

Happy New Year
Micah 6:8

Introduction

The Opinion Corporation of Princeton, New Jersey, put together the following statistics concerning adult New Year's resolutions:

Forty-five percent of Americans usually set New Year's Resolutions

Thirty-eight percent never set resolutions

Eight percent are always successful in achieving their resolutions

Twenty-four percent (one in four) never succeed and have failed on every resolution every year.

Forty-seven percent set resolutions related to self-improvement or education

Thirty-eight percent set resolutions related to weight

Thirty-four percent set resolutions related to money

Thirty-one percent set resolutions related to relationships

The younger you are, the more likely you are to achieve your resolutions (those in their twenties achieve their resolutions over twice as much as those over fifty achieve their resolutions).

The less happy you are, the more likely you are to set New Year's resolutions.

The good news is there is actually no correlation between happiness and resolution setting/success (In other words, people who achieve their resolutions every year are no happier than those who do not set resolutions or who are unsuccessful in achieving them)

TITLE SLIDE

The New Year is when a lot of us try to start over. It is just another day, but the calendar tells us it is more than that. When we set these resolutions, we are looking to change our lives some how. We are always looking for fixes in our lives. We are always looking for answers.

As we are looking for answers to the questions we have in this life, one of the problem we seem to have is – we don't want simple answers, but we do we want easy solutions.

A man isn't feeling well, so he goes to the Dr. After a thorough examination, the Dr asks the man to wait in that little examination room. You know, the place with the posters no one wants to see and the magazines that are too old to keep in the waiting room. He comes back just a few minutes later and gives the man 3 bottles of pills. One bottle has blue pills, the next one has red pills, and the third has green pills.

The Dr says to the man, take one blue pill each morning with a large glass of water. Make sure you drink all the water. Just before lunch, take the red pill with another large glass of water. Just before you go to bed at night, take one green pill with another large glass of water.

The man is concerned because all of a sudden he has to take so many pills each day. He asks, “What is the problem?” The Dr says, “To tell you the truth, you don’t need any pills. You’re just not drinking enough water.”

Just to tell the truth doesn’t seem to work with some people. Some of us don’t want simple answers. We want easy solutions. I don’t want to have to change. I just want a pill to make everything all better. Give me something bright and colorful, and in a really cool package. That is what I want.

Micah 6:8 is one of the more famous verses in the Bible. It is a simple solution. It isn’t necessarily an easy solution for what ails us.

Micah 6:8 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.

Where should I go this new year? What do I need to do to make this year count? How do I get through this year intact? There are lots of books and videos and people who will sell you the answer to life’s questions. We are willing to buy into these – we are willing to take the pretty pills. We just don’t want to have to drink that much water.

What should I do next year? What does God require of me?

God, help us to stop looking for all those clever down-stream solutions for our up-stream problems.

To act justly. To love mercy. To walk humbly with your God.

To act justly defines who we are in the world. To love mercy defines who we are as the church. To walk humbly with our God defines our relationship with God.

1. Act Justly

- a. To do justice defines who we are in the world
 - i. When Micah let us know we are to act justly, he was talking to a nation where there were people who were liars, and cheats, and thieves, and willing to trade in their integrity. People who would sell out a friend for money. Look what he says...
 - ii. **Micah 6:10 Am I still to forget, O wicked house, your ill-gotten treasures and the short ephah, which is accursed? ¹¹Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? ¹²Her rich men are violent; her people are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully.**
 - iii. An ephah is a unit of measure – the short ephah is the person who person who steals from another by shorting them.
 - iv. God has never tolerated injustice.
 - v. **Proverbs 11:1The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.**

- vi. **Proverbs 13:5 The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked bring shame and disgrace.**
- vii. **Proverbs 17:15 Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent— the LORD detests them both.**
- viii. God's people are not those who take advantage of others. God's people are to be known as those who do justice.
- b. We are told to DO justice.
 - i. Justice is something that is done.
 - ii. There's an old saying, "As long as good people do nothing, justice fails." God's people do justice.
 - iii. There are a lot of people who are more than willing to trade in integrity, to lie and to cheat and to steal. Money and greed are king to many.
 - iv. **Proverbs 11:18 The wicked man earns deceptive wages...**
 - v. To do justice is all about how personal integrity.
 - vi. **Proverbs 3:21 My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; ²²they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck.**
 - vii. Action is at the heart of all ethics. The beginning of this verse in Micah lets us know **He has showed you, O man, what is good.** We know what is just and right and good, because God has shown us what that looks like.
 - viii. Start off this year showing God's people do justice, and love mercy.

2. **Love Mercy**

- a. To love mercy defines who we are as the church
- b. Justice is where we begin. Mercy is how we progress. Justice is what we do. Mercy is what we love.
- c. We love kindness and compassion. We love the way Jesus loves.
- d. Max Lucado, a Christian writer wrote:
 - "I choose love...**
 - No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I will love God, and what God loves.**
 - I choose kindness...**
 - I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me."**
- e. To love mercy is not to forgive out of obligation. Mercy is given to those who don't deserve it, by someone who has no reason to give it.
- f. **Romans 9:14 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.**
- g. Robert Ingersoll was an agnostic.
 - i. He was a lawyer in the 1800's who was known for his speaking ability. He was really good at putting Christians and Christianity in its place.
 - ii. One of his more famous illustrations he would dramatically take out his pocket watch and say, "I'll give God a chance to prove that He exists and is almighty. I challenge Him to strike me dead within 5 minutes." At the end of the 5 minutes, he would declare "See! There is no God. I am still very much alive!"

- iii. Upon leaving one of his speeches a young man let a Christian woman know that “Ingersoll really proved something tonight!” She replied, “Yes, he did. He demonstrated that even the most defiant sinner cannot exhaust the patience of the Lord in just 5 minutes.”
- iv. God is merciful. Those who claim to be His, love mercy.

3. **Walk Humbly With Our God**

- a. Defines our relationship with God
- b. To walk humbly with God is to give ourselves up to Him.
- c. **Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.**
- d. A city slicker was walking down a country road.
 - i. He saw a farmer in his farmyard. He asked the farmer what time it was. The farmer said, “Wait a minute, walked over to his cow, knelt down and pushed an utter to one side.
 - ii. Then he looked over to the city slicker and said, “It’s ten to one.”
 - iii. The city slicker asked how you can tell the time just by feeling an utter.
 - iv. The farmer invited him into the yard, took him over to the cow and said, “I’ll show you.”
 - v. He pushed the utter aside and said, “If you kneel down and look, you can just see the clock on the church steeple across the way.”
- e. There is no shortcut. There is no big secret or huge mystery about how we walk humbly with God.
 - i. Thousands of books have been written
 - ii. Thousands of lectures have been given
 - iii. Thousands of lessons and satellite feeds and videos and all kinds of stuff has been shared to give out a secret that isn’t a secret.
 - iv. The way to come close to God is to get down on our knees and humbly accept God’s Truth.
 - 1. This is how we walk humbly with Him.
 - 2. It isn’t about interpreting what He meant.
 - 3. It isn’t about trying to understand in light of our society’s current understanding.
 - 4. It is about humbly understanding – God is God, and we are not. Humbly walking with our God.

Conclusion

In November of 2009, Kevin Anderson in Allentown, PA was working on his Eagle Scout badge. His project? To clear and create a walking path through a park in east Allentown. The path was strewn with trash. It had become an illegal dump.

Kevin and his volunteers spent 200 hours creating a 1000 foot – path along the river. The mayor considered it a “great service to the community”. The local newspaper praised the Scout as well.

However, local chapter of the Service Employees International Union is trying to decide whether or not they should sue Kevin. They claim he took work away from their people by cleaning up the park. They took their grievance to the city council.

It doesn't matter what we do, there will be those who don't like it. Sometimes it seems it doesn't matter how just we are, how much we love mercy, how much we walk with God, there will be those who don't like that.

Proverbs 4:18 The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. ¹⁹But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

Make your resolutions if you would like. Keep some, or don't. But today, do more. Choose to do what God has shown to be good – **Act justly, Love mercy, and Walk humbly with your God.**

Instead of the pretty pills – those wonderful, easy solutions found everywhere that don't really fix anything, drink lots of water – living water that only comes from Jesus, and with His help, act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

This is the resolution we all should have for this new year.