



# EMMAUS BAPTIST CHURCH

WHERE YOUR CHURCH HOME IS YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

## 3 Day Fasting & Prayer Guide

Aug 27-29

### Day 1, Aug 27

#### **Doing Justice – It Starts with Listening**

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and 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)

Human beings were created in the image of God. That means we were created and placed on earth to be God’s representatives and carry out His plan in accordance with the morals and concepts of justice that God himself follows. According to Biblical justice, all humans are equal, all are created in God’s image, and all are entitled to be treated with decency, fairness, and respect. Many think of justice in its retributive dimension – a wrongdoer “gets what he deserves” as punishment for the offense. The Bible has a number of examples of retributive justice; however, the Bible speaks much more frequently about restorative justice, where people who are unrightfully hurt or wronged are restored and given back that which was taken from them. Thus, God’s justice is manifested by a selfless way of life in which people strive to ensure that others are treated well and injustices are made right.

Biblical justice does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it must be applied to particular facts and situations as we understand them. How do we come to understand the facts? We do so by first being active listeners. Hearing is one of our five senses, but it is merely the ability to discern sound. It requires no real effort on our part. Listening, however, is quite different. Listening is the intentional process of hearing what is said for the purpose of understanding! It involves not just paying careful attention to what is said, but asking questions to seek clarity and ensure we are told everything that is relevant. As James taught, “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” James 1:19 (NIV). Active listening is not easy, particularly if what is being said runs counter to our own beliefs and preferences. Nevertheless, understanding all of the facts – the whole story, so to speak - is the key if we genuinely want to act justly as God instructed. The following story illustrates the danger of speaking and acting without complete understanding.

An old man and his teenage son were riding a train. A middle-aged couple sat across from them. His son, looking out the window, exclaimed, "Daddy look, the trees are running behind us." The couple, somewhat amused, just nodded at the old man. His son then said, "Daddy, look at the clouds. They are running with us." The couple, still smiling, squirmed in their seats. Then, the young man said, "Daddy, look at the cows. They are running away from us." Unable to resist any longer, the lady leaned forward and asked the old man, "Why don't you take your son to see a good doctor?" The old man just smiled, then replied "We have just returned from the doctor, an eye surgeon, and my son can now see for the first time in his life."

The famous radio commentator Paul Harvey, following a commercial break, would start the second part of his broadcast with the statement, "And now, for the rest of the story." In the illustration above, the "rest of the story" proved to be quite an embarrassment for the middle-aged couple. You see, they made two unfounded judgments about the old man and his son: that something was wrong with his son, and that he had failed as a parent to obtain medical help. Those assumptions were based on a combination of ignorance, arrogance, and an unwillingness to seek understanding.

We live in exceptionally tumultuous times. Protests – both peaceful and violent – abound over incidents of brutality and death, spawned in some instances by systemic racism. Our society has become increasingly polarized politically, socially, economically and religiously. We live in a tribal culture, and anything said or done by a member of another tribe is automatically wrong. No questions asked. Contrary to James 1:19, we have abandoned listening, and are exceptionally quick to speak, quick to anger, and quick to judge. Unfortunately, there are those in the evangelical Christian movement who have adopted these methods rather than pursue true Biblical justice.

Jesus knew we would have difficulty with judging and He gave us a stern warning in Matthew 7:1-2, when He said "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." This does not mean we should never judge. We make judgments all the time – between right and wrong, between dangerous choices and safe choices. It does mean, though, that if we judge others hypocritically and un-biblically, we risk paying an enormous price ourselves. It will rob us of our hope and joy (Romans 13:15), pollute our hearts (Mark 7:20-23), and make us vulnerable to hatred (Proverbs 6:16-19).

So, the next time you are tempted to judge someone's words or actions, make sure you know the whole story. Listen carefully and thoughtfully. Resist the urge to make hasty judgments. Ask questions designed to clarify anything that is unclear. Once you understand, then offer your observations in Christian love and with a humble heart (Matthew 18:15-17). Where the facts show an injustice that should be righted, take action that shows a genuine love for your neighbor and a desire, as one created in God's image, to demonstrate His righteousness towards His entire creation.

**Day 2, Aug 28**

**Loving Kindness**

*“He has told you, O man, what is good; and 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)*

Loving kindness is how some English translations of the Bible translate the Hebrew word *cheched* (also spelled *hesed*). In other verses and other versions of the Bible, the word is translated as mercy, goodness, kindness, faithful love, and steadfast love. As with many Hebrew words, there is no exact English equivalent that conveys the fullness of the meaning of *cheched*. However, by looking at its usage in the Bible, we can gain a better understanding of this word's richness.

Most often, *cheched* is used in relation to God and His character. When God passed before Moses, He declared Himself to be "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." "Steadfast love" in these verses is *cheched* in Hebrew. Moses repeated this promise back to God when begging Him to forgive the Israelites in Numbers 14:18-19. Moses again pointed to this lovingkindness, or steadfast love, of God when giving the law to the people a second time before they entered the Promised Land.

*Cheched* is a committed love that shows mercy, forgiveness, redemption, favor, and grace toward the one to whom it has been promised. We can call upon God's steadfast love when we need forgiveness (Psalm 25:7), when we need to be delivered from troubles (Psalm 119:149) and when we need assurance of His promises (Psalm 23:6). Certainly, we can follow the Psalmist's plea in Psalm 136:1 to "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever." God's unending lovingkindness is ample cause for thanksgiving and praise.

Please make this wonderful hymn your prayer today.

*In loving kindness Jesus came,  
My soul in mercy to reclaim;  
And from the depths of sin and shame  
Through grace he lifted me.  
From sinking sand He lifted me,  
With tender hand He lifted me,  
From shades of night to plains of light,  
O praise His name, He lifted me!*

**Day 3, Aug 29**

**Walk Humbly**

*“He has told you, O man, what is good; and 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)*

It was Monday morning, 6 a.m. and I was sitting with a group of co-workers. Alvin was telling all about church on Sunday and what a blessing it was for him. Our foreman stepped into our shack and greeted us with job assignments. Alvin, being senior crew member, received his job last. "I need you to mop the 12-ton bay floor, Alvin." Alvin immediately snapped, "I don't mop. That's beneath me and it's woman's work." Judy spoke up, "I went to church yesterday too, and my Lord washed feet. There is no job beneath me." The crew was silent. I took my hard hat and offered it to Alvin. "What's that for Tim?" I said, "It's customary to take a collection at church." Finally, everyone laughed.

We are children of the King. He washed feet, touched lepers, dealt with all manner of sick, dying and dead. He worked with fishermen, fed crowds and did what was needed in the moment. And, finally, He died on a cross to pay the ultimate atonement for each of us.

So, today let us not place ourselves above any work or any endeavor of life. Let us behave as our heavenly Fathers' children.

Prayer:

Father God, today and every day we live, walk beside us as we each try to be an example of humble servanthood. Let us keep the humble life and work of Your Son Jesus in our minds and hearts. Amen