



Do Justice

Bottom Line: The Christian life must be marked by a love for the world that seeks to correct oppression and injustice.

What is an example you can think of where somebody totally “missed the point?” (Could be an example from your own life, a movie/book/television show, a news story, etc.)

On the surface, the Christian life can seem pretty simple and if you were to ask most Christians what their Christian life consists of, you may get pretty similar answers from most people: go to church, read your Bible, give your tithe, etc. And these things are certainly true of the Christian life—we should go to church, read our Bibles, and give our tithes. But is that *all* that the Christian life is? Is that all that’s required of Christians? The prophet Micah would argue “no” and that if that’s all we amount the Christian life to, then we’ve totally missed the point.

Read Micah 6:1-5.

Here, the Lord is bringing an indictment against the people of Israel. Their sins have grieved the Lord and the Lord asks them, “what have I done to you? How have I wearied you?” The Israelites were acting as though the Lord’s commands and His law were too much to bear, so instead of keeping His law, they broke it. But God reminds Israel that He hasn’t wearied them, He has brought them rest. He “brought them up from the land of Egypt and redeemed [them] from the house of slavery” (v. 4a). He gave them good leaders like Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (v. 4b). In verse 5, God is recounting to the Israelites how he turned Balak’s curse against Israel into a blessing (Deuteronomy 23:3-6), and how He helped them miraculously cross the Jordan river (Joshua 3-4). He has not burdened them, He has done nothing but help them.

With this being the case, how could the Israelites have mistaken serving God as being a burden rather than a blessing? What are some ways that we make this same mistake?

Read Micah 6:6-7.

This is Micah’s response back to the Lord where he is trying to figure out how to respond to God’s indictment. What Micah quickly realizes is the futility of religious activity to atone for Israel’s sins. Rituals and sacrifices are commanded by God, but they aren’t meant to be done solely as a cheap means of clearing our conscious. They were meant to be done in faith, not obligation, trusting not in the sacrifices themselves, but in the God who promised to receive the sacrifices. Therefore the faith involved in the rituals and sacrifices terminates not on the rites themselves, but on God. Merely engaging in religious activity is not enough to please God, our hearts must be devoted to him in a deeper way.

How do we fall into the same trap of thinking we can restore our relationship to God by doing more?

Read Micah 6:8. How do you think the rituals and sacrifices of the Old Testament were designed to point us toward these “requirements”?



Let's concentrate on the first requirement: "to do justice." What does this mean?

In Hebrew, there are two words for justice. The one used here is *mishpat* which means "giving people what is due." A lot of times we think that this only applies to punishment, but this kind of justice also means giving people what they deserve for doing good, as well as just offering to all people the basic respect and dignity that they deserve as human beings made in the image of God.

This kind of justice is primarily outward focused. The idea is that what God requires of the Israelites, and by extension us today, is that they seek to make what's wrong in the world right again.

Does your heart naturally gravitate towards compassion for those who are unfairly treated or disadvantaged? If not, what does this say about your heart? How can we cultivate a desire to see justice in the world?

What injustices in the world most burden you? (Abortion, poverty, foster care, etc.) What injustices are you aware of in your community? If God *requires* justice—and that's a strong word—what does that look like for us individually? What about as a family? As a small group? As a church?

The Israelites "missed the point" of what God wanted them to do. They were doing religious activities for religion's sake, but God clarified: *what I have actually told you to do is to act justly*. God could care less about the Israelites' sacrifices and devotion to Him if they were not also devoted to the plight of their neighbor (cf. Isaiah 1:10-17; Matthew 5:23-24; Luke 10:25-37). The message for us is clear: the Christian life must be marked by a love for the world that seeks to correct oppression and injustice.

Is it possible that we've "missed the point" in what God requires of us? What are some signs that this could be the case?

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

The issue of justice is one that is incredibly important for us to understand because justice is a crucial aspect of God's character and nature. God will *always* give people what is due to them: either punishment or reward. The Bible tells us that this will happen on Judgment Day. What will you receive from God on that day? Will God's justice entitle you to punishment or reward? The simple way to determine this is to ask yourself: are you saved? For those who have repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ's life and death for them, they will stand before God perfectly righteous, and justice will require that they receive reward. But for those who do not have the righteousness of Christ credited to them, they will stand before God on their own merits, and justice will require eternal punishment. What will justice require for you on that day?

MOVING FORWARD *together*

What steps will you take to “do justice?” This is an individual expectation, it’s not something that you can outsource to “the missions team” or charities, etc. Doing justice doesn’t necessarily entail giving money (although that shouldn’t entirely be discounted). Justice can be done in the everyday normal parts of life. How do you treat your family? Your co-workers/bosses/employees? How do you treat the impoverished and disadvantaged? Even if it’s a change of heart, there are steps for you to take. What will you do?