

What is the Greatest Act of Love?

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Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. ² Hear, you mountains, the case of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a case against his people, and he will contend with Israel. ³ “O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! ⁴ For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. ⁵ O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.” ⁶ “With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ 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 fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸ He has told you, O mortal, 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? (Micah 6:1-8)

1. The Five Love Languages

Dr. Gary Chapman is known for making famous the concept of the “five love languages.” These love languages explain how people feel loved from others. They are 1) Words of affirmation, 2) Acts of service, 3) Gifts, 4) Quality time, and 5) Physical touch. Have you ever thought about God’s love language and how do you think God feels loved by us?

2. Love the Lord

The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 6:4-7, “**Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷ Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.**”

Moses teaches the Israelites that God feels loved when we keep his words in our hearts at all times and teach them to our children. In John 14:15, Jesus also says, “**If you love me, you will obey what I command.**”

Moses and Jesus tell us that God feels loved when we obey what the Lord says. This is God's love language.

3. What God Really Wants

Today's scripture, Micah 6, tells us what God desires. In the passage, we see a courtroom where the Lord pleads his case. The Israelites respond under conviction and Micah acts as the lawyer for the plaintiff. The mountains are the witnesses against the people and judge the controversy between God and his people.

Through the passage, the Lord reminds the Israelites of God's delivering acts in the Exodus to the Promised Land. The story of Balak and Balaam are a reminder that God long blessed the people by reversing the curses of Balaam. The Lord parted the Jordan River and allowed the people to cross over from Shittim to Gilgal. It is at Gilgal that the Israelites renewed their covenant with the Lord. Yet in the time of Micah, the people forgot their covenant and turned away from the Lord.

When the people realize the Lord's disappointment, they try to please the Lord. Verses 6 & 7 say, "***6 With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7 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 fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?***" In verses 6-8, Israel tries to appease the Lord with sacrifice. They think more sacrifices will please the Lord. But Micah says that religious rituals and sacrifices are not what God wants. Micah says clearly: ***what does the Lord require of you? To do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.***

Micah tells the people that to love God, the Israelites are to pursue justice, mercy (love kindness) and faithfulness (walk humbly with the Lord). This passage applies not only to the Israelites but to everyone. When we live our lives, we are all called to the same calling to please the Lord and to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly before our God.

4. What do Doing Justice, Loving Kindness, and Walking with God mean?

What is Justice? Justice in the Hebrew language is "***mispat.***" This means "right, proper, fair, and being impartial." Justice is the nature of God. It means to treat people with fairness and also to protect and care for others. God calls each of us to seek justice for the most vulnerable and those suffering injustice.

Deuteronomy 14:28 & 29 says, “**Every three year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year and store it within your towns; the Levites ... as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your town, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.**”

In Israel, it was everyone’s responsibility to care for those in suffering. Family members helped others and towns helped members of the community. This passage tells us that God wants us to show our regard to God as our Creator of all people. God wants us to treat everyone with the same standard and respect, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender or of any other social category.

In Luke 12:16-21, Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool. The rich fool stored his wealth up for his own use when he should have been “rich toward God.” Jesus makes clear that to be “rich toward God” means to sell his possessions and give to the poor. Then God would take care of him.

There is a recent story in Korea of a businessman who has given over the past 50 years, over 1,000 students scholarships towards their college education. He walked or used public transportation and didn’t own a car. He didn’t want anyone to know what he was doing. He even declined an invitation to meet the President of Korea. He just wanted to help students who needed financial support.

What does “love kindness” mean? Loving kindness is **hesed** in the Hebrew language. It means “loyal love,” “loving-kindness,” or “mercy.” **Hesed** is God’s covenantal love that can’t be broken. God expects his people to show this love to people and to be loyal in their love towards the Lord, just as God has been loyal to them. Both justice and mercy are God’s character.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus showed his love for the people by serving the poor, the sick, and the distressed. In Luke 15:11-32, Jesus told us about the Prodigal Son. The story of the Prodigal Son tells us that God’s love for us is unconditional. He loves us while we are still sinners. Although we are not faithful, God is still our faithful and loving father. The faithful and loving father waits for the return of his unfaithful son.

What does “walk humbly with God” mean? “Walk humbly” describes one’s attitude toward God. He is the one who listens to the Lord and is faithful to God’s mission. In the Old Testament, Moses would be a good example of someone who walked humbly with God.

In Exodus 4, God says, “**Now go, I will help you speak and will teach you what to say**” (verse 12). But Moses said, “**O Lord, please send someone else to do it.**” But after God showed him miracles and sent his

brother Aaron as his companion, Moses went with the Israelites toward the Promised Land. For 40 years in the wilderness, Moses walked humbly with the Lord.

Jesus also walked humbly with the Lord. Philippians 2:6-8 says, **“Christ was truly God. But he did not try to remain equal with God. Instead he gave up everything and became a slave, when he became like one of us. Christ was humble. He obeyed God and even died on a cross.”** In verse 5, Paul says, **“*think the same way that Christ Jesus thought.*”** Jesus humbly walked with the Lord throughout his ministry.

5. Conclusion

Christianity is the most prevalent religion in the United States. Estimates from 2021 suggest that 63% of the entire US population (332 million) identify as Christian (210 million). 43% are Protestants and 20% are Catholics. The question we need to ask is, do Christians make a difference in the United States?

The Prophet Micah lived during the 8th Century B.C. Injustice, hatred, and rebellion were big problems during the time of Micah. Is our world today different or perhaps more similar to the social issues during the time of Micah?

You’ve probably seen the news from Memphis, TN. A Black man, Tyre Nichols was pulled over by police, had a confrontation with officers. An ambulance was called at the scene of the arrest after Nichols complained of shortness of breath. He was transported to a nearby hospital in critical condition. He died three days later. The Memphis Police Department terminated the five police officers involved. Protesters called for justice on Friday after officials released the video of the police officers beating Nichols, leading to his death. This event is a reminder of why God calls us to be proactive to prevent injustice in our world.

6. Application

Christians often memorize the Bible verse, John 3:16. I wonder what would happen if we recited Micah 6:8 every day: ***O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? To do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.*** We are reminded today and each day of what God wants us to do. Taking care of God’s people is what the Lord wants us to do. The Prophet Micah tells us that God is loved and is pleased with us when we do justice, show loving kindness, and walk humbly with our God. May we show these greatest acts of love to our Lord today and always. Amen.