



A publication of **U of Discipleship**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- 1 The old Sears catalog used to offer its items in three levels of quality: "good", "better" and "best". Who would want **good** (tools, tires or towels) when you can have **better** or even **best**? (Apparently few wanted **anything** Sears sold—they declared bankruptcy in 2018.) So why do you think that Jesus said, "No one is **good** but God", rather than, "no one is **better** than God", or, "God is **the best of all**"? (Mark 10:18)
- 2 Read Psalm 24:3-4. Verse 3 asks a question, and then v. 4 answers it. But does v. 4 describe you? Why or why not? Explain.
- 3 What if v. 4 had answered with: "He who has **cleaner** hands and a **more pure** heart, who has lifted up his soul to falsehood **less than most other people**, and has not sworn deceitfully **too very much**"? Might **that** describe **you**? Why or why not? Explain.
- 4 What does it mean that God requires that we be **categorically** good, not just **comparatively** good? (After all, every **prison** has "better" and "best" inmates—but **none of them** are "good"!)
- 5 Romans 5:12 & 18a teaches that, as a result of Adam's sin, we all enter the world sinful and condemned, and 6:23 informs us that the wages of sin is death. So, if we **start life** sinful and condemned to death, **what hope** can **anyone** have of "ascending the hill of Yahweh or standing in His holy place"?
- 6 What should we do—and how can we know if it is "good" enough for God to let us approach him?
 - Pastor Doug said: *"Most Americans believe in God, but the idea that there is a gap between God and us that must be bridged somehow is not part of their belief system. They believe in a rather permissive God of love who exists to help us. He is essentially a magnified version of a kind grandfather."*
- 7 Who do you know who holds that view? Tell us a little about him/her.
- 8 **How often** do you wonder if God will permit **you** to "ascend His hill or stand in His holy place"? **How much** does that thought trouble you? **Should** it trouble you more? Why or why not?

Talking To Others About This Week's Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, "What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?", how would you summarize the most important ideas of this week's sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

Warning! This set of questions “drills down deep” on the problem that God requires absolute, total, “goodness” in those whom he permits to be in his presence. If one goes to the “cure” too quickly, before the severity of the diagnosis has sunk in, one will tend to, in the words of Jeremiah 6:14...

“[Israel’s ungodly religious leaders] *have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.*”

The educational objective of this week’s questions is simply to diagnose the problem accurately. Cure comes after diagnosis.

- 1 The insight which this, and following, questions is driving at is that God requires absolute, total goodness. The Bible says that **God requires that we be as holy and perfect as God himself is** (Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:16; etc.). As question 4 reveals, in a **prison** there will be inmates who are “better” and “best” than the others—but **none of them** are “good”! “Better” and “best” are comparative terms, while “good” is a “categorical” term. One cannot have any “bad” in him and still qualify as “good”, but one can have plenty of bad in them and still be better or best, when compared to the person with the most bad in him! **This** is what you must understand for leading this entire discussion. **Do not** “lay it all out” for your group. Instead, help them grapple with these questions and arrive at this understanding. But, you must make sure that you understand this principle. We cannot impart to others what we do not ourselves first possess!
- 2 Again, without having “spilled the beans” on this whole line of reasoning, on this question you are simply trying to increase their understanding incrementally. Am I in fact able to describe **my** hands as “clean” (not just “cleaner than someone else’s”!)? Am I in fact able to describe **my** heart as “pure” (not just “purer than someone else’s”!)? Have I **never** lifted my soul up to faulthood and **never** sworn deceitfully (rather than less faulthood/deceit than others)? Do not let group members either: [1] go instantly to the cure (Jesus), or [2] explain away the clear intent of this passage by saying, “Well, nobody can do **that!**” God is permitted to require of us that which we cannot do without grace, for he designed us to operate in dependence upon him and not by our own autonomous abilities.
- 3 Yup, that could describe anyone, for we always can find someone worse than us. But God’s standard is not the bell curve—just be better than most and he’ll accept you. God’s standard is himself. God’s standard is absolute perfection. We cannot dodge this.
- 4 It means just what it says: God’s standard is perfection. One sin deserves eternal hell. Our problem is that serious. This is biblical Christianity. Anything less is mere moralism.
- 5 Dante said that above the gate of hell is inscribed “Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.” But the biblical view is that—without Christ—that epitaph is written across all of human life now.
- 6 We must cry to God for mercy. Yes, it will be good enough. See Luke 18:9-14.
- 7 You may need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)
- 8 Lead your group in an honest discussion of this. It is uncomfortable, but it is for their own eternal good. **Don’t be afraid.** You **must** help people grapple with God’s standards (Acts 20:26-27).

Now for the good news! Forgiveness is available—in fact, it is assured!—for all who flee to Christ.

Just google “two ways to live pdf” (or, go here: <https://www.csmedia1.com/gosschurch.org/2wtl.pdf>).

Sermon Summary (Key Text: Micah 6:6-8)

In Galatians chapter 5, we find nine character traits the Holy Spirit wishes to impart into all our lives. One of those is **goodness**. Few of us would look at our culture today and say that people are becoming better. What we do see is that there is a lot of darkness in the human heart. Occasionally it explodes for everyone to see—race riots, destruction, hatred, and cruelty. C.S. Lewis says that what fallen human beings need is not **improvement**, but **redemption**. We need to become **new people – spiritually and morally transformed**. If we want to understand what the Bible means by goodness, we have to answer an important question. In the book of Micah 6:6-8, the prophet poses that critical question and offers two wrong answers, followed by the right answer.

The critical question - In verse 6, Micah effectively asks, “How can we have a proper relationship with, and come into the presence of, the **exalted God**?” He is infinite; we are finite. He is pure and holy, but we are flawed. Most Americans believe in a permissive God who exists to help them, not an infinitely holy, sovereign, transcendent God who owes us nothing, but to whom we owe everything. They are blind to the truth that there is **huge** chasm between Almighty God and us, a gap that must be bridged somehow. We cannot approach Him just any way we want, at any time we want. The question, then, is **“How can I, a flawed and finite being, come into a relationship with this great, powerful, and exalted God?”**

The wrong answers – First, when we read verses 6-7, it’s as if Micah is asking God, “If I could bring you all the wealth on earth and surrender everything I am to you, would that be enough? Would that open the door for a relationship with you?” Thousands of rams and 10,000 rivers of oil would amount to billions of dollars today, and a burnt offering was a way of symbolically giving one’s life. Micah knows that the answer is, “No! God can’t be bought off! You can’t purchase His favor.” Second, Micah rhetorically asks, “God, what if I offered you the most costly, painful sacrifice I can imagine, even my firstborn child, to atone for my sin. Would that be enough?” Again, the answer is, “No!” Sinning against an infinite God incurs an infinite debt. All the personal pain and agony in the world would not atone for your sin. **There is nothing a person can do to earn a right relationship with the exalted God.** He is too big, and we are too flawed.

The right answer – To understand the right answer in verse 8, we have to look at it within the broader context of the whole Bible. In the Old Testament, when God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He said, “You are my covenant people now. I’m going to give you two things: the Law of God (10 Commandments) and the tabernacle with all its sacrifices.” The Law reflected the way God wanted them to live, and the tabernacle existed, because He knew they **wouldn’t** live that way and would need atonement for their sin. In the New Testament, Jesus essentially repeats Micah 6:8 when He says, “Love God” (*walk humbly with your God*), and “love your neighbor as yourself” (*do justly and love mercy*). But which of us has ever done that perfectly? No one! We haven’t even come close to fulfilling those requirements. Another Old Testament idea that helps us understand Micah is God’s requirement to redeem the life of the firstborn son (Exodus 13:2, 13). As representative of the whole family, the firstborn would have to die to atone for the sins of them all. But rather than kill him, God allowed them to pay a ransom. Symbolically, this points to another Firstborn Son—God’s Son, Jesus Christ—who actually did die. Putting Micah 6:8 in its proper context, it’s clear that your sin must be atoned for, and you can’t do it. God Himself, in His grace, atoned for our sins by the death of His Son, and through **His** sacrifice alone, we can approach Him and have a relationship with Him.

Having entered into a relationship with God through Jesus, He now wants us to live lives that reflect that relationship. Micah 6:8 tells us what that looks like. First, we are to **“act justly,”** which means we are to be deeply committed to caring for the most vulnerable people in society—the poor, the immigrant, the marginalized, the weak. Second, we are to **“love kindness.”** That means loving others like God loves us, unconditionally, even when they don’t (or can’t) repay us. We’re committed to people even when they upset us or let us down. We stay in relationships, even when those relationships feel draining to us. Finally, we **“walk humbly with our God.”** When you walk with someone, you’re having a relationship with him and going somewhere together. Walking with God means letting Him into every area of our lives. We are intimate with Him when we pray. He speaks to us when we read His Word. We’re making progress as we grow in spiritual maturity. With our Heavenly Father, we are exposed and totally accountable, befriended and totally loved, growing and gradually changing. Again, C.S. Lewis says, “He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly. We catch a glimpse of God’s own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful, but that is what we are in for. Nothing less.” Let’s get a vision for this kind of newness of life. This is what God wants to do in and for you.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

God's goodness—and our need for it—are constant themes in the Psalms.
Psalm 25 says, "Good and upright is Yahweh, therefore He instructs sinners in the way."
Let's study Psalm 25 to learn how the goodness of God connects to us...

- Circle the word "ashamed" (3x in v. 2-3 and once more in v. 20), and then look it up in a dictionary. How often do you experience that? What does v. 2a give as the antidote to shame? Who **should** be ashamed (v. 3b)?
- Circle the word "wait" (once each in v. 3, 5 & 21).
How many of those who patiently trust God will be ashamed (v. 3)?
What do you think is the connection between patience, trust, and salvation (v. 5)?
Look up "integrity", "uprightness", and "preserve" (v. 21) in the dictionary. How are they connected?
How good are you at "waiting on God"? How will you learn patience and trust?
- Circle "way" and "path" (2x in v. 4 and once each in v. 8, 9, 10 & 12). What is the request in v. 4?
According to each of the following verses, what kind of people does God teach his ways/paths?
v. 8b? v. 9? v. 12? Which of those describe you?
According to v. 10, what kind of people find God's paths to be "lovingkindness and truth"?
To what degree does that describe you?
How often do you ask God to show you/teach you his ways (v. 4)? How serious are you?
- Do you have iniquity (v. 11b)? Does it need pardon?
Verse 11a says that God pardons iniquity **"for his name's sake"**—ie, **"for the purpose of"** or **"in order to achieve"** something. Explain how pardoning **your** sin is for **his** name's sake.
- Slowly reread Psalm 25 and mark an **"R"** next to each **request** the psalmist makes.
How often do you request that of the Lord?
Typically there is a condition associated with the request (eg. those who "wait" for God, v. 3, will have their request to not be ashamed, v. 2, granted). Look back over the "requests" you marked.
How well do you meet the criteria associated with each request?
- Slowly reread Psalm 25 and mark a **"P"** next to each **promise** God makes (eg. "he leads the humble in justice", v. 9). How well do you meet the criteria associated with each promise?
- Slowly reread Psalm 25. Make a list of the qualities and actions of the psalmist which you currently see in yourself (not perfectly, of course, but to some significant degree).
Take a moment to thank God for his faithful activity in transforming you.

Now make a list of those qualities and actions which you don't currently see to a significant degree.
Begin praying that God will build those into you.

- Choose one verse from Psalm 25 on which you'd like to meditate.
Write it on a card, and then, on the other side, keep track of how often you review it each day. Aim for at least ten repetitions.

What impact did that have on you throughout the day?

How did it make you more mindful of God?

Psalm 25:8
Good and upright is Yahweh,
therefore He instructs sinners in the way.

Sunday:	11
Monday:	
Tuesday:	
Wednesday:	
Thursday:	
Friday:	
Saturday:	



It's never too soon to begin "hiding God's Word in our hearts"!

"How can a young person live a pure life?" asks Psalm 119?

"By obeying God's word" is the answer (v. 9).

Why not encourage that habit by memorizing Psalm 25:8 together this week?

Here's a simplified version, suitable for almost any age child (or even us adults!):

"God is good and shows sinners the right way to live."

- Write it on a card and practice it each evening at dinnertime.
- Ask your children questions to find out what is, and isn't, clear.
- Close the dinnertime by asking God to show each of you "the right way to live"