

Care for the vulnerable- MICAH 6:8

Why do we care for the vulnerable?

We CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE because we interpret Micah 6:8 (and many others*) to be telling us that it is what we SHOULD BE DOING.

**Philippians 2:4, Galatians 2:6, Proverbs 21:13, Galatians 2:10, James 1:27, John 13:34-35, Proverbs 28:27, Colossians 3:12*

It should take about 8 minutes to convince you that what I'm saying is TRUE, and most (if not all of you) will be ready to DO something about it...probably TODAY. I'm not quite sure why it takes John and Brian and Brandon and DJ and the other people up here teaching 40-50 minutes to get their point across. This one seems pretty straightforward.

We've heard from the prophet Micah that we should do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Seems simple enough. So that we can make this brief and inspire everyone I will give you a brief description of what each of these will mean....

Do justice: *DO WHAT IS RIGHT.*

- Even if nobody else is.
- Even if it is inconvenient or uncomfortable.

Love kindness: *LOVE KINDNESS.*

- Who doesn't?

Walk humbly with God.

- We know He's better.
- We need Him.

Here's one more verse for good measure.

Proverbs 19:17 One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.

This is even more convincing, right? This one gives us the notion that the good we do will be repaid.

We have a good grasp on the basic idea, and we have a few verses that are backing it up, so let me pull at your heart strings a little bit. This almost always seems to work...Visuals are powerful.

A typical home in rural Guatemala, where the average income is \$7.50/day.

A super big hearted young woman holding an orphan in Haiti...where there are an estimated 600,000 orphans.

A single father with newborn twins...the mother died during childbirth and, without the provision of formula from our partners in Haiti, he likely would have lost his children as well.

A home in rural Missouri. 17% of Missouri families are classified as "FOOD INSECURE". Only Arkansas has a higher percentage of families with inadequate food supplies.

564,708 people on any given night are homeless.

A tent city for homeless people...this helps bring it close to home...this picture is from St. Louis.

There is no arguing that these images do something inside of us. I don't even know what we can call it, because it's almost universal, meaning it affects the majority of humans. We have a desire in us to see these things FIXED. We are stirred by Compassion International commercials with starving children, flies buzzing around their faces...we WANT to give to relief efforts when celebrities are conducting telethons and describing just how NEEDED WE ARE. It isn't just sentimentality and manipulation. It pulls at us.

It is a persistent awareness that THIS IS NOT HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE. We find ways to hide from it, or ignore it, or throw up our hands because it all seems so HOPELESS.

There are common words that we use for these feelings- empathy and compassion. Empathy is feeling WITH another person. Compassion is the desire to ACT on that feeling.

And that should do it, right? We're clear? We know what it is that the Lord requires? It just doesn't work that way. So this will actually take a little longer than 5 minutes...

So most of us have these feelings, and most of us have at some point in time DONE something about it. We have CARED FOR THE VULNERABLE. But as we look around, things don't seem to be any different. Sometimes they seem worse. And we also notice that we quickly run out of steam, that our passion and desire to help the vulnerable fades or even dies. We go back to hiding, or ignoring, or embracing the futility of it all. Here is how I've seen this play out in my own life...working at residential treatment program in Colorado. Worn out. Came home, working with Brandon in our youth ministry. We treated ALL kids like criminals.

Gone was our desire to give, to help, to fix. We HAD empathy, we HAD compassion for kids.

What happened? What happens to all of us?

Researchers have proven that humans have a limited capacity for empathy.

What then do we, the Body of Christ, do with Micah 6:8? God has clearly declared that proof of our desire to do what He requires is to do what is right, love kindness and walk Humbly with Him. We have an intrinsic sense that the hurt and brokenness and poverty and hunger and mental illness is NOT HOW IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE. And we WANT to do something. But, we can't. At least not with any real consistency and duration.

The desire within us to DO something about the desperation and vulnerability we see is GOOD...but it ABSOLUTELY matters where it comes from.

Here is a very plain example of how Jesus responded, it reads similarly in both Matthew and Mark- His response was compassion, but it was not because of their hunger, or their illness, or their poverty, or their homelessness...those things absolutely matter to Him.

But what makes HIS heart feel compassion is seeing sheep without a shepherd. His response to seeing vulnerability is very different than ours was just a few minutes ago when we were seeing pictures of vulnerability laid out before us and we felt something and we even probably felt compelled to act. To

fix it. To feed and clothe and build and treat and donate and visit and champion a cause. His cause is not and was not to fix the obvious signs of our brokenness.

His cause is to restore His people into right relationship with their Creator.

When God's people are reconciled to Him, they are no longer vulnerable. Being made right with our Creator looks like this:

Revelation 21:3-5 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!"

His Compassion for His sheep is driven by THIS...He knows that when the sheep have a shepherd, the former things, the broken things, pass away.

When our "cause" is His cause, when our hearts are drawn to compassion by the sight of sheep without a shepherd, we are just, merciful and humble.

When our cause is alleviating poverty, we will become tired and disillusioned.

We long to see all of it redeemed...but we are not the redeemer. When we are drawn to compassion by lost-ness, we adopt a humble position recognizing that we CANNOT save and our only compulsion is to point the way to the redeemer.

What does this mean for OUR body?

Sharing Shed- we have not adopted the cause of providing furniture to every vulnerable family in the county. God has given us a vehicle by which we can display His mercy and justice and it just so happens to be through giving away furniture. Our desire is that people who come get a couch are reunited with their shepherd and that their momentary afflictions fade.

LIFT- we wouldn't even begin to think that we could cure or heal or change disability. We pray that God draws us into the lives of people with disabilities so that they may know hope.

Adoption/Foster Care- We care for orphans (James 1:27), not solely based upon our desire to see all children have parents.