

# THE MERCY JOURNEY

## FOR FAMILIES

Bringing hope and healing  
to a broken world



A Barna Workbook  
Produced in Partnership  
with The Reimagine Group

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**FOR FAMILIES**

Bringing hope and healing  
to a broken world

Research commissioned by  
The Reimagine Group, Alpharetta, Georgia

Research conducted by  
Barna Group, Ventura, California

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## PREFACE

For most of my Christian life, I viewed mercy as a deed or act, likely one of pity. But in the last several years, I have discovered mercy is an *investment*—albeit often a messy and costly one. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” If grace is amazing, mercy is magnificent. And when we sow seeds of mercy in the lives of others, we are guaranteed to reap mercy ourselves.

In my recent book, *The God Impulse: The Power of Mercy in an Unmerciful World*, I unpacked the reality that God’s first impulse toward us is one of mercy. Imagine a time in your life when, like the prodigal son, you totally blew it—yet when you returned to God, he ran to you with outspread arms. Jesus commands us to “go and do the same” (Luke 10:37). Mercy is a bridge, and God created us for interdependency and community. Our capacity, and much of our

provision, stems from leaning into him and the communities he has provided in a vulnerable and interdependent way.

What if, just as we are desperately dependent on God’s daily mercies, a broken world may depend on daily mercies from us?

The Reimagine Group and I commissioned this Barna study to explore the notion that if we become imbalanced in our understanding of the gospel, then we cease to be a bridge to a lost and hurting world. Barna found that one-third of practicing Christians (33%) views the gospel as a mission of restoration and renewal, begun on the cross and continued in our acts of love, justice and mercy. This view acknowledges that everything flows from the completed work of Christ—his death, resurrection and ascension—and that his work in bringing his Kingdom to earth will be through his spirit and his Church.

But do we *really* understand what mercy is? What is our propensity to demonstrate it to those around us through forgiveness, compassion and justice, to represent a gospel that is about more than our individual, personal salvation?

**“If we become imbalanced in our understanding of the gospel, then we cease to be a bridge to a lost and hurting world.”**

At times, the results of this study are sobering, and I hope they will serve as a catalyst or, at least, a mirror for my fellow believers. I know they have for me. If I see mercy as a deed, it is easy for me to check it off my list or even outsource it to another party, like I would for landscaping, tax preparation or

automotive repairs. Has this same spirit of outsourcing crept into our displays of compassion? Looking at a number of areas of need, from poverty to incarceration, this study shows that only 17 percent of practicing Christians feel they personally carry a primary responsibility to provide help in person.

Embodied mercy is the full picture of the gospel. Jesus' ministry was hands-on, always seeing the people before him, being moved to compassion, reaching out to touch them and providing physical *and* spiritual relief. His mercy toward us was an *investment* in our eternity. I hope *The Mercy Journey* leads us back to that same type of expression—in our hearts, homes, churches and communities.

### **Jack Alexander**

*Founder of The Reimagine Group*

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**Jack Alexander**, founder of The Reimagine Group, has a business background as an entrepreneur and has co-founded and built business services and technology companies across diverse industries. He is author of *The God Guarantee* (foreword by Timothy Keller) and *The God Impulse* (foreword by Walter Brueggemann). Jack often speaks at churches, events and conferences and enjoys consulting with business leaders, pastors and ministry leaders. Jack and his wife, Lisa, live in Atlanta and have three sons and six grandchildren.



## INTRODUCTION

### Embarking on The Mercy Journey in Your Household

An understanding of mercy is foundational to our understanding of the gospel and to the Christian life as a whole. For people of faith, merciful thoughts and decisions should permeate our daily lives—starting within our families and most intimate relationships.

But the data show both the external influences and internal dynamics of our households can complicate this effort. Moderating screen time, fighting for that ever-elusive work-life balance, navigating relationships in a fraught political climate, discussing faith in an increasingly secularized society, cultivating generosity in an age of compassion fatigue—these are just some of the factors that, as multiple Barna Group studies attest, influence the atmospheres and values of our homes. Technology alone, parents tell us, has made it harder than ever to raise children.

*The Mercy Journey* is a timely opportunity to pause and reflect on how Christians can provide hope and healing in a broken world. Jack Alexander, founder of The Reimagine Group, and his team first approached Barna to survey perceptions and experiences of mercy for his book, *The God Impulse: The Power of Mercy in an Unmerciful World*. The study, conducted among both practicing Christians and pastors, covers topics such as giving and receiving forgiveness, what mercy looks like and to whom it should extend and how individuals and churches go about providing relief to those in need.

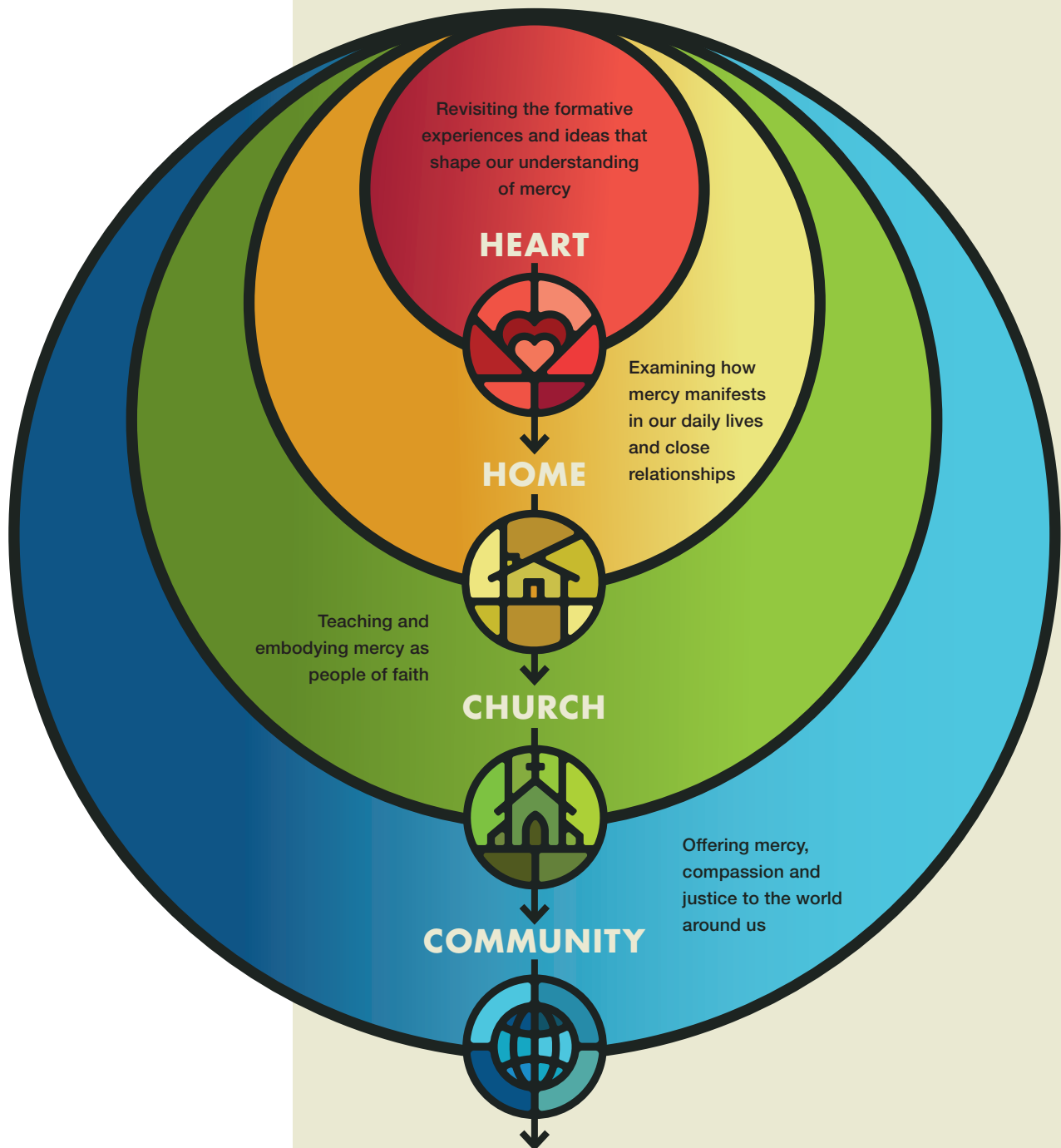
This workbook, *The Mercy Journey for Families*, explores some of the primary themes and findings as they relate to our daily interactions and decisions. It is intended to help parents, children and other housemates go on an interactive exploration of the topic of mercy. Throughout these pages, you'll find relevant data from Barna, applications and discussion prompts for your family and insights from experts and practitioners to help you cultivate compassion and kindness in your home environment.

The researchers recognize that some of the terms in this workbook—mercy, compassion, forgiveness, justice, truth, empathy and so on—are interconnected. Further, perceptions of these virtues and reports of how they have been either experienced or carried out in the lives of Christians are subjective. But Barna's hope is that this introspective study of how these gifts have been received and offered will produce more thoughtful conversations and compassionate endeavors. In embarking on this journey, the presence of Christians and the work of the Church can become a healing balm in a merciless age.



This workbook is part of *The Mercy Journey* collection, a data-driven exploration of the topic of mercy, based on Barna research conducted in partnership with The Reimagine Group. This resource is set up to first inspire reflection and then action, moving outward from our **hearts**, to our **homes**, to our **churches** and, finally, to our **communities**.

## THE MERCY JOURNEY MAP



# MERCY IN OUR HEARTS

## TURNING POINTS: Applications for Families

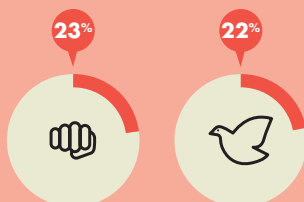
Seven in 10 practicing Christians (**70%**) believe that forgiveness entails the repairing of relationships. **Forty percent** say real forgiveness is characterized by forgetting what was done.

- ⊕ What does it look like to give and receive forgiveness? What actions or mindsets undermine an atmosphere of forgiveness?
- ⊕ Discuss specific examples of conflict or wrongdoing—lying, making fun of someone, neglecting responsibilities and more—and what it might look like to correct them.

The percentage of practicing Christians who say they have offered unconditional forgiveness (**76%**) exceeds the percentage who say they have received it (**55%**).

- ⊕ What does a sincere apology include or sound like?
- ⊕ Create a “resolution template” for your family—a blueprint for giving apologies or offering forgiveness. In a calm, conflict-free moment, talk over and commit to this standard as a family. Hang this template in a central spot as a reminder.

Around one in four practicing Christians (**23%**) has a person in their life who “they just can’t forgive.” More than one-fifth of practicing Christians (**22%**) reports struggling with receiving forgiveness for something they have personally done wrong.



- ⊕ Can you think of an ongoing conflict that has not been resolved, within or outside of your household?
- ⊕ Consider a merciful next step you could make or initiate in one of your relationships—a conversation that could be had, a card that could be sent, a favor that could be offered.

Older practicing Christians more often associate true forgiveness with mended relationships (**78%** of Elders and **75%** of Boomers, vs. **65%** of Gen X and **66%** of Millennials), lessening someone else’s suffering (**52%** of Elders and **49%** of Boomers, vs. **38%** of Gen X and **39%** of Millennials) and not seeking retribution (**70%** of Elders and **68%** of Boomers, vs. **52%** of Gen X and **49%** of Millennials).

- ⊕ What factors—in your community, culture, church, entertainment and so on—influence your understanding of concepts like mercy, compassion, justice or forgiveness?
- ⊕ As a family, decide upon a reading plan, perhaps including scripture and other resources, to discover mercy’s meaning as a group.

## How Can Parents Model Mercy?

### A Q&A with Paul Tripp

**Q. What are some ways that heads of households can treat mercy and compassion (not just efficiency, comfort and so on) as important parts of their decision-making?**

**A.** As a Christian parent, you can't reduce parenting down to having a clear set of rules, accompanied by a corresponding set of punishments. When parents do this, they tend to use "tools"—such as guilt, fear, shame, manipulation, etc.—that don't produce the environment that God intended for parents to foster.

In moments of correction, I shouldn't be asking myself what the child has done and what punishment they deserve, or what response I want from them in the specific situation. Rather, I am asking a larger, more heart-oriented question: "What is God seeking to reveal right here, right now in the heart and life of my child, and how can I be part of it?"

**"You can't reduce parenting down to having a clear set of rules, accompanied by a corresponding set of punishments."**

I am not just focused on "fixing" the situation and holding the child accountable, but on helping them take another step in the life-long process of change in their heart that will result in changes in the way this child thinks, decides, speaks and acts.

**Q. What encouragement would you give to parents to embrace their own need for mercy—even from themselves?**

**A.** It is vital to remember that Jesus came to earth and measured up in every way precisely because God knew *we* would not measure up. God is not surprised by a parent's failure and has already extended to them his forgiving and enabling grace.

You have been blessed by the relationships and help of the body of Christ of which you are part. You do not have to be self-sufficient. Seek the advice of wise and seasoned parents, find people who are willing to be available to comfort and encourage you when you are distraught, and be willing to admit your struggle when you're going through a rough patch. Finally, find families who can extend your family and, in moments, be surrogate parents to your children.




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**Dr. Paul David Tripp** is a pastor, international speaker and best selling author with more than 20 books on Christian living, including the award-winning *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*.

# MERCY IN OUR HOMES

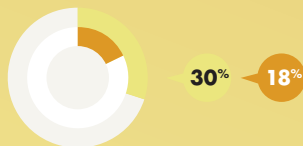


## TURNING POINTS: Applications for Families

Practicing Christians see their inner circles, such as family members or church friends, as highly deserving of mercy—more so than those who have committed a wrongdoing, such as a personal offense or a crime.

- ⊕ Where have you limited your expressions of mercy or compassion with people you know or don't know? Why?
- ⊕ Look at your schedule for the week. Insert an event or task that gets you out of your bubble and into contact with new faces, people you disagree with or other relationships that aren't necessarily comfortable or convenient.

Parents are more likely to say there is something for which they personally struggle to receive forgiveness (**30%** vs. **18%** of those without children in the home).



- ⊕ Parents and guardians: What has raising children taught you about yourself (for good or bad)? What has it shown you about unconditional forgiveness and the way that God sees us?
- ⊕ Set a weekly “words of affirmation” time and draw names to determine a rotation of reassurance. Don't divvy up by age or relationship, but instead make sure children have an opportunity to share kind words about adults, and vice versa.

Nearly two-thirds of practicing Christians (**63%**) say mercy affects how they speak and act. One in five respondents says mercy doesn't influence their actions (**21%**), or that they don't think much about its role in their lifestyle (**21%**).

- ⊕ What factors are typically at the helm of the decision making in your household?
- ⊕ Set up a visual reminder—perhaps a note on an alarm clock or a verse over the front door—to consider the ways that mercy should guide thoughts, conversations and actions.

Married practicing Christians are more likely to associate forgiveness with repaired relationships (**72%** vs. **62%** of never married) or not seeking retribution (**61%** vs. **51%** never married).

- ⊕ Spouses: Does your marriage put a priority on peacemaking? Beyond resolving conflicts, what are other ways to practice mercy in marriage?
- ⊕ Make a “mercy jar” filled with prompts for moments when couples need mediating. Include small mementoes from favorite memories or previous obstacles overcome, suggestions for quality time or phrases to help steer a disagreement. (“I messed up.” “I'm thankful for you because ...” “Let's just flip a coin this time.”)

## Households of Faith: Mercy in Action

*The Mercy Journey* reveals a number of ways that our families influence our definitions, memories and expressions of forgiveness or compassion. Further, *Households of Faith*, a recent Barna report produced in partnership with Lutheran Hour Ministries, finds evidence of intentional spiritual, even pastoral, moments in the close relationships that make up a home, including some discussions and actions related to mercy.

According to U.S. practicing Christians' descriptions of their household interactions, grandparents hardly ever participate in a home (whether as a member or regular visitor) without trying to lead or interact on a spiritual level. For example, grandfathers and grandmothers are the most selected relationship when respondents are asked which members of their household or extended household talk to them about God's forgiveness (56%). Mothers (52%) and fathers (43%) follow. Accordingly, this is a task step-parents (29%) are also likely to take up. Four in 10 (39%) say their husband or wife shares about their faith in this way, part of a trend of spouses being spiritual partners for practicing Christians.

There is also reason to believe that practicing Christians who live with others have frequent chances to practice forgiveness with their family members or housemates. For instance, a majority says that confrontations are a frequent interaction in their home. Looking at categories of living arrangements, three in four nuclear family (76%), multi-generational (75%) and couple households (75%) report a direct confrontation in the past month, with single-parent households (70%) close behind. Just over half of those in roommate households (55%)—which are typically less intimate or interactive in general—recall this kind of communication. Considering this, it's not surprising to see that significant others or children are most often noted as the individuals on the other end of these encounters. It shouldn't necessarily be assumed that confrontation equals conflict, however; these could be productive opportunities for growing, learning, forgiving or moving on. After all, respondents are just as likely to report praying with members of their household as confronting them, and few describe their home atmosphere as *tense* (9%), preferring adjectives like *loving* (67%) or *peaceful* (55%) instead.

When it comes to parent-child relationships today, the responses of practicing Christian teens are especially enlightening. Gen Z respondents in this survey consistently identified their

**Confrontations could be productive opportunities for growing, learning, forgiving or moving on**

mothers as the principal housemate for almost all activities, from talking about faith (70% vs. 56% fathers) to having confrontations (63% vs. 43%). This also applies to conversations about God's forgiveness, something two-thirds of teens (66%) say their mom leads, compared to less than half (47%) who receive this spiritual instruction from their dad. Grandparents fill the gap here, according to 6 in 10 teens.

How can parents, as well as any Christian adult, play a part in imparting a robust understanding of mercy to the next generation, especially those who are members of their own household? In *Households of Faith*, Barbara Reaoch, director of Bible Study Fellowship's children's division, advocates for a "live it and tell it" approach to spiritual leadership, that intentionally applies the Bible in everyday interactions with—and in front of—kids. An example from Reaoch: "[One] woman said that when her family got home from church after hearing a sermon on Matthew 6:14–15, God gave her an opportunity to ask her son's forgiveness for speaking harshly. Later she overheard him asking his younger brother's forgiveness for an offense."

Adapted from *Households of Faith* (Barna Group, 2018).  
Produced in partnership with Lutheran Hour Ministries.

## COMMON SPIRITUAL COACHES IN ALL HOUSEHOLDS

How do the people in your household or extended household talk to you about their faith?

	Teaches me about the Bible	Talks with me about God's forgiveness	Sets an example	Teaches me about traditions	Encourages me to go to church	Encourages me in other ways
1	Grandparent 55%	Grandparent 56%	Grandparent 67%	Grandparent 67%	Grandparent 65%	Grandparent 62%
2	Mother 49%	Mother 52%	Mother 58%	Mother 53%	Mother 61%	Spouse 60%
3	Father 44%	Father 43%	Father 56%	Father 48%	Father 51%	Mother 57%
4	Spouse 34%	Spouse 39%	Spouse 48%	Step-parent 32%	Spouse 44%	Father 53%
5	Roommate 29%	Friend 34%	Step-parent 44%	In-laws 30%	Step-parent 41%	Friend 48%
6	Step-parent 26%	Roommate 29%	Friend 38%	Friend 26%	In-laws 41%	Step-parent 47%
7	Friend 23%	Step-parent 29%	In-laws 36%	Spouse 25%	Friend 32%	In-laws 44%
8	Unmarried partner 21%	In-laws 28%	Other relative 31%	Other non-relative 22%	Unmarried partner 29%	Unmarried partner 44%
9	Other non-relative 21%	Unmarried partner 25%	Unmarried partner 30%	Roommate 21%	Roommate 28%	Other relative 41%
10	Other relative 20%	Other relative 25%	Sibling 28%	Other relative 20%	Other relative 27%	Sibling 32%
11	In-laws 18%	Other non-relative 24%	Roommate 27%	Sibling 17%	Sibling 24%	Other non-relative 31%
12	Sibling 14%	Sibling 19%	Other non-relative 23%	Unmarried partner 16%	Other non-relative 20%	Grandchild 31%
13	Child 8%	Child 14%	Grandchild 15%	Child 7%	Child 13%	Roommate 30%
14	Grandchild 7%	Grandchild 11%	Child 13%	Grandchild 6%	Grandchild 12%	Child 26%

*n*=2,347 U.S. practicing Christian adults and teens who do not live alone, April 5–11, 2018. Respondents were only shown relationship types they live with or who visit them regularly in their home, not including children under age 18.

## Communicating Mercy Within Marriage

### A Q&A with BJ Thompson

**Q. What is unique about the connection between spouses that seems to foster an awareness of mercy?**

**A.** Marriage is probably one of the most vulnerable relationships you'll be blessed to be a part of. It's a relationship that exposes deep insecurities, fears, worries and anxieties. Marriage will expose the fact that you're not as self-sufficient or autonomous as you thought. Your spouse, whether they realize it or not, becomes a necessary agent for dispensing mercy. The relationship is so reciprocal that when you are not operating with mercy, it is no longer a healthy relationship.

**“Your spouse becomes a necessary agent for dispensing mercy.”**

**Q. How would you encourage people who might not be married to cultivate merciful responses in their intimate relationships?**

**A.** Part of being in a covenant relationship with Jesus means you're a covenant individual. There are things about you that have to be shaped by wrestling in committed relationship with others. That opportunity and encouragement is available for all people who are willing to risk vulnerability, to risk loving someone outside of themselves.

**Q. Married adults are more likely to say forgiving means forgetting. What do you think about that?**

**A.** That's the traditional or conditioned response. I also think it's a cheapened response, and I'll tell you why: To forget could also mean to absorb trauma without processing it.

I would advise them to set aside their phones and express the range of emotional intelligence, to do their best to put words to their feelings. Instead of just saying they're angry, they could use more vulnerable language or communicate the impact of

what has happened: “I feel ashamed by that.” “I felt very guilty about what you did.” “I was embarrassed by that.” “You dehumanized me in that way.”

**Q. How should people actually voice confession or forgiveness in the home?**

**A.** There's this phrase: “Is that what I'm hearing you say?” It's used by counselors to ensure what's being said is being heard correctly. It resolves what was *intended* to be communicated from the other person. That's number one, that understanding.

Number two is empathy. Empathy has to do with being oneself and living in compassion. When individuals may be self-righteous or don't have empathy, their apologies don't mean much. Once you enter into both understanding and empathy, and then you make the apology, it lands the plane onto the runway.



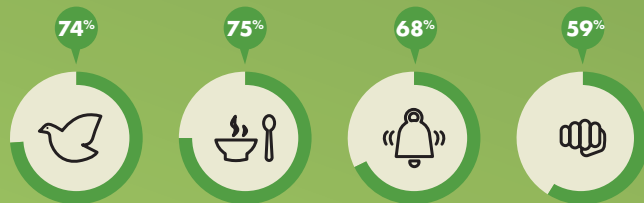
**BJ Thompson** is an author, speaker, life coach and the executive director of Build a Better Us, a non-profit that provides resources for holistic development of individuals and couples.

# MERCY IN OUR CHURCHES



## TURNING POINTS: Applications for Families

Three-quarters of practicing Christians (**74%**) say their pastor or someone else has taught about mercy in their church at least once in the past three months. A majority of practicing Christians says their church also encourages them to help poor people (**75%**), those in distress (68%) or someone who has wronged them (**59%**).



- ⊕ How often is mercy addressed at your church, either through sermons or programs? Is this message being received by family members of all ages?
- ⊕ If you haven't yet, sign up to volunteer with a specific program, outreach or department of your church. Ask each family member to contemplate how they can best be a part of imparting mercy through the local church.

Practicing Christians don't significantly differ from the general population in reporting feelings of high compassion for those in distress (**55% vs. 52%**), the poor (**50% vs. 46%**), someone who has wronged them (**13% vs. 9%**) or someone who has committed a crime (**9% vs. 6%**).

- ⊕ Who is someone you think of as being very merciful or compassionate? Do you learn about faith or God from them?
- ⊕ Commit to a prayer focus for the next week or month: that any acts of goodness or compassion done by you or your household would represent Christ well.

Pastors and practicing Christians present different assessments of how their church offers mercy, whether by meeting spiritual or physical needs. Pastors tend to be more optimistic. The biggest margin occurs concerning care for widows and orphans, which **72 percent** of pastors and just over half of congregants say is practiced by their church.

- ⊕ How well do you know your church? Are you well versed in what it provides for members of both the congregation and the community? Do you have chances to speak informally with pastors, staff members or elders?
- ⊕ Extend yourself to a pastor or other church leader in a new way this week. Perhaps invite them for coffee or a meal at your house or ask your whole family to sign an encouraging note to send to their office.



## Building a Kind Home

### A Q&A with Shaunti Feldhahn

#### Q. How do we overcome “kindness blindness”?

**A.** Often, we will treat our spouse or our kids in a way we would never treat a close friend. I will talk in a tone of voice to my daughter or my son in a way I would never talk to one of my best friends. Why is that? We often tend to treat others in a more purposeful way because we’re trying to bless them or we’re trying to maintain a friendship. Well, you know my marriage is supposed to be my closest friendship. Why am I not putting the same effort into that?

Pick one person to be really purposeful about in some sort of initiative of kindness, like the 30-day Kindness Challenge. There are three things that we ask people to do for 30 days—and, as you do them, it starts changing your feelings toward this other person.

**“Pick one person to be really purposeful about in some sort of initiative of kindness.”**

#### 1. Don’t say anything negative about that person—either to them or about them.

That’s often where we sabotage how we feel about somebody. Let’s just say I’m in a difficult season with my husband. If I’m polite to him, but I go to my girlfriends at work and say, “Uh, you would not believe what he did!” I’m actually sabotaging how I feel about him. I’m training myself to be an unkind person.

**2. Find and say something that’s positive.** Like, “Thanks for taking the kids out. I know you’re really tired, and you took them out and you played with them anyway. You’re a really good dad.” And tell somebody else about this too!

**3. Do a small action of kindness or generosity.**

What we found is that, if you do those things, suddenly the stuff that used to bug you doesn’t bug you as much anymore. It’s still there; it just doesn’t loom so large in your eyes, and you start noticing all these things that are actually quite good about this person. It makes it so much easier to have mercy, love them and be kind. I think it’s why in Philippians 4:4, Paul says, “I say it again—rejoice!” You think on whatever is lovely. You think on what is excellent and worthy of praise.



**Shaunti Feldhahn** is a social researcher, speaker and the author of several best selling books, including her most recent, *The Kindness Challenge*.

# MERCY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

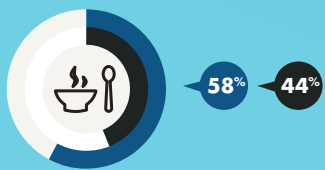


## TURNING POINTS: Applications for Families

If approached by a man who appears to be homeless and requests money, more than half of practicing Christians say they would begin by praying for him **(59%)** or providing something other than money, such as a meal **(54%)**.

- ⊕ When was the last time someone in need directly asked you for help? How did you feel? How did you respond? Did you get to know them well?
- ⊕ As a family, choose someone to help or support this week—with tangible as well as relational or spiritual needs.

Among practicing Christians, more liberals than conservatives claim a high level of compassion for the poor **(58% vs. 44%)**. Meanwhile, conservatives are more likely than liberals to belong to a church that they think clearly models compassion, whether with money, goods or time.



- ⊕ How often do you speak with people of another ideology or party? Where do you most often find common ground or a spirit of kindness, even in a divided political climate?
- ⊕ Strive to create an environment that might be an antidote to political discord (if only in your household!). Some new rules: Close any heated discussion about a headline or politician with prayer. Host dinners or cultivate friendships that reach across ideological lines. When an event, controversy or policy upsets you, channel that disappointment by deciding as a family which relevant charity you'll donate to.

Practicing Christians with some proximity to economic hardship—either through personal experience or through a relationship with someone who has been at risk of homelessness or in need of public assistance—exhibit more compassionate attitudes and actions.

- ⊕ What's the toughest thing you've ever gone through? Has it changed the way you live now or the way you respond to people in similar situations?
- ⊕ Create an empathy curriculum for your family—perhaps a collection of films, a reading list or a day trip to a nonprofit or museums that will expose everyone to perspectives and contexts other than their own.

## CONCLUSION

By now, we hope you can tell there's a reason that one of the phases of *The Mercy Journey* singles out the home. Home is a proving ground, a pivotal realm in which our beliefs are contemplated and carried out even when few are watching. For Christian families, home is where core ideas about compassion, forgiveness, justice and God's love for us take root, potentially nurturing the character and decisions of housemates (particularly children) for the long term.

Further, every other phase of *The Mercy Journey*—heart, church and community— cannot be extricated from the daily routines and intimate relationships of family. Barna's research suggests some of these close ties may even add new dimensions to our expressions of compassion and forgiveness. Thus, it's crucial to include and examine the family as Christians strive to understand the meaning of mercy.

Of course, no family is perfect. The term "family" itself is complicated, encompassing groups inherited or chosen, close-knit or broken. Allowing an awareness of mercy to permeate your life may require addressing conflicts, habits or misconceptions you've long carried, as a unit or as individuals. As this study shows, practicing Christians struggle to feel compassion toward someone who has wronged them—and those offenders

may be quite near and dear. At times, a commitment to mercy may even need to be worked out without the presence or participation of some relatives. The statistics, interviews, discussion questions and action steps in this workbook are intended to help guide you through some of these twists and turns on your family's journey.

Moments shared as a family range from the mundane to the identity-shaping and transformative—and in each of those moments, Christians are called to follow a "God of compassion and mercy ... filled with un-failing love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15). Whatever your roles—spouse, parent, grandparent, in-law, child, sibling, aunt or uncle, cousin or honorary friend-turned-family-member—we hope *The Mercy Journey* ultimately leads you to be a more mindful recipient and minister of mercy, as representatives of both your own family and the family of God.

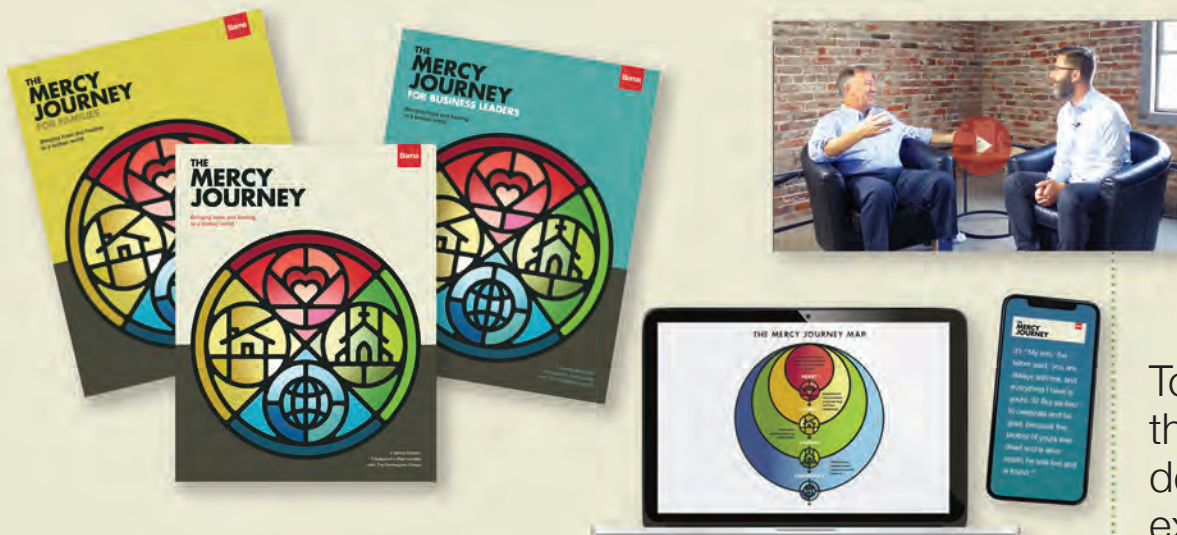
# Travel *The Mercy Journey* with Your Church or Organization

Scripture mandates that the people of God are to “love mercy” (Micah 6:8). Jesus once instructed a group of listeners to “go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’” (Matthew 9:13).

God desires his people to be living expressions of his mercy on earth. How can we honor his instruction? Where does mercy fit into our understanding of the gospel? How can we embrace mercy so it overflows into our actions, conversations and relationships?

New data from Barna Group show that the Church at large lacks consensus in answering these questions. Informed by these findings, Barna and The Reimagine Group have produced a comprehensive suite of tools that will help you lead your church, family or team to a deeper awareness and embrace of mercy—in your hearts, homes, churches and communities. Shaped by the insights of ministry experts and practitioners, these tools include:

- Sermon development outlines created by a teaching pastor
- Small group discussion and leader guides
- Presentation slides and note-taking templates
- Customizable promotional images for social media, digital communications and print materials
- Video interviews with key faith and business leaders
- Weekly email templates to reinforce and encourage content engagement among your group
- *The Mercy Journey* workbooks for business leaders and families



This holistic toolkit—the first of its kind from Barna—will maximize your ability to lead your church to embody the whole gospel.

To get access to these tools and deepen your experience, visit [www.barna.com/mercyjourney](http://www.barna.com/mercyjourney)

## METHODOLOGY

This study is based on quantitative surveys of 1,007 U.S. adults, 1,502 U.S. practicing Christian adults and 600 U.S. senior pastors of Protestant churches. Among pastors, Barna oversampled to include more perspectives of black pastors (100 respondents total). Interviews were completed online and by telephone between April and August 2018. The rate of error is + / - 2.3 percent for practicing Christians, 3.9 percent for pastors and 2.9 percent for the general population, at the 95 percent confidence level.

**Practicing Christians** are self-identified Christians who say their faith is very important in their lives and have attended a worship service within the past month.

**Gen Z** were born 1999 to 2015 (only 13- to 18-year-olds included).

**Millennials** were born 1984 to 1998.

**Gen X** were born 1965 to 1983.

**Boomers** were born 1946 to 1964.

**Elders** were born before 1946.

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We are grateful for the insights of additional contributors: Shaunti Feldhahn, BJ Thompson and Paul Tripp.

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## ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTNERS

**Barna Group** is a research firm dedicated to providing actionable insights on faith and culture, with a particular focus on the Christian Church. Since 1984, Barna has conducted more than one million interviews in the course of hundreds of studies, and has become a go-to source for organizations that want to better understand a complex and changing world from a faith perspective. Barna's clients and partners include a broad range of academic institutions, churches, non-profits and businesses, such as Alpha, the Templeton Foundation, Fuller Seminary, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Maclellan Foundation, DreamWorks Animation, Focus Features, Habitat for Humanity, The Navigators, NBC-Universal, the ONE Campaign, Paramount Pictures, the

Salvation Army, Walden Media, Sony and World Vision. The firm's studies are frequently quoted by major media outlets such as *The Economist*, BBC, CNN, USA Today, the *Wall Street Journal*, Fox News, *Huffington Post*, *The New York Times* and *the Los Angeles Times*.

[Barna.com](http://Barna.com)

**The Reimagine Group** was formed in 2011 to provide a variety of video, books and study guides resources to help Christians grow and mature. Inspired by Jesus' words to his followers in Matthew 5, Reimagine has helped thousands of Christians to look at the deeper heart issues in life and "reimagine" generosity, stewardship, mission, overcoming fear, mercy and many other topics.

In 2018, Reimagine released *The Generosity Pivot*, building the case for the Church to adopt a more holistic, relational approach to generosity. Reimagine's founder and chairman, Jack Alexander, has written two books: *The God Guarantee: Finding Freedom from the Fear of Not Having Enough* (2017) and *The God Impulse: The Power of Mercy in an Unmerciful World* (2018).

[TheReimagineGroup.com](http://TheReimagineGroup.com)