

EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO KNOW I LEARNED IN KINDERGARTEN SUNDAY SCHOOL

Bible Study for September

By Major Cathi Boyd

"Share your crayons", "Don't take cuts in line", "If you make a mess, clean it up."

These are the simple rules we learned in kindergarten, and according to Robert Fulgrum in his book **Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten**, these rules that served us well as youngsters will serve us just as well as adults. The secret of the book's back to basics appeal is in a return to a kinder, gentler time when right was right and wrong was wrong; and even if you disagreed with your neighbor, cookies and milk would make everything better.

What rules do you remember from your kindergarten days? Do you agree or disagree that living by these kinds of principles would make life better today? Why or why not?

Life today can be very confusing. What once was right is now called wrong and vice versa. I recently saw a cartoon where a man complained to his neighbor, "The trouble with kids today is that they don't play by the rules." The neighbor replied, "How can they when we grownups keep changing the rules!"



As Christians living in a complicated world, we look to **God's Word** for rules to live by. The book of Micah shares some of these back-to-basics principles. Micah was a prophet living in the country of Judah, a country that appeared strong economically, but had fallen to the depths of spiritual depravity. The rich grew richer and lived the lush lifestyle seemingly unaware or uncaring of the impoverished people

living around them. People went to the Temple to be seen worshipping God, but practiced all sorts of idolatry and lived their lives doing whatever pleased them. A nation that once proudly called itself the people of God had in fact turned its back on the One who had founded it.

Do you see any parallels between Judah at the time, and America today? What sorts of things do people idolize (put in the place of God) today? What things in your life might be called an idol?

When bad things happened to the people of Judah they began crying out about injustice. They asked questions like: "How could a loving God allow children to die of hunger?" "Where is God when brother is killing brother in the streets?" "Why did God allow my wife to suffer with cancer?" "I'm a good person, I've worked hard all my life, why won't God cut me a break?" Questions that people are still asking today. "What does God want from me?" The prophet Micah had an answer for the people then and for us today. He shared three principles that are so simple that even the kindergarten Sunday School class could understand them:

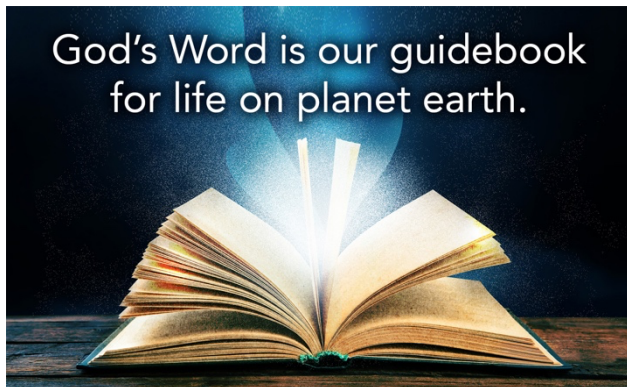
"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humble with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Micah tells us plainly that God requires three things of us: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. Let's look at each of these three.



TO ACT JUSTLY. To do the right thing regardless of circumstances and situations. To do the right thing when no one is looking. (Actually, that's not true, because God is always looking. I almost stole a candy bar when I was a little kid, but our Sunday School memory verse came to mind: "But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him." I didn't understand that to fear God meant to revere Him, but I sure was afraid of Him seeing me take the candy and telling my mom. She was the one whose wrath I feared!).

To act justly is putting into practice the Golden Rule all the time, towards everyone, even when it doesn't seem fair. It's seeking to be pure in thought as well as deed; pure of motive as well as action. No white lies, no sneaking things from the office, no saying one thing to a person and stabbing them in the back to another. It means speaking truthfully, keeping our word, and standing up for what is right even when it is unpopular. It's treating all people with the dignity due them as fellow creations made in the image of God. Acting justly is what sent Jesus to the cross.



Can you think of a time when Scripture helped you make the right choice?

Justice is a hot topic. Here are some other verses from God's Word that talk about justice. Which one speaks to your heart today? Why?

Isaiah 1:17, Amos 5:24, Romans 12:19, Isaiah 30:18, Jeremiah 23:5.

TO LOVE MERCY. The story is told of a mother who sought from Napoleon the pardon of her son. Napoleon said it was the man's second offense and justice demanded his death. "I don't ask for justice," said the mother, "I plead for mercy." "But," the emperor said, "he does not deserve mercy." "Sir," cried the mother, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask." "Well then," Napoleon replied, "I will show mercy."

What a clever mother. Mercy is not something any one of us deserves. God, however, is full of mercy towards us. Another translation of the word mercy is loving kindness and the Bible speaks often of God's loving kindness towards us. (see Psalm 63:3, Psalm 117:2, Isaiah 54:8, Nehemiah 9:17) Eternal salvation is ours only through the mercy of God and this undeserved, unearned gift is given freely to all who ask (see Titus 3:3-5).

We in turn are to show mercy, loving kindness to others from the overflow of gratitude we have for what God has done for us. We love because He first loved us. Yet this idea of mercy is more than a feeling. Loving kindness is a verb, an action word. *Read Mark 12:29-31. How do the words of Jesus fill complete the words of Micah? How can we live these words--how do we love mercy with our actions? What can you do this week?*

Living justly and loving mercy go hand in hand. Without mercy, justice becomes intolerant, harsh, or self-righteous. Without justice, even handedness, and the ever-present sense of who

we would be if God had not forgiven us, mercy becomes self-serving smug do-gooding. But neither of these has any lasting meaning without the third thing God requires.

TO WALK HUMBLY WITH OUR GOD. Walking with God is the driving force behind all we do. To walk humbly literally means walking with attentiveness, thoughtfulness, and watchfulness. We need to follow closely in our Father's footsteps. It is, like Jesus said, loving the Lord God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. It is also growing to know God so that you can know how He wants you to live each day.

My husband is 11 inches taller than me. After 41 years of walking together we have learned to compromise. He shortens his stride and I walk a little faster. When we hike, he takes the lead to warn me of hidden roots or slippery places, and he stops and lends a hand when I need it. When we went cross country skiing, he broke the trail through the snow because I was the weaker skier. **Can you see the connection to walking with God?** Sometimes He will seem to be ahead of us, showing the way, breaking the trail, and warning us of dangers in the road. We can listen and avoid trouble, or we can be stubborn and face the consequences. He will always be there to pick us up if we fall. As we grow to know Him, we begin to match strides with Him. We begin to know instinctively the way He would have us go. And as the popular poem Footprints suggests, when we look behind us and see only one set of footprints it will be because God was carrying us during a difficult time. We know we are never alone when we are walking humbly with God.



"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" Isaiah 30:21.

Have you ever sensed God was telling you what you should do, or which way you should turn in a particular situation? Did you pay attention, or did you go your own way? What happened? Was there any lasting change from this experience?

So, everything I needed to know I learned in **Sunday School**. What does God require of us? To act justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly

with our God. And yes, **milk and cookies** are still a good way to smooth things over with someone with whom you've had a disagreement.