

What Does God Require?

Micah 6:6-8

Preface

The year 2009 has been a year filled with challenges and uncertainty. As we enter a new year, we once again find ourselves asking probing questions. What could I have done different? Can I improve this year? Some of you no doubt have already made New Year resolutions.

I would like to suggest doing things different this year. Rather than making resolutions, make devotions to God. Instead of pondering what you would like to change, ask God what He would like to change about you in 2010. I have already started praying about that and unfortunately for me, God has already impressed upon me that I need to lose some weight; not exactly the kind of thing I wanted to hear. I also need to read and study my Bible more, work on my faith by trusting Him.

Scripture – Read

“⁶With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:6-8 NIV

Introduction

The Bible is known as God’s special revelation to man. Restated, **the Bible is God revealing himself to man**. We also know it is full of instruction about “living for God”. Actually, it is more about “allowing God to live through us” than “living for God.” It is perhaps best stated as “Abiding In Him.”

The prophet Micah does a great job of providing an overall summary of what God actually requires from us. He manages to cut through all of the complex rules and add-ons. He gets to the heart of the basic, simple concept of what God requires from you and me as His children.

In our text, Micah is doing exactly what I am asking you to do today. He is searching his heart and asking the question, “What does God require of me?” Today we will look at the answers for Micah’s life and apply them to our own lives.

Content

1. What God does not require

Micah begins by going to the extremes or exaggerating if you will. He describes things most of us do not have and things that do not exist. He does this to emphasize something very important that we should not miss.

“Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves?”

God does not require our rituals. So often, we want to offer God rituals to please Him. What rituals do we perform today? Attending church without giving our heart in true worship and submission is just that, attending church, a ritual. We can perform all of the rituals we want. But, God is more interested in our hearts than our rituals.

“Does the Lord delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil?”

God does not require our earthly possessions. We all know we can’t buy our way to heaven. We should also understand that our money and other possessions will not earn us God’s pleasure. The reality is that they are not our possessions to start with. They belong to God the Creator and they are in our care only for a short time. Only God has thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil. You and I could never produce enough possessions to earn our salvation.

“Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

God does not require our prized relationships. One of the most misunderstood and overlooked attributes of God is His

ability to give life. God is the creator and only He can create something from nothing. Our ability to produce the fruit of our body is a gift from God. God does not require the things that are **already His** as they are given to us as gifts from Him.

You will notice that our offerings, possessions and relationships are all things that God can give and God can take away at will. He owns and controls all of these things. We may treasure and value them but they are only ours for a brief time under our stewardship with permission from God. He doesn't require our offerings, possessions and relationships, he requires something far more significant. **He requires things within our power to give but often very difficult to surrender.**

So, what does God require from us? What do you and I as mere men have to offer to a great and almighty God, our Creator? "He has told you O man what is good: And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?" vs. 8. God requires three important things.

2. "To do justice" - Personal Ethics

"Ethics", now that is word you don't hear much about today. **What is personal ethics?** To act justly involves doing the **right thing** in every aspect of life.

To do justice is to do justice with God's creation. It is to understand that you, yourself are His creatures placed here with purpose and to **do everything with honor and integrity**. It means we conduct ourselves in such a manner that we understand one very important fact, which is that **God is always watching**. To ignore that is unbelief. To behave one way in public and another in private means we do not really believe that God exists. Our life and commitment is for pleasing man rather than God. In reality, what we do **privately** is more important than what we do **publicly**.

Illustration: You may be thinking you don't understand this matter of personal ethics or doing justice with God's creation. Let me make it a little clearer. Personal ethics involves **what you do in private when no one is looking**. Do you spend your private time contemplating God's word, plan and desires for your life? Or, do you spend it doing things for which you

would be ashamed. If personal ethics were the norm rather than the exception, the majority of the **internet would not be about pornography**. If personal ethics were the standard, Hollywood would not feel compelled to produce movies rated "R". If personal ethics were the standard, our **prisons would not be crowded** and **marriages would not be crumbling at a rate in excess of 50%**. **And what about the stealing of software and music in this day and time? Some people say that downloading Christian music from the internet isn't stealing. Well, if you do not have the musician's permission, it is stealing! You wouldn't steal Bibles would you?**

I am afraid our legal standards for ethics have been adopted as personal ethics even for Christians. "I am guilty only if you can catch me and prove it." Rest assured, that is a standard of man's doing and God will have nothing to do with such nonsense.

Simply put, personal ethics is holding yourself to a high standard and that is what God requires.

3. "Love loving-kindness and mercy" - Inter-Personal Ethics

To love kindness means to **value and adore acts of kindness**. **God wants us to love others and love being kind to others**. As Christians, we should not look for ways to show kindness, we should be **all about kindness** to others and love doing it. My wife has a certain way of quietly **calling my name** - "**Bobby**", when she suspects I am about to say or do something that is not going to show kindness. When she does this, I usually listen up because she is the kindest person I know. It seems that kindness comes natural for her but it doesn't, it comes from **abiding in Christ**. **Kindness comes as a fruit of our relationship with God**.

Illustration: A few years ago, **my own son provided me a lesson in kindness**. My wife wasn't feeling well and we ordered food from a local restaurant. When my son and I went to pickup the food. I paid in cash and the young girl at the checkout handed me my change. As she walked away to retrieve the food, I glanced at the change and we could both see I was short one dollar. My immediate reaction was to call her back and **insist on my other dollar**. However, I looked at my son and he quietly said, "**I wouldn't worry about it.**" My

natural instinct was to insist on what was mine even if it was only one dollar. My son on the other hand was considering the embarrassment and trouble the matter might cause the young lady. Why put her through that or even the embarrassment of being told she made a mistake. Sure, I was due the other dollar and for me it was the principal rather than the value of the dollar. **We let it slide; the girl never knew she made a mistake, and I got a lesson in kindness.**

Loving kindness or **inter-personal ethics means to take joy in the act or scene of mercy**. It happens when showing mercy means more than having justice. **In other words, mercy transcends justice**. Mercy is the principal on which we are **saved** – how easy we forget that principal. In the US, everything seems to evolve around capitalism. As a result, we become obsessed with getting the **most bang for our buck**. Unchecked, this attitude **leads to greed or gain at the expense of others**. We tend to put all of our emphasis on getting what we deserve and not showing restraint and mercy to others. Hard work is important but must be accompanied with kindness and love.

God is pleased when we reflect His likeness by showing **mercy** which transcends **justice**. The Bible doesn't teach do unto others as they do unto you. Instead, it teaches what? **“Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you.”**

Some people never have kind a word to say to others. It seems as only negative comments come from their lips. On the other hand, there are those who we all love to be around because they lift us up and encourage us. In meeting with young couples, I always encourage them to find mutual friends who likewise are striving to have a successful marriage and want to live their lives for God. This will be a blessing to their relationship and encourage them in difficult times.

Simply put, inter-personal ethics is holding yourself to a higher standard than you hold others to and that is what God requires.

4. “Walk humbly with God” – Spiritual Ethics

Christianity is not a religion. Being a Christian involves taking on a **whole new way of life**. It means you **surrender your own personal desires to live in God's purpose** – doing

what He wants you to do at every moment. Christianity is more about **“DOs”** than it is about **“DON'Ts”**. It is about living a life that receives joy from doing what God leads. **This changes everything**. It changes your relationships, your work and every other aspect of your life. It affects everything. It changes how you conduct your business transactions right down to the visit to the local grocery store. **Suddenly, everything is about sharing His message and not about getting what you want.**

Illustration: A couple of years ago, my family moved from Orange Beach to Fairhope. We worked with a real estate agent for several months to find the right home for us. During the course of working with the agent, I always had this feeling God wanted to use me in her life. I was careful to speak with her about God and her church affiliation, but, she was reluctant to provide too much information. It always bothered me that I never found the words or opportunity to be a minister to her. One year later, I found myself preaching here at Barnwell Baptist Church on Mother's Day and guess who was here? My real estate agent and her husband were right down on the third row. Today I am their pastor. You see, **I thought I was just looking for a house. God was up to much larger eternal matters.**

Walking is a metaphor for **casual living** – abiding with Him in everyday life. It doesn't say run or fight with God, it says walk with God. Walking with God **means abiding in Him in everyday life**. Walking with God means walking at the **same pace, same time, same direction, same place and same purpose as God**.

Break away from the daily grind and walk with God. Walk with God and allow His attributes to influence every aspect of your life. **God Clears His calendar and says, “walk with me.”** **Simply put, spiritual ethics is letting God's standard become your standards and that is what God requires.**

➤ Conclusion

Chuck Swindoll, a well know preacher once mentioned five ways to waste time. They are:

Worry about things

Fix yourself on wealth

Compare yourself to others
Lengthen your list of enemies
Don't read the instructions

Why waste another year living for you? Micah asked the question, "What do you require of me God?"

Will you ask that question? Before you even celebrate New Years, I suggest you ask God what He requires of you."