**GOD: FIEND or FRIEND**

***What Does The Lord Require Of Me?***

I’ve been reading Micah. In fact lately I’ve been reading all the prophets, both Major and Minor. Just for kicks let’s say them together. First, the Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. Very good. Now, the Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Outstanding.

While reading the prophets can certainly be an exercise in confusion, and even depression, as you try to understand the language and the message of the books and read again and again of the punishments from the Lord upon Israel and other nations, it is also a powerful reminder of how badly we need to hear God speak to us of what He requires from His people. I need to hear, in no uncertain terms, exactly what God wants from me as I live my life before Him.

This question, “What does the Lord require of me?” brings my focus back to Micah. That very question was asked, and succinctly answered, in this “minor” book. All of us who have a pulse of at least 60 (normal is 60 to 100) and an IQ of at least 60 (Albert Einstein’s was 160) and who have even a minimal Bible IQ (you at least reverence God’s name without texting #OMG) have at some time in our life looked heavenward and asked, “What do you want from me?”

If you are gray-headed like me you likely remember the old commercial from that (see tongue-in-cheek) “intellectually stimulating” tabloid named *The National Enquirer*. Dealing with sensationalist stories on sex and scandal from politicians and Hollywood entertainers it would fill its pages with filth fit only for the sewer. Foolish folks bought that tabloid and believed its gossip. But likely the only thing they ever said accurately was their motto: “*Inquiring minds want to know*.”

We are an inquisitive people (just look at how many “hits” Google gets daily, or how many questions are asked to Siri). But one question I did ask Siri today she could not answer was this: “Siri, what does God want from me?” She simply said, “Interesting Question.” Sadly, that answer is about as far as most “inquiring minds” want to go. They would rather know if Tom Cruise is cheating on his wife, or if Brad Pitt is with Angelina Jolie or Jennifer Anniston. I pray, with all my heart, your question to God is taken more seriously when you ask: “God, what do you want from me?”

The people in Micah’s day complained that God was never happy with them. They just couldn’t please Him no matter what they did. He was a hard taskmaster that could not be satisfied. They snidely asked, “*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil*?” (Mic. 6:7). They were sick and tired of all the commandment keeping. Jehovah was nothing more than an ogre that kept crying, “Give me, give me, give me” but whatever they did was never good enough.

Have you ever felt that way about God’s commands? Do you think God is some vampire-like creature that demands your blood, but then, like the Pharoah of Egypt, drives you to work even harder by telling you to get your own straw to make bricks, all without changing your daily quota (Exo. 5:6-14)? Is God such a tyrant? Is He a harsh taskmaster? Can He never be gratified with your efforts?

Micah’s response from God to the irritated Israelites should have shut them up for good. It didn’t, and it hasn’t shut up people today either who ask God the question but don’t like His simple answer. Listen to Micah:

“*He has told you, O man, what is good. What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God*?” (Micah 6:8 ESV)

God has a way with words, doesn’t He? In a simple three-point sermon He outlines exactly what He wants from us. This is not rocket science. Here is what God wants from me (and you):

1. **Do Justice**.
2. **Love Kindness**.
3. **Walk Humbly With God**.

I don’t need to write a lengthy commentary on those three points. Anyone who can see through a ladder can see the meaning of those three requirements. Live by those principles and God will say, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*.”

Brother (or sister), read this verse and tell me what God wants: “*But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*” (Heb. 13:16). Is that so hard? How about, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy*” (Matt. 5:7), or, “*mercy triumphs over judgment*” (Jam. 2:13)? Or what of Enoch’s life when it says “*Enoch walked with God*” (Gen. 5:24) and then 1500 years later it says of that walk: “*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death… he had this testimony, that he pleased God*” (Heb. 11:5).

Does that sound like the Lord is some Baal-like god that has to be appeased by screaming and blood-letting from sunrise to sunset (read 1 Kgs. 18:27)? Mark it down and drive your tent-peg and camp on this verse: “*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome*” (1 John 5:3). God’s commandments are not burdensome! In fact, Jesus explained it this way, “*My yoke is easy, and my burden is light*” (Matt. 11:30). When asked what was the greatest commandment He replied: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart… soul… and mind*” and “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matt. 22:37-39). The average IQ in America is 98. Since my motto in school was “C’s get degrees,” I’m sure I’m average (or below), but even I grasp Christ’s command and can obey it, thus pleasing God.

Do you fret like the Israelites in Micah’s day that saw God as a fiend instead of a friend? Are you struggling with thinking you can’t please God? Then start with Micah 6:8. Memorize it. Apply it. Now, look up. God is smiling.

Now you smile, for God loves you. – Rick