

What Does the Lord Require of You?

The Prophet Micah lived about 700 years before Jesus. He was concerned with poor people who were being treated badly by those who were privileged and advantaged. In this lesson, I want to challenge you with a question found in the Book of Micah.

Micah 6:8 (NKJV)

*“He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?”*

Micah first tells us that God has already shown us “*what is good*”... or how we are to live a righteous and pleasing life unto Him. The New Testament reinforces the principle that pleasing God should always be our primary aim in life.

2 Corinthians 5:9 (NKJV)

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.”

The Apostle Paul gives us the following failsafe principle for implementing “*what is good*” and pleasing God in any situation. It’s a simple, universal guideline for a Christian facing everyday life.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV)

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

We have no excuse. We cannot say we don’t know what is good in God’s eyes. He has made it perfectly clear throughout the Scriptures.

Micah’s Question

The prophet Micah then asks a question. He writes, “*And what*

does the Lord require of you...?” He’s not asking for his listeners or readers opinions. He’s using a common biblical technique of a rhetorical question that he will answer himself. His words (question and three answers) are a prophetic announcement on behalf of God, who fully inspired Micah’s message.

God has given us all the ability to unpack the details we need for finding out what He requires of us. We’re not ignorant of the Lord’s requirements. This is because we have His Word, both in written form and from the preaching and teaching of the Bible. In Micah’s prophetic answer to his own question, he encapsulates his message into three parts.

- [1] *“But to do justly,*
- [2] *To love mercy,*
- [3] *And to walk humbly with your God.”*

Micah has given us this three-part list of requirements, inspired by the Holy Spirit. To require something means it’s not an option. It’s not something we can make a choice to do or not to do.

Let’s look into Micah’s three answers one at a time. They’re like gifts of wise instruction for godly living. They are guideposts inspired by the Holy Spirit for a journey of personal success. They tell us what it means to imitate Jesus.

Unpacking Micah’s Three Answers

MICAH’S FIRST ANSWER: “TO DO JUSTLY.”

(New Living Translation: *“To do what is right.”*)

Experience should teach every Christian two things:

First: It’s never right to do what is wrong.

(This will never please God.)

Second: It’s never wrong to insist on doing what is right.

(This will always please God.)

God is very clear about what pleases Him. When we are walking with God, we can never excuse consciously doing what is wrong.

God is with us and He will give us the wisdom and conviction to do what is right. He has clearly shown us that doing what is wrong is a sin; and sin always leads to sorrows, destruction and the loss of opportunity. God wants His best for you. Do what is right!

The original Hebrew word Micah used that's translated "to do justly" was a legal term. It meant that when a person went to court to have his behavior judged, the verdict would be, "Not guilty, because he or she did the right thing."

The Message Bible translates "to do justly" as, "Do what is fair and just to your neighbor." This is a biblical requirement that is not optional. God expects His children to act like mature, caring people who know right from wrong. We are to be a reflection of Christ. This is a good time to consider the question, "What will your life testify to?"

Before we look at the other two parts of Micah's prophetic answer to the question, it would be important to understand the continuity of God's Word. The Lord Jesus Christ has reaffirmed Micah's prophetic utterance by giving us the two great commandments.

Matthew 22:34-40 (INKJV)

*"But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. {35} Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, {36} "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" {37} Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' {38} This is the first and great commandment. {39} And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' {40} **On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.**"*

MICAH'S SECOND ANSWER: "TO LOVE MERCY"

(NLT = "be compassionate and loyal in your love,")

Micah did not say to be merciful just because the Bible commands it. He said to be merciful because your heart has been changed by God... and like Him, you will love being merciful. *“Love never fails”* (1 Corinthians 13:8). Love will infuse your acts of mercy with God’s power. It will also bring a flood of God’s power into your life. This power will continually change you to be more like Jesus. It is a lifelong process called sanctification. So you can see that loving mercy is not just a feeling. It’s a transforming decision you make that changes you and the world in which you have influence.

Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

“I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. {2} Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

Romans 12:2 (The Passion Translation - TPT)

“Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God’s will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.”

Who is transformed?

First, you are transformed! You become more like Jesus and less like the world. The result is that *“you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect”* in the eyes of God. Would you agree that personal transformation through sanctification is to be desired above most things we could ask for?

Second, the people you love and the circumstances they face may be changed by the display of your love-infused mercy. Your intentional intervention as an act of compassionate love will open

the door for the Spirit of God to move into their lives and do what only He can. The conclusion to this is obvious. Miracles happen through the actions of people who love mercy! You are a miracle waiting to happen in somebody's life. What (and who) will you love?

MICAH'S THIRD ANSWER: "TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD."

(NLT = "*And don't take yourself too seriously - take God seriously.*")

To walk humbly with your God requires taking God seriously. Just remember that He's God and we're not! Another way to put this is to walk in the fear of, and reverence for your Lord and Savior. God intends this to be your desire and understanding all day, every day! You have the incredible opportunity to be in step with God. So, here's what you do:

- When He says, "Go to the right," you go to the right.
- If He says, "Stop and listen to Me for a minute," you are to stop and listen to Him for a minute.
- If you hear Him saying, "Love this person or love these people. I want you to go to them and make their lives better." Your response must be to go to them and allow God to work through you to make their lives better.
- Listen and obey. Don't worry about what anyone will say or what they will think about you. Just do the right thing by showing loving mercy... "*And don't take yourself too seriously – take God seriously.*" Always take God seriously. He will never disappoint or fail you.
- Walk close to Him. Let people see this. Make yourself like a shining reflection of God and never let anything get between you and Him. That's how you will fulfill the three requirements of God.

A Life Changing Choice: Pride or Humility?

1 Peter 5:5-9 (NLT) makes it clear that "*God opposes the proud but favors the humble.*" This translates into a reality we all have

experienced from time to time. It's not pleasant to think about those times when He's done this, but it's there for us to learn and grow. It's the reality that "God pulls back from proud people."¹ He will not walk with those who elevate themselves above the reality that God is not our servant. It's quite the opposite. We serve Him. We need to stay fixed on taking Him seriously! Here's more of what the Apostle Peter had to say about pride and humility:

1 Peter 5:5b-9a (NLT)

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. {6} So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. {7} Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. {8} Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. {9a} Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith..."

There are solid biblical commands that these Scriptures and an additional word from the Apostle Paul provide us with. They have the same foundation as everything else we've looked at in this study. They're all undergirded and supported by God's love and His concern to equip us for the battles of life.

First Command (from Peter): *"Humble yourself under the mighty power of God."* It's not a suggestion, though God gives us the free will to reject it. Christian experience teaches us that it's wise to stay humble and abide under the shadow of that *"secret place of the Most High."* (Psalm 91:1) Think of this as your divine insurance policy. It works! Peter tells us the result of this submission to God will be *"at the right time he will lift you up in honor."* That's a great result!

Second Command (from Peter): *"Give all your worries and cares to God."* Paul was in agreement with Peter when he wrote:

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

¹ From Pastor Andy Stanley, Senior pastor of North Point Church in Atlanta, from his preaching series "What Happy Couples know, Part Three."

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. {7} Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

This was not an empty suggestion. It provided an edifying set of instructions for defeating worry. If you understand worry correctly, it shows itself to be a lack of faith in God. Such a lack of faith denies us the ability to live in peace. The conclusion is our third command and it comes from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians:

Third Command (from Paul): *“Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.”* Have you thought about the power of thanking God by remembering what He’s done for you in the past? Memories of God’s faithfulness are great reminders when facing challenges. What would you remember most about His loving faithfulness when pressed by circumstances?

Fourth Command (from Peter): *“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil... [and] Stand firm against Him”* Never doubt who is at the bottom of your troubles. Don’t go to sleep on the devil’s efforts to disrupt your life. *“Stay alert and stand firm.”* God has given you promises that are unbreakable as long as you are *“strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.”* (Ephesians 6:10)

Fifth Command (from Peter): *“Be strong in your faith.”* There’s no other fully dependable basis for strength in the face of the world’s troubles than our faith in God. Anything else will lack the power to always make a difference. We can rely on the Lord when there’s nothing else or nobody else to rely on!

These five commands give us clear direction that trusting God ought to be our only choice. What will you choose?

Look once more to the Prophet Micah’s words (6:8).

*“And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,*

*To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?"*

Let's finish the study with a picture of what Micah's words can mean to a Christian who consistently does what God desires. This only comes from choosing a lifestyle of pleasing God and obeying His instructions. Obedience and trust will inevitably lead to an undeniable and often irresistible glow of confident faith from within us. It's a glow that has the power to change what nothing else will change. Here's what the Lord Jesus Christ has said about this in His sermon on the mount.

Matthew 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. {15} Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. {16} Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16 (My Paraphrase)

You are a glowing testimony, a lighthouse on a stormy sea. You are like a brightly lit city that even the darkest clouds cannot hide. Don't be like a lamp covered by a basket that does nothing. Display your righteous, loving mercy in all humility so people will see and catch what's shining from you. The result will be amazing. They will see the results of your actions and glorify God. They will be forever changed. Then, watch the glory of God reflect on their faces!

Is this only wishful thinking or is it a statement of fact?
It's certainly a statement of potential for every Christian!

May the Lord strengthen and bless you as you walk in faith and obedience to do what's pleasing before Him. May He provide you with the power to consistently do the right thing and have good success as He grants you a life of fruitfulness!

Dr. Bob Abramson