

The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 8: The Lord's Lawsuit: What Does He Require?

Micah 6:1–16

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, the heart of this lesson is Micah 6:8, and the teacher's task is to let it land in full. "To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" is a summary of true religion. Teach that God has never been interested in being bought off by ritual; He has always wanted the whole person, a life of justice toward others, mercy that delights in kindness, and a humble daily walk with Him. This anticipates Jesus' own teaching that the weightier matters of the law are justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23), and that all the law hangs on loving God and loving neighbor (Matthew 22:37–40).

Guard against two opposite errors, as the prompt requires. On one side, do not let faith shrink into private religious devotion that ignores how we treat people; the prophets will not allow worship to be divorced from justice. On the other side, do not reduce Micah 6:8 to mere social activism cut loose from God; the verse explicitly roots justice and kindness in walking humbly with God. True worship of God and justice toward neighbor belong together and cannot be separated without distorting both.

This passage forms the student deeply. It calls us to remember God's redeeming grace, to abandon the attempt to manage God with religious performance, and to live out justice, mercy, and humility in ordinary life. Teach toward a faith that is whole, in which our walk with God and our treatment of others are one seamless life. And let the gospel be heard: where we have failed at Micah 6:8, Christ has fulfilled it perfectly and offers us both forgiveness and the power to walk this way.

Question 1

Student Question:

God presents His "case" against His people by calling the mountains as witnesses and then asking, "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you?" (6:1–3). What does it reveal about God that He pleads with His people and reasons with them rather than simply destroying them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open with the courtroom that is also a plea. God calls the mountains and the enduring foundations of the earth to hear His "case" (Hebrew *rib*, a covenant lawsuit) against His people (6:1–2). But the first words from the bench are not accusation; they are a wounded question: "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!" (6:3).

Teach what this reveals about God. He does not deal with His drifting people as a tyrant who simply destroys; He reasons, pleads, and invites them to answer. This is the heart of a Redeemer who longs to be reconciled, not merely a judge eager to condemn. The same tone runs through Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, let us reason together.”

Note the tenderness of “O my people.” Even in lawsuit, God claims them as His own. The relationship has been wounded by their sin, not by any failure on His part, and He grieves the distance. This is the language of a faithful spouse confronting an unfaithful one, more sorrowful than angry.

Set the tone for the chapter. The God who will, by the end, expose dishonest scales and pronounce judgment, begins by pleading. His justice and His love are not at war; the same God who requires justice longs for His people’s return. This guards the class from imagining a cold or arbitrary God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God reasons and pleads with His people rather than simply destroying them.
- God’s covenant lawsuit flows from a wounded relationship, not cold judgment.
- “O my people” shows God still claims His drifting people as His own.
- God’s justice and His love are not at war.
- The Redeemer longs for reconciliation (Isaiah 1:18).

Discussion Prompts

- What does God’s tender question reveal about His heart toward those who drift?
- How does it change your view of God to see Him plead rather than simply condemn?
- How do God’s justice and love work together in this opening?

Question 2

Student Question:

God grounds His appeal in His past redemption: “I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery” (6:4). How does remembering specifically what God has done for you fuel both gratitude and obedience, and where do you need to recall His past faithfulness right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question draws on God’s appeal to history in verse 4: “For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery.” God’s call to obedience is grounded in His prior redemption. He does not begin with demands but with reminders of grace.

Teach the gospel logic at work here. Throughout Scripture, obedience flows from remembered grace. God redeemed Israel first, then gave the law; the indicative of what God has done precedes the imperative of what we must do. Gratitude, not fear, is the proper engine of obedience.

Help the class practice remembering. We are forgetful people, and a forgotten grace produces a cold heart. Deliberately recalling God's specific acts of faithfulness, in Scripture and in our own lives, rekindles love and loosens the grip of sin. This is why the Lord's Supper is a remembering, why testimony matters, why the Psalms rehearse God's deeds.

Move toward concrete recollection. Invite each person to name one specific way God has redeemed or helped them, and to let that memory fuel fresh gratitude and obedience. Where we are tempted to drift, remembering what God has done can call us back.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God grounds His call to obedience in His prior redemption.
- Obedience flows from remembered grace, not fear.
- A forgotten grace produces a cold heart.
- Deliberate remembering rekindles love and weakens sin.
- Gratitude is the proper engine of obedience.

Discussion Prompts

- How does remembering what God has done fuel gratitude and obedience?
- Why are we so prone to forget God's past faithfulness?
- What specific act of God's faithfulness do you need to recall right now?

Question 3

Student Question:

The people ask, "With what shall I come before the Lord?" and escalate to thousands of rams and even offering a firstborn child (6:6-7), as if God could be satisfied by the size of the gift. Why is the attempt to buy God off with religious offerings a fundamental misunderstanding of who He is and what He wants?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 6-7 voice the religious heart's instinct: "With what shall I come before the Lord?... Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression?" The escalation is telling, from generous offerings to an extravagant excess to the horror of child sacrifice. The assumption underneath is that God can be satisfied by the size of the gift.

Teach why this misunderstands God. God is not a deity who can be bought off, bribed, or managed. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10–12); He needs nothing from us. The attempt to satisfy God with ever-bigger offerings treats Him as a transaction to be settled rather than a Person to be loved and obeyed.

Expose the deeper motive. The desire to pay God off is often a desire to keep our hearts and lives for ourselves. If we can satisfy God with a gift, however costly, we can avoid giving Him the one thing He actually wants: us. Religious extravagance can be a sophisticated way of withholding the heart.

Connect to the consistent prophetic word. “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22); “I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6). God has always wanted obedient, loving hearts more than ritual offerings. This sets up Micah 6:8, which tells us what He actually requires.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God cannot be bought off, bribed, or managed.
- God owns everything and needs nothing from us (Psalm 50:10–12).
- Paying God off is often a way to withhold the heart.
- Religious extravagance can mask a refusal to obey.
- God desires obedience and love over ritual (1 Samuel 15:22; Hosea 6:6).

Discussion Prompts

- Why is trying to satisfy God with bigger offerings a misunderstanding of who He is?
- How can religious giving or activity become a way of withholding the heart?
- What does God actually desire more than ritual?

Question 4

Student Question:

Many people today still try to satisfy God with religious activity (attendance, giving, service) while their hearts and daily lives remain unchanged. Where are you tempted to substitute religious performance for genuine obedience and a real relationship with God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question presses the previous one into the student’s own practice. The temptation to substitute religious performance for genuine obedience did not end with ancient Israel; it is alive in every church. We can attend, give, serve, and sing while our hearts and daily lives remain untouched.

Help the class examine this honestly. Religious activity is good and commanded, but it becomes a substitute when we use it to feel right with God while avoiding the obedience He actually asks:

the relationship we will not mend, the sin we will not forsake, the neighbor we will not love. We offer God the easier currency of activity to avoid the costlier currency of obedience.

Teach the difference between performance and relationship. God does not want religious transactions; He wants us. The danger of performance is that it can keep us busy enough to feel spiritual while keeping God at arm's length from the parts of our lives we most want to control.

Move toward integration. Invite each person to name one place where their religious activity and their actual obedience have come apart, and to bring that area into genuine surrender. The goal is not less worship but worship joined to a yielded life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Religious activity can become a substitute for genuine obedience.
- We offer the easy currency of activity to avoid the costly currency of obedience.
- Performance can keep us busy while keeping God at arm's length.
- God wants us, not religious transactions.
- The goal is worship joined to a yielded life.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to substitute religious activity for genuine obedience?
- What costly obedience might religious busyness be helping you avoid?
- How can worship and a yielded life be brought back together?

Question 5

Student Question:

Micah answers, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (6:8). What does each of these three (doing justice, loving kindness, walking humbly with God) actually mean, and why do they together capture the heart of what God desires?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question reaches the doctrinal heart of the lesson: Micah 6:8. Slow down and unpack each phrase, for this verse summarizes what God has always wanted. "He has told you, O man, what is good" means this is no mystery; God has made His will clear. The requirement is threefold and integrated.

First, "to do justice." This is active, not passive: treating people rightly, dealing honestly, defending the vulnerable, refusing to exploit. Justice is not merely avoiding wrong but doing right by others, especially those who cannot defend themselves. It is the outward dimension of a life right with God.

Second, “to love kindness” (Hebrew *hesed*, covenant mercy and steadfast love). Note that we are not merely to do kindness but to love it, to delight in mercy. This is the inner disposition that goes beyond strict duty to embrace compassion, loyalty, and grace toward others, reflecting God’s own steadfast love toward us.

Third, “to walk humbly with your God.” This is the vertical relationship that grounds the other two: an ongoing, daily, humble walk with God. Justice and kindness without this become mere ethics or activism; this without justice and kindness becomes empty piety. Together they form the whole: a humble life with God that overflows in just and merciful dealings with people. Show the class that Jesus affirmed exactly this balance as the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23), and that He alone has lived it perfectly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God has clearly revealed what is good; it is no mystery.
- To do justice is active: treating others rightly and defending the vulnerable.
- To love kindness (*hesed*) is to delight in mercy, not merely perform it.
- To walk humbly with God is the daily relationship that grounds the rest.
- The three belong together as one integrated life.
- Jesus affirmed justice, mercy, and faithfulness as the weightier matters (Matthew 23:23).

Discussion Prompts

- What does each phrase of Micah 6:8 actually mean?
- Why do these three together capture the heart of what God desires?
- How did Jesus affirm this same balance, and how did He live it perfectly?

Question 6

Student Question:

“To do justice” means treating others rightly and defending the vulnerable. Where in your daily life (work, family, community) is God calling you to act justly toward people, even when it is costly or inconvenient?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes “to do justice” out of the abstract and into the student’s daily life. Justice is not only a matter of grand causes; it is enacted in how we treat the people right in front of us: paying fair wages, telling the truth, keeping our word, refusing to take advantage, defending someone who is being wronged.

Help the class locate concrete arenas: honesty in business, fairness as an employer or employee, integrity in how we speak about others, advocacy for someone overlooked, refusing to

participate in dishonest practices even when everyone else does. Justice often costs us something, which is precisely why it reveals the heart.

Guard against making justice someone else's job. It is easy to be passionate about injustice in the abstract while being careless about it in our own dealings. Micah's land-grabbers (chapter 2) were respectable people doing legal things; the call to do justice begins with our own conduct.

Move toward concrete action. Invite each person to name one specific relationship or situation where doing justice would be costly or inconvenient, and one step they will take to act rightly there this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Justice is enacted in how we treat the people in front of us.
- It includes honesty, fairness, integrity, and defending the wronged.
- Justice often costs us something, which reveals the heart.
- The call to do justice begins with our own conduct.
- Doing justice requires concrete, sometimes costly, action.

Discussion Prompts

- Where is God calling you to act justly in your daily life?
- Why does doing justice often cost us something?
- What is one costly or inconvenient step toward justice you can take this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Micah 6:8 holds together our walk with God and our treatment of our neighbor; true worship and real justice belong together. How do we avoid the two opposite errors of reducing faith to private religious devotion on one hand, or to mere social activism on the other?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question addresses the doctrinal balance the prompt specifically requires: Micah 6:8 holds together our walk with God and our treatment of neighbor, and we must avoid two opposite errors. Teach this carefully, because both errors are common and both distort the gospel.

The first error is shrinking faith into private religious devotion that ignores justice. Some treat Christianity as purely a matter of personal piety, prayer, worship, and inner experience, while remaining indifferent to how they treat people or to injustice around them. The prophets thunder against this; God explicitly rejects worship divorced from justice (Amos 5:21–24; Isaiah 1:11–17). A faith that loves God in word while ignoring the neighbor is a contradiction (1 John 4:20).

The second error is reducing faith to mere social activism cut loose from God. Some take the language of justice and kindness and detach it from walking humbly with God, turning Christianity into a program of social improvement powered by human effort and ideology. But Micah roots justice and kindness explicitly in walking humbly with your God. Severed from that root, activism becomes self-righteous, exhausting, and ultimately just another human cause.

Show the class the integration. True worship of God and real justice toward neighbor belong together as one seamless life, exactly as Jesus joined loving God and loving neighbor as the two great commandments on which everything hangs (Matthew 22:37–40). We do justice and love kindness precisely because we walk humbly with the God who first loved us. The vertical and the horizontal are meant to be one.

Apply it pastorally. Help the class examine which error they personally tend toward, the privatized piety that ignores the neighbor, or the activism that drifts from God, and call them back to the whole, integrated life that Micah 6:8 describes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Error one: shrinking faith to private piety that ignores justice (Amos 5:21–24).
- God rejects worship divorced from justice toward neighbor (Isaiah 1:11–17).
- Error two: reducing faith to social activism cut loose from God.
- Justice and kindness are rooted in walking humbly with God.
- Loving God and loving neighbor are one integrated life (Matthew 22:37–40).
- We do justice because we walk humbly with the God who first loved us.

Discussion Prompts

- How do we avoid reducing faith to private devotion that ignores justice?
- How do we avoid reducing faith to activism cut loose from God?
- Which error do you personally tend toward, and how does Micah 6:8 correct it?

Question 8

Student Question:

“To walk humbly with your God” describes an ongoing, daily, humble relationship, not a one-time event. What does a humble walk with God look like in the ordinary rhythms of your week, and where is pride or self-reliance interrupting that walk?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes the third phrase, “to walk humbly with your God,” into the texture of ordinary life. The word “walk” implies an ongoing journey, a daily companionship, not a one-time decision or an occasional religious event. And it is to be humble, marked by dependence rather than self-reliance.

Help the class picture what this walk looks like in a normal week: beginning the day in dependence on God, bringing decisions to Him in prayer, listening to His word, confessing sin quickly, depending on His strength rather than our own, and staying teachable. It is less about dramatic spiritual highs and more about steady, humble companionship with God through ordinary days.

Name the chief obstacle: pride and self-reliance. We interrupt the humble walk when we run ahead of God in our own strength, when we stop listening because we think we already know, when we handle life as if we do not need Him. Humility keeps us in step with God; pride pulls us out of stride.

Move toward a concrete rhythm. Invite each person to identify where pride or self-reliance most interrupts their walk with God, and one practice that would help them walk more humbly and dependently with Him this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Walking with God is ongoing, daily companionship, not a one-time event.
- A humble walk is marked by dependence rather than self-reliance.
- It looks like prayer, listening, quick confession, and teachability.
- Pride and self-reliance interrupt the walk.
- Humility keeps us in step with God.

Discussion Prompts

- What does a humble walk with God look like in your ordinary week?
- Where does pride or self-reliance interrupt that walk?
- What practice would help you walk more humbly and dependently with God?

Question 9

Student Question:

The rest of the chapter exposes the alternative to Micah 6:8: dishonest scales, wealth gained by violence, lies, and the ways of wicked kings, all bringing judgment (6:10–16). How does this show that abandoning justice, mercy, and humility toward God inevitably corrupts the whole of life, and how does the gospel both expose our failure here and provide what we could never achieve on our own?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson in terms of pressing the verse home, and it rests on the contrast in 6:10–16, where Micah shows what life looks like when a people abandon Micah 6:8. The list is grim: dishonest scales and false weights (6:11), wealth gained by violence

(6:12), tongues full of deceit (6:12), and the adoption of the wicked ways of evil kings (6:16). The result is judgment and emptiness.

Teach the principle that abandoning justice, mercy, and humility toward God corrupts the whole of life. Worship and ethics are connected; when the humble walk with God is lost, justice and kindness collapse too, and society fills with dishonesty, exploitation, and violence. Micah 6:8 is not one nice ideal among many; it is the structure of a healthy life and community. Remove it, and everything decays.

Show the futility of the corrupt life. God says they will eat but not be satisfied, sow but not reap (6:14–15). Sin promises fullness and delivers emptiness. A life built on injustice and self-reliance, no matter how prosperous it looks, comes up hollow. This is the consistent testimony of Scripture about the wages of sin.

Now turn to the gospel, as the question invites. Micah 6:8 exposes us, because none of us has done justice, loved kindness, and walked humbly with God perfectly. If the verse were merely a demand, it would condemn us all. But here is the good news: where we have failed, Jesus Christ has fulfilled it perfectly. He did justice, embodied steadfast love, and walked in perfect humility with His Father, even to the cross (Philippians 2:8).

Let the class hear both forgiveness and power in Christ. Through Christ, our failures at Micah 6:8 are forgiven, and through His Spirit we are given the power to begin truly living this way. The verse that condemns us in our own strength becomes, in Christ, both a description of the life He gives and a path we can walk by grace. The gospel does not lower the standard; it provides what we could never achieve and then empowers us to pursue it out of gratitude.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Abandoning Micah 6:8 corrupts the whole of life (dishonesty, violence, deceit).
- Worship and ethics are connected; losing the walk with God collapses justice and mercy.
- Sin promises fullness but delivers emptiness (6:14–15).
- Micah 6:8 exposes that none of us has kept it perfectly.
- Jesus fulfilled justice, kindness, and humble obedience perfectly (Philippians 2:8).
- In Christ our failures are forgiven and we are empowered to walk this way.
- The gospel does not lower the standard but provides what we could not achieve.

Discussion Prompts

- How does abandoning justice, mercy, and humility corrupt the whole of life?
- Why does a life built on injustice come up empty even when it looks prosperous?
- How does the gospel both expose our failure at Micah 6:8 and provide what we lack?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole chapter, from God's tender lawsuit to the call of Micah 6:8. Name one specific way Jesus is pressing the heart of true religion (justice, kindness, and a humble walk with God) into your daily life right now.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question asks the student to look back over the whole chapter and name one specific way Christ is pressing the heart of true religion, justice, kindness, and a humble walk with God, into their daily life. Press for a concrete, personal answer.

Gather the threads: God's tender lawsuit, His redeeming grace, the futility of trying to buy Him off, the threefold call of Micah 6:8, and the gospel that fulfills it in Christ. Each is a place the Spirit may be working.

Help different people land differently. For one, the lesson is acting justly in a specific costly situation. For another, it is delighting in mercy rather than merely tolerating people. For another, it is walking more humbly and dependently with God in ordinary days, resting in Christ who fulfilled the verse for them.

Close in prayer that asks God to make our worship and our lives one whole, to forgive where we have failed, and to empower us by His Spirit to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Transformation is specific and personal.
- Justice, delight in mercy, and a humble walk are the chief fruits.
- Christ fulfilled Micah 6:8 and empowers us to walk it.
- The same text meets different hearts differently.
- Self-examination should end in prayer for an integrated life.

Discussion Prompts

- Name one way Christ is pressing justice, kindness, or a humble walk into your life.
- Which of the three do you most need to grow in right now?
- What concrete step will you take this week in response to Micah 6:8?