

Victoria Hoppes
NT 4225: Genesis to Revelation
January 23, 2016

Bible Study Session Two: Micah

Lesson Foundations

Context: Small group; Youth (middle school)

- This session is designed to be used with a small group of 6-8 youth who meet as a part of their Confirmation program. This session would be one in a year-long series about the Bible, and is designed to give them an overview of the prophets.

Text: Micah 6:1-8

- This session will focus primarily on the text found in Micah 6:1-8, with a focus on the final part of this passage (Micah 6:6-8).

Duration of lesson: Approximately one hour

Lesson Theme: Justice

- This session will use the text of the prophet Micah to help students reflect on the meaning of “justice,” and how justice plays into our lives. Specifically, this lesson will invite students to consider how God talks about justice in this passage, and how we are called to engage in actions of justice, too.

Study Resources Used

1. Willis, J.T. “Micah, Book of.” *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*.
<http://www.ministrymatters.com.luthersem.idm.oclc.org/library/#/dbi/87bbdebaa46075d5e767c1a45fbc5eb9/micah-book-of.html>. Accessed Jan. 23, 2016. (The dictionary is a compilation of articles written by various contributors. This article gives an overview of the book of Micah. Specifically, this article gives a historical chronology of the book and its interpretations over the years.)
2. Meeks, Wayne A. *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993. (Specifically, I have referenced the introduction to the book of Micah, found on pages 1379-1381. This section was written by Philip J. King. This introduction gives an overview of the history of the prophet, gives consideration to historical events at the time the book was written, and introduces the theme of justice in the text.)
3. Simundson, Daniel. "Old Testament: Micah." Accessed January 23, 2016.
<http://www.enterthebible.org/oldtestament.aspx?rid=51>. (This page gives an overview of the book of Micah. It frames Micah as a book about judgment against God’s people, but also as a book that includes language of hope and renewal in pain and suffering.)
4. "Micah 6:1-7:20." *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. 7. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
<http://www.ministrymatters.com.luthersem.idm.oclc.org/library/#/tnib/32b6b9a58ca6164ab8575dffa999e3ce/micah-61-720.html> (The author of this commentary makes the point

that the final section of the book of Micah includes words of both judgment and hope, though the final word given is a word of hope. God speaks to the ways Israel has broken their covenant with God, and calls on them by asking them what they should do as God's people.)

Background Information for Leaders

What's the Story?

Today your group will explore the book of Micah, one of the prophets found in the Old Testament. Prophetic texts are sometimes difficult to read and understand, yet their message is important to the people of God.

The text for this session comes from Micah 6:1-8. Micah is known as a prophet who lived around the same time as Isaiah. Little is known about Micah, but we can date Micah's prophecies to the Judean kings of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. We believe that Micah lived in a rural area southwest of Jerusalem.

As previously mentioned, we think that Micah prophesied during the reign of three different kings. During this period, Judah faced threats from outside armies, most notably Assyria. Micah prophesied that Judah would face judgment from God, based on its actions; this judgment and punishment would come from actions by Assyria. However, Micah is also a book that brings hope in the midst of this judgment. God's people will face punishment for their actions; however, God will also (eventually) restore hope to the nation in the midst of struggle.

There are several passages from this book that most people recognize. For example, chapter 4 includes imagery of peace and security. Micah 5 is a passage that is typically read during the Advent season, as it is the prophecy that we traditionally associate with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Finally, one of the most famous passages from Micah is Micah 6:6-8, which your group will study today.

What's the Theme?

This session is centered on the theme of *justice*. Justice and judgment are evident throughout the entire book of Micah, as God calls Israel to re-consider their actions. Micah is also a prophet who spends a lot of time talking about the poor, and how they are being exploited by the wealthy. This exploitation of those who don't have much is one of the things that Micah says will lead to the judgment of Israel.

Judgment and justice can sometimes be very heavy topics to discuss, yet they are topics that impact your students in a wide variety of ways. In a world filled with classism, racism, sexism, and the exploitation of the poor, young people desire to work for peace and justice on earth. It is Micah's identification with and compassion towards the poor that results in the prophet's teaching that we should "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God." (Micah 6:8) In a world where we crave to make a difference, how can we engage in acts of peacemaking and social justice? What is justice, and how does it play into our roles as people of faith?

*The Lesson***Opening Activity (15 minutes)**

Opening Prayer: Say: Holy God, be present with us as we listen to your Word. Open our eyes and hearts to your love and faithfulness in our lives. Amen.

Invite the group to share their highs and lows for the week.

Opening Activity: Justice

1. **Today we are going to read a little bit from the book of Micah. Micah was a prophet who talked a lot about justice. When you hear the word “justice,” what comes to mind? How would you define it?**
2. Ask students to share words or phrases that pop into their head when they hear the term “justice.” Write these words or phrases on a flip chart or large sheet of paper. Place this sheet in a location where everyone can see it.
3. Then, ask students to (only for this activity) use their phones (or other electronic devices) to look up a definition of the word “justice.” If students are without a phone or way to connect to the Internet, invite them to work with someone who is able to do so.
4. After a couple of minutes, ask students to share the definitions they have found.
 - **What are some definitions of justice that you found, while you did your research?**
 - **Are these definitions similar or different than the definitions we listed off just a few minutes ago? How are they similar or different?**
 - **Can you think of any other stories you have heard (in your community, on the news, in the Bible, etc.) where people have received “justice?” What are they? How do they receive justice?**

Exploring the Story (25 minutes)**Exploring the Story: Micah**

1. Ask students to open their Bibles to Micah 6. Walk them through the process of finding the text, if needed.
2. **Today we are going to read a passage from the book of Micah. Micah was a prophet who spoke words of judgment to the people of God. Micah saw that God’s people were not living lives that promoted justice and peace.**
3. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Micah 6:1-5.
 - **What are some of the words or phrases that stand out to you in this part of the passage?**
 - **What confuses you about this passage?**
 - **To me, it sounds like God is challenging Israel. Why do you think God is challenging them?**
 - i. **TEACHING POINT:** Micah is speaking out against corruption and people exploiting others. God is challenging their actions, and how they have broken the covenant that they have made with God: to love God and to love other people.

- **How do you think God’s people would react to this challenge? How would you respond?**
 - **Can you think of places in our world where people are exploited or treated badly? What are some of these places?**
4. Ask a volunteer to read Micah 6:6-8.
- **In v. 8, Micah tells people what God requires. What are these things?** [*Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.*]
 - **Why do you think God “requires” people to do these things?**
 - **What do you think will happen to God’s people if they don’t listen to the prophet, and remember the covenant they have with God?**
 - i. **TEACHING POINT:** Micah’s prophecy brings judgment to God’s people. Soon, Israel will be forced to stand up against one of their enemies—and lose. Assyria will come in and overtake their land, which the prophet says is because of God’s judgment.
 - **What does this passage tell us about justice? What does it tell us specifically about the justice that God gives?**
5. **Micah tells God’s people that God requires them to “do justice,” “love kindness,” and “walk humbly with God.” What might that look like to us as Christians? Let’s think about that while listening to a song.**
6. Play the song “Micah 6:8” by Charlie Hall. (You can download this song on iTunes, or stream it using a music service like Spotify. You can also find the song on YouTube.)
- **OPTIONAL:** If you feel comfortable doing so, teach students the chorus to the song, and invite them to sing along with the song while you play it.
 - **OPTIONAL:** Hand out song lyrics for students to read as they listen to the song (lyrics are available here: http://lyrics.wikia.com/wiki/Charlie_Hall: Micah_6:8)
7. After the song, discuss:
- **Who are some of the people that are mentioned in this song? Do you think these people live in a world with or without justice? Why?**
 - **The first verse of the song hints that God could do a lot to help bring justice to the world, but instead we are called to help and pray for those who are normally forgotten. Why do you think we should become involved in God’s justice work?**

Applying the Story (15 minutes)

Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly

1. Re-read Micah 6:8 aloud for the group.
2. **Micah 6:8 is probably the most well-known passage we find in Micah and it’s also probably one of the most well-known passages in the Bible. We’ve talked about what God calls us to do; now let’s create something that reminds us about what it means to follow the prophet’s words.**
3. Hand each student a sheet of paper.
4. Students should look through a selection of magazines and newspapers to find examples of ways they can do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. They should use these images to make a collage.

5. After students have finished making their collages, invite them to share and explain what they created, as they are comfortable doing so.
6. **Do you think that God's people listen to the prophet and do what God requires of them?** *[Answers will vary.]*
7. **Is it easy or hard for us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God? Why?**

Closing (10 minutes)

Putting it all Together

1. Ask each student to share one word or phrase that describes what they learned today.
2. Invite the group to look at the flip chart or paper, at the definitions of justice they named at the start of the lesson.
3. **Based on what we have talked about today, has your definition of "justice" changed? Why or why not?**
4. Close in prayer: **Mighty God, you call us to love you and to love others. Help us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you every day. Amen.**
5. Thank students for their time, and let them know what they will be learning next week!