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Do Justly, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with God

To do justly means acting honorably. We act honorably with God by walking humbly with Him. We act honorably with others by loving mercy.

As followers of Jesus Christ, and as Latter-day Saints, we strive—and are encouraged to strive—to do better and be better.¹ Perhaps you have wondered, as I have, “Am I doing enough?” “What else should I be doing?” or “How can I, as a flawed person, qualify to ‘dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness?’”²

The Old Testament prophet Micah asked the question this way: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?”³ Micah satirically wondered whether even exorbitant offerings might be enough to compensate for sin, saying: “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten [thousand] . . . rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for . . . the sin of my soul?”⁴

The answer is no. Good deeds are not sufficient. Salvation is not earned.⁵ Not even the vast sacrifices Micah knew were impossible can redeem the smallest sin. Left to our own devices, the prospect of

returning to live in God’s presence is hopeless.⁶

Without the blessings that come from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, we can never do enough or be enough by ourselves. The good news, though, is that because of and through Jesus Christ we can become enough.⁷ All people will be saved from physical death by the grace of God, through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁸ And if we turn our hearts to God, salvation from spiritual death is available to all “through the Atonement of [Jesus] Christ . . . by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”⁹ We can be redeemed from sin to stand clean and pure before God. As Micah explained, “[God] hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”¹⁰

Micah’s direction on turning our hearts to God and qualifying for salvation contains three interconnected

elements. To *do justly* means acting honorably with God and with other people. We act honorably with God by walking humbly with Him. We act honorably with others by loving mercy. To *do justly* is therefore a practical application of the first and second great commandments, to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . [and to] love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹¹

To *do justly* and *walk humbly with God* is to intentionally withdraw our hand from iniquity, walk in His statutes, and remain authentically faithful.¹² A just person turns away from sin and toward God, makes covenants with Him, and keeps those covenants. A just person chooses to obey the commandments of God, repents when falling short, and keeps on trying.

When the resurrected Christ visited the Nephites, He explained that the law of Moses had been replaced by a higher law. He instructed them not to



San Lucas Sacatepéquez, Guatemala

“offer up . . . sacrifices and . . . burnt offerings” any longer but to offer “a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” He also promised, “And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost.”¹³ When we receive and use the gift of the Holy Ghost after baptism, we can enjoy the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and be taught all things that we should do,¹⁴ including how to walk humbly with God.

Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for sin and salvation from spiritual death are available to all who have such a broken heart and contrite spirit.¹⁵ A broken heart and contrite spirit prompt us to joyfully repent and try to become more like our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. As we do so, we receive the Savior’s cleansing, healing, and strengthening power. We not only do justly and walk humbly with God; we also learn to love mercy the way that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ do.

God delights in mercy and does not begrudge its use. In Micah’s words to Jehovah, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, . . . will have compassion upon us,” and will “cast all . . . sins into the depths of the sea.”¹⁶ To love mercy as God does is inseparably connected to dealing justly with others and not mistreating them.

The importance of not mistreating others is highlighted in an anecdote about Hillel the Elder, a Jewish scholar who lived in the first century before Christ. One of Hillel’s students was exasperated by the complexity of the Torah—the five books of Moses with their 613 commandments and associated rabbinic writings. The student challenged Hillel to explain the Torah using only the time that Hillel could stand on one foot. Hillel

may not have had great balance but accepted the challenge. He quoted from Leviticus, saying, “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹⁷ Hillel then concluded: “That which is hateful unto you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole of the Torah; the rest is commentary. Go forth and study.”¹⁸

Always dealing honorably with others is part of loving mercy. Consider a conversation I overheard decades ago in the emergency department of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, in the United States. A patient, Mr. Jackson, was a courteous, pleasant man who was well known to the hospital staff. He had previously been hospitalized multiple times for the treatment of alcohol-related diseases. On this occasion, Mr. Jackson returned to the hospital for symptoms that would be diagnosed as inflammation of the pancreas caused by alcohol consumption.

Toward the end of his shift, Dr. Cohen, a hardworking and admired physician, evaluated Mr. Jackson and determined that hospitalization was warranted. Dr. Cohen assigned Dr. Jones, the physician next up in

rotation, to admit Mr. Jackson and oversee his treatment.

Dr. Jones had attended a prestigious medical school and was just beginning her postgraduate studies. This grueling training was often associated with sleep deprivation, which likely contributed to Dr. Jones’s negative response. Confronted with her fifth admission of the night, she complained loudly to Dr. Cohen. She felt it was unfair that she would have to spend many hours caring for Mr. Jackson, because his predicament was, after all, self-inflicted.

Dr. Cohen’s emphatic response was spoken in almost a whisper. He said, “Dr. Jones, you became a physician to care for people and work to heal them. You didn’t become a physician to judge them. If you don’t understand the difference, you have no right to train at this institution.” Following this correction, Dr. Jones diligently cared for Mr. Jackson during the hospitalization.

Mr. Jackson has since died. Both Dr. Jones and Dr. Cohen have had stellar careers. But at a critical moment in her training, Dr. Jones needed to be reminded to do justly, to love mercy, and to care for Mr. Jackson without being judgmental.¹⁹



São Paulo, Brazil

Over the years, I have benefited from that reminder. Loving mercy means that we do not just love the mercy God extends to us; we delight that God extends the same mercy to others. And we follow His example. “All are alike unto God,”²⁰ and we all need spiritual treatment to be helped and healed. The Lord has said, “Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another.”²¹

Jesus Christ exemplified what it means to do justly and to love mercy. He freely associated with sinners, treating them honorably and with respect. He taught the joy of keeping God’s commandments and sought to lift rather than condemn those who struggled. He did denounce those who faulted Him for ministering to people they deemed unworthy.²² Such self-righteousness offended Him and still does.²³

To be Christlike, a person does justly, behaving honorably with both God and other people. A just person is civil in words and action and recognizes that differences in outlook or belief do not preclude genuine kindness and friendship. Individuals who do justly “will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably”²⁴ one with another.

To be Christlike, a person loves mercy. People who love mercy are not judgmental; they manifest compassion for others, especially for those who are less fortunate; they are gracious, kind, and honorable. These individuals treat everyone with love and understanding, regardless of characteristics such as race, gender, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and tribal, clan, or national differences. These are superseded by Christlike love.



Chiba, Japan

To be Christlike, a person chooses God,²⁵ walks humbly with Him, seeks to please Him, and keeps covenants with Him. Individuals who walk humbly with God remember what Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have done for them.

Am I doing enough? What else should I be doing? The action we take in response to these questions is central to our happiness in this life and in the eternities. The Savior does not want us to take salvation for granted. Even after we have made sacred covenants, there is a possibility that we may “fall from grace and depart from the living God.” So we should “take heed and pray always” to avoid falling “into temptation.”²⁶

But at the same time, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ do not want us to be paralyzed by continual uncertainty during our mortal journey, wondering whether we have done enough to be saved and exalted. They surely do not want us to be tormented by mistakes from which we have repented, thinking of them as wounds that never heal,²⁷ or

to be excessively apprehensive that we might stumble again.

We can assess our own progress. We can know “that the course of life [that we are] pursuing is according to God’s will”²⁸ when we do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. We assimilate the attributes of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ into our character, and we love one another.

When you do these things, you will follow the covenant path and qualify to “dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness.”²⁹ Your souls will be infused with the glory of God and with the light of everlasting life.³⁰ You will be filled with incomprehensible joy.³¹ I testify that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and He lovingly and joyfully extends His mercy to all. Don’t you love it? In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67–69.
2. Mosiah 2:41.
3. Micah 6:6.
4. Micah 6:7.