

**LIVE FOR SUCCESS**  
**Micah 6:8**

**INTRODUCTION:**

It's almost unbelievable but our revival starts one week from today. **One week from today!!** This coming Saturday is our annual hog roast and this year, it will include a concert by Anita Newlin, who is providing the music for our revival.

Darryl Bolen, senior minister with Greenville, IL First Christian Church will be preaching our revival. Due to his responsibilities with a church that averages over 1000 in attendance, Darryl will not be able to be with us next Sunday morning but he will be here Sunday through Wednesday evenings.

Darryl's theme for our revival is "ONE MONTH TO LIVE" and it is taken from the title of the very popular book by Terry and Chris Shook. The Shooks ask the question: "What if you only had one month to live. What changes would you make in your life?"

It may sound like this will be a depressing revival but, in fact, it will be invigorating, inspiring, encouraging...reviving! It will be challenging, thought-provoking, stimulating and even exciting. You may even find it life-changing.

As part of our preparation for the revival, and as part of our follow-up to the revival, I want to consider how we ought to be living. Next week, I want to talk about living for today. The following week, I want to talk about living for tomorrow. And the last Sunday of the month, I want to talk about living for eternity.

But for today, I want to preach about living for success.

I was attending a musical that had been presented by a youth group at a neighboring church when we lived on Long Island. They had worked hard, I'm sure. I enjoyed their program. On the way out of the building, I was behind a couple of high school aged students who had come to the musical. One of the girls was probably from the host church and the other must have been a friend she had invited to come with her. I overheard the first girl say to the other, "Well, it wasn't very good but what do you expect? It's just a church."

I remember workdays at a certain church where I preached. More than once, as we were finishing some project, one of the men would say, "Well, it's not perfect but it is just for the church."

That kind of comment went right through me. "It's not perfect but it is just for the church!" That's like saying, "It's not perfect but, hey, it's just for the Lord."

There seems to be a heresy out there that teaches that God is satisfied with whatever we offer Him no matter how sloppy, how inferior or how shoddy. But as D. Elton Trueblood once said, Holy shoddy is still shoddy.

Some people act as if they believe that God doesn't care about quality. And some people seem to think that God does not want His people to be successful.

But the clear teaching of Scripture is that God deserves our best and that He wants us to be successful.

But if that is true, then the way we define success becomes critical. In his book *THE 12 ESSENTIALS TO GODLY SUCCESS*, Author Tommy Nelson writes:

*"Success is not wealth. It is not having everyone like you, think you are attractive or be amazed at your talent or competence. If you want to learn about Biblical success, the first step is to take that sorry view of success you absorbed from the world out of your pocket, throw it on the ground and stomp on it. Then you'll be ready to hear from God and His Word."*

There are a lot of voices that want to tell you how to define success, how to measure success and how to find success. Just Thursday, the London Daily Telegraph newspaper reported that people who live in blue houses are significantly more successful than those who live in any other color of house.

Amazon.com lists 12,347 books on the topic. A recent Google search of the word "success" turned up over 37 million web pages that talk about success.

But for all that is written about the subject of success, I'm not sure we know much about the topic...especially from God's point of view. And since God created us and since He is the one who will judge us when our lives are over, doesn't it make pretty good sense that we ought to pay careful attention to His measure of success?

In Micah 6:8, the prophet of God tells us what the Lord requires of us. That is, Micah tells us what God's measure of success is. Listen to these thirty-one words that define success:

*<sup>8</sup>He has showed you, O man, what is good.  
And what does the LORD require of you?*

*To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.*

“What does the Lord require of you?” Isn’t that a worthwhile question to consider? You need to know what your supervisor demands of you, what your spouse expects of you, what your values compel of you...but what does THE LORD require of you? That is the vital question since it is the Lord who will evaluate your time on earth and since it is He who will determine your success or your failure.

What does the Lord require of you? Micah lists three characteristics of those who are successfully doing what the Lord requires of them.

### **I. Act Justly**

God requires that we act justly. By that, Micah means that God demands that we treat one another with fairness, honesty and integrity.

Micah wrote a lot about the importance of justice. He wrote a lot about it because he didn’t see a lot of it. In his day, Micah saw the poor oppressed by the rich and the weak overpowered by the strong. The courts were corrupted by bribes, graft and kickbacks. Widows and orphans were being taken advantage of and even abused. The handicapped and disabled were neglected. Fairness was in short supply.

Micah wanted the people to understand that God requires justice among His people. Religion that doesn’t translate into practical benefit for those who need it is false religion.

Regardless of your political affiliation, your economic standing or your personal prejudices, you have to admit that our nation is going through difficult economic times. Our world is going through difficult economic times. We could easily fill a lot of time talking about how bad things are, how much we’ve lost from our investments and how difficult it is to make ends meet. And we can easily get discouraged about that.

But let me pose to you another possibility. We can also see this as the perfect economic climate within which to demonstrate our determination to act justly. Where there is great need, there is great opportunity to meet needs.

Some 50 years after the prophet Micah, another prophet of God spoke to the people of God about the will of God. The prophet Amos said that God was not impressed with formal religion that was not also practical religion. Hear these words from Amos chapter 5.

<sup>21</sup> *“I hate, I despise your religious feasts;  
I cannot stand your assemblies.*

<sup>22</sup> *Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them.*

*Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,  
I will have no regard for them.*

<sup>23</sup> *Away with the noise of your songs!*

*I will not listen to the music of your harps.*

<sup>24</sup> ***But let justice roll on like a river...***

If you want to live for success as God measures success, you must act justly. You must live so that justice will roll on like a river.

## II. Love Mercy

You must act justly and you must love mercy. God requires that we love mercy. Sounds good doesn't it? But when you really think about it, that is a very convicting statement: you must love mercy.

Every so often, you will hear a story about some criminal who got caught because of some mistake he made. I remember a story about a couple of thieves who held up a bank in Minnesota. They fled from the bank to their getaway car, threw the money in the trunk along with their disguises, slammed the lid and then realized the keys were in one of the pockets of one of their disguises. When the police arrived, they were still standing at the rear of the car trying to pick the lock to get the keys so they could make their escape.

When I hear a story like that, I laugh at the triumph of justice over evil. But when I hear that Jeffery Dahmer, a serial killer who raped, tortured, dismembered and even cannibalized his victims...when I hear that Jeffery Dahmer professed faith in Jesus while in prison and that he was baptized by Roy Ratcliff, a Church of Christ minister just eight months before Dahmer was killed by other inmates...when I hear that his sins were forgiven just because he accepted Jesus...I struggle with that.

I love it when the guilty receive justice. I have a problem when the guilty receive mercy. Do you? Perhaps it would be good for us to remind ourselves that the only people who can receive mercy are the guilty. Those who are not guilty don't need mercy. The innocent need justice. It is the guilty who need mercy.

Don't get me wrong. I love some mercy, just not all mercy. I love mercy for me when I have done wrong. And I love mercy for the people I love when they have done wrong. But Micah doesn't put any qualifiers on the fact that God requires that we love mercy.

To love mercy is to get excited when someone who messes up gets a second chance in the hope that he will get it right this time. To love mercy

is to cut others some slack when they are a bit ill tempered, cranky or hard to get along with. To love mercy is to delight in seeing grace extended.

Who in their right mind can get excited when the guilty are given mercy, when the bumbling are given a second chance and when the grouches are given some slack? Who can delight in that? Only those who were given mercy. Only people who realize they deserved justice but who received mercy know the difference it can make in a life, in a home, in a community, in the world. They, with a view to the transformation that grace can effect, **love** mercy.

And the people who resent it when the guilty get mercy instead of justice? Well, they are the ones who have never acknowledged their own guilt or who have never accepted God's mercy.

### **III. Walk Humbly with God**

What does the Lord require of you? Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God.

To walk humbly with God is to let Him determine the direction and let Him set the pace. In ballroom dancing, someone has to lead and someone has to follow. In walking with God, Someone has to lead and someone has to follow. For you to walk humbly with God means He leads, you follow. That requires surrender.

Walking humbly with God not only requires surrender, it requires sensitivity: sensitivity to His leading. When we lived in Elkhville, IL, there were a couple of ladies in the church who played the keyboard instruments. One played the organ and one the piano. They had played together for so many years that they could almost read each other's mind. They seemed always to be in perfect synch with one another because, over the years, they had become sensitive to each other's musicianship. When we walk closely with the Lord, we develop a sensitivity to His will, His way and His leading.

Walking humbly with God requires surrender, it requires sensitivity and it requires steadfastness. Walking with God is a lifelong journey, not a brief stroll. To walk humbly is to steadfastly decide each day that you will take up your cross and follow Jesus.

But you cannot walk humbly with God if you are not walking with Him. To walk with God means you must accept Jesus Christ as your savior, be buried with him in baptism and then emerge to new life, a new way and a new walk...with God.

### **CONCLUSION:**

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In England, the London's firemen's strike of 1978 made possible one of the great animal rescue attempts of all time. Valiantly, the British Army had taken over emergency fire fighting and on January 14 they were called out by an elderly lady in South London to retrieve her cat, which had become trapped up a tree. They arrived with impressive haste and soon discharged their duty. So grateful was the lady that she invited them all in for tea so they could celebrate their success. Driving off later, with fond farewells completed, they ran over the cat and killed it. The moral of the story is that success is not so much a moment to be celebrated as it is a route to be traveled...daily.

**INVITATION:** #549 – *“Higher Ground”*