

## MERCY

The Spirit-given ability to manifest practical, compassionate, cheerful love toward those who are suffering. More than human kindness, it is divine love acting in Christ's name to glorify the Father. The gift of mercy can be used, for example, to call on the sick and shut-in, to call on lapsed church members, to organize programs to meet social needs, to care for the disadvantaged or comfort those who are mourning.

### CHARACTERISTICS

1. A deep desire to demonstrate the love and concern Jesus has for hurting people.
2. An ability to sense genuine love. A greater sensitivity to the difference between surface concern and what truly comes from the heart.
3. A need for deep friendships in which there is mutual commitment and a willingness to stand up for friends when they are hurt or rejected.
4. A greater concern for mental or emotional joy or distress than physical concerns.
5. A tendency to attract people who are having mental and/or emotional distress.
6. A desire to remove what causes someone pain, even if it means personal sacrifice.
7. An ability to bring joyfulness into a difficult situation without making light of someone's needs.
8. An ability to share the happiness of those who are happy and enter the grief of those who are in sorrow.

### CAUTIONS

1. Failing to be firm and decisive when necessary to avoid hurting or offending others, which often causes greater hurt and disappointment.
2. Taking up offenses for those who have been hurt, especially when a friend has been hurt.
3. Making decisions based on emotions rather than on objective logic.
4. Promoting improper affection from those of the opposite sex that may be drawn to them because they are sensitive, understanding, and responsive listeners. When counseling, safeguards must be established to avoid improper emotional attachments.
5. Cutting off fellowship with those who are insensitive to others; feeling emotionally superior because others are unable to care about people as much as they do.
6. Failing to recognize God's purposes in allowing people to suffer. Unlike exhorters who look at suffering as a way to promote spiritual growth, those with the gift of mercy tend to reject the idea that God would allow a person to suffer for any good purpose, preferring to remove the cause of suffering as soon as possible.
7. Establishing possessive friendships, needing commitment and closeness, and being deeply hurt when there is not a mutual commitment to the friendship.