

TRANSFORM™ WEEKEND SERIES

Precept Ministries International

DIRTY JOBS

STUDY GUIDE

Dirty Jobs— Study Guide

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DIRTY JOBS



Justice denied

anywhere diminishes

justice everywhere.



—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

LESSON 1

A Life Pleasing to God

A life pleasing to God is simple but not easy. Scripture tells us in Micah 6:8, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Out of all the commands, instructions, warnings, and encouragements God gives us in His Word, we can boil them all down to these three things: kindness (mercy), justice, and walking humbly with our God. Simple, right...but not easy!

Obviously it’s easier to say Micah 6:8 than it is to live it, but here’s the cool part—God has told us how to please Him! A lot of the time you don’t know what to expect from people because they are constantly changing with their circumstances, but God does not change. Have you ever considered that you can please God, or do you feel like you’ll never measure up? Well, you can please Him if you do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him!

Let’s look more closely at the lifestyle that pleases God and some characteristics that grieve His Spirit.



CENTRAL QUESTION

Central Question for Lesson 1: What does a life pleasing to God look like?

Observe the text:

Read Micah 6:1-8. Draw a triangle over every reference to *God*, including pronouns like *He* and *Him*.

We’re marking God because we want to focus on what He says is important. God is THE key character in Scripture (Glad we cleared that up!), so it makes sense to look closely at His character—what He likes, what He dislikes, and anything else we can learn about Him from His Word! A simple but effective study practice for you and your students is to mark “God” whenever you study your Bible and write down what you learn about Him.

Micah 6:1-8

- 1 Hear now what the LORD is saying,
 “Arise, plead your case before the mountains,
 And let the hills hear your voice.
- 2 “Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of the LORD,
 And you enduring foundations of the earth,
 Because the LORD has a case against His people;
 Even with Israel He will dispute.
- 3 “My people, what have I done to you,
 And how have I wearied you? Answer Me.
- 4 “Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt
 And ransomed you from the house of slavery,
 And I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.
- 5 “My people, remember now
 What Balak king of Moab counseled
 And what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
And from Shittim to Gilgal,
 So that you might know the righteous acts of the LORD.”
- 6 With what shall I come to the LORD
And bow myself before the God on high?
 Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
 With yearling calves?
- 7 Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams,
 In ten thousand rivers of oil?
 Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts,
 The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
- 8 He has told you, O man, what is good;
 And what does the LORD require of you
 But to do justice, to love kindness,
 And to walk humbly with your God?

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“Investigate” assignments focus on questioning the text to pull out as much information as possible, like a good interrogation. By asking simple questions like *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* (the 5 Ws and H), you will learn more from your personal times of Bible study!



INVESTIGATE

If you're going to read with a purpose (e.g. to get all the details), you must ask these questions. The text provides the answers, and you'll be amazed at what you learn! The exercise below shows students how to observe and interpret a passage by asking 5W and H questions. Investigating a passage is simply asking who, what, when, where, why, and how questions!

LEADER
NOTE

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

1. **Who** is speaking in the first five verses and **what** tone is being used?
2. **What** does the LORD have against His people (the Hebrews) in verse 2? **What** kind of setting does this bring to mind?
3. **What** does He remind the people of in verses 3-5?
4. **What** does it seem that the people were trying to please God with in verses 6-7?
5. **What** kind of sacrifice is He looking for? **What** does He call “good” in verse 8?

say what?

Other versions translate the NASB's "kindness" in verse 8 as "mercy." The basic idea is an act of kindness or love shown to someone. It is NOT simply feeling sorry for someone. That is called pity.

God's demand of justice means all people owe others certain rights—like the rights to life and possessions. Acts that take away these rights like murder, theft, and many others are practices of injustice.

6. **How** would you summarize Micah 6:1-8 in your own words? According to these verses, **why** did God have a case against the people?

Isaiah 64:6 says it this way:

Isaiah 64:6

6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

At the risk of sounding gross, I want you to understand something. The "filthy garment" mentioned in Isaiah refers to a used menstrual cloth. In other words, even our "righteous" acts can be completely disgusting, revolting to God if not done for the right reason.

Have you ever considered that "offerings" such as going to church, praying, giving, and even reading a Bible (Gasp!) can be this gross to God? Yes, God commanded sacrifices in the Old Testament, but something in the lives of the people was missing that made the sacrifices repulsive in God's eyes. So he tells them what these missing things are: kindness (mercy), justice, and walking humbly with Him.

What, then, makes a religious sacrifice disgusting in the eyes of God? And what does He actually want out of us?

Observe the text:

Read Isaiah 1:10-17. Continue to mark all of the references to *God* with a triangle.

Leader Note: Marking the text benefits students in several ways:

- It makes them slow down, which is good for retention.
- It makes the work visual.
- It makes students focus on one subject at a time.
- It engages them with the text. You can't mark and daydream easily at the same time!

LEADER NOTE

Isaiah 1:10-17

- 10 Hear the word of the LORD,
You rulers of Sodom;
Give ear to the instruction of our God,
You people of Gomorrah.
- 11 “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?”
Says the LORD.
“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
And the fat of fed cattle;
And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.
- 12 “When you come to appear before Me,
Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?
- 13 “Bring your worthless offerings no longer,
Incense is an abomination to Me.
New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—
I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.
- 14 “I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts,
They have become a burden to Me;
I am weary of bearing *them*.
- 15 “So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*,
I will hide My eyes from you;
Yes, even though you multiply prayers,
I will not listen.
Your hands are covered with blood.
- 16 “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.
Cease to do evil,

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17 Learn to do good;
Seek justice,
Reprove the ruthless,
Defend the orphan,
Plead for the widow.



INVESTIGATE

God is again speaking to His people, the Hebrews, in these verses. Let's take a few minutes to list the things in their lives that didn't please God as well as the instructions He wanted carried out. Complete the following chart which we've started for you as an example.

Displeases God	Instructions for Pleasing God
v.11 - multiplied sacrifices, burnt offerings of rams, fat of fed cattle, blood of bulls, rams, and goats	v. 16 -
v. 12 -	v. 17 -
v. 13 -	
v. 14 -	
v. 15 -	

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1. After looking at these verses, **what** does God want from us?
2. **What** do you learn about the prayers of the people? **How** will God treat the prayers of those who bring Him offerings but deny justice to others?
3. The sacrifices, incense offerings, assemblies, and other religious acts of worship were not bad things—God had commanded them in the Old Testament. So **what** made them unacceptable to Him?
4. Comment on verse 17. Give some examples of things you could do for victims of injustice like orphans and widows.
5. If these are God's requirements and pleasure, how pleased is He with you? **What** (if anything) can you change or start doing?

At the risk of being a bit blunt: God cares less about how religious you appear than how you respond to Him and to others. As we'll see below in James 1:27, the problem is impure and defiled religion, not religion or worship itself. Too often we think of worship only in terms of church meetings (assemblies), prayer (incense), Bible study, and donations (sacrifices). But these acts done without justice do not complete true worship.

In fact, Romans 12:1 says, "...present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship." When you seek justice by protecting the helpless from the ruthless, you are worshiping the Almighty God. That is pleasing to Him!

You've probably got the point by now, but let's examine one more section of Scripture that deals with these subjects, this time from the New Testament.

Observe the text:

Circle any references to *religion* as you read James 1:22-27.

LEADER NOTE

You're about to mark a key word. Key words are critical to the meaning of a passage and often are repeated in the text. If God cared to have a key word mentioned repeatedly, there's something we can and should learn!

James 1:22-27

22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

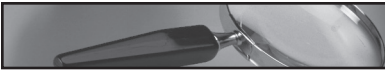
23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless.

27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

**INVESTIGATE**

Remember what we learned about investigating the text? Notice how each question below is one of our 5 Ws and an H. Support your answers from the verses you read whenever possible!

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

1. **What** command is given in these verses?
2. **How** is the person who hears the Word but doesn't act on it described?
3. In general, are you a hearer or a doer of the Word? **How** does your life demonstrate your answer? Be as specific as possible.
4. **What** is the end result for the person who does what the Word says?
5. **What** is pure and undefiled religion according to these verses?
6. **Who** determined this standard?

say what?

Orphans are usually parentless (sometimes just fatherless) children. Widows are simply women whose husbands have died. By the way, the divorce rate in our own country is at 50 percent. Not all orphans and widows are on the streets in some foreign land. Even in America we are surrounded by women and children who qualify as widows and orphans.

7. **Who** can you think of (family, friends, other students, etc.) that needs mercy and/or justice? Do you personally know any orphans or widows?

8. **How** can you serve God by meeting their needs? Be creative!



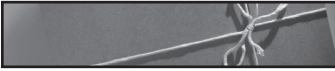
CENTRAL QUESTION

Central Question for Lesson 1: What does a life pleasing to God look like?



FAITH WORKOUT

Look around you for hurting people, but know that they are trying to hide their hurts just like you do. Make an intentional, honest attempt to show mercy to as many people as possible next week. Ask God to help you identify those who need mercy and justice and to make this a daily part of your life.



WRAP THAT UP!

God says in His Word that He provides for the fatherless, the homeless, the sick and the hurting through the Church. In fact He says He's the special protector of the oppressed in Exodus 22:21-24. He tells the men of Israel that if they oppress widows and orphans, He'll make more widows and orphans out of their wives and children (translation—if they oppressed widows and orphans, then God would kill them)!

If you think that trip to the soup kitchen once every couple of months or medical missions one week a year makes your life one of mercy and justice, you're just getting started. What is God's plan for justice on earth? WE ARE THE PLAN (24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year) to relieve the poor, the needy, and the sick. We're to reach out to those with no friends, those who feel like they don't belong, those who are made fun of and ridiculed, those who are desperate, and hungry.

This is a life pleasing to God!

NOTES...
