

Has anyone ever heard of Sean Connery, Christian Bale, or Russel Crowe? These are all fantastic actors! Technically speaking they may be some of the best actors out there. Everything they do when they're on camera is great! They truly become the person they're acting out. They have all kinds of skill and are excellent in front of the camera. But what about off camera? I hope I'm not ruining some movies for you, but all of these actors are said to be pretty hateful and rude. Russel Crowe has been known to neglect his fans and be mean to them. Christian Bale has been known to hold grudges on directors and say awful things to them. The one that breaks my heart, Sean Connery has been known to be a diva on set because of a heightened sense of his own importance.

These are phenomenal actors, they're great at what they do; but what they seem to be lacking is CHARACTER. To me, this sounds a lot like the Israelites in Micah's day. Turn over to **Micah 6**.

In this chapter Micah raises the question: "What does the Lord require of you?"

Micah answers his own question, and the answer is character; but Micah also makes some important points not only for the sake of Israel of his day, but for the benefit of the Lord's church today. Let's read **verses 6-8**.

Let's consider the question:

I. What did God require of Israel? The answer is Character. But there's a lot that goes into that.

What Israel Thought

- a. Israel was under the impression that God only required burnt offerings. Maybe God only required year-old calves. Maybe a thousand rams, ten thousand rivers of oil, or maybe even their firstborn child!
- b. While it's true that God certainly did command some of these things like the offering of calves and rams in **Leviticus 1:1-3**, but in the context of **Micah 6**, God through Micah is saying that rituals and sacrifices alone did not please God. A person could offer all the calves or rams in the world and the most valuable possessions they have to God, but that alone would not please him. (**Isaiah 1:11; Hosea 6:6**)
- c. For these rituals and these actions to be accepted by God they had to be done with something else. Something that is just as essential than the sacrifices themselves.

What God required of Israel

### 1. To Do Justly

- a. This means "to act toward God and man according to the divine standard of righteousness revealed in His law." This did involve the offering of sacrifices commanded by God. But it also involved treating their fellow man in a way that was right and fair and the Israelites broke the rules a lot. **Zechariah 7:8-11,13** – Failure to do "justly" was one of the main reasons Israel went into captivity!

### 2. To Love Mercy

- a. This means "to show a compassionate warm-heartedness toward man." Not only treat others fairly, but to show mercy when mistreated themselves. But Israel mistreated others more than they forgave. You can really see that in chapter **7:6**, they just weren't being kind to each other! **Micah 7:18-19** - One reason they were to love mercy was because God Himself delighted in showing mercy!

### 3. To Walk Humbly with Your God

- a. This involves living "in humble and submissive obedience to His desire and will." It can only happen when we "recognize the absolute holiness and righteousness of God." But Israel was pretty selfish and prideful. **Isaiah 66:1-2** - It is the humble of heart and spirit that greatly pleases God! And they will submit to his authority.

These three things God required of those who would come before Him. Not instead of the ritual observances, but in conjunction with them! They should both be present, not one or the other! This sounds a lot like the Pharisees in **Matthew 23:23**. But how does this apply to us?

II. What Does the Lord Require of us? The answer is Character. But again, there's a lot that goes into that.

What We Might Think

- a. We might think all the Lord requires is the observance of certain rituals like attending church on Sunday, like when we do this, we've done all that's required.
- b. I wonder sometimes if people believe this because of the impression someone gets by the example of who they are with or if that's the answer they usually get when they ask what is required.

- c. Attending worship services is definitely important. It is essential to obeying God and it is required if we expect to grow spiritually (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).
- d. Failure to attend worship services displeases God. It can also explain a lack of spiritual growth, a lack of commitment in the work of the church, and the lack of fellowship with God and other Christians.

It is essential that we observe the "rituals" God has put in place for us; but the Lord requires more than just "going to church."

#### What God Requires of Us

##### 1. To Do Justly

- a. In other words, live according to justice and do what's right. **James 4:17** – if we know what is right and we know what we ought to do but we don't do it, it's sinful. Now before we happily skip on to the next part because we've got this one covered, let's ask a few questions:
- b. Do I owe anything to anyone? Have I cheated on my finances? Do I tell the truth? Have I "done right" by people? Treated others as they should be treated. Are there sins that need to be confessed and turned from? Am I living by God's moral law?

##### 2. To Love Mercy

- a. To love mercy or to love kindness means to actively seek to give others what they may not deserve. **Luke 6:35-36** – Loving mercy is more than liking it. It's doing good for enemies and not hoping for anything in return! Some more questions to consider:
- b. Am I merciful to others when I have it in my power to help someone? Do I live in such a way that others are first, and I am last? Do I see my material blessings as a means to bless others? Do I give of myself only when it is convenient?

##### 3. To Walk Humbly with Our God

- a. Live in complete dependence upon a holy, righteous and awesome God. He alone deserves glory. **1 Peter 5:5-6/James 4:10** – God will lift up the humble! Sometimes I think we let arrogance slide a little bit because it's a "small sin". But God resists the proud. Some things to think about:
- b. Do I make decisions based on how they will benefit me, or God's kingdom? Do I feel the need to take credit for the wonderful things I've done? Do I feel I "deserve" a particular job/position/recognition? Do I rely on my good deeds to count, when my heart is far from Him?

We know that God requires of us the same thing, but what are some things we can do to show we are doing this? What are some things we can see the Israelites did not do that we ought to do?

##### 1. Study Our Bibles

- a. The Israelites were ignorant! **Verses 6-7** Micah is kind of giving a recount of all that the Israelites had been asking him. Micah says in the beginning of **verse 8** "*he has already told you what is good...*" I believe what Micah means is that the three things he tells them afterwards had already been told in the Law! But obviously these Israelites didn't know it or they wouldn't ask. **2 Timothy 2:15** – This is how we are approved by God, if we rightly divide the word of truth. Let's spend time in the Word so we are not ignorant of God's will.

##### 2. Practice Kindness

- a. We saw back in Micah that the Israelites were just being awful to each other and everyone was rising up against each other! But God required that they love mercy or love kindness. **Colossians 3:12-13** – This is the attitude and the qualities of God's people! Showing mercy by forgiving each other and showing these wonderful traits of kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering. Let's learn from the Israelites and practice kindness.

##### 3. Be a Daily Sacrifice

- a. I may be reading Micah wrong and we can talk about it but I believe that these Israelites were very much looking for a kind of "one and done" deal. In **verses 6-7** it really seems like they were saying, "Can I bring a bunch of stuff and be done?" Kind of like "can I just show up on Sundays and Wednesdays and be done?" Let's learn from these Israelites. **Verse 8** has three things that encompass just about everything. If a person truly does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly it will be every day. It's a continual thing and not a "one and done" deal. **Romans 12:1-2** – A living sacrifice! While we are living! It doesn't say be a sacrifice on Sunday and Wednesday. When are we living? Every day right? So let's be a daily sacrifice for God by submitting to his authority.

Let's go back to talking about actors. Has anyone ever heard of Jimmy Stewart, Tom Hanks, or Hugh Jackman? These are some more examples of fantastic actors. All of these actors are said to be great people both on and off the camera. Not only are they great at acting out a character, but they're great at having their character act out of them. That's exactly what the Lord requires of us: Having character that acts out of us by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.