

"Walking with God in 2010"

Micah 6:1-8 Here are the people of God, centuries after their liberation and their entrance into the Promised Land, in deep trouble...The worst sort of deep trouble: **in trouble with God:** Hear what the Lord says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the Lord has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel.

("If God is for us, who can be against us?" Conversely, if God is against you...?)

"O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam... Here are the people giving their great God the impression that it's a sort of tiring thing to be his people.

Micah for one takes this indictment seriously, and wonders what he might do, what he might offer, to respond to it. "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

And here is the answer to the question, for us to consider on the brink of yet another year of life and health and opportunity: 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?

SUMMARY: In response to God's indictment, a people who have become tired of God are told what God thinks is good ...

WHAT THE LORD REQUIRES OF HUMAN BEINGS:

1. **Do justice** → Do the right(eous) thing. **Psalm 89:14** Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne (IJM Sunday, February 21)
2. **Love kindness** **1 Timothy 1:5** The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

→ for God's justice and his kindness are THE WHOLE POINT, THE MAJOR THEMES OF THE WORLD.

Romans 11:22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God:

- And then one more thing** → because THE WHOLE POINT, THE MAJOR THEME OF ETERNAL LIFE IS KNOWING GOD
3. **Walk humbly with your God** It is a figure of speech, of course. Life can be compared to a walk because you experience it one step at a time. Just as 2010 will be the sum total of its 365 days. And living each of those days will be the sum total of that day's thoughts and words and actions. Each one is the next step in the experience of walking through that day on your way to the next day. And here the call is to experience each day as a "walk" with God by taking each step, thinking each thought and speaking each word and taking each action, in a state of connection, conscious connection, with God. This consciousness is the essence of godliness (the word means "Godwardness". A godly man is a man who lives his life, and so lives each day, looking to God, that is, focusing on God.) *Does the idea of that sort of life interest you? Or does it weary you? And why should you be interested in this?*

From an experiential perspective, because God is the source of all the truly good stuff: peace, joy, love ... God is the source of all of that.

From a moral perspective: it's a matter of doing the right thing with the resources provided: life is a gift that God has shown us how to use.

To develop this focus, a certain amount of time should be spent regularly developing the focus.

If you meant to keep a clear picture of a certain person, say, your spouse, in your mind, you should spend some time actually studying that face. Hence, the discipline of Time with God.

When I got quite serious about this, I was newly married and living in a one bedroom apartment in Richmond Hill Ontario. A nice little place for a couple of 22 year olds brand new at being married. But it had no air conditioner at all, and no heat controls. So it was pretty well always hot in that apartment.

So early morning Bible reading and prayer was hard because the heat would make me drowsy. So I invented getting out of the apartment early in the morning and doing my praying while walking around a block. It was a literal application of the instruction to walk humbly with my God.

It was a rectangular block. Four sides. So I organized my praying into four parts and then applied the four part formula to each of the five days of the work week. Something like this:

The first side of the rectangular block I would get started, **thanking God for the day** (“with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...”) and for what I had just been reading, up in the apartment before I got drowsy. (So that my time with God was a sort of dialogue.)

Then I would turn the corner.

While walking **the second side of the block**, I would pray for **the people** that I thought I should be praying for. So now I prayed for them on a weekly basis.

So on that second side of the block,

→ on **Mondays, I would pray for my family**. My parents, my two sisters and my two brothers.

→ on **Tuesdays, I would pray for friends**, mostly university friends who were now all over the place.

→ on **Wednesday I would pray for the church and the camp** that Deb and I were involved in.

⇒ on **Thursday it was the people I worked with** and other non-believing people I knew and cared about.

→ on **Friday I prayed for political leaders**, since we are instructed in the Bible to do so (1 Timothy 2:1,2) --- and up until then I never got around to it. (A BIG DEAL: this is something I meant to be doing that I had been not getting around to doing.)

Then I would turn the corner.

On **the third side of the rectangular block**, I would pray about **the day ahead**, in general terms and also concerning specific work issues that were coming up that day.

Then I would turn the corner.

On **the fourth side of the block**, the home stretch, I would pray **free-style**: just whatever was on my heart to pray about. No agenda, just my heart poured out to God --- which I learned was the part that really did feel like I was walking with God. But then I came to think of the whole experience as a walk with God, and for the two years we lived there, it became a really significant part of my relationship with God and of my day.

And where is the humility? What is the humble part? For starters, just in getting on with this, for we are taught by instruction and by example to be people who lived with this focus. And getting our focus off ourselves is an act of humility.

And **THE BENEFITS OF “WALKING WITH GOD”** ?

(What difference might this discipline make to your experience of living in 2010?) “Godliness:” that God-focused mindset, that is the real point of the instruction to walk humbly with God. Along with your goals for physical fitness in the new year... **1 Timothy 4:7-9** ... train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.

- A) **The delight of a duty fulfilled** How nice it is sometimes to “get it done.” By this point in my life, I really did intend to be a person who friends could count on to pray for them. I would often say so. “I’ll really be praying for you.” It was great to be able to say with sincerity to my friends and family, “I’ll be praying for you. On Mondays, walking down Mill Street.” (Compare the opposite: carrying around the burden of unfinished business, of unaddressed responsibilities.)

B) The pleasure of "knowing God on earth." The experience of a more personal relationship with God. In fact, everyone has a relationship with God: We all live and move and have our existence in him, through our relationship with him. But not everyone experiences the presence of God very personally!

Psalm 18:1-3 I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

Psalm 42:1-2 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

And what people have been writing about for centuries: the experience of the sense of being close to God, becomes a very real and satisfying thing. I walked out to the hill just now. It is exalting, delicious. ... the wind tugging at your coattail and the heavens hailing your heart, to gaze and glory and to give oneself again to God, what more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth. ("*The Journals of Jim Elliot*;" [entry of January 16, 1951])

C) The personal experience of being helped by God.

Psalm 46:1
James 4:4

Ephesians 1:15-23 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ... that you may know ... what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places...

Ephesians 1:19 ... the exceeding greatness of His power to us who are believing, according to the working of the power of His might

Ephesians 1:19 ... the transcending greatness of his DYNAMUS (power) ... according to the ENERGEAIN (power) of the MIGHT (power) of his STRENGTH (power)

Ephesians 1:19 ... the transcending GREATNESS of his POWER toward us who believe, that corresponds to the POWER of the POWER of his POWER

Are there not challenges of many kinds awaiting us in 2010? Can we do what we must do in the year ahead? Where will we find the energy to even keep trying – and the strength to accomplish what needs doing?

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
What difference might THAT experience make in your life?
For one thing, you are not likely to be weary of God!

NEXT SUNDAY: (January 3): "**LAWS YOU COULD LOVE**" [Psalm 119:97]
An introduction to the new series on the Ten Commandments