

Proposed Statement Concerning Mercy Ministries

The church is called to exhibit the love of our Triune God by following the scriptural model of mercy ministry; mercy that moves those in need to a place of productivity so that they may help others in need (Eph 4:28).

The Scriptures differentiate between a person who is truly in need and the sloth. God calls us to discriminate between the deserving and undeserving poor whenever possible.

Our efforts are to be focused on long-term changes not quick fixes. Poverty will be overcome in individuals and our culture by properly addressing the following three areas. 1. Faith in Christ with a lifestyle that shows that faith to be real. 2. Strong family ties-Fathers providing stable homes for their wives and children. 3. All who are physically able must work. From creation God has called mankind to work, taking dominion of the world. "Six days you shall labor" we find in the Ten Commandments. Man was created to work. Giving someone money does not necessarily constitute "help", it most often delays the inevitable. We strive to heal the sickness not just put salve on the symptom.

The church is the only institution that can properly nurture the values of faith, family and work, through the word revealed, the word made manifest and the Word incarnate.

The Word renews minds, readjusts us to reality and reforms our lifestyle. The *needy* need the Good News and all that comes along with it more than anything else. Right thinking leads to right actions. Wrong thinking always leads to wrong actions. God commands us in his Word that we are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5). No area of life is left untouched concerning the lordship of Christ. Cornelius Van Til wrote, "The Bible is authoritative on everything of which it speaks. And it speaks of everything." The poor need to be taught scripture so that their total selves will be transformed.

God has commissioned and gifted the church to motivate, educate and equip the saints in the work of the ministry. This begins and culminates in worship. Proper worship changes history and the world around us. God feeds us (shown beautifully in the Lord's Supper) and provides our every need. Here God shows mercy to all the poor and needy.

Families are to care for their own whenever possible. Family charity is the most effective because it is personal, flexible and promotes accountability.

The church should help those able to work find jobs. This will, in many cases, involve education in job skills and/or basic financial planning. In doing this we enable the poor to become self reliant, provide for their families, prepare for the future and share with others in need.

The Gospel of Mathew 25: 31-46 quotes our Lord speaking of a separation of the sheep from the goats. While always affirming that salvation is by faith (and that from God) not by works, lest any man boast, Scripture is quite clear that this faith is a lively faith. This faith is active. Jesus said, "for when I was hungry, you fed Me, when I was thirsty, you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was in prison and you visited Me." When asked, "When did these things happen?" Jesus replied, "When you did it to the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." Faith leads to obedience. Our merciful God calls us to be merciful.