

## What Does God Require? (Micah 6:8)

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The mother of four growing children went to a counselor because she felt that she was a failure. She had trained for ministry and had hoped to one day serve the Lord as a missionary overseas if the Lord really wanted her to serve overseas. But instead of going on to the mission field, she fell in love and married a widower with four children. Barely able to keep her household functioning, she was not able to engage in any formal ministry. She had wrongly concluded that God was subjecting her to well-deserved chastisement for not obeying His call to the mission field.

The Christian counselor pointed her to Micah 6:8, which asks, “What does the Lord require of thee?” Immediately that question is answered, “To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” The mother of the four children realized that she could meet these requirements without going to a foreign mission field. And meet them she did! She raised her children for the Lord. No matter where we are at in life, no matter how many failures we have passed through in life, we can always come back to what God requires of our lives right now. God requires justice, mercy, and humility from our lives.

Have you ever asked yourself, “What does the Lord really require of me? What does God expect out of my life today, next week, and next year?” Those of us who really desire to please God and do what the Lord wants must take to heart what Micah told the northern kingdom of Israel who had strayed from God. The people of God needed a fresh understanding concerning what God actually required of them.

Micah 6:8 declares:

“He hath shewed thee, O man (any person in Israel), what *is* good (beneficial); and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

The pagan world of today does not care what God requires! But sometimes even God's people can lose sight of how God requires them to live and what God requires from their lives. As God's people, we can become backslidden, dormant, and stuck in our Christian walk and need to once again focus on what God requires of us as His people. The child of God should be sincere and have their ears open to what the Lord requires of their lives. In Micah 6:8, there is a general description and overview of the way God wants His people to live. There is absolutely no question regarding what God requires for our daily Christian living. It is clearly stated in this text of Scripture. This should cause us to perk up our ears. God is about to tell us what He requires from our lives. Wow!

Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Micah 1:1) who were kings of Judah in the southern kingdom. However, his prophecy concerns both Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, while Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. Although he was a man from the southern kingdom, a great deal of his prophecy had to do with the northern kingdom. He spoke to the nation during the time that the northern kingdom was being attacked by Assyria.

It would be the northern kingdom that would be carried away into Assyrian captivity. With enemies on their doorstep, the children of Israel began to wonder what God required of them. They were bringing sacrifices and following the Mosaic calendar. However, we find that God wanted more than just ritualism; He wanted the reality of true spiritual living. Sadly, if we are not doing what God requires of us as Christians, then our lives will become meaningless and misdirected.

God requires His children to live a spiritual life before Him and others.

There are two views regarding God's requirements.

### **1. The legalistic view (Micah 6:6-7)**

Of course, the basic thrust of legalism means that we seek to live our life only by law (rules and rituals) but forget about the most important things in life – spiritual living in our attitudes, actions, and inward life.

Micah 6:6-7 covers the legalistic questions:

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?”

These are questions that Micah asked knowing the pathetic spiritual state of his people. He was talking for the people and in the place of the people. They had lapsed into ritualism but no longer possessed a true relationship with God. So, Micah represented the backslidden people, while asking these questions, and the questions reveal where the people were at in relationship to their spiritual lives.

Knowing their way of their thinking, Micah speaks for the people and generally asks this question: “What does God want from me anyway?” He knew what his people were thinking. Therefore, he begins to ask some questions to demonstrate the temperature of their spiritual lives.

The legalistic approach to finding out God’s requirements revolved around asking questions so the people could try and dodge God’s will. We sometimes ask, “What do you want from me God” when God has already revealed His will to us in His Word. We get the impression that those who asking these questions were interested in bargaining with God and “buying Him off” for they kept raising the bid. “Shall we bring a few calves as burnt offerings (Micah 6:6)? If that’s not enough, maybe we could offer a thousand sacrifices, such as Solomon offered (Micah 6:7 with 1 Kings 3:4; 8:63)? Would rivers of oil please Him? How about the ultimate sacrifice: we could offer our own flesh and blood on the altar, as Abraham did with Isaac? (Micah 6:7).”

We must understand that God does not bargain with sinners and none of the sacrifices they offered to bring before God could have cleansed them from their sins and made them right before God. By these questions and statements the people try to defend themselves as being spiritual by explaining how faithful they have been to God.

Four legalistic questions are asked.

➤ **What gift does God require?**

Micah 6:6a

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God?”

Speaking in the place of the people, Micah brings forth the people’s first question: “Wherewith (with what) shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God?” In other words, what can I bring to God in my time of worship? What can I give Him? What gift will please Him?

This sounds spiritual but it’s not. At this point, the people’s worship was regulated to only ritualistic and legalistic giving. They were giving without possessing a heart for God and desire to live for God. They had lost their focus in life. They were passing through the outward religious ceremony, thinking that God would be pleased, if they would bring something to add to their list of outward rituals and ceremonies. They figured that God could be “paid off” with ritual worship and be pleased with their lives.

One author said:

“The sins of the people were hidden behind a veneer of religious activity—routine worship that didn’t come from their hearts.”

Of course, God had given them certain rituals to follow under the Mosaic Law, but He never intended their worship to be relegated to nothing more than giving something to Him without possessing a life of integrity, purity, righteous living, and humble worship before Him.

God is looking for much more than our religious trappings and what we give to Him in the offering plate at church. God is looking for much more than the Sunday rituals that people pass through to demonstrate that they are “with it” in their Christian life. You see, God is looking for a changed life, a righteous life, and a humble life that is lived out before Him and others. God is looking for humility and integrity as we live out our lives in

the normal routine of life. It's not, "What can I give," but "What I am" that counts before God!

You might be a Sunday pew sitter but a Monday through Saturday Christian atheist who forgets that God really exists and requires a life of integrity and honesty throughout the week in our devotional and daily living. As we will see later in this study, this is what the Lord really requires of us today. God is looking for character and a changed life much more than your gift in the offering plate. God is looking for your life! God wants the real deal! God wants you!

Remember the old picture of "Uncle Sam" with the pointed finger, which says, "I want you." God is pointing His finger at us and in essence is saying, "I want you." He does not want to be paid off; He wants our hearts and a life of righteous living and integrity.

We must come to worship God when possessing a spiritual life and hunger for God. Get a life! The people asked: "Wherewith (with what) shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God?" They wanted to pass through the motions while not passing the test of living a spiritual life.

- ✓ How do you come to church?
- ✓ Do you come to church out of a legalistic habit?
- ✓ Are you prepared to worship God with your heart and not out of religious routine?
- ✓ Is your life in spiritual order?
- ✓ Do you attend church with a spiritual outlook and attitude to hear from God and receive His blessing?

One pastor said:

"Beware of the mind-set in looking to see if the church will meet your needs. ... When my family is ready to leave for church, we take certain expectations about what we want to receive and leave them at home with our dog. Consequently, everything that we do receive is what we really need and is a blessing."

➤ **What ritual does God require?**

Micah 6:6b says:

“... shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?” Micah brings forth the people’s second question: “Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?” God had required sacrifices that they were to give. In the first part of the Book of Leviticus the people were to give five offerings, which is the way they were to approach God. They were to meet with God in a holy fashion that accurately represented His purity.

In light of this, the people asked the question, “Will it be adequate simply to go through this form or ritual?” We must understand that the people had departed into the form of religion and had forgotten about the relationship that they were to have with God. They had religion without relationship! They had rules and rituals without the reality of fellowshiping with God. God wants us to have a right relationship with Him instead of merely and outward form of a legalistic religion.

2 Timothy 3:5

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

The word “form” speaks of an outward appearance of religiosity and yet the people were denying the power of God to save and transform their lives into what He wanted them to be. Today we have a great many unsaved folks attending church who are passing through the form of religion, ritual, and ceremony, but they do not have a right relationship with God. They have religion coming out of their ears, but they do not have a right relationship with God.

Beware! This can also happen to God’s people. Many of God’s people in the northern kingdom had lost their relationship with their God. They were passing through the form of religious ceremony but had lost touch with the reality of having a personal relationship with God. We must be careful this does not occur in our own Christian lives.

James 4:8 says:

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.”

Be careful that you do not move into a religious routine and fail to do what the Lord requires of you. Religious ceremony, rituals, and church routine is meaningless without possessing a close relationship and walk with the Lord. Going through the motions without a proper relationship to God is like driving a car without all the spark plugs working properly. You will begin to sputter in your life as a believer and eventually quit running.

The following hand-lettered signs were displayed around a drive-in restaurant in Pine Grove, California.

- Do not back in.
- Restrooms are for customer use only.
- (On trash can) Not for diaper disposal or auto trash.
- Local checks for amount of purchase only.
- Only vanilla frosties are dipped - one size only.
- Please order by number.
- Observe all signs.

Here is the point. What we see happening with the people in the days of Micah can also happen with us. Some believers can become filled with so much empty religious routine that they lose sight of worshipping God and living close to Him. God is looking for our hearts and not merely our outward rituals and forms of worship.

Matthew 15:8

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.”

- ✓ Are you trying to make God happy with your rituals but not your righteous living?
  - ✓ Do you only have a form of godliness while missing the power and victory you can have in the Lord?
  - ✓ Is your walk and relationship with God lacking because you are only going through the motions?
- **What is the amount that God requires?**

Micah 6:7a

“Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Italian scenic designer Enrico Job wanted to give an unusual Christmas gift to his wife, film writer and director Lina Wertmuller. Her "trademark" was white-rimmed eyeglasses, which she was constantly misplacing. So her husband gave her five thousand pairs for Christmas. Now this is really being generous!

In a similar way, the people asked, “Okay, God, how much do you really want? Just let me know and I’ll write you a check.” The items of rams and oil were used in connection with the sacrificial system. Some suggest Micah was speaking in hyperbole to drive home the point that the people did not want to really please the Lord in their everyday living. Like many today, they want to give their ten percent on Sunday and live as they please Monday through Saturday.

There is a lesson to learn from this. God wants our purity in life before our pocketbook! God wants our godliness in life before our gold. God wants a personal relationship with us before our religious routine. Many people feel that God is pleased with them if they give their weekly tithe or whatever they might give to support God’s work. They feel that they can mail in their church check on Friday, go golfing on Sunday morning, and God will be pleased with them. They believe that giving is the only thing God requires of them. Of course, they are fooling themselves! God is looking for a changed heart and life. This is what Micah is going to speak to God’s people about.

Remember:

“You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving.”

- ✓ Have you been trying to con God into taking your money while living an unsanctified life before Him?
- ✓ Do you have a deepening relationship with God or a surface and nominal relationship?
- ✓ Doesn’t God want your heart before your sacrifice?
- ✓ When are you going to stop playing church and start living for Jesus Christ?



➤ **What kind of sacrifice does God require?**

Micah 6:7 goes on to say: "... shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?" The fourth question the people of Israel asked is going to the outer limits: "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Perhaps some were thinking about Abraham offering Isaac upon the altar. However, the people had forgotten that God was teaching Abraham a lesson but did not actually condone the child to be sacrificed. He had a ram to be sacrificed. God never condones the sacrifice of children.

The idea of child sacrifice was very meaningful to some of God's people because they were surrounded by pagan peoples who in their worship of Molech and Baal offered human sacrifices. There were instances when even Israel turned in the direction of this pagan worship. Two of the most godless kings of the southern kingdom indulged in human sacrifices - Ahaz and Manasseh. These two men offered their own children as burnt offerings. But is this really what God would ask us to do or require of our lives? Absolutely not!

I want to make it very clear that God never condones human sacrifice. God did require that they give to Him the firstborn male of everything that was born to them, whether it be a cow, sheep, or ox. But God made it very clear to them that He did not require human sacrifice. In other words, God would not accept a human sacrifice. The very idea of human sacrifice demonstrated the depths of the people's own depravity and lack of spiritual insight and living.

Leviticus 18:21 says:

"And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through *the fire* to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD.

America will pay for child sacrifice which is nothing more than the murder of innocent babies in the womb! I can tell you that every nation that sacrificed their children has ultimately been judged by God. America will be no exception from God's rule! We won't get away with it and we are not getting away with it today!

Now reflect on this. Whenever God's people become more interested in their own rituals, instead of integrity and humility before God, they eventually begin to engage in activities that are carnally and culturally impure. No, they may not sacrifice their children, but they move into areas that are very questionable in practice. Over time, they begin to condone and practice things that ten years ago was unthinkable for them to do.

What was once "taboo" is now suddenly permissible and is done under the disguise of "Christian liberty."

Galatians 5:13

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

Many Christians try to get away with their worldliness by sanctifying it under the disguise of Christian liberty. Friend, when we lose our integrity and righteous living before God, as the northern kingdom did, there is no end to the depths that we will sink. They were willing to sacrifice their children! Many times, we sacrifice other things that should be precious to us – a good church, Bible reading, prayer to God, and wholesome friendships and Christians who are willing to rebuke us at times. If we are not careful, we will go lower and lower and wallow in the pig pen and God will eventually have to scrape us off the bottom of the barrel and pick us up again (Luke 15:11-24).

Someone said:

"Contrary to popular opinion, sin is not what you want to do but can't; it is what you should not do because it will hurt you--and hurt you bad. ... God is not a policeman; He is a Father concerned about His children. When a child picks up a snake and the father says, 'Put that down right this minute!' the child thinks he's losing a toy. The fact is, he is not losing a toy; he is losing a snake."

Some of you might need to get rid of the snake in your life. Whatever sin it might be, confess it to God and get on the other side of it. Don't waddle in the pig pen.

- ✓ Can you really be living for the Lord when you are sanctifying disobedience and worldliness in your life?
- ✓ Do you have a false view of Christian liberty?
- ✓ What sin must you confess to God so you can restore your relationship with Him?
- ✓ How far have you departed from truth, obedience, and integrity of living?
- ✓ Is your life really surrendered your life to God?
- ✓ Have you turned your life over to Him and asked Him to be lord over your life?

There is a simple answer to this final question: “What kind of sacrifice does God require?” It’s found in Romans 12:1-2: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

The people asked: “shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” God does not want your unsanctified and worldly ideas about what it means to live the Christian life. He wants your life! God does not want your legalism – He wants your heart. He wants you to place yourself on the altar of sacrifice and give your soul, devotion, and life to Him. God wants a surrendered and holy life that is consecrated to Him and His Word.

Jesus taught in Mark 12:30:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.”

I was exercising out in the garage while watching a TV program. A commercial came on with a televangelist named Peter Popoff. He was selling what he called “miracle water.” If a person would order the miracle water, they were to follow the instructions and God would give them a miracle in relation to their health and wealth. People were giving

testimonies of the money that came to them after using the miracle water and how the miracle water changed their life. I had never heard of Peter Popoff before, but I would like to give him the nickname of Peter Rip-off for he is nothing but a charlatan and con artists. There are people like this associated with Christianity today and the same was true in Micah's day. They were greedy charlatans seeking to take advantage of people. Micah is going to call them out on their covetousness, lack of integrity, and taking advantage of the people.

But we have seen in our first point that God requires His children to live a spiritual life before Him and others. We are looking at two views regarding God's requirements. The legalistic view was revealed in the questions the people asked of God. They showed that they just wanted to go through the motions without being obedient to God in all areas of their lives and without possessing a love for God and His will. They had religion without a relationship with God, routine without real fellowship with God, and regulations without a rich or satisfying life that comes from God. On one sense, they wanted to buy out God, play church, go through the motions, but they did not want to be obedient to God nor did they possess a heart for God.

## **2. The Lord's view – Micah 6:8**

What the Lord requires of us is all the really matters! God had already shared with His people some basic demands or requirements. Some of the things mentioned in the earlier verses are similar to what Micah revealed to the people.

Deuteronomy 10:12

“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

Deuteronomy 10:18 -19

“He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

These verses are similar to Micah 6:8 in that the people were to walk with God, live a righteous life of integrity, and show mercy and love toward others. God gives us His commands and requirements for living the Christian life. These commands are clearly spelled out and cannot be misinterpreted. In Micah 6:8 the prophet turns around and answers the questions of the people by telling them what God really requires of their lives. He expresses these commands in a positive light knowing that God's commands are His enablements and that following God's commands bring blessing, freedom, and satisfaction into our lives.

1 John 5:3

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

Micah is going to teach us that God is not interested in mere outward religious forms. God is not interested in the tangible things that you can give Him. God is interested in your day-to-day godly living. God is more interested in your righteous and humble living before Him than your showy religion. God wants obedient living instead of outward show. He wants righteousness instead of ritual. The people wanted to give goats, but God says, "Give me godly living." The people wanted to give God rams, but God says, "Give me humble living."

Micah 6:8

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

God requires something far more important than rituals. He wants the people to have a personal relationship with Him and live a righteous and humble life of integrity before Him. We need to know what God requires of our lives today. When we lose the desire to know and understand what God wants from our lives, we lose focus in life.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good." We notice first that this is addressed to man (meaning any person in Israel). Of course, the

application extends to every Christian living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is for each one of us today. Not all of Scripture is “to us” but it is “for us” (Rom. 15:4). Friend, what God requires from us should be the most important thing in our lives. Your basketball or soccer coach, or your boss at work may require many things from your life. But what your manager wants you to do is not as important as what God requires you to do. You see, what God requires of you is more important than anything else in life. God requirements for your life should rate higher than any other requirements that man might give to you.

Micah 6:8 has been called the greatest saying of the Old Testament. From this verse we develop the greatest question: What does God require of me? This is a soul-searching question. God requires His children to live according to His standards.

There are three standards that God requires.

#### **A. God requires righteous living (vs. 8).**

You are “to do justly.” This means that you must live a righteous life before God and others. This is referring to living out a life of integrity before God and others. The word suggests purity in motive and the manner of our living. It points to living a life that is above reproach, one that reflects good morals, and possesses transparency before God and others.

The idea of “acting justly” would include a general propensity toward righteous living and specifically acting justly toward others. They were to demonstrate mutual respect for one another within the community. “Justice” would describe right social relationships between people based on God’s view of what is appropriate. God is looking for righteous living – not renegade living! There is no replacement for a righteous life. In this context, God wants us to live a life of integrity before Him and others.

A boy, 12 years old, was the important witness in a lawsuit. One of the lawyers, after questioning him severely, asked, “Your father has been telling you how to testify, hasn't he?” “Yes,” said the boy. “Now,” pursued the lawyer, “just tell us how your father told you to testify.” “Well,” replied

the boy modestly, "Father told me the lawyers would try to tangle me in my testimony; but if I would just be careful and tell the truth, I could say the same thing every time."

God is looking for a people who are going to be possess integrity in living before others and their testimony before God. God says, "I want a life of integrity. I want upright living from my people. Clean up your act! I want you to live above reproach."

When an army officer asked President Lincoln if he could write an article defending the administration against attacks that were being made by the Committee on the Conduct of the War Lincoln replied: "If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how - the very best I can, and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference."

Many people in Micah's day were not being just or righteous in their daily lifestyle and dealings with their fellowman.

Micah 2:1-3 reveals:

"Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! (*staying awake at night thinking of the bad things they can do to people*) When the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take *them* by violence; and houses, and take *them* away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time *is* evil."

Just like today, there were a lot of shady characters, lawyers, and business deals going on during Micah's day. Some people would lay awake at night thinking about what kind of evil they could do in the morning or the next day. They wondered about how they could greedily gain the other people's fields and farms and add to their wealth or stockpile of goods. They

thought about how they could take advantage of others and steal their lands and life savings.

God was explaining that He would judge them for exploiting the people. The leaders and rich people were puffed up in their ability to defraud, gain wealth and deceive others of their homes and wealth. They viewed themselves as great businessmen who had climbed the corporate ladder of success and who had successfully achieved the American Dream, or in this case, the Jewish dream.

Micah 3:1-3

“And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads (*leaders*) of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; *Is it* not for you to know judgment? Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron” (*a metaphorical way of explaining how they took advantage of the people financially*).

The leaders were to be like shepherds to the people (their sheep) but instead they were metaphorically described as chopping up the people and making a stew out of them, destroying them by taking advantage of them. Instead of practicing justice, righteous dealings, and possessing integrity toward the people, they hated good and loved doing evil against one another. The people turned the table upside down, and they were found actually hating that which was good and wholesome and loving that which was evil and degenerate in practice. What a perverse standard! When God’s people lose focus on living a life of righteousness and integrity, they are prone to promote evil over the good. They can turn the tables on goodness by making it into evil while at the same time making the evil into something that is acceptable and good. Beware of this!

The people became very twisted or warped in their thinking and dealings with others. We live in such a day as this. We can suppress our moral conscious and become twisted and perverted in our way of thinking. Of course, this is the opposite of the way leaders should act.



Amos 5:15 gives us God's view:

"Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."

Dr. Arnold of Rugby used to say:

"I never could be sure of a boy who only loved the good. Until that boy also began to hate evil, I never felt that he was safe."

The people in Micah's day had changed God's standard for godly, upright, and righteous living. Their perverse and perverted standards showed that they did not really love the Lord for the Bible declares "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. 97:10) and "To fear the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:13). This may sound strange, but we sometimes need to relearn to hate disobedience, sin, and unfaithfulness. Unless we hate sin we must find ourselves condoning it in our lives. In this case, the people needed to hate the sin of covetousness and using people for their own greedy gain.

I had a telephone call a while back. On the other end of the line was a man who was trying to sell me some type of waterproofing for my basement. He had heard that there was a problem of leaking basements in my area. Well, there was a problem was his analysis. We were in a drought warning at the time he made the phone call. Where did he hear that my basement was leaking? Well, he didn't hear it from any person. It was simply one of those phony statements coming from the lips of a telephone con artist. Some people in the nation of Israel had become con artists who were very covetous and were starting to take advantage of the people.

Micah 6:10

"Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure *that is* abominable?"

The "treasures of wickedness" refer to the wealth they had accumulated in their unjust dealings. They were counting their money and having fun doing it. They were getting rich through covetous practices and unfair treatment of the people.

Micah 6:11

“Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?”

There were many who were ripping the people off and dealing unjustly with their fellowman. They were being dishonest in their business practices. They were cheating their customers. The sellers used dishonest scales and false weights to give less merchandise than the buyers thought they were getting.

It’s like they do today in the grocery stores. I remember the days when they used to give you a large box of ice-cream and there was plenty to go around. Today they keep downsizing the boxes. Sooner or later the size of the box will be so small that you will have to buy three of them to equal the content of what one box used to hold.

God said He hates unfair practices that take advantage of others. His repeated statements in the Word reflect His attitude to those who cheat others.

Leviticus 19:35-36

“Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I *am* the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

Deuteronomy 25:13-16

“Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. *But* thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, *and* all that do unrighteously, *are* an abomination unto the LORD thy God.”

Proverbs 11:1 adds:

“A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight.”

The people thought that they were getting a pound of hamburger and only received three quarters of a pound. When I go to our local market, I expect the man behind the meat counter to keep his thumb off of the scales!

Proverbs 16:11

“A just weight and balance *are* the LORD's: all the weights of the bag *are* his work.”

Proverbs 20:23

“Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance *is* not good.”

If the weight is supposed to be a pound, then make sure it is a pound. Don't make it less or more than a pound. This is especially important when you are buying some more expensive meat or fish. I remember asking for one pound of shrimp. But the man behind the seafood counter gave me almost another half pound of shrimp and asked if the little extra was all right! Well, it was not all right because my family had to eat more than just shrimp for the entire week.

Hosea 12:7 says:

“He is a merchant, the balances of deceit *are* in his hand: he loveth to oppress.”

Amos 8:5 asks if they were “falsifying the balances by deceit?” Obviously, the people were not acting justly or expressing loving mercy toward other people as we will see in our next point (Micah 6:8). Cruelty and oppression were seen by rich people and lying by almost everyone was very common during Micah's day.

Micah 6:12 reveals the saddened state:

“For the rich men thereof are full of violence (cruelty), and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue *is* deceitful in their mouth.”

Sounds like a shady car salesman! This once again sounds like the day in which we live. As Christians, we must remember that God is viewing our own personal lives every day and He expects us to operate on the basis of

integrity and justice. We are to be pure in our dealings and practices before God and others.

The Great Wall of China is a gigantic structure which cost an immense amount of money and labor. When it was finished, it appeared impregnable. But the enemy breached it. Not by breaking it down or going around it. They did it by bribing the gatekeepers.

- ✓ Have we been honest in our dealings and interactions with people?
- ✓ Have we been paying our bills on time?
- ✓ Have we been cheating the boss at work by your laziness?
- ✓ Are we a man and woman of integrity in relation to our business practices?
- ✓ Do we treat people fairly?

Living a life of righteousness and integrity before God and others is very important as a Christian.

A Michigan judge found himself in the news recently because of the violation of a courtroom rule—and what happened next. Judge Raymond Voet has long had a policy forbidding the use of electronic devices in the courtroom. Anyone whose phone rings aloud has it confiscated and receives a fine. Over the years, attorneys, police officers, witnesses, and spectators have broken the rule and received the punishment. During closing arguments at the trial, someone's smartphone started talking. "I can't understand you. Say something like Mom," the phone requested. It was the judge's new phone!

"I'm guessing I bumped it. It started talking really loud. That's an excuse, but I don't take those excuses from anyone else. I set the bar high, because cell phones are a distraction and there is very serious business going on," he said. "The courtroom is a special place in the community, and it needs more respect than that." During the next break in the trial, Judge Voet held himself in contempt, and paid the standard \$25 fine that he issues anyone who disturbs a trial. "Judges are human," Voet said. "They're not above the rules. I broke the rule, and I have to live by it."

Well, that was a decision which at least showed some integrity. Even though he had broken the rule, he was willing to admit and make things right. It's mazing how the politicians of today try and apologize when they do or say something wrong. Many of them lack sincerity and conclude, "I made a mistake, I misspoke, or I miscalculated my response.

To live a life that is pleasing to God, we need to deal justly both with ourselves and others. The priority God places on justice is very high. God wants us to "do justly" (Micah 6:8). Openness, honesty, and transparency before others is to be a hallmark of Christian living. God wants us to be a man and women of integrity.

Romans 12:17 speaks of this:

"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

2 Corinthians 8:21 also conveys the same truth:

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

A grown man shared this story of his father:

"As a schoolboy, I worked with my father during the summer months. Each morning we stopped to pick up the early edition of the newspaper at a small grocery store.

"One morning when we got to work, my father found that by mistake he had taken two newspapers instead of one. He first thought of paying the man the extra price the next morning, but then after a moment's consideration he said, "I had better go back with this paper. I don't want the man at the store to think I'm dishonest." He got in his car, drove back to the store, and returned the paper.

"About a week later, someone stole money from the grocery store. When police pinpointed the time it occurred, the grocer remembered only two people being in the store at the time—and one was my father. The grocer immediately dismissed my father as a suspect, saying, "That man is really honest. He came all the way back here just to return a newspaper he took

by mistake.” The police then focused their investigation on the other man, who soon made a full confession. My father’s honesty made a big impression on that non-Christian storeowner, and on me.”

1 Timothy 3:7 requires this of a bishop:

“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

God requires the same from every Christian. Living above reproach is to live a righteous life, a life of integrity that is pure in motive and practice. Are we living this kind of life before others and God? What God said to the nation He is saying to you and me today. In essence, God concludes: “I don’t want your religious ceremonies and your churchy pious platitudes. I want your righteous life. I want you to live a life of integrity before a lost world. I want you to demonstrate godliness toward others in the everyday routine of life. I want you to live a life free from pretense and manifest a life of purity in your attitudes, actions, and aspirations of life. Give me a real life. Give me the real deal. Live a righteous life instead of just a ceremonial and legalistic life of passing through the motions of religion. I don’t want some kind of churchy life that is all showy and shallow. Give me the real thing.”

Beloved, God requires that we live righteously among others and before Himself. God requires it. Does this mean anything to you today?

Henry Heinz, born in 1844, to German immigrants in Pittsburg, PA, helped support his family as a teenager by growing and selling vegetables in the family garden. After graduating from college and getting married, he started a business selling horse radish. In 1875, a national financial collapse drove the young company into bankruptcy. Despite the legal freedom bankruptcy gave him, Heinz regarded each of the company’s outstanding debts as a moral obligation and personally paid back every penny.

Heinz went on to establish the H.J. Heinz Company with its 57 varieties and became a leading American businessman. As a devout Christian, he was known for the generous treatment of his employees and his generosity to

Christian causes. Throughout his life Heinz conducted his business and personal dealings with the same integrity that led him to pay back hundreds of thousands of thousands of dollars he technically did not owe. He began his will with these words: “I desire to set forth at the very beginning of this will as the most important item in it a confession of my faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour.”

Proverbs 22:1 says:

“A good name (reputation) is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.”

Possessing a good name or reputation is better than anything else. This is why we need to practice living out a life of integrity before others in our daily decisions and lifestyle. People are watching us as Christians. The fruitfulness of good character and conduct is better than obtaining riches because living a life of integrity is more precious, more powerful, and permanently enduring.

## **B. God requires merciful living.**

The expression “to love mercy” (Micah 6:8) has the idea of expressing loving acts of kindness toward others to try and meet their needs. It means to reach out to others and try to help them and see them through some difficult time in their lives. We can shower mercy upon others by praying for them, giving to them in some manner, or just encouraging them through a difficult time.

As we have already pointed out, the people were not showing mercy or pity to others in their greedy and covetous actions. Their scales were dishonest, and their business contracts had all kinds of clauses and loopholes in them. They were not showing mercy. Whatever happened to mercy? God wants us to demonstrate mercy to others that we come in contact with.

Colossians 3:12 reminds us:

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.”

God is saying to you today, “Bring on the mercy! Demonstrate kindness to others! Will you show some mercy to people instead of going for the dollar! Will you be a Good Samaritan to someone along the way? Do you have a heart for people! Go the extra mile of the way. What are you doing for others?”

“Show a little bit of love and kindness  
Never go around with hatred's blindness  
Take a little time to reach for joy and wear a happy face  
Sing a little bit when the days are dreary  
Give a little help to a friend that's weary  
That's the way to make the world a happy place.”

If we are not careful, we can become selfish and live alone on this planet. But God is asking us to extend our hand of mercy to others. This is what God requires of us! And if God requires this, we should get busy doing it! We should start reaching out to others wherever and whenever we can. If God requires this and we do it, we can be sure that He will bless our lives today and honor us in the end when we stand before Him!

Many people during Micah’s day were not demonstrating real love and kindness to others. The merciful spirit had gone out of the nation. The department called “Mercy” had been remodeled and the new sign now read, “Help Yourself.” The people certainly were not expressing mercy to them who were hurting and needy in life. Instead, they were like greedy bankers who wanted more and more and more without extending any kindness or mercy to any of the less fortunate people.

Micah 3:9-11 once again tells the true story:

“Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment (*righteous discernment*), and pervert all equity (*straight and upright living*). They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity (*they were responsible for bloodshed and wickedness in Jerusalem where justice and righteousness should have reigned*). The heads thereof judge for reward (*personal gain and profit*), and the priests thereof teach for hire (*they are like preachers for hire*)



*telling the people what they want to hear), and the prophets thereof divine for money (compromise with the occult to gain money by practicing divination): yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us."*

What a facade! They were merely using God and believed that since God was among them, they were safe, and no judgment could ever come upon their lives. Boy, were they fooled! The condition of their lives is revealed in these verses. Of course, a ruler over God's people was supposed to be just and fair, like God Himself. A leader was to desire righteous behavior in his own life and in the lives of his people. Instead of this, these rulers deliberately perverted uprightness. They lived for money and were covetous in their dealings with men. They hurt and stole from others! The almighty dollar meant everything to them.

There was no mercy in their heart. It was business as usual in the nation. Climbing the corporate ladder was the bottom line. Integrity did not matter to them. They lived for money instead of the Master! Instead of expressing mercy toward people they began to drain the people for everything that they had. There was no mercy in their hearts toward others. It was a "dog-eat-dog" philosophy.

When a Michigan deer hunter found a 100-pound buck struggling to get out of a mud-bog in which it was hopelessly stuck, the hunter's first thought was to shoot, but he couldn't bring himself to pull the trigger. Instead, he called for the help of his partner. Together they snared the animal with a rope and pulled it out of the mud. The moment it was freed, the deer bolted to freedom. The hunter later recalled, "When you see a deer like that, eyeball to eyeball, it's a little different. I think the eyes did it-that longing look, like, 'What are you going to do?'" Well, my friend, what are you going to do this week to show mercy to others? God requires you to demonstrate kindness and love to others. May we have a merciful heart today!

Jesus said in Matthew 5:7:

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

### C. God requires humble living.

Micah 6:8 finally reveals that the people were “to walk humbly with thy God?”

Someone remarked:

“To learn to walk humbly, start out on your knees!”

The people who were exploiting others were to humble themselves before God by getting down on their knees and repenting of their sins and then become obedient to God in their living and relationships with others. When Micah said that the people must come down off their pedestal in life and begin “to walk humbly with thy God” he was probably opening a can of worms. But this is exactly what the people needed to hear. The people could not keep saying, “Business as usual.” They had to come down to the place where they would humble themselves before God, do some old-fashioned repenting of sin, and getting right with God.

James 4:10 reminds us:

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you (the communion we can have with God). Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord (the call to clean up our lives through humility), and he shall lift you up” (to a place of victory and honor).

The contexts of both Micah and James demand that we are to humble ourselves in God’s sight through repentance and the forsaking of sin in our lives. We have a tendency to treat sin too lightly and we sometimes laugh about it but the Bible says, “let your laughter be turned into mourning.” Sin is serious, and one mark of true humility is facing the seriousness of sin and dealing with our disobedience. Repentance and humility work hand in hand.

“A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 51:17). God must break our heart over sin before we will repent of that sin! He must bankrupt our lives.

Sometimes we hear a believer pray, “O Lord, humble me!” This is a dangerous thing to pray. Far better that we humble ourselves before God, confess our sins, weep over them, and turn from them. After this, we are to proceed to live a humble life before God as His obedient servant and also become a servant of others. As we humble ourselves and yield our lives to God, we can expect God to lift us up.

- God will lift us up to a place of victory and blessing.

Humbling ourselves before God means that He will lift us up to the place of victory and newfound blessing in life which includes joy and satisfaction as we walk with God. David knew this to be true (Psalm 51:10-12). Humility gives us the victorious lift in life that we need. If we honestly take our place in the dust at His feet, He will lift us up to the place of victory over sin and bring fresh new blessing into our lives.

- God will lift us up to a place of honor and respect.

God will not only lift us up to the place of victory but also to a place of honor and respect. This may be true in our present lives. As we humbly obey God and live for Him, others will know it and respect our life of integrity and testimony. But this will certainly be true in the future. God will exalt us in due time when we stand before Him someday! God will exalt us in the future in that He will reward us in relation to how we have lived and managed our life down here upon earth. The way up is down! The lowly one becomes the lifted one. There is a marked advantage to humility. It will eventually lead to honor when we are rewarded by the Lord.

The people in Micah’s day were not walking in a humble fashion before the Lord God. Instead, they had a haughty spirit about themselves and their accomplishments in life. We have documented all of their greediness and covetousness. The people were proud of their wealth and accomplishments.

But their greed not only violated the tenth commandment against coveting what belongs to a neighbor but also the eighth commandment against stealing (Exod. 20:15, 17; Lev. 19:13; Deut. 5:19, 21; Col. 3:6). Furthermore, they broke the second greatest commandment that said they should love their neighbors as themselves (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:34–40).

Instead of humbly bowing before God, seeking His face, and serving others, they were full of pride and delight in what they had accomplished.

Proverbs 6:16-17

“These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,.”

I remember the days when my children used to play with bubbles. Many times they would spill the bottle on the sidewalk and start crying! However, when they managed to not spill the bottle, they would take that sticky liquid and have a good time blowing bubbles and popping them as they went floating through the air.

Some of us today need to have our bubbles popped! We need to have God take His finger and stick it in our giant bubble of pride that we have created around ourselves, so that it will pop. We need to be brought down and reduced to the place of repentance and humility before God. We need to once again realize that we have nothing to brag about, since God has given us everything that we have and the ability to accomplish. I think we all need to be on guard against the sin of pride. Pride is a stench in the nostrils of God. God is looking for a humble life today. He is looking for a life that is laid out before Him in repentance and humility and which longs to give Him all the glory.

A top-ranking British official once entertained a haughty and sophisticated lady in his home. By mistake his assistant asked her to sit on the left of her host rather than the place of honor at his right hand. The visitor was offended and became very indignant. Turning to the general, she said, "I suppose you have real difficulty in getting your aid to seat your guests

properly at the table." "Oh, not at all," came the reply; "I have found that those who matter don't mind, and those who mind don't matter!" Ouch!

2 Chronicles 7:14 says:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

God wants His people to turn from their wicked and disobedient ways by humbling themselves before God and getting rid of their sins. God cannot do anything for us, nor can He work in our lives, unless we are willing to humble ourselves before God and repent of the things that we are doing that are wrong. This means that we must humble ourselves before Almighty God through repentance, so we might "hear from heaven" or receive God's rich blessing upon our lives.

God is looking for our humility in repentance and restored living that honors Him. Jesus Christ demonstrated humility from the time of His birth and throughout His entire life, even unto His death upon cross.

Philippians 2:8

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

One mother relayed this story: "My two preschoolers had made numerous trips in and out of the house one summer day, each time leaving the screen door open. Irritated, I closed the door for the umpteenth time and hollered out, 'Who was born in a barn?' From the backyard, three-year-old Craig yelled, 'Jesus.'

Of course, Jesus not only demonstrated humility in His birth but also His death. If we want to be more like Christ, we will live a humble life before God and others, seeking to bless their lives and lift them up, through sacrificial love and giving.

Gustafson wrote:  
"Humility's a slippery prize  
That seldom can be won;  
We're only humble in God's eyes  
When serving like His Son."

We need to finish our lesson.

Micah 6:8 loudly declares:

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

God has told us in unmistakable terms what He requires from our lives. He lays it out before us and says, "There you go. Now go do it." Once again, we must understand from this study that God is not looking for our ritualism but real godly living. God was not looking for the goats and rams that the people wanted to bring Him. The people said, "God, what can we give you in church that will please you?"

Micah 6:6-7 once again asks:

"Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?"

I must repeat something for emphasis. The Lord is looking for godliness instead of goats. He is looking for righteousness instead of rams. He is looking for humility instead of hellish living that dishonors God. God wants you! He wants your whole life! He wants right living, honest living, clean living, and obedient living. He wants us to express a life of kindness toward others and demonstrate repentance and humility before Him in confession of our sins and also in our daily walk.

The people in Micah's day needed to realize that God is looking for a change of heart and life, and obedience to righteous, merciful, and humble living, instead of just a formal ceremony and ritual.

1 Samuel 15:22 declares an enduring principle:

"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams."

This says it all! In essence, there is nothing better than obeying God and doing what He requires. You can play church and go through the motions of Christianity and still not be doing what God really requires of your life. You can put on your spiritual cosmetics on Sunday when you go to church but not be truthful or full of integrity in your daily living.

You might be a Sunday School teacher, or singing choir member on Sunday, but turn into a worldly Christian on Monday. You may pay God your ritual money on Sunday but refuse to live out a life of integrity on Thursday. You may act like you care in church when you pray that little prayer, "God bless all the sick folk," but in your busy day on Friday, you really don't take time to show mercy to some poor hurting soul. Galatians 2:10 says, "Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." This is what Micah is talking about. Dear friend, God is looking for substance more than heartless service and ceremonies.

Can we really live a life such as this? Remember: God's requirements are God's enablements. This means that we can live the kind of life that God requires us to live. What God requires of us He will also enable us to do! Today, He enables us to live for Him through the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 2:13

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure."

My friend, when God says, "This is what I require of you," there can be no choice in the matter! God has already chosen the path for us, and He is the King! Let's get busy doing what God says. This is what is going to matter for time and eternity. This is what God requires and what we need to practice in order to make our lives really count for God and bring glory to Him.

Someone said:

"Folks, the grass is not greener on that side of the fence. And the grass is not greener on this side of the fence. The grass is greener where you water it."

Let us live for the Lord today, obey Him, love Him with all of our hearts, and find God's rich and satisfying blessing!