

pray . fast . give .



Living Lent | Day 36

## Act.Love.Walk... Pray.Fast.Give

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*"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?"*

**Micah 6:8 ESV**

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### Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

Perhaps now more than ever, we are looking at our lives in new ways. The pandemic, a particularly contentious election, and social unrest have given us all reason to contemplate not only our place in this world, but what's important in this world. Additionally, we're only in February, so theoretically, we are early in our yearly quest to stick to our New Year's resolutions.

Thankfully, the world has plenty of advice for us! Whether it be the newspaper, magazines, your social media feed, the self-help section of your bookstore, or 1,000 television channels of varying perspectives all vying for your attention, there's no shortage of opinions....and advice.

As humans, we want to know what to do. We crave direction. We want meaning.

But whose opinion really matters? Who are you really listening to?

Thank God for Lent.

There's no sarcasm in this comment; it's merely an admission of the need for

pause, prayer, reflection, preparation and action in living a life more like Jesus. That is what matters.

Throughout the Gospels, scribes and lawyers alike asked for instructions, as if the 10 Commandments given to Moses were just too cumbersome. “But which ones are the most important?” Regardless of the absurdity of the question, answers were given. Matthew 22 35:40 is but one set of instructions to love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor.

And now, it seems absurd, doesn't it, but hundreds and hundreds of years after the Gospels answered the questions, we are still searching for instructions, and direction and meaning in our lives.

But the answers are simpler than we seem to make them, and Micah 6:8 is but another example of how we are to spend our time on this earth.

Context matters, and prior to the chapter and verse cited above, an allegorical conversation between God and Israel occurs. After God introduces the case against the unruly people of Israel, verses 6 and 7 describe Israel's response in a series of questions beginning with, “With what shall I come to the Lord?” (Micah 6:6).

Israel focuses on their external religious rituals and sacrifices, and their questions make reference to greater and greater items, eventually leading to hyperbole. Finally, they ask whether they should offer their firstborn sons as a sacrifice for God. Would God be pleased with them then?

Verse 8 follows with God's answer, based in the Law of Moses: “He has told you, O man, what is good.” In other words, Israel should already have known the answer to their questions. God then says that He did not need their religious rites or sacrifices. Instead, God is not only seeking Israel's justice....but mercy and humility as well.

The answer, as it usually is, was even simpler, and deeper than any religious observance. *They needed a change of heart.* Without the heart, the law, justice, is simply a set of rules.

While “act justly” likely refers to following those rules, “love mercy” and “walk humbly” are the keys to the passage. “Love mercy” contains the Hebrew word *hesed*, which means “loyal love” or “loving-kindness.” God expects people to show love to our fellow man and to be loyal in our love toward Him, just as He had been loyal to the people of Israel, which is described throughout Micah.

It seems to me that “walk humbly” is a description of the heart's attitude toward God. Instead of taking pride in what we bring to God, we need to humbly recognize that no amount of personal sacrifice can replace a heart committed to justice AND love.

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## Challenge to Prayer and the Exercise of the Privilege of Generosity

As you pray and sacrifice through fasting throughout this Lenten Journey, will you take this opportunity to pay forward in generosity a gift of at least \$1 per day throughout the 40 days for the Children? It is a privilege and a blessing to give as we all look forward to Easter and the Resurrection.

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### Contributor

Scott Smalstig, Yorktown, Indiana, is the Director of Development of a healthcare non-profit organization that serves over 40 counties throughout Indiana. Scott's passions include youth sports and youth leadership development. He serves on both domestic and international boards that encourage the development of our next generation, which includes his three children, Madison, a junior Journalism major at Indiana University, Gehrig, a freshman Finance major at Notre Dame, and Athena, 9, whom he and wife, Tara, fostered then adopted, who believes she is destined to become a baker.

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