

What God Desires

Micah 6:8

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Introduction

Micah 6:8 is one of the most well-known verses found in the Old Testament and for good reason.

It is this verse that you find inscribed on the walls of the main meeting room in the Congressional Library in Washington D.C. (*the largest library in the world*)

It's a verse that has been long quoted by politicians in their election campaigns though it is rarely practiced once in office.

It has been said that this verse is *"the finest summary of the content of practical religion to be found in the Old Testament."* **And another someone else noted that** *"the rabbis who commented on this verse in the early centuries of the Christian era called it a one-line summary of the whole Law."*

And yet it's interesting that John Newton said of this passage that there was hardly any other one passage more generally misunderstood than this one.

And why would Newton say such a thing? Because this can very easily be taken as that which **contributes to** our salvation rather than the **response from** our salvation. What we find here in verse 8 is not the root of salvation but the fruit of it.

The Scriptures tell us that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He is not willing that any would perish but that all should come to repentance. And that the only way to come to Father is by Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus said of Himself that He is the door of the sheep and if anyone enters by Him, *they will be saved*.

What God desires above all is that we come to Him by faith believing in who He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. *This is what pleases Him*.

When the masses were fixated on what they could do, Jesus summarizes the work of God this way..

John 6:29

²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

And yet we know that Jesus isn't referring to a mere acknowledgement of the truth but a transformation by it. *This is that saving faith that is ultimately worked out in the life of the believer*.

Micah 6:8 does not stand as the way to salvation but describes what God desires for those who already have it. Micah is not addressing the unbelieving pagan world but is speaking to God's people who were called to live differently. He has not hidden His way. *He has made it plain & clear that we should know it & live it*.

Read Micah 6:1-8 & Pray

Context of Micah 6:8

The book of Micah is usually only brought up around Christmas time because of its famous prophecy concerning the Messiah. **Micah 5:2** says that there would be One to come out of Bethlehem who would be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

Like many of the major and minor prophets of the OT, Micah was sent by God due to major issues within the nation. The book of Micah is a mixture of both judgments and warnings that he issued along with prophetic promises of God's future faithfulness to Israel as a whole.

Chapter 6 opens up with the scene of a courtroom where we find God bringing a lawsuit against His people. He brings His complaint against them calling in the mountains & hills as His witnesses.

In verse 3, God asks what He had done to them and in what way had He wearied them? He is calling them to take the stand and show where He had been unfaithful to them, *where He had let them down.*

In verses 4-5, God records how He brought them out of Egypt and redeemed them. He calls them to remember what happened with King Balak and Balaam, *how God turned his cursing into blessing.*

Then verse 5 ends, "that you may know the righteousness of the Lord." God was not at fault here, He had been righteous and faithful, *so why did they leave Him and cease following His ways?*

In a rather dramatic fashion Micah illustrates the perspective of the children of Israel by posing a handful of questions on behalf of the nation toward God in **verses 6-7.** These couple verses not only reveal the **ignorance** but the growing **bitterness** that they had toward God.

Micah 6:6-7

⁶With what shall I come before the Lord, *And* bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? ⁷Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?

A total of four questions are posed regarding what God desires from them.

The first question is open-ended, in the way of wanting to know what God wants from them as if He had been silent. The questioning of whether they should bow or not shows them to be focused on the outward show rather than inward sincerity.

The second question has to do with the question of sacrifice. Is this what God desires? Is a one-year-old calf good enough?

And then notice with the third question the increase of absurdity. Asking if God wants thousands of rams or 10,000 rivers of oil, showing that they really think God wants too much from them and that what He wants is unreasonable.

And the fourth question takes it to the point of asking if God would want them to sacrifice their child to satisfy Him in which they no doubt got that concept from the worship of foreign gods.

We will find very quickly in the response of verse 8 that all of these questions **miss the mark** altogether. *And that actually God has already revealed the answers to the questions being asked.*

These questions that Micah proposes on behalf of God's people echoes many other passages found in the Bible. Here are a couple examples...

Psalm 51:16-17

¹⁶ For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*; You do not delight in burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.

God desires humility and not sacrifice. God doesn't want anything from us for truly we have nothing to offer. He just wants us to come to Him broken and humble and when we do, *He will not turn us away.*

When Saul got caught in his disobedience to the express Word of God, Samuel said this to him..

1 Samuel 15:22

²² So Samuel said: "Has 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 heed than the fat of rams.

God would say do what I've already told you to do. Repent and do the first works.

Manmade religion always goes back to something we have to do to get right with God.

We think that's what God wants from us. That's what will get us in right standing with God and yet he says I don't delight in sacrifice. *"I want you to come broken and ready to obey."*

⁸ He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you

Shown: "*nāgād*" *naw-gad'* – to be in front, to be in sight, to be clear, to tell, to let something be known

God has revealed what he desires very clearly in His word. If anyone wants to know what God wants, then they can find out. *God's word reveals God's will.*

Isaiah 45:19

¹⁹ I have not spoken in secret, In a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek Me in vain'; I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

It is not an issue of revelation but an issue of willingness. Willingness to look and find out. It isn't a secret; His will is not hidden. You do not have to have a decoder; you don't have to solve a riddle.

Deuteronomy 30:11

¹¹ "For this commandment which I command you today *is not too* mysterious for you, nor *is* it far off.

Mysterious: difficult to find out

The Bible says that God is not the author of confusion but of peace. Confusion comes with a lack of communication, but *God has communicated the way of peace.*

And then notice who he addresses, "O man"

Now ladies before you think your exempt from this, this word in the Hebrew does not refer to a male only but to mankind in general.

O man: "*ādām*" *aw-dam'* –a human being, humankind, mankind

Such as in Genesis 1:27 when it says that, "God created man in His own image"

Micah then gives two descriptions to what God has shown mankind. He will give the details in a moment, *but he attaches here these two descriptive words to what He has already shown.*

1) What Is Good

what is good;

Good: “*tôb*” *tobe* – pleasant, agreeable, beneficial, of moral excellence

The beautiful, the best, the better, the pleasant, the sweet

The goodness of what God has shown mankind has a full and rich meaning. It's good as it aligns with what is right, *but it is also good in the fact that it personally benefits our lives.*

Matthew Henry

There is something which God requires we should do for him and devote to him; and it is good. It is good in itself; there is an innate goodness in moral duties, antecedent to the command; they are not, as ceremonial observances, good because they are commanded, **but commanded because they are good**, consonant to the eternal rule and reason of good and evil, which are unalterable. It has likewise a direct tendency to our good; our conformity to it is not only the condition of our **future happiness**, but is a great expedient of our **present happiness**; *in keeping God's commandments there is great reward*, as well as after keeping them.

What God has shown in His word in the way of His commands are out of His great love for us and for the purpose of our joy in Him.

John 15:10-11

¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that your joy may be full.*”

*John would later say in his first epistle that **God's commandments are not burdensome.***

Not only what God has shown is good but it's also what He requires.

2) What He Requires

And what does the Lord require of you

That is what He desires and expects of us. *God does not move in the realm of unspoken expectations.*

Unspoken expectations can be extremely frustrating. They can be frustrating to employees, spouses, children, and friends. For someone to want something but not communicate and then be upset when what they wanted wasn't done is truly absurd and yet not at all uncommon. **However, when it comes to God, He has no expectation of us that He has not spoken to us in His word.**

Does require: “*dāraš*” *daw-rash'* – to seek after or to ask for, to expect, to desire

And what we find here in **verse 8**, is not a new revelation by any means. These are not new commandments, but a summary of the commandments God had already given. *They were not in need of new revelation but a reminder of what they had neglected.*

I wonder if Micah had this passage in Deuteronomy in his mind...

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

¹² “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your

soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?

Now here in Micah 6:8 we find a threefold summary of what God has revealed that He desires.

And I am going to assume that for most of you, these will not be new concepts. It won't be a new revelation to you, but the question must come down not to your knowledge of them but the existence of these things in your life.

Do these aspects found in verse 8 regarding what God desires mark your life as a believer?

The first aspect has to do with our actions....

1. Actions

But to do justly,

To do: " *āśâ*" *aw-saw'* - to carry out or preform an action

Used in a general sense of doing, making, or performing various works, actions, or behaviors.

Justly: "*mišpāṭ*" *mish-pawt'* – justice, that which is right, judgment in the determination of rights and the assignment of rewards and punishments, to execute right judgment

This is to pass righteous judgment in all situations and circumstances in your life and others.

John 7:24

²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

One might be surprised to hear that God actually expects us to judge. He just expects it to be done righteously, which is not done according to appearances & not done hypocritically.

To do justly is to live out justice, to do things that align with that which is right and just. This does not merely mean to talk about justice or rally other people to act justly **but to do the just thing yourself!**

James Montgomery Boice

"To act justly is most important, for it does not mean merely to talk about justice or to get other people to act justly. It means to do the just thing yourself."

Now we know from the Scriptures that God is perfectly just. Everything He does or says aligns with what is right.

Deuteronomy 32:4

⁴ *He is* the Rock, His work *is* perfect; For all His ways *are* justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright *is* He.

Psalms 37:28

²⁸ For the Lord loves justice, And does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.

And so likewise, He expects that we would love justice and pursue what is right not just for us but for those around us. Now in the days that we live in, in many ways, this word justice has been hijacked for social and political purposes. There are many who demand justice as a way to disguise their own selfish desires.

And yet the only One who gets to define what is right and just is the One who is the Creator and Judge of all the earth. We are to look to what He has said in His word so to see what is right and wrong. ***No one else gets to define it.***

Jeremiah 22:3 AMP

³ Thus says the Lord, "Execute justice and righteousness, and rescue the one who has been robbed from the hand of his oppressor. And do no wrong; do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

To do justly is immensely practical. We do this by rescuing the innocent, opening our mouth for the speechless, and stepping up for the cause of the one who needs it. **And we do this not by cherry-picking one verse, but by looking at life through the lens of the whole counsel of God.**

And when we step up to do justice, it is an absolute joy for those who do it.

Proverbs 21:15

¹⁵ *It is a joy for the just to do justice, But destruction will come to the workers of iniquity.*

This is one of the reasons why I believe this church, this body of believers is filled with such great joy. Because we are a people who doesn't just do church, but we step up as the church and do justly. *Our pastor leads us not just in the knowledge of the word but in the action of doing the word.*

God takes this pretty seriously. It is the self-deceived who only hear and do not do. When there is an appearance of righteousness but a lack of justice, *the heart of God is grieved.* Jesus referred to the church at Sardis as ***having an appearance of life but being dead.***

Amos 5:21-24

²¹ "I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savor your sacred assemblies. ²² Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept *them*, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. ²³ Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. ²⁴ But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream.

It is justice and righteousness that is more acceptable than sacrifice or any so-called religious act.

Direct Application

In all situations, we aren't to pursue what is convenient or comfortable but what is right. This would include things like standing at the corner of the planned parenthood praying, showing up at the capitol steps in Sacramento, showing up to vote, and many other things we must do as we seek to be the salt and light in this world but also in the everyday situations of life within our places of work, school, or families. **Don't pass the buck to someone else, God calls you TO DO JUSTLY.**

Notice then the contrast, we are told to do justly but then to love mercy. Many people claim to love justice but not many people do justice. However, we are to love mercy. Why? Because you could do something right without love and according to 1 Corinthians 13, all you'll be is a clanging symbol. *Micah isn't referring to an occasional merciful act but a heart that has a deep affection for mercy.*

The second aspect of what God desires has to do with our affections...

2. Affections

To love mercy,

God doesn't want us to become these rigid legalistic rule followers but desires us to be well balanced by loving mercy. If we act justly and love mercy, we won't be so rigid that we shame others like the Pharisees but not so merciful in the way that we let evil run rampant.

Notice the balance found here in Proverbs 3...

Proverbs 3:3-4

³ Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, ⁴ And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man.

To love: "*āhab*" *aw-hav'* - to have a great affection and care for

Mercy: "*hesed*" *kheh'-sed* - kindness, compassion, lovingkindness, loyal love, unfailing kindness

This word is used many times to describe **God's loyal love toward us** which is that His love is not based on our performance or whether we deserve it or not. *That's the whole point of mercy.*

He is not only the God of justice, but He is also RICH in mercy.

Psalm 103:8

⁸ The Lord *is* merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

And in like manner, this is how God wants us to be as well toward our fellow man. He wants us to not just occasionally be merciful, but He wants us to love it in the way that it simply becomes a part of us and how we operate.

Zechariah 7:7-9

⁷ *Should you not have obeyed* the words which the Lord proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited? " ⁸ Then the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, ⁹ "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother.'

There is way to do both. To uphold justice and to show mercy. By the grace of God, we are to strike that balance *to be like Jesus who was full of grace and truth.*

This reminds me of the time where Jesus sits down at the table in a house where many tax collectors and sinners came to sit down as well. Matthew records that when the Pharisees saw it, they asked his disciples why He was doing that. *Overhearing the question, Jesus says this...*

Matthew 9:12-13

¹² When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ But go and learn what *this* means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

They were so consumed with their own self-righteousness and their works to earn what could not be earned that they missed what God cared about most. *May we tonight learn what mercy means.*

Similarly to acting justly, there is a blessing for those that love mercy...

Matthew 5:7

⁷ Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Proverbs 11:17

¹⁷ The merciful man does good for his own soul, But *he who is* cruel troubles his own flesh.

Direct Application

There is a way to do the right thing the wrong way. While we should seek to do justly, we must never do so from a place of superiority but from a place of knowing how much we need His mercy.

We must err on the side of mercy because that is what we received and yet never comprise what is right. **In order to do this well in this crazy world** we truly need to be as *wise as serpents & yet harmless as doves*. **LORD HELP US!**

The *third & final aspect* of what God desires is in regard to our overall attitude...

3) Attitude

And to walk humbly with your God?

Our attitude is what often influences our actions and our affections.

If we walk with humbly with our God, then by proximity to His presence in our lives, we will be compelled to do justly and love mercy. Paul said it was the love of Christ that compelled Him.

To walk: “*yālak*” *yaw-lak*’ – metaphorical for the way one lives, referring to one’s behavior & conduct

Deuteronomy 13:4

⁴ You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

Notice the personal nature of this, to walk humbly with **YOUR** God. We are to walk after the Lord **OUR** God. He is who we seek to serve and hold fast to, *not just collectively but individually*.

Humbly: “*ṣāna*” *tsaw-nah*’ - lowly, modestly, submissively, to act in a manner respectful and careful of another’s direction

This is a rare Hebrew word occurring only here and in **Proverbs 11:2** where it is contrasted with being proud. It is humility in the sense of not insisting in your own way but ready to do what God desires.

And it doesn’t merely mean to be humble, but it means to be submissive to all that God wants. **You could also render this verse**, “*you must be careful to live the way your God wants you too*”

I think John the Baptist put it best when he said...

John 3:30

³⁰ He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

These two things always go together. Our decreasing leads to His increasing in our lives.

It is impossible to walk with God and be prideful. If pride comes, the walk stops. The proud man simply does not know God. When the finite man walks with the infinite God, he or she quickly realizes how little they are and how big He is.

Isaiah 66:2

² For all those *things* My hand has made, And all those *things* exist,” Says the Lord. “But on this *one* will I look: On *him who is* poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.

Trembles: to be in such reverential awe that causes intense motion

This is to have God’s word as the final authority in your life. What He says goes.

It is as we live humbly surrendered to His Word & His Will, that we will experience His grace.

1 Peter 5:5b-6

“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

THIS IS WHAT GOD DESIRES...

In our **actions**: to do justly (*the way of joy*)

In our **affections**: to love mercy (*the way of blessing*)

In our **attitude**: to walk humbly with our God (*the way of grace*)

In the chapter where Jesus rebukes all the hypocritical religious leaders, He said this....

Matthew 23:23

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: **justice and mercy and faith**. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Now these three divine aspects that God desires are only able to come out of the life of someone already surrendered to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. *Only then by God’s help would we be able to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.*

The reality is that we have fallen short of living up to God’s expectation, but Christ walked in these three things perfectly. *He did justice, He loved mercy, and He walked humbly with God the Father.*

He fulfilled the law on our behalf. We don’t do these things to get saved or keep ourselves saved; we now live in this way because we love Him. *We pursue this lifestyle not for salvation but from it.*

THIS IS WHO HE IS & SO THIS IS WHO WE ARE TO BE – in Him, for Him, & by Him

Micah 7:18-19

¹⁸ Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy. ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.

And how do we do it? *Only by the help of our God!*

Hosea 12:6

⁶ So you, by *the help* of your God, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually.

C.H. Spurgeon

Only through faith in Christ does a man **learn** to do righteously, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; and only by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifying us to that end do we fulfil these **three divine requirements**. These we fulfil perfectly in our desire; we would be holy as God is holy, if we could live as our heart aspires to live, we would always do righteously, we would always love mercy; and we would always walk humbly with God. This **the Holy Spirit daily aids us** to do by working in us to will and to do of God’s good pleasure; and the day will come, and we are pining for it, when, being entirely free from this hampering body, we shall serve him day and night in his temple, and shall render to him an absolutely perfect obedience, for “they are without fault before the throne of God.”