

Act. Love. Walk

MICAH 6:8

ACT.LOVE.WALK: Act Justly

Large Group Talk 1

*Don't forget to start with the intro found in the speaker outlines.

Objective: This session focuses on the first element of Micah 6:8: acting justly. Acting justly goes deeper than getting behind a cause or posting something on social media. It soaks into the ins and outs of daily life as a student, from how students position themselves in a group, to using words that lack exaggeration or manipulation. Students carry a lot of influence, and how they wield it determines how they can act justly.

Transition to Act Justly Large Group Talk

Ask: What do you think it means to “act justly”?

Say Something Like: *Basically, “acting justly” means doing what is right. Our actions should be just. The things we do to, with, and for others should be described as true, honest, and right. In other words, they shouldn't be manipulative, degrading, conniving, or wrong. Most of us probably don't wake up in the morning thinking, I'm going to go out and ruin someone's day today! More likely, we just don't take other people into account. We focus on ourselves, and we make choices that help us but inadvertently hurt others. To act justly, we should stop viewing ourselves as the center of the universe and start considering how the things we do affect other people.*

Illustration Option 1: Me, Myself, and I. Ask students to write down their answer to the following question using at least five sentences: *Describe a typical school day.* Once they're finished, tell students to underline every place they used the words *me*, *I*, or something else referring to themselves. Then tell students to circle every place they use the words *he*, *she*, or a word referring to someone else. Once they're finished, ask if they have more underlines or circles in their answer. When students think through their days, are they mostly concerned with what happened to themselves, or do they pay more attention to what happened to other people?

Illustration Option 2: Great Power, Great Responsibility. In the movie *Spider-Man (2002 Sony Pictures)*, Peter's uncle tries to explain what it means to act justly, to make choices that will help other people instead of hurting them. But Peter is only concerned with himself and how his new powers can get him everything he wanted, so he says hurtful things to his uncle that he'll soon end up regretting. By learning to live for others instead of for himself, Peter later becomes the superhero Spider-Man, but it takes an unfortunate tragedy to get him to that point. Watch the following clip: (www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DfztllqbTI) - You can also find this clip by

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searching *Spiderman Uncle Ben, with great power comes great responsibility*).

Say Something Like: *How do we know what kinds of actions are just? Well, one place to start is by looking at unjust actions. The prophet Micah actually gave us several examples of unjust people throughout his writing, so we can see how horrible their consequences can be. He shows us just how easy it is for our actions to slide from just to unjust. Let's look through a few of those examples. As we talk about each one, think about how these unjust actions could be turned into just actions by thinking more about other people than about ourselves.*

Teaching: Act Justly

1. Tearing Others Down

Say Something Like: *Sometimes it's easiest to define something by identifying what it's not. In fact that's what Micah did before he got to Micah 6:8, the main passage of these lessons. Just a few chapters earlier, Micah took the time to describe some leaders who were unjust.*

Read Micah 3:1–3.

Then I said,

“Listen, you leaders of Jacob,
you rulers of Israel.
Should you not embrace justice,
you who hate good and love evil;
who tear the skin from my people
and the flesh from their bones;
who eat my people's flesh,
strip off their skin
and break their bones in pieces;
who chop them up like meat for the pan,
like flesh for the pot?”

Say Something Like: *Micah describes these unjust leaders like butchers! They cared for the people they led no more than a butcher cares about a carcass. Micah isn't just describing unjust people who physically harmed others. He's also talking about leaders who saw other people as commodities, only good for what they could get out of them. They used other people without any thought for their welfare, and it broke those people down like a butcher cutting apart meat. That's a pretty extreme image, isn't it? But when we ignore the ways our actions affect others, that's exactly what we do.*

Do we ever tear people down with our words or our posts on social media? When

we compete (for student government, sports, or a music competition), are we willing to do whatever it takes to win, no matter the consequences? It's easy to mix our just actions with a little bit of careless manipulation and a see-what-we-can-get-away-with attitude. Small, careless actions will start to unjustly tear down the people around us.

Illustration: The Power of Words. After feeling prompted by the Spirit of God, a student named Shawn McKenzie began a ministry called InstaGOD on Instagram. He sends inspirational pictures and words from Scripture to his nearly 200,000 followers. After these words went viral, one person sent a message back: "I'm so thankful that the Lord has heard my prayer, he has heard my cry. And just know that you saved my life because I was about to commit suicide." (www.kltv.com/story/21440336/students-instagram-messages-go-viral)

Say Something Like: *Acting justly doesn't leave room for the tearing down or disregarding others. That's how a butcher treats a carcass, not how God's people treat other people God loves.*

2. Jealousy and Power

Say Something Like: *Micah describes another set of unjust leaders in an earlier chapter. These guys spent their time plotting against others because they wanted what others had. Their unjust actions started with coveting and jealousy (the 10 Commandments warn us against this). And simply because they had the power, they stole from and lied to the people they were supposed to help.*

Read Micah 2:1–2.

Woe to those who plan iniquity,
to those who plot evil on their beds!
At morning's light they carry it out
because it is in their power to do it.
They covet fields and seize them,
and houses, and take them.
They defraud people of their homes,
they rob them of their inheritance.

Say Something Like: *The more power we have, the more potential we have to act justly or unjustly. But we can't decide to use our power in the right way if we don't know what power we have. We need to start by seeing the areas of power in our lives.*

You may feel like, as a student, you don't have any real power. But you have more power than you know. Think of power this way: any time you influence someone, you wield a little bit of power.

Ask: What kinds of power do you have? How do you influence other people (like being an older brother or having a friend who listens to your advice)?

Say Something Like: *Have you ever convinced a teacher to let you out early or your parents to extend a curfew? Have you ever had a little brother or sister try and copy you? Have you ever put a video or a picture up on the Internet and gotten views, shares, or likes. Have you ever purchased something? Have you ever prayed for someone? Each of these is a time you have wielded some power. You convinced someone of something, you got a message out to the world, and you changed another person, even if just in a tiny way.*

Illustration: Going Viral. These days, anything you post online has the chance to reach a huge audience. Not very long ago, most people didn't have influence outside of their own small town. Now, something you write or post could be seen by people all around the world in the blink of an eye. Politicians, celebrities, and geniuses aren't the only ones with the power to change things—anyone can, with the right message. Here are a few people whose messages reached a huge audience. All of their messages had a huge impact, but not all were positive.

>> For homework, third grade teacher Kyle Schwartz asked her students to finish the sentence "I wish my teacher knew ...". When she received the finished statements, she shared them on Twitter with the hashtag #IWishMyTeacherKnew. The responses included, "I wish my teacher knew that I want to go to college," "I wish my teacher knew I don't have a friend to play with me," and "I wish my teacher knew I don't have pencils at home to do my homework." These answers went viral and started a national conversation about how teachers can better help their students. (ktla.com/2015/04/17/teacher-shares-heartbreaking-notes-from-third-graders-sparks-social-media-movement/)

>> After Anye Nkimheng, a black student from Cameroon, was elected class president, his opponent and other students texted racist comments about him. Those texts went viral, the students who sent the racist messages were suspended, and Anye was deeply hurt that people he had been in class with for years felt that way about him. (www.wcvb.com/news/racist-text-messages-against-lowell-hs-class-president-go-viral/35627010)

3. Just Words

Say Something Like: *One of the most telling signs of whether or not we are acting justly is how we use our words. Just a few verses after Micah tells us to act justly, he writes about the people who have used their words to lie to others.*

Read Micah 6:11–12.

Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales,
with a bag of false weights?
Your rich people are violent;
your inhabitants are liars
and their tongues speak deceitfully.

Say Something Like: *These people hid the truth for their own personal gain. God calls them liars and brings this up as proof that they aren't acting justly. Most of us wouldn't describe ourselves as liars. But if we think about it closely, do we ever weigh the scales a little to make ourselves look better or to get out of something? Do we ever one-up someone in a conversation with a story that's just a tiny bit exaggerated? Do we tell white lies that we assume won't hurt anyone? Or do we tell half-truths to our parents in order to convince them a movie or a concert is okay? Does the "about me" section of your social media account describe the true you or the person you want others to think you are?*

Illustration: Think about the descriptions people put on dating websites. Most people are willing to bend the truth in order to attract the right guy or girl. But sometimes it's not hard to tell what a person's description really says about him or her. Here are a few examples of how some people might describe themselves and what those descriptions actually mean.

>> A simple guy who loves to cook for others at home. *(Can't afford to take you out to a nice restaurant.)*

>> A focused person who notices the small things. *(Won't stop staring at the pimple on your chin or the stain on your shirt.)*

>> Hoping to meet a strong man with a big truck who loves to help those in need. *(Just wants someone to help her move a couch.)*

>> A dreamer looking for someone to support him. *(A narcoleptic who needs someone to catch him if he falls asleep standing up.)*

>> Looking for someone with a sparking personality to spend eternity with. *(Obsessed with the movie Twilight.)*

>> Just looking for the right person. *(Unfortunately, the right person is Ryan Gosling.)*

Say Something Like: *Our world is so used to half-truths that sometimes we tell them without thinking. We've trained ourselves to respond to ads by asking, "What's the catch?" While this might be culturally acceptable, it's not just.*

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Dishonesty and deceitfulness only protect ourselves. Honesty and authenticity exist to help others.

Putting it all together:

Say Something Like: *God requires you and me to act justly. He's not looking to punish us or to laugh at us where we're wrong. He's looking out for our best interests. Acting justly is a matter of the heart.*

More than any amount of good deeds, God is interested in your heart. He has a plan to connect to your heart, to guide you, and to show himself to the rest of the world through you. You are evidence of his goodness to people who desperately need him. And in a world that's okay with power trips, sketchy scales, and half-truths, your ability to act justly will make you stand out. And when people notice how differently you're living, they'll be drawn to the reason you act justly: God. Acting justly is a radical way to live. It's an adventure that connects us to God and compels people to come along for the ride.

[Speaker note: The following questions will be discussed deeper in the small group lesson]

Question 1: What just actions should you start doing to glorify God?

Question 2: What unjust actions should you stop doing to glorify God?

Looking Forward: Let the students know that the next lesson will look at God's command to love mercy. Be sure to give them any instructions they might need to go from here.

LeaderTreks recommends watching all video clips and visiting all websites in this lesson before sharing them with students. These links are optional and not required in order to lead an effective large group talk. Websites often change, and links may not always have the same result. LeaderTreks will do its best to keep them updated and fresh; however, in the event that they do not function properly, we cannot retain responsibility.

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