

## **What Does The Lord Require Of You?**

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Rich Nathan  
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Micah 6:1-8

You know, it is totally appropriate that we occasionally stop from the routines of life and just throw a big party to celebrate. It occurred to me that the evangelical world, of which we are a part, is not particularly good at throwing parties and celebrating. If you want to go to a really fun wedding, where people are dancing and feasting, eating great food and the wine is flowing, it is usually not going to happen at a conservative Christian wedding.

I remember my first wedding experience at a Christian church. I could not believe it, having come from a Jewish background where weddings are big deals. I mean, in a Jewish wedding people are dancing, singing, eating, and laughing. When I went to my first Christian wedding, the celebration took place in this gray little fellowship hall in the basement of this church. Some elderly women served me a glass of punch and a tiny little Dixie Cup filled with mints and peanuts. We ate the mints mixed with peanuts like little rabbits and then we quietly talked with one another about being good witnesses and living a holy life.

After an hour of Christian fun, I was finally released to go home. I took off my suit and I actually ate something.

Certain denominations, the Greek Orthodox come to mind, and certain religions, I think of Islam and Judaism, have no problem with the concept of celebration or throwing a big party, or having a feast. In fact, the God that we read about in the Bible apparently enjoys great parties. Jesus, himself, is often found at many parties, eating, drinking and telling stories. Eternity in the Bible is described as a wedding feast in which the church finally comes into that ultimate love relationship with Jesus our husband. And I do not imagine that the Jewish writer of the book of Revelation conceived of the wedding feast as taking place in a gray little fellowship hall where the church stood around eating mints and peanuts from little Dixie Cups.

Do you know celebrating and having parties are so important to God that he actually commands us to party as part of our religion? Here is what we read in Deuteronomy 14.24-26,

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*Dt 14:24 But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away) <sup>25</sup> then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. <sup>26</sup> Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice.*

So it is entirely appropriate that we occasionally pause and say “thank you” to God and celebrate, especially in times of great victories. And the opening of this community center is a great victory!

I would like to begin by sharing with you some of my favorite bumper stickers. Every once in awhile, you read a bumper sticker that makes you laugh or think. Here are a few of my favorites:

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1. Forget world peace. Visualize using your turn signal.

Here are a few give-and-takes between hunters and animal rights' people:

SLIDES

1. I love animals. They taste great!
2. If you aren't supposed to eat animals, why are they made of meat?

Here are the responses from the animal rights' folks:

SLIDES

1. Heart Attacks: God's Revenge For Eating His Animal Friends

Ladies, what do you think about this bumper sticker?

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How many roads must a man travel down before he admits he is lost.

Here is a great one for children's sports:

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My hockey mom can beat up your soccer mom.

Here is an important word of wisdom:

SLIDE

Be nice to your kids...they will pick out your nursing home.

I love this one:

SLIDE

What if the hokey-pokey IS what it's all about?

Here is an encouragement for you non-business majors. Listen to this bumper sticker:

SLIDE

I majored in liberal arts. Would you like fries with that?

Here is one of those rejoinders to Christians bumper stickers:

SLIDE

Following the rapture, can I have your car?

But there is one bumper sticker that I read that really caught my attention and made me think. It said,

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Do something really radical. Practice your religion.

Don't just tell me what you believe, or why you are such a good Muslim, Jew or Christian. How about putting your religion into practice? What would it mean for those of us who claim to be followers of Jesus to actually put our religion into practice?

You see, there is a basic question, perhaps the most basic question that anyone could ever ask and answer. It is this: What does God require of us?

You say, "Well, the Lord requires us to believe in his Son Jesus Christ."

But the next question is: What does that look like in real life? How does faith in Christ change a person's life? What does it look like for a person to live by their profession of faith in Christ?

It is more than words. If you were to try to summarize what God requires of you, those of us who claim to be followers of Christ, what would your answer be?

As we are going to be opening up our community center this weekend, an opening that I believe will change the entire future of Vineyard Columbus, I've decided for this commemoration talk to try to ask and answer the question: What does the Lord require of you? Micah 6.1-8. Let's pray.

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*Mic 6:1 Listen to what the LORD says: “Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. <sup>2</sup> Hear, you mountains, the LORD’s accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.*

*<sup>3</sup> ‘My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. <sup>4</sup> I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. <sup>5</sup> My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.’*

*<sup>6</sup> With 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? <sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? <sup>8</sup> He has shown all you people 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.*

The structure of Micah 6.1-8 is in the form of a legal case brought by the Lord against his people, Israel. In verses 1-2 the Lord is acting as the plaintiff or the prosecutor. Here is what we read:

#### SLIDE

*Mic 6:1 Listen to what the LORD says: “Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. <sup>2</sup> Hear, you mountains, the LORD’s accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.”*

And the Lord is calling upon the mountains to be witnesses in this prosecution. Then, in verse 3, the Lord takes the role of the defendant in the legal action:

#### SLIDE

*Mic 6:3 “My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me.*

In other words, is it my fault, God is asking, that you relate to me the way you do? Why, my people, have you turned your back on me? Why have you cooled in your affection toward me? Why don’t you burn white-hot for me, God asks? Why aren’t you willing to obey me? Why is it difficult to get through to you? Why have you hardened your heart against me? Why do you live such divided lives

tipping your cap to me, being religious and going to church, and then doing what you want to do? Have I done something to deserve this, God asks? Present your evidence. What have I done wrong?

And then the Lord goes through a recitation of Israel's history in verses 4-5.

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*Mic 6:4 I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. <sup>5</sup> My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."*

The Lord speaks to Israel about how he saved them from bondage from Egypt. He speaks about how he gave them leaders, how he protected them against pagan kings, and how he brought them through the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

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*Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal.*

Now, I think the key words in this text are found in verse 5. The key repeated words are:

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*Mic 6:5 My people, **remember** what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. **Remember** your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."*

Why does God call us to remember? Because one of the things that the Lord requires of you and me is that we give thanks.

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What Does The Lord Require? Giving Thanks

In terms of your relationship with God, there is virtually nothing more foundational than that you develop the habit of giving God thanks each day. Almost nothing reveals your fundamental orientation to life than whether we are thankful people, whether we regularly say 'thank you' to other people, and whether we regularly say 'thank you' to God. If you want to find out what a person believes right down to their toes, watch how often they say 'thank you' to God or to other people.

Why is thanksgiving so revelatory? It is because you recognize that either God or other people are the source of everything good in your life, or you honestly

believe that you are the source. See, there are two basic approaches to life. There is the American version of life that you are a self-made man or a self-made woman. And all the good in your life has come from you and your efforts. Or instead, you become a fundamentally thankful person saying: God is the source of everything good in my life and I am standing on the shoulders of many other people. That is why I'm 10' tall. Either the blessing that is on you or on your family is due to you because you are so brilliant, because you are so accomplished, because you worked so hard, because you are such a phenomenal spouse, or the blessing has come from the hand of God and others.

See, theoretically you might say: I believe in God. But how do I know if my belief in God is real? How do I know if I have a living faith, or if it is all just window dressing? How do I put wheels on my profession of Christian faith and bring it down to earth?

One way to answer the question regarding whether your faith is really alive is to look back over the last week and say: How often did I find myself saying 'thank you' to God? Is it natural to you to say 'thank you' to God as it is to breathe? Because if we don't frequently say 'thank you' to God, then we are, in practical terms, no different than atheists. We see ourselves as the source of the good in our lives.

We teach our children and grandchildren to say 'thank you,' to acknowledge a gift or some undeserved kindness. But we adults also need to be trained to say 'thank you.' And part of the training in being thankful people, the Lord tells us in Micah, is to start by cultivating good memories. In other words, before you move on to the next great thing that you are going to achieve, before you move on to your next great project, or next activity, your next great conquest, stop and look back and remember. That's what the Lord is saying in Micah. My people, pause and look back and remember all that I've done for you. Instead of grumbling about how your lives are going right now, or asking the question: What have you done for me lately, God? Or where are you, God? Why aren't you answering this prayer? Start cultivating a good memory.

Let me bring this down to earth. Based on your last week, who can you say 'thank you' to? Who blessed you? Who served you? Who encouraged you? Whose help made your success possible?

Let me bring this down to earth even further. If you were to write two cards expressing thanks, who would they be to? Write this suggestion down on your outline: "I need to send a card, or a note, or an email to a coworker, to someone in my work group, to a parent, to my roommate, to a friend just to acknowledge the contribution that this person has made to my life. And while I'm writing out this note to a friend, or someone here at the church, or a relative, I'm also going to write out a note to God."

I want to pause right here and turn you in this church and say 'thank you' for blessing my life. So many of you model to me what the Christian life is like. My life is enriched, my life is satisfying, my life is a joy because of you, because of this church. Over the years I've gotten offers: Would you consider moving here and taking this church? Would you consider going into this other ministry? I always think to myself, apart from God, absolutely, crystal clearly telling me to do it, in which case I would do what God says, I would have to be crazy to leave this place. You have been a blessing to me. And I want to say 'thank you' to you as well for your giving to this community center. Thank you for being generous. Thank you for continuing to give.

Brothers and sisters, if you want to lift yourself out of pessimism and despondency; if you want to encourage your own heart, write a letter to God in which you express thanksgiving to him. Take ten minutes and look back over the course of your life. Can you recall a time when you were just like the children of Israel – in bondage, helpless, weak, and God came to your rescue? Do you remember a time when you needed help and just like the children of Israel, God sent you a leader, an encourager, a helper at just the right moment? Are you enjoying the Promised Land just like the children of Israel were in some area of your life? Are you enjoying the Promised Land in your marriage, in a relationship, or at your job? Are you enjoying the Promised Land in your finances, or at the church? Is there blessing? Why not write it all down for God?

I will tell you, friend, cultivating a thankful heart is the best antidote you will ever have for your depression, for your selfishness, self-centeredness, negativity, and tendency to complain.

What does the Lord require of us? Notice how the Israelites responded to God in verses 6-7.

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*Mic 6:6 With 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? <sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

God, are you asking me for some great sacrifice? Notice the value of the sacrifice keeps going up in some ascending order from burnt offerings to calves, to thousands of rams, ten thousands rivers of olive oil, to the firstborn children. What do you want of me, God? I'm willing to give you anything and you still aren't satisfied.

The children of Israel are responding defensively to the Lord's legal case against them. How can you say that we are failing you when we are willing to do so much for you?

As I listen to the Israelites defend themselves, they sound like husbands who are responding to their wives' pleas for intimacy, more communication, more time, and more relationship: What do you want from me, woman? Here I am working my tail off for you so that I can give you a big house, a great car, and so that you can buy all the things you always wanted. I can't believe that you are complaining about my work hours.

The wife's response: I never asked you when we got married for a 4000 square foot house. All I've ever wanted was a relationship with you. I would much rather you were home in the evening relating to me and the kids, and not working than that you give me an expensive piece of jewelry two times a year.

That is what God is saying. My children, all I've ever wanted was a relationship with you. When did I ask you to buy me off? When have I asked for your:

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Great Sacrifice

All I've ever wanted was you. I want you. I want you to give yourself back to me. I want your heart.

What does it mean to give ourselves to God? What does that look like? Verse 8,

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Mic 6:8 He has shown all you people 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 was the last of the four great 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. prophets. The other three were Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Many commentators have noted that in this one verse Micah is summarizing the three great themes of the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. The prophet Amos' book is all about doing justice. The prophet Hosea's book is all about loving mercy, or better translated, having steadfast love. And the prophet Isaiah calls us to the quiet faith of a humble walk with God. Micah being the last in this line of prophets underlined for the people of Israel healing for our century, act justly, have mercy, and walk humbly with God.

You know, some churches are really good at giving thanks and celebrating what God has done in their lives. But God is asking for more than just giving thanks. Some of you are familiar with the story of Jesus multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish and feeding a whole crowd with the multiplied food. I would like you to imagine that instead of the disciples taking the multiplied bread and fish and distributing it to the crowd, they simply enjoyed the blessing of multiplication themselves. What if the 12 disciples gathered around the thousands of loaves



and thousands of fish and held hands and said, “thank you, God; thank you for all of this blessing, thank you, God. Oh we are enjoying prosperity before you.” And then they held a gigantic worship service and said, “thank you for the bread, and thank you for the fish.” But they never actually got around to giving it away?

Isn't that a picture of so many churches in America today? Thank you, God, for our gifts. Thank you for our blessings. Thank you for our prosperity. Thank you for our money. Thank you for our freedom, for our education, for your presence. But they never actually get around to giving the blessing away. And then sometimes we actually find ourselves complaining and saying, “God, when are you going to do something for the poor people in city? When are you, God, going to go to work to stop crime in our city? When are you, God, going to do something to reduce teen pregnancies? When are you, God, going to help people get off of drugs? When are you, God, going to help folks complete high school? When are you, God, going to welcome immigrants in our community?”

What does the Lord require?

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Doing Justice

God says: I've asked you for:

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More Than Thanksgiving

God says I've asked for more than thanksgiving. I want you to do justice. Justice means, in part, distributing God's blessings to those in need.

You know, this community center that we're building – I want to be as frank with you as I can be as your pastor and say this is a mammoth risk that we are undertaking as a church. Because we are attempting to forge an utterly new model of church life and it is a risk of faith to believe that it can be done. It is not a risk of faith to believe that we can create a church of several thousand people who will enjoy God's blessing and celebrate it. There are hundreds of models of churches around America that gather together and celebrate the blessing of God on their own lives.

But that we would have a church that distributes the blessing to others by having thousands of people use their talents not just for themselves or their families, or their own enrichment, but who would say: I'm going to use my talents on behalf of the poor. I'm a doctor; I'm a nurse; I'm a therapist. I'm going to give several hours every other week and donate my talents for the poor. Or, I'm an attorney or a teacher; I'm a coach; I'm a dancer; I'm an artist; I'm in business; I'm in computers, I'm in sales – I'm going to use my talent and I'm going to donate several hours every other week for the poor. That it wouldn't just be the most

highly committed people in our midst, the shock troops of Jesus, who are at work with the poor. But that it would become normative for the average, run of the mill Christian in our church to donate some of their time and talents to serve the community. That is a risk of faith. God is pushing us out on a limb.

I believe it can be done. I believe that our church will create a model that will be imitated by thousands of churches across America. I believe in the power of God in your life. I believe that there is something inside of every Christian that wants to do something significant for others. I think we want to, because of the Holy Spirit, we want to give our lives away. I think we want to work justice because God is a God of justice.

God doesn't need our help to work justice in this world. We get to work with God. We get to partner with God. We get to have our lives be significant. We get to help someone else.

You know, one of the most important issues regarding doing justice is:

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Naming Things Correctly

I don't know how many of you read the George Orwell novel, 1984, when you were in high school, or at some point after that. But Orwell wrote 1984 back in the 40's. It is the story about a man named Winston Smith who is rebelling against this totalitarian state called Big Brother. The thing about this totalitarian state is that it regularly mislabels things. So, for example, this totalitarian empire has four ministries housed in these huge pyramids. One of the ministries is the Ministry of Peace. It is responsible for conducting the country's ongoing wars. There is a Ministry of Plenty, which is responsible for rationing and controlling food and goods. The third ministry is the Ministry of Truth. It is the propaganda arm of the regime. It controls information and rewrites history. And then there is the Ministry of Love, which is the agency responsible for identifying, arresting, and torturing dissidents. The Ministry of Love has no windows and it subjects dissidents to the worst imaginable torture in the windowless building.

The three slogans of the party are these: War is peace. Freedom is slavery. And, ignorance is strength.

It is the constant misuse of the language; it is through deliberate deceptive uses of words that injustice is often perpetrated. So the Nazis put the slogan "Work Will Set You Free" over the Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

Even the term "concentration camp" rather than "death camp" was designed to cover up the truth. The Nazis talked about the "final solution" rather than the extermination of Jews. And their policy of "relocating Jews" was a cover-up for killing Jews.

Money for a few gambling interests in Ohio is called “Learn and Earn.” Allowing cigarettes in bars and restaurants is called “Smoke Less Ohio.”

We perpetrate injustice whenever we call things by the wrong names. We call all Muslims “terrorists.” We call all the poor “lazy.” We call those who grab a disproportionate share of the wealth, like CEOs of Fortune 500’s, successful. Back in 1980, the average Fortune 500 CEO made 42x the median income of a worker. Now they make almost 500x the median income of workers. And we call them great entrepreneurs. We call those who oppose war “un-American” or “unpatriotic” or that they are coddling terrorists. We call pro-life people “anti-choice.” We call environmentalists “tree huggers.” Whenever a government, a corporation, a marketing campaign, political campaign, or we engage in double-speak and words lose their meaning, we are probably covering up injustice.

Have you see this, friend, especially during this political season? It is amazing, isn’t it? That even Christians during campaign season will bear false witness against their opponents, tell scurrilous lies and yet still claim to serve God when we violate his commandments? False names are always a cover for injustice.

You know, the Bible calls God a God of justice. There are so many passages like Deuteronomy 32.4,

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*He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.*

And Psalm 11.7,

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*For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face.*

It says in the scriptures that God works justice on behalf of the needy. For example, we read texts like Psalm 10.17-18,

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Ps 10:17 You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,<sup>18</sup> defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror.

Or Isaiah 42.1-4

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*Isa 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup> He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. <sup>3</sup> A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; <sup>4</sup> he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope."*

But how does God work justice in the world? How does he defend the widow and lift up the afflicted? How does God protect the weak and care for the orphans?

The Bible tells us that God works his justice through people. There may be occasions where God completely bypasses human instruments and works justice in a totally supernatural way. But overwhelmingly, God works his miracles of justice through people who are obedient to his call. Listen to the words of Ezekiel 22:25, 27, 29 and 30:

#### SLIDES

*Eze 22:25 There is a conspiracy of her princes within her like a roaring lion tearing its prey; they devour people, take treasures and precious things and make many widows within her.*

*Eze 22:27 Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain.*

*Eze 22:29 The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice. <sup>30</sup> "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.*

God is still looking for people today to work justice. Let me tell you a couple of stories.

One Christian man that I greatly admire is a man named Gary Haugen. Gary Haugen is a Harvard Law grad. He worked for the U.S. Department of Justice. And then he was loaned by the Department of Justice to the United Nations to direct the UN's genocide investigation in Rwanda. Haugen's job was to search down a list of mass graves and massacre sites. He had to go into churches where hundreds of defenseless children, mothers, brothers, grandmothers were hacked and clubbed to death in a church building where they sought refuge. He

had to go into stadiums where thousands of defenseless people went seeking some kind of refuge. The government released the army on them with machetes and metal rods and sticks with nails in them. Children cried out for rescue and there was none to protect them.

With a team of local laborers, Haugen had to dig up the mass graves. They found amidst the corpses people clutching photographs and little Bibles, bits of precious possessions that spoke about what they valued. While he was in the midst of this horrific investigation, Gary Haugen cried out to God and said, "God, where are you? Where are you in all of this injustice?" The Holy Spirit spoke gently back to Gary's heart and said, "Gary, where are you? Where is my church?"

Where's my church in fighting for the least of these? Where's my church in preventing sex slavery? Where's my church in protecting children and widows from getting their property stolen? Where's my church in crying out against genocide?

It is amazing the justice that people have been able to work in this world with God's help.

In Gary Haugen's powerful book named *Good News About Injustice*, he tells a story about a woman named Sister Kay. In Sister Kay's country there is a booming business in forced prostitution. The local police protect it. They return the run-away girls to the brothels. The police are all paid off. One man actually burned one of the girls to death. He poured gasoline on her; set her on fire. Everyone in the town knew about it. The police didn't lift a finger against this man until someone went to the girl's rescue.

The person who went to her rescue was Sister Kay. The country I was talking about that forced girls into prostitution was the United States. In mining and logging camps all over the frontier, especially in the state of Wisconsin, women and girls were regularly herded into stockades and sold into prostitution to satisfy the miners and loggers.

Sister Kay was a woman named Kate Bushnell. Despite the tremendous personal danger, she infiltrated scores of brothels, interviewed hundreds of women held in bondage. She reported her findings to a convention of Christian women in Chicago. The state of Wisconsin denied her findings. The state inspector tried to smear her. He called her a liar and unchaste. She stood before the Wisconsin state assembly. People were screaming at her, threatening her. She had to be escorted in by police escort.

But then 50 Christian women, many from some of the wealthiest families in Wisconsin pushed through the door of the State Assembly and stood with Sister Kay while she presented her findings. The Wisconsin State Legislature and

other state legislatures around America were finally shamed into taking action against forced prostitution in the United States.

We can make a difference. We can work justice. We can start with this city. We can make a difference.

What does the Lord require?

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To Love Mercy

I've spoken to you in the last few months about this phrase "loving mercy." It is the Hebrew word

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Hesed

The KJV defines this as "loving kindness" or "tender mercies."

I've called it a commitment to kindness. It is a commitment to love regardless. There is a difference between doing justice and loving mercy. I believe justice gets more at the causes of people's suffering and mercy relieves people from the consequences of injustice. Let me give you an illustration.

There is a town on a mountain road where when the road is slick people sometimes drive off the edge of the mountain and end up crashing into the valley below. The townspeople in their mercy paid for and equipped ambulances to go down into the valley. They transport people at their own expense to local hospitals. They sit with the families. They take care of the children of those who are injured.

All of the things I've described are acts of mercy. What would justice be?

Justice would re-engineer the road. Changing the contour of the road. Justice would put up guardrails so that people don't go over the cliff in the first place.

People need both mercy and justice. When we give out bags of groceries to hungry people at our food pantry; when we serve folks by providing them with free medical care, or free dental care, or free vision care, those are acts of mercy.

When we start asking the "why" question, why do people keep having to come back for groceries every week, why don't people have the ability to get medical care at a reasonable price in our country, why are there so many uninsured folks? When we start asking the "why" question, we are dealing with issues of justice.

How can I relieve someone's pain? By loving mercy.

Why is the person in pain in the first place? How can I keep other people from experiencing similar pain in the future? By doing justice.

In our community center, when we tutor kids so they can get their high school diplomas and are able to get decent jobs, when we offer GEDs, when we teach English as a second language, when we do job training – those are all examples of doing justice. Justice is more than visiting someone in jail. Justice is keeping them from going to jail in the first place.

Mercy is love regardless. And you know, I would be not a very good preacher if I talked with you about showing mercy to people you don't know in a new community center and didn't talk with you about showing mercy to people you do know, people who are in your own family – perhaps relieving the loneliness of an aging relative by making a commitment to regularly visiting them in their home, or in their assisted living residence. Showing mercy means loving regardless of how another family member treats you, refusing to write your own brother or sister off, even though they've made terrible decisions, refusing to write your son or daughter off, or your mother or father off. Loving regardless – a commitment to kindness.

Loving mercy, this commitment to kindness, loving regardless, this is what the Lord requires of you. It is shown every time a single woman refuses to abort their child, even though the child is going to cost them a college education, even though the child is going to cost them freedom, even though this child if they are born is going to cost them financially. God requires "love regardless." Showing mercy, a commitment to kindness, is what a woman does when she rips her heart out to give her own baby away for adoption because she wants the child to have a better life than she can provide.

Do you want to know what being a Christian is about? It is about giving thanks. It is about doing justice. It is about loving mercy. It is about

SLIDE

Walking humbly with God

Let me close with a couple of thoughts here. One of the great dangers involved with any human being who wants to work justice is a self-righteous, moral indignation. This sense of moral superiority in which the zealot for justice approaches the rest of the world:

- We alone care about the poor.
- We alone care about the unborn.
- Only me and a few others like me are truly in touch with the real issues in the world.

- We alone care about war and peace.

What saves us from the stench of self-righteous moral indignation? The atmosphere in which we go about doing justice must be walking humbly with God.

When we think about mercy, what keeps the mercy giver from burnout? I am relieving someone's pain. I am showing compassion to this weak person. I am giving and giving and giving. What keeps me from totally burning out from compassion fatigue?

The only answer to compassion fatigue is walking humbly with God. I recognize my limits. I see that I'm not the answer, God is. I am not another person's savior. God is. What people need most of all is not more of me, they need more of Christ. So much of Christian zeal for good works in this world falls at this last point at walking humbly with God.

This community center, if it is going to do the work of Jesus in this community, must be bathed in an atmosphere of humility. We are not going to approach the city of Columbus with some kind of triumphalism. We'll fix everything. We'll solve every problem. We will over and over and over again be taught by God that we are limited. We are going to face issues that go so far beyond us. We are going to have people come whose problems are so much greater than our capacity to fix, or to heal. We are going to find that change is way more difficult than we ever realized. We are going to discover that no one likes someone standing over them.

But people will respond to those who stand alone side of them and come to them not to rule, but to serve.

In the community center we have to continually breathe the air of humility, recognizing our own limits, acknowledging that we don't have all the answers, confessing that we can't fix everything; but we are just trying to be faithful to God. Brothers and sisters, as we celebrate this grand opening today, and commit ourselves to becoming a thankful people, a just people, a merciful people, and a humble people, I believe that God is going to create something through Vineyard Columbus that may change the lives of thousands of people here in Central Ohio and impact the church across America. Let's pray.



## **What Does The Lord Require Of You?**

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Rich Nathan  
October 21-22, 2006  
Micah 6:1-8

### **I. What Does The Lord Require? Celebrating Joyfully**

### **II. What Does The Lord Require? Giving Thanks (Micah 6:1-5)**

- A. Remembering Well
- B. Acknowledging Dependence

Not Our Great Sacrifice (verses 6-7)

### **III. What Does The Lord Require? Doing Justice (verse 8)**

- A. More Than Thanksgiving
- B. Naming Things Correctly
- C. Working With The Poor
- D. All Of Us Called (Ezekiel 22:22-25)

### **IV. What Does The Lord Require? Loving Mercy (verse 8)**

### **V. What Does The Lord Require? Walking Humbly With God (verse 8)**