

What Does God Require of Us? – July 21 & 22, 2018
Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: 2 Samuel 12:1-14

- Set the scene of this text (1). Summarize the story Nathan shares (1-4). What are your thoughts about the poor man? Why do you think the rich man committed such a grave act of injustice?
- What was David's response to this story (5-6)? And yours? What was Nathan's point in telling it (7)? Despite his own severe guilt (committing rape and murder), David wanted no mercy shown to the hypothetical rich man. Are there any similar patterns of hypocrisy in your own life? As you reflect, ask the Lord to speak.
- What privilege does the Lord remind David that he has (8)? What does God think about the way he uses it (9)? David's sins inflicted horrible harm on others, but they also said to God, "I hate you." Weigh this in your own heart and mind; have you ever sent such a message to God? Summarize the mercy and justice David will face in the aftermath of his sin (10-14). How would consequences of your own design be similar or different from God's?

Day Two: Matthew 23:23-24

- Who has sorrow coming their way (23)? Generally speaking, why (23)? What is the specific reason for their sorrow (23-24)? What do you think it would've looked like for the Pharisees to "practice the latter, without neglecting the former"? What does it look like for you? Pray for grace to holistically follow God. What do you think of the imagery Jesus uses, especially in verse 24?
- Just as the Pharisees paid too much attention to tithing spices, what details or minor issues tend to snag and distract you? What comes easiest for you: justice, mercy or faithfulness? Why? Pray for perfect balance and expression of all three. Given your life circumstances, what would this look like? It's such a gift to dream of being a better disciple. Even better, God can turn these dreams into reality! Ask him to make it so.

Day Three: Mark 15:21-42

- Who carried Jesus' cross (21)? What did the soldiers do to Jesus (23-24)? What other details does the gospel writer include (25-27)? Describe the way different people treated Jesus (29-32). What happened from noon to 3pm (33-34)? How did people respond (35-36)? Describe the moment of Jesus' death (37-39).
- During this time, what were Jesus' female friends doing (40-41)? Contrast their behavior with that of the centurion (39). Surprisingly, someone of power and status – a Roman soldier – *and* those of low estate – Jewish women – were drawn to Jesus and his death. Why? Tell the Lord how *you* feel about his death.
- Now, read Micah 6:8. What makes Jesus' gruesome death an expression of all three attributes described in the verse: justice, mercy and humility? Where else in the gospels do you see Jesus embodying these characteristics? What is one way you can point others toward this picture of Jesus?

Day Four: Luke 6:27-36

- Whom is Jesus addressing here (27)? Consider whether you are truly listening to him right now. Summarize Jesus' *commands* to "love our enemies" (27-29). Imagine doing the very best thing for the person you consider to be the absolute worst. In Ephesians

4:32, Paul tells us to “be kind and compassionate to one another.” What would make it possible for you to do that for this person?

- What should our giving look like (30)? What does the “golden rule,” found in verse 31, mean to you personally? Why is “loving those who love you” not anything exceptional (32-34)?
- How does Jesus want us to surpass simply loving the lovable (35-36)? Today, what is one way you can do this? What awaits those who obey these commands (35)? Notice that when we practice kindness and mercy, people will know we’re part of God’s family. Based on how you treat others, what family do you belong to? Pray you’d be “kind to the ungrateful and wicked,” just as God is.

Day Five: Romans 12:3-8

- What makes it possible for Paul to issue these commands (3)? What do you sense “the grace given to you” authorizes you to do? How should we think of ourselves (3)? What do you think Paul means by “in accordance with the faith God has distributed...”? What about your faith helps you to think of yourself in humility?
- Paul then shifts gears to the theme of the Body of Christ, complete with lots of imagery; describe it (4-5). What role do spiritual gifts play in the Body of Christ (6-8)? Where do you see your own giftings identified here? What about gifts you desire; which ones create a longing in your heart? Talk to the Lord about the gifts he’s given you and those you still desire. What do you think he’s up to?
- Imagine trying to honor these commands when you lack justice, mercy and humility. Perhaps this is a current struggle. Tell God what you need from him. Ask him to put you deeply in touch with how his justice, mercy and humility tremendously bless you.