**Session 7/Evangelism**

***Relying on God’s Grace and Mercy***

*2 Corinthians 9:8 AMP*

*And God is able to make all grace [every favor and earthly blessing] come in abundance to you, so that you may always [under all circumstances, regardless of the need] have complete sufficiency in everything [being completely self-sufficient in Him] and have an abundance for every good work and act of charity.*

We are able to keep a generous heart only as we remember that we are led by God’s grace and mercy.

Grace = receiving what we do not deserve.

Mercy = a withholding of what we do deserve.

Grace and mercy act like two reins on us, similar to what is on a bridle used when riding a horse. A horse gets it’s cues from the rider; who uses foot cues, verbal cues and shifting of her weight to let the horse know the expected direction. The reins, however, turn the horse in the intended direction either by laying them on the neck of the horse or a slight tugging with the hand on a rein. As the horse cannot see straight ahead (it’s eyes sit on either side of it’s head) it is up to the rider to let the horse know about obstacles, obstructions and detours. Without reins, a horse will pretty much run wild and the rider has no control. As God uses His hands to guide us - like a rider on a horse - we must depend on the reins of His grace and mercy to keep us on the right path!

Remember:

• Always depend on His grace and mercy.
• Always treat people with grace and mercy.
• Always err on the side of grace - giving what isn’t deserved.
• Plan to practice mercy when wronged or hurt - withholding vengeance.

• Remind others of the power and value of God’s grace and mercy.

Grace looks for the best for someone, no matter the offense they have committed. Mercy chooses to leave the vengeance to God, no matter the offense committed.

Jesus exemplified this for us in many ways:

-The woman caught in adultery - John 8:11
-His encounter with Zaccheus - Luke 19:1-9
-The healing of a woman bent with an infirmity - Luke 13:10-17

-The healing of the bleeding woman - Mark 5:25-34
-His Teaching on Revenge - Matthew 5:38-42
-His Teaching on Love for Enemies - Matthew 5:43-48

These are just a few examples of Jesus showing grace and mercy. It is always good to notice in the Gospels how He interacts with people obviously struggling or even in the act of sin against God - which was also a sin against Him. His kindness in sharing strong truth, clarity in His purpose with them and obvious love for them is not only an example for us but also a prayer request for us to reflect that same grace and mercy. It is only by His grace that we are able to reach out to others to share the Gospel in love and action. It is only by His mercy that we can continue to do so even as we make mistakes and

misstep. Thankfully, He is not expecting perfection. He is simply asking that we be willing and continue to learn as we grow in relationship with Him.

***Restitution***

At times, we as Volunteers may encounter the process of restitution in our Client’s lives. Why mention restitution?

res·ti·tu·tion: the restoration of something lost or stolen to its proper owner, recompense for injury or loss, an act of restoring or a condition of being restored.

• Usually is in conjunction with a confession of guilt and realization of offense committed.

• Involves an apology and recognition of the loss, hurt and damage the offense caused.
• It can have elements of punishment.
• It can come in the form of natural consequences to decisions made.

• Purpose is to bring about restoration.
• Is a biblical concept.
• Restitution does not replace forgiveness.
• Forgiveness can only be found in Jesus Christ; His life, death, and resurrection for us.

Many times, our Clients are struggling with guilt and shame. Guilt and shame are very real – guilt stems from the fact of having committed a specified or implied offense. Shame joins in with a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior. Natural conviction is usually the result of particular sin, a specific sin. Natural convictions usually fade away after a short time and there is no change in behavior or moral standing.

When we sin against another, we actually sin against God as well. We have injured two parties - our victim and God. While we do our best to work towards human forgiveness through restitution, we must understand that human forgiveness is optional - God’s forgiveness is what counts.

We do not exploit the emotions of guilt and shame by presenting the Gospel as just a means to assuage those feelings. Restitution can be a way for our Clients to work through those feelings, but we must not ever present the Gospel wrapped in restitution. **The Gospel is free, to any sinner to be absolved of any sin.** True spiritual conviction brings us to the place to recognize **all** sin in our lives, seek forgiveness and a new way to live. Spiritual conviction is durable and does not fade. It does not fade until it reaches it’s fullness – a life changed, with a moral compass set towards God’s direction.

Guilt and shame are not the are not our destiny when we have offended God. Those emotions are only there to point out that we need God! Human effort will not save us. We work through those feelings to get to the fact of God’s great, immeasurable, life-giving, sin washing love available to us when we place our faith in Jesus Christ. It is only then that we really begin to understand grace and mercy at work.

***Self-Reflection***

Write out your testimony and practice presenting the Gospel with a friend.

***The Plan of Salvation***

It is tough to admit that we are wrong. Even before God, we feel we are basically good, and we would like to think we are never as bad as some others. The truth is we are all sinners and can never be good enough to earn our way to heaven. God’s Word, the Bible, clearly states that ALL have done things that are wrong and against God. God is holy and just. Offenses against a Holy God deserve punishment. We are told in the Bible that the wages or payment for sin is death—eternal death in hell.
**However, a loving, merciful God has provided a rescue plan!**

**A = Admit that you have offended God.**

Both John the Baptist and Jesus himself began their preaching with the word, ‘Repent’. To repent means ‘change one’s mind’ or to turn — to go in another direction. How can we be led to repentance ? The first step toward repentance is true sorrow for what we’ve done wrong. We understand sorrow is more like the regret of a criminal who’s just been caught where the sorrow God recognizes is the deep remorse or conviction that produces a change in direction.

**B = Believe on Jesus Christ.**

Salvation is not complicated. Jesus said,

“Mark this: Unless you accept God’s kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you’ll never get in.” Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them.” Mark 10:15

A child simply puts their trust (faith) in the father’s strong arms. Likewise, we entrust our life to Jesus Christ—believing on Him and His finished work on the cross. Jesus Christ, the perfect, sinless lamb of God, laid down His life and took the penalty meant for us, dying in our place (Isaiah 53:6). He paid the debt we could not pay and redeemed us (bought us back) from the power of sin and death. (John 1:29 / Galatians 3:13 / Romans 3:25)

**C = Confess Jesus publicly.**

God did his part, sending His one and only Son to die in our place. He has offered us a free gift — salvation, the forgiveness of sin, eternal life with Him in heaven. BUT... we must receive that gift. We must confess our sins (1 John 1:9) and confess (or proclaim) our faith (belief) in the death, burial and resurrection of God’s son, Jesus Christ. Confessing with our mouth requires an outward, public action, not a secret, hidden, timid faith. God’s plan of salvation is freely offered to everyone.