

Fixing the Microwave

He has shown you, O mortal, 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 (Micah 6:8).

Scripture: Micah 3:1-3, 9-12; 6:6-8 **Song:**
“There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”

I was frustrated with my husband. I wanted him to change some things about the way he related to me. After sharing with him, I went to the grocery store. When I came back, I stepped into the kitchen and noticed that the microwave had been moved. I asked him why he had moved the microwave. He said, “I’m not sure . . . I think I just needed to fix something!” We looked at it and burst out laughing. In his desire to fix the relationship, he “fixed” the microwave instead.

The leaders of God’s people were distorting justice. Yet they tried to fix it the wrong way. It was not sacrifices and burnt offerings that would fix the injustice that they were involved in. God wanted them to simply start doing the right thing.

The Lord requires the same from us today, especially from the leaders of His people. God is not as concerned with our outward religious rituals as He is concerned that we treat others with justice and mercy. When we pour energy into merciful acts toward others, we are at the same time strengthening our relationship with the Lord.

Heavenly Father, I want to act justly when I am given opportunity to do so. I pray that I would be more concerned about how I treat others than about how holy I look. In Jesus’ name, amen.

March 23

Heavenly Reflections

The heavens proclaim his righteousness, for he is a God of justice (Psalm 50:6).

Scripture: Psalm 50:1-15

Song: “God of Wonders”

Yesterday my husband and I spent 15 hours in our car, returning home from a visit with family. We passed quite a few billboards along the way. Although we could have searched for nearby restaurants on our smartphones, that large sign with pictures of barbecued ribs informed my husband of what he wanted for lunch. Another sign pointed out a state welcome center where he found the updated map he needed. I was interested in the sign that promised clean restrooms at the truck stop ahead. We even saw one billboard available for rent that proclaimed: “Made you look!”

The sky above us is a giant billboard proclaiming God’s majesty. The first chapter of Romans explains that God’s invisible qualities are revealed through His creation. Whenever we look up or around us at the work of God’s hands, we get glimpses of His nature and power. We can let the heavens remind us of our Creator throughout the day. The sunrise confirms that He has a plan and a purpose for the day. Whether the weather is sunny or stormy, we can remember that He controls it all. Every evening the sunset assures us of His protection through the night. The skies above contain heavenly reflections for anyone who cares to look.

O Father, open my eyes to the evidence of Your power and presence all around me today. Amen.

Searching for Perfection

“Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf” (Leviticus 22:20).

Scripture: Leviticus 22:17-25

Song: “Perfect Sacrifice”

When I saw the ceramic pencil cups painted like animals, I knew my granddaughter would love the unicorn one. But the first cup I picked up had an obvious bubble in the glaze. The next one felt rough on the bottom. This one had a crooked line for the mouth; that one had irregularities in the paint on the horn. *Why do I always do this?* I wondered. The gift would cost less than 10 dollars; yet I knew I would inspect every single one on the shelf, looking for the best one.

The Israelites were to inspect their animals when they chose one for a sacrifice. As a reflection of God’s holy nature, the animal had to be free from any physical defects or it would not be acceptable in His eyes. This foreshadowed Jesus, who would live a sinless life and then offer Himself as the ultimate and perfect sacrifice. His death and resurrection ended the need for animals to be slaughtered as atonement for sins.

On my own I can never come close enough to perfection to be acceptable to God. Some days I wonder how He can even love me with all my defects and blemishes. On those days, I’m tempted to obsess about my imperfections. But I’m learning instead to thank Jesus for His sacrifice on my behalf, and then commit anew to giving Him the best of all that I am.

Jesus, thank You for offering Yourself as the only way I could be cleansed of my sin. In Your name, amen.

March 25

Honoring His Name

“My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets” (Malachi 1:11).

Scripture: Malachi 1:11-14

Song: “What a Beautiful Name It Is”

The instructor of a marketing class pointed out that best-selling authors have a recognizable brand. In other words, whenever we hear an author’s name or see it on a book, we know what to expect—whether it’s science fiction based on space travel, wholesome romance, or a thriller involving an attorney. I think the same can be said of our friends and family members. Often we know what we can expect before we interact with them. We may associate a person’s name with humor, gossip, deep fulfilling conversation, or even self-absorbed prattle.

People respond in different ways when they hear God’s name mentioned. They may picture a benevolent “man upstairs” or an angry deity waiting to punish them for messing up. Others think of a loving Father ready to guide, protect, and provide. God is very concerned about the reputation of His name. He wants everyone all over the world to have an accurate view of what His name stands for—not just so He will receive the praise and glory He deserves, but so that more people will enter into a relationship with Him.

As followers of Christ, we represent His name. Everything we say and do should reflect His character. Each day is filled with opportunities to bring honor to His name and influence the way people around us view Him. What a privilege to help others get a clear picture of the Lord we love!

Lord, may all my conversation and behavior glorify Your name today. Amen.

Unwavering Faithfulness

Be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful (Malachi 2:16).

Scripture: Malachi 2:10-16

Song: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

I read about an elderly man in New York who walked six miles round-trip every day to visit his wife in the hospital. He admitted that he could wait for his daughter or someone else to give him a ride. But instead, he set out on his daily trek each morning regardless of the weather. After his wife was diagnosed with a brain tumor several years before, she'd been hospitalized numerous times. With each hospital stay, this husband faithfully visited her every day, considering it not an inconvenience but a privilege.

People take notice when someone demonstrates such a level of selfless devotion and commitment. But God calls us to live this way every day. He expects us to stay faithful to our word, to family relationships, to our work and ministry obligations, and especially to Him. Being faithful to God begins with nurturing our relationship with Him by guarding our devotional time.

It's tempting to occasionally compromise in some area of commitment, especially when we're feeling overwhelmed. We don't always feel like giving our best to our job or family responsibilities. During busy times it may seem logical to skip our prayer time, personal Bible study, or church attendance. But we can rise above our feelings and self-centered human nature by remembering God's commitment to us. Since He never wavers in His faithfulness to us, we can find the strength and perseverance to live on a higher plane.

Father, thank You for Your promise that You will never leave or forsake me. In Jesus' name, amen.

March 27

A Long and Painful Process

“He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver” (Malachi 3:3).

Scripture: Malachi 2:17–3:4

Song: “Refiner’s Fire”

For several years my husband worked at the smelter of a copper mining company in Utah. From a gigantic open pit, the ore is extracted, broken into smaller pieces, and concentrated into a more usable form. Toward the end of the long smelting and refining process, the copper is heated to almost 2000 degrees and cast into plates that are 99.5 percent pure—but not pure enough. In the final step, plates are submerged into a chemical bath combined with electrical currents to remove the remaining impurities.

Each one of us is going through our own unique refining process supervised by God Himself. As soon as He extracted us from the death grip of sin, He began working to remove anything that contaminates our thinking and behavior. God uses people, circumstances, His Word, and the Holy Spirit to refine us. Sometimes God “turns up the heat” by sending or allowing trials; these seasons are painful but necessary.

We may grow impatient at our seemingly slow rate of spiritual growth, but God will bring it to completion. The further along we progress in our sanctification, the more usable we are to Him—and the deeper the fellowship we can enjoy with our “refiner.” We cannot attain a 100-percent pure heart and spirit. But our Savior is perfect, and He is our standard.

Thank You, **Father**, for promising to finish the good work of refining and purifying my heart. For Your glory, amen.

Expect Unexpected Blessings

“Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it” (Malachi 3:10).

Scripture: Malachi 3:7-12

Song: “Showers of Blessing”

One November my daughter went to purchase supplies for her family’s holiday dinner. She had no idea the store was giving away groceries off and on all day. Just as she entered, an employee announced that the next three customers wearing Thanksgiving-themed clothing would receive a free turkey. Just that morning my granddaughter had insisted on wearing her turkey sweatshirt to accompany her mom. My granddaughter unexpectedly received a free turkey because she was dressed in the right way, and was in the right place at the right time.

It’s always fun to receive an unexpected gift or favor. In the Old Testament, people followed God’s specific sacrifice procedures in order to receive forgiveness. The new covenant is different; in this system Christ’s perfect sacrifice is the only one needed to provide forgiveness. We have the Lord’s unconditional love and acceptance. But our choices help determine to what extent we live a blessed life.

God loves to shower His children with gifts. By nurturing our relationship with Him and pursuing a lifestyle of obedience, we put ourselves in a position to receive more of His blessings. As we follow Him we’ll be in the right place for unexpected blessings.

God, thank You for being a loving and generous Father. Open my eyes to see and acknowledge the blessings You send my way today. In Christ, amen.