

## 5. Transforming communities through active compassion, mercy and justice ministries (Micah 6:8)

Read Micah 6:8 *He has shown 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.*

Compassion, mercy and justice is often explained this way: Pretend you live near a river. You notice people are floating down the river and appear to be struggling to swim. Having *compassion* means you feel badly about the people in the river. Showing *mercy* would be to throw them a life raft to help them out of the water. *Justice* involves going upriver to find out why people are going into the river in the first place, and then doing something about that.

### **What does this look like practically?**

Compassion starts with education about issues and learning to put yourself in someone else's shoes. How do you have conversations about homelessness, poverty, hunger, water, immigration, sports teams with offensive names, or Trayvon Martin in your home? Is there a way to have these conversations start from a place of compassion?

Mercy is when you start to do something about the problems you see around you. You realize people are hungry in your community so you fill a grocery bag for union gospel mission. You serve a meal at a homeless shelter or pack meals at Feed My Starving Children. You send your high school kids on a mission trip. These are all acts of mercy. Someone told me once that non-profits need two things from you: your time and your money. Consider how you might share your time and money to show mercy.

Justice is much trickier, and may not be something we see much of this side of heaven. But we keep striving for justice and sometimes we catch a glimmer of hope. We still work toward righting the wrongs we see around us and giving voice to those who are oppressed and have no voice. We pray God will reveal to us ways we can help bring justice to our communities and to the world.

This is hard stuff but important because we assume that if our family life is more or less in order (good marriage, healthy kids, nice house, good school...), we must be doing awesome. Transforming our communities through compassion, mercy and justice involves taking our blinders off so we can notice others around us.

If you are overwhelmed with this, consider circle of influence/circle of concern. Your circle of concern consists of all the things you care about – everything from whether your kid will pass algebra to sex trafficking. Your circle of influence is a much smaller circle within your circle of concern. Start by focusing your energy on your circle of influence.

### **Parent Devotion for: Transforming communities through Compassion, mercy and justice.**

When was a time you felt helpless and God used someone to deliver you (help you) out of your situation?

Read Micah 6:8

Who is speaking in this passage? (Hint: read the rest of chapter 6)

How would you explain what the Lord says to Israel?

Someone explained compassion, mercy and justice this way: Pretend you live near a river. You notice that people are floating down the river and appear to be struggling to swim. Having **compassion** means that you feel badly about the people in the river. Showing **mercy** would be to throw them a life raft to help them out of the water. **Justice** involves going upriver to find out why people are going into the river in the first place, and then doing something about that. Do you understand the difference between these three words? Explain.

Where do you see compassion, mercy and justice issues in your community, neighborhood or the world?

Do you have any thoughts on what you can do about this?