

The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

Lesson 8: The Lord's Lawsuit: What Does He Require? -- Micah 6:1–16

Chapter 6 of Micah opens like a trial, but with a tenderness that catches you off guard. God calls the mountains and the hills to serve as jury, and then He takes the stand, not to accuse first, but to ask a heartbroken question: “O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!” Here is the Maker of heaven and earth, who has every right to thunder, instead pleading with His people like a wounded friend. What have I done to make you turn away? It is one of the most moving moments in all the prophets.

God reminds them of their history together: how He brought them up out of Egypt, redeemed them from slavery, gave them leaders, turned a curse into a blessing. He is not a distant deity demanding tribute; He is a Redeemer recalling everything He has done. And against that backdrop of relentless grace, the people's coldness and corruption look all the more tragic. How could a people so loved live so badly?

Then comes the great question that every religious heart eventually asks: “With what shall I come before the Lord?” The people imagine they can satisfy God with bigger and bigger offerings, thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil, even, in a horrifying escalation, the sacrifice of a firstborn child. They think God can be managed by the size of the gift. But they have completely misunderstood Him. God has never wanted to be bought off. He wants them.

And so Micah gives the answer, one of the most famous verses in the Old Testament: “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?” Not more ritual. Not bigger bribes. A life of justice toward others, mercy that delights in kindness, and a humble walk with God. The rest of the chapter shows what happens when a people abandon this: dishonest scales, violence, lies. True worship of God and justice toward neighbor were always meant to belong together. This lesson asks whether they do in us.

Group Discussion: God asks His people, “What have I done to you? How have I wearied you?” rather than simply condemning them. What does this surprisingly tender question reveal about God's heart toward people who have drifted from Him?

Personal Reflection: The people thought they could satisfy God with bigger and bigger offerings while their lives stayed unchanged. Where might you be tempted to offer God religious activity as a substitute for actually doing what He asks of you?

Read Micah 6:1–16

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?

6. "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?
7. 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?
8. "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?
9. 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?
10. 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.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: 1 Samuel 15:22, to obey is better than sacrifice; Hosea 6:6, I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice; Matthew 23:23, you have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness; James 1:27, religion that is pure and undefiled before God; Matthew 22:37-40, love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself.

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