

Jesus Calls Us To Maturity Not Perfection

CHAPTER 3

Maturity: What God Requires?

LIFE QUIZ

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners. How did you do?

The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners. God does not require us to remember the above trivia but He does require certain factors for us to mature.

What Does The Lord Require of us?

"He has showed you, O man, 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 6:6-8

"Micah's words are a preview of Jesus' words to love God and love your neighbor as yourself, plus the Golden

Rule, amplified by Matthew 7.

It is a kinder and gentler summary of what the Ten Commandments are intended to do. This verse goes to the heart of the matter of "Maturity". God wants us to live a righteous life, enhancing the lives of our fellow man while developing our own spirituality. He isn't demanding perfection in the sense of blind obedience to a bunch of seemingly arbitrary laws that set an unattainable standard for behavior. What he wants is for us to make good use of our individual talents and time on earth. One of the ways we glorify God is to take good care of His earth and people. A good example is Jesus healing on the Sabbath and rebuking those who rebuked him for healing on the day of rest."

Larry Cloutman

Larry Cloutman, of Lawrence, Kansas is my good friend of 40 plus years and co-editor of this book..

I heard a well known preacher, Gerald Mann, say--"*When I was just a lad, the Lord said to me--'In your life and living, Keep it simple.'* Later in life as I was called to preach, the Lord again said to me--'*Gerald, keep it simple.*'" Bro. Mann's attitude and practice in life of keeping it simple gives us a chief clue in answering Micah's query. "**What does the Lord require of you.**" With great simplicity Micah suggests in simple words, that the Lord's requirements are not nearly as much as we suppose. Too many answer this by turning Jesus' teaching into a second set of laws.

After we sort through the philosophies of men, the Old Testament Law, the Talmud, the reasoning of the Church Fathers, the anathemas of modern day Pharisees and pronouncements by 20th.

century Legalists, we still must ask and answer the age old question--"What does the Lord require of me?" Some answer --Just do what the Bible says.

However, this is too simplistic as all the above groups make some appeal to the Bible. Micah answered the question in plain words--

"He has showed you, O man, 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 6:6-8

I could easily *muddy the waters* with too much human reasoning concerning Micah's statement about what the Lord requires. So, our consideration in this chapter will primarily center around illustrating what the Prophet, Micah, said so very well.

**"Act justly ... love mercy ... walk humbly with your God."
Micah 6:8**

Either the ancient Hebrews thought backwards or we do? It was the practice of the ancient Hebrew writers to state certain propositions: example-- 1. 2. 3., then expound them in a 3. 2. 1. order. We do just the opposite, so we will consider Micah's answer in Hebrew fashion as follows:

- 1. walk humbly with your God**
- 2. love mercy and**
- 3. act justly**

**"He has showed you, O man, what is good?"
Micah 6:6**

Micah the prophet declares *"I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord . . . to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."* But his ministry was far more than a ministry of denunciation. His

message was also constructive. In fact, this man was inspired to define for us the will of God, both for the individual and the world, with a beautiful simplicity surpassing that of any other prophet of the Old Testament. In truth, it is doubtful if any man in all the centuries since that far-off day has improved on Micah's statement as to what God requires of man. Here in a few words, yet mighty, Micah answers the question of the ages. "**And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."**
Micah 6:6-8

In other words, **what is necessary to please God?** In answering Micah passes by ritual, he passes by sacrifice, which was a fundamental part of the worship of that day, to give this simple and profound answer. "What does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" How beautifully simple! A child can understand it. How vastly profound! The wisest of men cannot run past it. There is a word for every man in every age. Often religion seems a vague and unreal something. But not so is the religion of this prophet. Here is a religion that fits into life as we know it and live it.

I - Walk humbly with God

"walk humbly with your God, love mercy, and do justice" (Micah 6:8)

To some, being **HUMBLE** before God will seem unnecessary and unreal. To be just and kind, is that not enough? That is a religion that the man of the street feels he can get his teeth into. But walking with God in **HUMILITY**. Why is that necessary?

Humility is not something we write home about so-to-speak, but it happens to us while on our journey of living. It is the first step in

seeking God, and most often occurs when we are unaware of what is taking place.

Acting in humility has for the most part come naturally to me As illustrated by an incident out of the past. Some fifty years ago this country boy from the Gyp Hills southwest of Medicine Lodge, Kansas was contemplating the call of God upon my life. I knelt by a creek fed from springs in the hills, and simply prayed: **"God, like Solomon of old 'I am but as a little child, really just a crooked stick from the Kansas prairie, I know not how to go out or come in', but if You will show me the Way, I'll try to follow."** (I Kings 3:7) He did and I have moved down the path marked with His footprints, it has been a good journey for me as I move on, as the late Don DeWelt often said-- *"I'm happy on my way to Heaven."*

So, I bowed myself before my Maker and He lifted me up and led me on.

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." I Peter 5:6,7

What does it mean to be humble? A genuine "acid test" of a humility is-- What do we do when called to wait upon the Lord.?

A humble soul waits upon the Lord by turning to Him.

This was vividly illustrated when the Lord indicated a move for us from Arkansas City to a place of His choosing, and while we have sought to follow God in a "faith walk" several hundred times, yet, so soon we forget. One more time the Lord taught us to walk by faith, not sight. I prayed what is known as the "Prayer of Jabez":

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, 'Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!' So God granted him what he

requested." I Chronicles 4:10

And, God acted quickly indicating we should seek a new "home base" of operation for our *Faith Alive Days ministry*. We prayed and looked, but He did not lead us to a living place in Arkansas City, not in Winfield, not in Minneola, but in Ashland, Kansas, 175 miles west. That guidance is a glory story with the Lord sending old time friends, Bob and Marge Hoskins of Lafayette, Indiana to visit us in Arkansas City, Kansas. Having sold hundreds of houses as Realtors across many years the Lord gave us invaluable guidance through them. We thanked them and the Lord with great rejoicing! Bob Davis, Bible College classmate of fifty years ago, now living in Ashland played a pivotal part calling our attention to certain houses.

Now, with a new home base location it was obvious we must sell our Arkansas City house. How could we forget so soon the everlasting guidance words of Proverbs 3:5,6? --"**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.**" But, we did and *leaning on our own understanding* we sought out a Real Estate firm and signed a three month contract with them to sell our house. They showed it to many prospective customers and finally the Cowley County Junior College signed a contract to buy our house. Our Realtor, Carol Daulton, mis-steered us to sign a contract for \$7,500. less than what the house was appraised for with no earnest money, because she said "with the Junior College it is a done deal, they will write a check." They backed out and we were left "holding the bag." Finally *our own understanding contract* expired at the end of December.

Now, we decided to "***Trust in the LORD with all our heart,***" by "hiring God as our Realtor". We placed a sign--"HOUSE FOR

SALE BY OWNER"-- in the yard at 419 North B street.

When we put the yard sign up Roger Day, preacher friend of Highmore, SD, wrote us on January 8th.

"Like I said..look for a quick change from **"FOR SALE by OWNER"** to **"SOLD BY GOD THE GREAT REALTOR"** to replace that sign rather quickly. Amen and Amen in Jesus' Name" -- Roger Day

A long time neighbor, Lyn Myer and an old time friend Charley Monroe, served as our local representatives to show the house to interested people. They showed the house more times in three weeks than the professional Realtor had in three months.

So, on January 15th. Todd and Connie Byers made an offer and we agreed to sell our house for \$47,000. Interesting is the fact that two others wanted to buy the house: The First Baptist Church youth minister was ready to write us a check, and on January 19th., Alvin Moulton was ready to move into our house almost by force as he had sold his house, and the person who was to sell him a house had backed out on the deal, so he was "up a creek without a paddle."

In February we signed the "Closing papers" with the Byers and our house was SOLD, but **GOD DID IT HIS WAY.**

So, once again, when we are "backed into a corner" in life, WHAT WE DO demonstrates our humility or lack of the same to wait upon the Lord.

Finally, humility maintains our fellowship with God because He knows that it is only as we walk with Him, we are *just and kind* as well illustrated by a lovely little brook. It is singing its way to the sea. But the spring far up yonder among the rugged hills, I care nothing about at all. Yet unless we have the spring we cannot have the lovely stream that flows from it. *Humility* is the origin of the

spring and ***justice and mercy*** at their best flow out of this lovely *spring*. When this *hidden spring* dries up the stream flowing out which emits ***mercy and justice*** slackens and disappears.

As I pore over the testimony of Bob Davis, it comes clear to me that *humility* is the factor that brought my Brother back to the Lord. Here are his own words:

"Dear Friends,

In response to Wilbur Johnson's request for "testimonies," I submit the following with a very grateful heart. All of my family has been faithful in their Christian walk throughout the years, but I took a 35 year detour into a "far country," so to speak. During that time I left music, which was once so important to me, completely out of my life, and busied myself in the secular world of academia. I taught college German for 14 years; took care of my invalid father for four years; worked at Boeing for 14 years, and retired in November of 1992. In 1989 the "prodigal son returned home. Influences from three different directions caused me to take a serious look at where I was going, and it was a scary picture. There was no way my life in the secular humanistic world of liberal education, and later in industry, could be reconciled to biblical teaching. The Holy Spirit had been *leaning heavily* on me since 1978, but it wasn't until 1989 that I stopped resisting, and gave in to the *tugging and nudging* of the Holy Spirit. I decided that however many years there were left in this old curmudgeon's life, they would belong to Christ, and the Holy Spirit would be in charge of every day from that time on! That was the greatest year of my life, I have never been happier. Of course, I lost some "friends" by taking this step, and I returned to music,

too! It was like beginning all over again after all those years. I am just thankful for God's mercy and patience. Aside from the Bible, one of the greatest blessings and helps for me is Wilbur Johnson's book FAITH ALIVE IN HEART, HOME, AND CHURCH. I constantly refer to it. His other books are good, too, especially TAKING CHARGE OF LIFE, but FAITH ALIVE has been the greatest blessing."

In Christian Love, Bob Davis

Ashland, Kansas

Of interest to me are the words of Bob Davis about his family:

"My immediate family consists of one brother, Bill Davis, of Wichita, and one sister, Dorothy L. Baker, of Bartlesville, Oklahoma. I do enjoy my brother's family of five kids and nine grandchildren, and my sister's family of two daughters, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. My sister's oldest daughter, Glennie, and her husband, Clark Tanner, went to Manhattan Christian College. They have been in Beaverton, Oregon, the past sixteen years where he is senior minister of the Beaverton Christian Church. My brother's youngest daughter, Sandi, and her husband, Jud Weece, went to Ozark Christian College, and he is with Campus Ministries at the University of Missouri in Columbia." (B.D.)

Micah raises the question as to whether works alone is what God requires?

His words are, "burnt offerings", "calves a year old", "thousands of rams," or "rivers of oil" is that the **good thing the Lord wants?**

Speaking for God, Micah responds to this question in the very

next verse:

What man supposes is cited in vss Micah 6:6,7

"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? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, 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 6:6-8 (NIV)

Church busy work, much religious activity, good works alone, asceticism, and outward piety will not mature us in Christ. What then ought to be my resolution for today? I ought to resolve to humble myself before God in order to live in fellowship with Him. I can do nothing less than this and be a real Christian. I can do nothing bigger than this, however great my gifts. I can begin in the here and now by an inward dedication to my Lord. I ought to do this in the realization that the closer I get to God, the more *just and merciful* I shall become. I can make no higher resolution than this.

II -- LOVE MERCY

"He has showed you, O man, 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 6:6-8

God not only asks that we be *humble*, but also that we love mercy and justice. (Micah 6:8)

Mercy is love in action. Galatians 5:22 names "*long-suffering ... goodness...and gentleness* " as *fruits of the Spirit*. Kindness is a child of love-- "*Love suffers long, and is kind.*" I Corinthians 13:4.

Merely to be kind does not sound very heroic, yet nothing will do more to sweeten life and to change a human desert into a garden than plain, everyday mercy- kindness. Acts 10:38

Mike Hylton, a long time friend of mine, wrote that "kindness" expresses his purpose in life:

"Your query as to *"The purpose of my life"* reminds me of a song that friends of mine, J.D. Sumner and The Stamps Quartet, sang *"If I Can Help Somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain..."* I have used this song as a basis in my life for many years. Having worked in the funeral business for over 20 years, I have worked with hundreds of families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Of course there are no two families alike nor in the family are there two people alike, and during the grief process every emotion possible comes out.

Through the years, people have said being a funeral director is "a ministry". Giving comfort and peace of mind to a family upon the loss of a loved one is very hard to do. I have always disliked the *Nineties* term "care givers" used to identify members of the funeral profession.

When the telephone rings with a death call you never know what to expect but, must be prepared to handle any situation that comes your way, and to realize that this family has called upon you with trust to handle the most difficult situation they will ever have to deal with.

We, in the funeral business sometimes are called cold-hearted - far from the truth there are many times we are troubled by the death of a child, friend or family member, especially when working in your home town or a small

community. To me, if you can go through your career being cold-hearted and never become emotional either publicly or privately then this business is not for you.

Many have said to a funeral director, "I couldn't do your job" - but it is of great comfort to ourselves to have a family comment on how smooth everything went, how nice their loved one looked and how glad they called upon us and, yes believe it or not the funeral business like any other business is competitive.

When you are called to the scene of an auto accident that has claimed the life of a teen age girl two weeks after her high school graduation, doing what she learned at S.A.D.D. and was giving a teenage boy (whom she did not know) a ride home because he was drunk - she herself has a tire blow and is killed instantly while the young man survives - you are faced with grief of many faces: her parents who have just lost a daughter with so many hope and dreams; her younger sister looking forward to a life time together; her friends realizing that life is short and that death can come truly like a thief in the night; a community shocked and angered how an innocent life was lost; and then your own as you see the trauma of this young person, knowing the family has put faith in you to allow them to see their child one last time, arrange a final tribute for someone they never dreamed of having to bury and realize that for the next several days, everyone of these faces of grief are going to stare you in the face and ask you "Why did this have to happen?".

Then you answer the call upon the death of an Alzheimer patient - whom the family felt had died several years before when being placed in a nursing home never to recognize them again-while the grief is there for their loss, a great

since of relief is also there for their loved one and also for themselves.

Of course we as Christians are told that death is something to look forward to when we are called home to be with our Lord and Savior as well as being reunited with those who have gone before us. In teaching my son about what I did for a job in a way a youngster could understand - I told him that when a person dies they are brought to the funeral home and put in a box to go see Jesus - which was something he could understand.

So what is my purpose in life, a very good question Wilbur. For now I pray that my living shall not be in vain as I help people along the Way."

Yours in Christ, Mike Hylton,

Arkansas City, Kansas

Kindness is also Godlike for God is infinitely kind. This the Bible tells us again and again. But we receive our greatest assurance of God's kindness when we see Jesus.

"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

Luke sums up Jesus' life in a single beautiful sentence by saying that **"he went about doing good."** Acts 10:38 That is just another way of saying that He went about **being kind.**

The **field for the exercise of kindness** is everywhere. There is seldom a day so uneventful that we do not have an opportunity to employ it.

Kindness is needed everywhere, but the closer our relationships to

each other, the more it is needed. We come closer together in the home than anywhere else; therefore, there is no better place for the practicing of kindness than among the folks with whom we live day by day. Yet, I have known a few people who were more kindly and gracious everywhere else than in their own homes. Kindness enriches both the giver and the receiver. It makes living together easier. It saves from what is often the sharpest pang of separation when the one we love reaches the end of the journey. It was my painful duty to conduct a funeral sometime ago where the grief of the bereaved was unusually bitter. I knew the situation well enough to be confident that the sharpest pain of that grief grew out of the memory of unkindness.

Jim Sumner, a long time friend, wrote me these words about the importance of *kindness*.

"One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books, and I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd." I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friends Saturday afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on. As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw a terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him, so, I jogged over to him as he crawled around looking for his glasses.

I saw a tear in his eye as I handed him his glasses, so I said, "*Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives.*" He

looked at me and said, "*Hey thanks!*" with a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I had never hung out with a private school kid before.

We talked all the way home, and I carried his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play football on Saturday with me and my friends. He said yes. We hung-out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same. Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, "*Boy, you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!*" He just laughed and handed me half the books. Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were Seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship. Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak. Graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses.

He had more dates than I had and all the girls loved him. Boy, sometimes I was jealous. Today was one of those days I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I

smacked him on the back and said, "Hey, big guy, you'll be great!" He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. "Thanks," he said. As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began. "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach...but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story." I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize it's depth. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or for worse. God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way, perhaps just an act of kindness.. Look for God in others." *Jim Sumner,*

Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

One day Jesus told the story of a man whom the whole world had agreed to call good. Why have all men in every age reached the same decision regarding this Samaritan? (Luke 10:33)

We have only one view of his face, one single snapshot. But this shows him in what we regard as a typical pose. In this one picture he

is doing an act of kindness; hence we call him good. But the fact that kindness is always good does not mean that it is goody-goody. Kindness sometimes has to wound. When a surgeon is called to see a patient with an acute attack of appendicitis, the easiest way out might be repeated shots of morphine. But out of real kindness he resorts to the knife. Kindness, whether its face seems harsh or gentle, is always love in action.

Kindness is a great luxury. But it is far more than a luxury, it is a necessity.

Jesus named the very important matters in life when he said:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." Matthew 23:23

Jesus told the story of a certain rich man who lifted up his eyes in Hades. This was the case not because he had committed a crime. It was the case because he had not had enough kindness to make him willing to help a beggar who lay at his very gate. In the picture that Jesus gave of the final judgment, there were some who received no welcome but were turned away. Why? They were so devoid of kindness that their presence would have changed any kind of heaven into a hell. (Matthew 25:34-46) No place can be heavenly where hearts are unkind. But there were others who were made welcome. This was the case because they were so full of "the milk of human kindness" that, had they been sent into hell, they would have changed it into heaven. Kindness is a necessity.

When people do *kindness*, not because they are required or asked to, it is most noteworthy. Here is a true story of *love and kindness*

extended in a beautiful way by friends of many long years, Carl and Gina German.

"Children are a blessing from God." That phrase is one that we hear regularly, but do we really know what it entails? I feel that Carl and I have a really clear view of what that phrase really means! We had tried for many years, through different avenues to have children, and when we were unsuccessful, we were "willing to accept" that it was God's will that we be childless. But once this acceptance took place, God was able to work in our lives. Through a dear saint in our congregation in Dodge City, Hazel Burghardt, we learned of the *Home of God's Love* in Lo-Tung, Taiwan. We began the process of working on an adoption through them, only to be devastated by the "loss" of the little girl that we were working on, to her grandparents.

"A little less than a year later, we were notified that another baby girl had become available for adoption, and they would start the paper work on her as soon as they heard from us. We learned of **Luda Yan (Erika)** when she was three months old. The paper work for an adoption out of China is grueling. For one thing, you have a week to two weeks mail time each way, besides the time it takes for each process. The paper work had been going fairly smoothly, and we were very hopeful that we would have little **Erika** in our home soon, but it was not to be. There was a sudden stand still on their end, as the mother lost her signature chop (a must for signing any legal papers) and the head of the household, the grand- father, had no intention of cooperating. This dragged on for many weeks, and finally, the Skiles (the missionaries who run the home) told us that if this fell through, that they would take it as God's will that we not have a child through

them, and would not try again. We were devastated! We went to church that Sunday and told the congregation about what was going on. That morning, they held a special prayer session on our behalf. Many prayers and many tears were shared that day. Still we didn't hear, until about two weeks later, we got a phone call that the papers on their end had begun to move!!!! When I relayed the story of the prayer meeting, we checked the dates, (Taiwan is 14 hours different) and found that that was the very day that the papers on their end began to move!!!! God is faithful, and we got **Erika** on November 6, 1984. Praise The Lord.

"We also have a boy who is Cambodian, who is also an answer to prayer. His biological mother was a refugee from the camps in Thailand (a horror story in itself) living in the refugee settlement in Colombia, Missouri. She went to the village witch doctor, and tried to abort the baby when she was three months pregnant. But God knew the wonderful little boy that she was carrying and the family in Kansas that would be touched by his addition to their home, so the potion that he gave her, failed.

"The paper work to get a baby across State lines from Missouri to Kansas is almost as bad as getting one from overseas. The "Interstate Compact Act" makes it very difficult, but God is always in control, and **Ty (Christopher Ty)** came to live with us at age of five days. He is now 16 years old, and a true blessing.

Children are truly a blessing from God and we rejoiced to extend our kindness to him and Erika." Amen

Gina (Hickerson) and Carl German,

Mayfield, Kansas.

III - To act justly--

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? **To act justly.....**" Micah 6:8

The last of the three requirements of God says Micah is to "**do justice**" also translated "**righteousness.**" Justice is the practice of what is right and just. The word specifies what is right, not only as measured by a code of law, but also by what makes for right relationships as well as harmony and peace.

The English term justice has a strong legal flavor. But the concept of justice in the Bible goes beyond the law courts to everyday life. The Bible speaks of "doing justice" (Psalm 82:3; Proverbs 21:3), whereas we speak of "getting justice." Doing justice is to maintain what is right or to set things right. Justice is done when honorable relations are maintained between husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, government and citizens, and man and God. Justice refers to brotherliness in spirit and action.

What is it to act justly? *Justice is fair-mindedness in action.* Just conduct is the outward expression of inward righteousness--honesty, and integrity.

Such conduct is admired by every unwarped mind.

This being **just**, playing the game fairly, is to cover the whole circumference of life. It is to govern our play. When boys and girls play games, they are to play fairly. Anyone who cheats in a game is likely to cheat in matters of greater importance. The same is true of an adult. A certain humorous writer declares with more truth than humor that there are few sharper tests than that which comes to a golfer when his ball is in the rough and nobody is looking on but God.

HOW shall a Christian react to injustice?

Jesus gave us some plain instructions:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 'But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 'that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.'" Matthew 5:43-45

This true story of Carl Breshsear illustrates in a beautiful way a proper response to injustice. This synopsis is taken from the great movie--"Men of Honor."

In this Naval story the **Master Chief, Billy Sunday** acted by Robert DeNiro-- said he was named after the preacher, Billy Sunday. ***"Mr. Billy Sunday preached God; but I am God's man.*** Carl was a black boy, son of a dirt farmer of Alabama."

The Chief and others made it next to impossible for Carl to stay in the U.S. Navy or advance as a diver. Black men were not much accepted in the late forties. All kinds of trickery, deceit, and guile by fellow ensigns and officers was used to put Carl down including an attempt to kill him by the Base Commander in a "final diving test" incident; but, as a simple, honest young man he prevailed with great tenacity and courage!

Overcoming almost impossible odds, Carl received many honor medals and high notice when he retrieved an atomic warhead from the ocean floor off the coast of Spain. He was elevated to the rank of "Chief."

This is an apt illustration of the rewards and defeats of those who seek to be mighty in their own eyes, The scum on the waters of life eventually sinks to the bottom and is sucked down the drain, but the

just prevails. While below the water surface genuine life exists and often rises to greatness because of goodness fulfilling Jesus' statement -- "*The first shall be last and the last shall be first.*"

Justice also has to do with our **business relationships**. It was a lack of **justice** between man and man that filled Micah with such hot indignation. As he looked about him, he saw "priests peddling oracles for money." He beheld so-called prophets who would pronounce a blessing if they were paid, but would curse if they were not. He saw judges accepting bribes. He saw powerful rich taking such advantage of the poor peasants that he accused them of stripping the hide off their flesh. That conception has come down to us, so today we speak of getting skinned in a trade. These plunderers were going even further. They were practicing cannibalism. This they were doing, not by actually eating the flesh of their victims, but by cheating them of the goods upon which life depended.

Micah said "**do justly**" (render justice to all men) which I understand references how I think and how I act about and towards my fellow man.

For that reason I have been most careful in searching out facts about certain members of the Arkansas City government and business community. We lived for twenty five years in Arkansas City, Kansas, a city where regrettably the City Commission is replete with injustice towards the electorate.

The "flood gate" for a multiplied number of injustices came with a giant flood on the Walnut River in November of 1998.

The flood waters rose swiftly much to the surprise of all as a new dike had been installed the prior summer. Although both Engineers and Builders told the Commissioners that if a hole was left where a

flood gate was supposed to be installed and the river flooded, the town would be flooded. They left the hole, big enough to drive a tank through. The River flooded! When it came to within one half block of our house, we were told to prepare to evacuate. Many of the hard working people in the "flood basin" were lower income people -- black, hispanic and white folk. Thousands of peoples lives were endangered, besides real estate worth millions of dollars was destroyed. The City Manager cleverly called a reporter down from the "Wichita Eagle" newspaper giving them false information about "the river snaking itself around the dike and coming through at an unexpected place." The false newspaper pictures showed an old dike with a hole in it. Only during "Noah's Flood" would it have been possible for the River do what the City Manager asserted.. The City Commission "thumbed their noses" at the populace and continued on in irresponsibility. Simple justice called for "I'm sorry" and resignations, but none of this ever came. It cost the tax payers millions of tax dollars to buy out some of the flooded property and settle a couple of lawsuits filed against the City. Through all this and multiplied other infractions of justice, there was one, "Daniel in the lion's den." Her name is **Becky Bruton**, a Christian lady who champions fairness and justice to all. Elected by a overwhelming majority she served as Mayor for two years but time and time again was beaten back and down by the City Manager, Commissioners and "The Traveler" newspaper.

For the most part the thousands of God fearing citizens of Arkansas City chose to react as Jesus said:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate

you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:43-45

This flooding of the Walnut River and the lack of Just response by the Commissioners opened the *floodgate* for a continuing raft of injustices.

Micah spelled out the evil of injustice when he wrote:

"And I said: "Hear now,..... you rulers is it not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones; Who also eat the flesh of My people, Flay their skin from them, break their bones, and chop them in pieces like meat for the pot, like flesh in the caldron." Micah 3:1-3

Money was illegally taken from the City Treasury but the City Manager made arrangements so nothing was done.

State Law forbids the sale of alcoholic beverage on property constructed with tax moneys, but the City Commission passed a shifty Ordinance allowing such property to be used as an "Open Saloon" one week end a year.

The Hospital Administrator retired embezzling multi thousands of dollars. But, he was a relative of the City Manager and he sent word to to the County Attorney that his brother-in-law was not to be investigated or prosecuted. He wasn't!

Faith Alive Ministry was treated unjustly on a number of occasions by the Church. We contracted with a video firm owned and operated by a deacon of the Bible Christian Church. He agreed to make us a video master copy of the "Dealing With The Devil" seminar and one dozen saleable copies for a total of \$400. The finished bills was \$1,500. When I objected, their response was "Well, it just cost

more." Doesn't a man's word count for anything? Injustice won the day! What were we to do? I contacted the church preacher and he responded by saying, "Did they sign a contract?" The answer was no, but I had detailed notes which I reviewed with him and the Video firm. But, since his father-in-law was an Elder in the church and Board Chairman so nothing was done. Should we have gone to court? We reviewed I Corinthians 7 and let the matter rest. (Romans 12:19-21)

The above matters were just the "tip of the ice berg" as injustice after injustice was perpetrated against the people; but, injustice ruled the day. The City Manager was even charged before a sitting Grand Jury in Cowley County; but, the Foreman of that Jury was the County Attorney held under the evil sway of the City Manager. Fear won the day and no indictments were issued.

Perpetrators of injustice ought to consider Hebrews 10:30,31: "For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Micah's word is needed in every age. There is a pressing need for **justice between capital and labor**. We are concerned that the employer pay a **just wage**. We are also concerned, if we are **just**, that the employee do a **just day's work**. We need, **fairness** between buyer and seller— fairness on both sides of the counter. In fact, we are to handle the tools of our trade day by day as honestly and religiously as we handle the Communion cup on Sunday morning.

Our late President, Harry Truman, maintained a keen sense of justice expressed in his famous words, "*The buck stops here!*" This was well illustrated while we ministered at Minneola, Kansas. A

young man of the community engaged in promiscuous sex and fathered a baby. He stepped forward to say--"*I am the father! I love her! I'll marry her!*" That is justice, fairness at a very young age.

Jesus discusses another form of justice telling us we are to be **just in our judgments of one another.**

"Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considers not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Matthew 7:1-5

"Judge not," said Jesus. What does Jesus mean by this warning? I do not take it that he is forbidding our reaching a conclusion as to the degree of worth or worthlessness of the men and women with whom we have to do. Such conclusions are made necessary by our Lord's next command: "**Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.**" Matthew 7:6 We can follow out this command only by reaching some conclusion as to who is swinish and who is not. Our Lord said--"**Judge righteous judgment.**"

What then is Jesus forbidding? He is forbidding judgments that are harsh and unfair. According to the Greek word He is forbidding the passing of eternal judgment. He is forbidding those hasty criticisms born of ignorance or prejudice.

There is another field for the exercise of **justice** that comes close to all of us. Americans have a **race problem** that has been considerably aggravated in recent years. Southerners are naturally

resentful of the type of outside interference that seeks to erase by a wave of the hand difficulties which are the growth of centuries. But they must allow no kind of resentment to make them unfair. **Justice** is always needful, but it is never more needful than when we are dealing with those whom we have at a disadvantage, nor is it ever so beautiful as then.

I have been blessed in being "color blind" all my life in that the color of a persons skin evades my attention. In a Revival at Minneola, Kansas we called **Titus Solomon** of Ozark Bible College as our preaching evangelist. It was Tuesday before a deacon said to me--"Why did you call that nigger to be our Evangelist?" Immediately I castigated him about proper terms to refer to another race. True he was slightly black being from South Africa, but I had not noticed. He conducted one of the best week long revivals we ever had!

We ought to be **just** to the membership of the organizations of which we are a part. One organization of supreme importance to which we belong is the **home**. Now I know a home needs more than justice, but it certainly cannot get along with less. How many husbands and wives separate for lack of fair play? Some will not **play fair financially**. Some refuse to play fair in matters more intimate and personal. The husband who takes privileges that he would not allow his wife is a cheat. Not only does he cheat his wife, but he cheats himself, his children, and society.

How is man to **play fair with their children**. Every child has a right to be well-born. Every child has a right not only to a mother but to a father. All parents owe their children the right sort of training. Dr. Link, a noted psychologist, tells us that children who go to

Sunday school have a higher personality rating than those who do not. He tells us that children whose parents attend church have a higher personality rating than the children of parents who do not.

Our youngest daughter, Lisa, died in November of 1997 as a result of the carelessness of the Cowley County Developmental Service. Both their Manager, Marty, and a Nurse were responsible. They refused to discuss the matter and referenced us to their Social Rehabilitation Service (SRS) attorney. We employed an attorney for this solid case of negligence hoping to teach these people a lesson about justice and responsibility. Experts were sought and statements taken. All went well until our attorney paid a visit to the SRS attorney in Topeka. From that time on the case came to a screeching halt in a way that makes me suspect that our attorney had been bribed or coerced into dropping the case. There was no mercy in this grave injustice.

Is anger, rebellion a solution to the injustices which are cast upon us?

Art Linkletter's daughter had LSD placed in her drink at a party which caused her untimely death.

In an interview by Robert Schuller

Mr. Linkletter says: "Is it true when this first happened you went through anger?"

Art Linkletter replied: "Oh yes! Denial! Anger! My daughter was from a wonderful Christian family. A great girl at the gateway of life-- nineteen, beautiful, talented. She didn't know LSD had been put in her drink and this party in Hollywood, and she leaped to her death from her apartment building. So it was a difficult thing to overcome.

The second thing I had to overcome was the rage at the people who put the LSD in her drink, and the ones who were distributing the drugs and even the ones who were taking it. After a little while I realized the kids that I was saying "arrest them, put them in jail" were the victims. I am responsible towards my children and youth as a whole. I loved them and forgave them for what they were doing and began talking about rehabilitation.

I became active in Teen Challenge; traveled all over the country for David Wilkerson raising money to save such children."

So, Linkletter "overcame evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

I conclude with this simple story:

It was the last night of a revival at Christian Church in Guthrie, Oklahoma. The service was over and it was supper time. Our host said-- *"Well preacher now that you have spilled your guts all week long. What now?"* My response, which surely was by Divine revelation --*"My good Brother, our task is crystal clear--- "Fear God by doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God."* He remonstrated-- *"Is that all?"* I rejoined-- *"It is enough, for that will take us a life time."*

Now, we press on in our thinking in this book which will center around God's Tools for maturing us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma

Chapter 3 - "MATURITY: GOD'S REQUIREMENTS"

- 1. According to Micah 6:6-8, what does the Lord require of us?**
- 2. These verses go to the heart of "Maturity." What does God want us to do?**
- 3. When Gerald Mann was just a lad, what did the Lord say to him?**
- 4. According to author Johnson, in answering Micah God passes by what two things?**
- 5. What is the first step in seeking God?**
- 6. What do we do when called upon to wait upon the Lord?**
- 7. Where do we find the "Prayer of Jabez"?**
- 8. When the author Johnson placed a sign in the yard at 419 North B Street, what did Roger Day suggest he change it to?**
- 9. What maintains our fellowship with God?**
- 10. Micah raises the question as to whether works alone is**

what God requires; what were his words?

11. Church busy work, much religious activity, good works alone, asceticism, and outward piety will not mature us in Christ. What then ought to be our resolution for today?

12. God not only asks that we be humble, but also that we do what?

13. What did Mike Hylton say was a basis in his life for many years?

14. We receive our greatest assurance of God's kindness when we do what?

15. How does Luke sum up Jesus' life in a single beautiful sentence?

16. Jim Sumner tells of the friendship that developed with Kyle. What did Kyle plan to do the day they first met?

17. When Jesus told the story of a man whom the whole world had agreed to call good, what is the one picture he gives in doing one act?

18. Kindness, whether its face seems harsh or gentle, is always what in action?

19. Jesus told the story of a certain rich man who lifted up

- his eyes in Hades. What had he not done enough of to help a beggar who lay at his very gate?**
- 20. What is the last of the three requirements of God for Micah to do?**
- 21. What is the practice of what is right and just?**
- 22. Doing justice is to maintain what?**
- 23. According to Matthew 5:43-45, how shall a Christian react to injustice?**
- 24. What was lacking between man and man that filled Micah with such hot indignation?**
- 25. What evil did Micah spell out In Micah 3:1-3?**
- 26. Perpetrators of injustice ought to consider what verse?**
- 27. In what Scripture does Jesus discuss another form of justice telling us we are to be just in our judgments of one another?**
- 28. Who was the evangelist at a revival in Minneola, Kansas, when a deacons said to brother Johnson, "Why did you call that nigger to be our Evangelist?"**
- 29. What is the one organization of supreme importance to**

which we belong?

30. What two emotions did Mr. Art Linkletter say he had to confront when his daughter died?

NOTES