at the present day is to magnify the political, the social, the secular, or what may be called the worldly-humanitarian aspects” of “professedly religious movements.”<sup>13</sup> He and others like him were dismissed. Why? First, because liberal theology had already made headway in all of the major houses of Protestantism; secondly, because the cause which he and other political realists—particular southern conservatives—were accused of upholding was slavery. Did not Christianity have something decisive to say about that wicked institution? Absolutely! Likewise, our faith speaks to the whole of the world’s institutionalized evil today. But what is our central message and our loudest boast [cf. 1 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 6:14]? That is our main question. It does not cease to be our main question when it comes time to save a little girl who is drowning, or, to teach a man to be a fisherman instead of just giving him a single fish. These, as we have seen, are as important as they are precisely because of the gospel: because of what they display about Jesus Christ. They lose their meaning—in fact, they lose their *effectiveness*—to the extent that they begin to replace the cross of Christ and our individual, eternal need for that atoning work as a new center of attention. The poor man’s attention span is at stake in how we feed and clothe him. That is because he is not merely materially poor, but in spirit, he is as poor and destitute as we [cf. Rev. 3:17-18]. We would add that *our* attention span—the attention of the whole church—is also at stake in how we organize to clothe, feed, give, save, etc.

#### Specific Policies

First and foremost, we would agree with all seven elements of the old Puritan view and seek to live by them in all that we do. We regard their approach as the true biblical framework. How we apply it may differ in this or that situation because of

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<sup>13</sup> Harper quoted in Timothy Smith, *Revivalism & Social Reform* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1980); p. 15

cultural differences that separate them from ourselves. We cannot apply the same institutional pressures, for example. We do not have the same percentage of our society's resources (every penny of their economy flowed through the hands of explicit believers or at least those who had to answer to the biblical framework) at our disposal. So, we will have to be more creative. Challenging businesses to give to what we now call "faith-based" charities will work to the degree that such owners are convinced that a more biblical church will naturally do more good. The leaders of our mercy ministries must sell the idea (i.e. the doctrinal vision) to groups who want to help.

The center-piece of church aid will be helping those who the Bible expressly mandates that we help: those in our own midst. Since such a demographic is made up of professing believers, such giving will coincide with a program of discipleship. If the recipient is genuinely disabled, the giving will be accompanied by pastoral care for their soul. If the recipient is able-bodied, then the giving will be accompanied by an elder-led (or elder-approved, should gifted non-elder leaders arise in this area) instruction on budgeting, tithing, work-ethic, and any other specific problem area that the elder/mentor identifies. A full-fledged doctrine of work and kingdom stewardship should be included on any formal classes or one-on-one studies. This shepherding process should include periodic (minimum quarterly) examinations of all of the relevant behavioral indicators. If there is an individual-specific problem such as time management, then it is appropriate for the mentor to inquire into those specifics at (and between) examination times. At the first instance of request for help, perhaps, the full amount of the need may be supplied. Following the initial discipleship training, a weaning process will ensue. Fewer resources will meet with increased productivity and faithfulness. Where there is no corresponding increase from the recipient, there will still be the reciprocal weaning of the support—and a renewed (and intensified) training process can begin. This can, and often should, be combined with disciplinary action where that is appropriate.

Anyone with a spare room, who feels led to share it, will not be left with the pressure and guilt of becoming a feudal lord. The very same standards that govern the church budget would shepherd the one who rents a space. For instance, if someone who is indigent is provided with a room, the church will supervise funds and other needs as their owner makes them known. On the other hand, for an able-bodied person who is provided with a room, the principles of stewardship will be monitored by quarterly meetings between owner, renter and a church elder. In other words, we will not abandon someone who provides a room to the harsh duty of kicking someone out who does not live up to their responsibilities. We will join them in applying that disciplinary action.

The common method of caring for the abandoned or widowed was for families to physically take them in. A mutual benefit would arise as the single woman's room

and board are cared for (whether or not she earns supplemental income) and she, in turn, helps with children, cooking, and cleaning. Another segment of society often neglected is made up of those kids—usually boys—with troubled pasts or toxic personalities in the present. Here we must exercise the most amount of what our culture would call “micro-management.” These young people need to be put on a program of radical discipleship, which would include rigorous labor. Farms are ideal if they have grown up in the city. Housework, particularly in the service of younger children, is preferable to re-soften girls who have rebelled or who have never had a female role model. We can show them the value of their own faithfulness and trusting others at the same time. This too will take individual homes, however.

A portion of the church budget will be devoted to charity—what is often called a “Barnabus Fund”—and will be open for the congregation’s knowledge. This ought to be done without earmarking such offerings so as to avoid the slippery slope toward a backdoor congregationalism of the rich. Simple access to how the church is spending its money is more than sufficient grounds for a church member to bring concerns to the elders.

Finally, the issue of rehabilitation in severe cases of psychological trauma or physical injury or abuse needs to be discussed. Here, we are more ready to enlist the help of trained professionals, though not in a way that would compromise anything that we have already said. There are ways of handling this kind of care that also distract from the gospel and thus do great harm to these broken people. In the first place, we must say that what we call psychological disorder is nothing but extreme forms of the same shattering that all of our souls experience in a fallen world. There is nothing whatsoever in the DDS (excepting that which is scientifically erroneous) that cannot be placed somewhere on a spectrum from where Adam was and where the demonic resides. Whether this or that case is pathology or possession is to be assessed through biblical lenses, and that cannot be farmed out to the “expert” unless that specialist has a biblical worldview. Moreover, women and/or children immediately coming out of abusive situations need to be treated to the same material care as the abandoned or widowed. A gospel-centered program of recovery is simple enough to construct with all of the resources out there.

Anyone led to serve in such ministries may begin to build up their knowledge of mercy ministries in general, or work-ethic, stewardship, or counseling for rehabilitation in particular with the following resources:

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