



DISCOVER

MICAH

God of Justice and Mercy





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Sample

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Contents

How to Study	4
Introduction.....	6
Historical Snapshot.....	7
God’s Story.....	9
Map.....	10
Glossary of Terms	11
Lesson 1: Powers and Trust.....	16
Lesson 2: Weeping, Wailing, and a Way.....	20
Lesson 3: Anticipating God’s Peace.....	25
Lesson 4: He Will Be Our Peace.....	30
Lesson 5: Proper Worship.....	35
Lesson 6: Watching in Hope.....	40
Lesson 7: Hope, Prayer, and Praise.....	45
Invitation and Prayer of Commitment.....	50
Bibliography.....	52
Evaluation	

How to Study

The questions in this study booklet will help you individually and as a group discover what the Bible says and means for a unique and transformative journey.

Questions are the key to Bible discovery. Through questions you search for the writers' thoughts and ideas. The questions in this study guide are designed to help you in your quest for answers. You can and should ask your own questions too. The Bible comes alive with meaning for many people as they uncover the exciting truths it contains. Our hope and prayer is that this guide will help the Bible come alive for you.

The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Step 1.

Read through each Bible passage several times. Allow the ideas to sink in. Think about the meaning of the passage.

Step 2.

Answer the questions in the Study Guide lesson. Look for your answers in the Bible passage. Write your answers in your own words.

You may find the glossary, study notes, “Introduction,” and “Historical Snapshot” helpful tools as you think about the Bible passage. If you use Bible study aids such as commentaries, Bible handbooks, or Internet sites, do so only after completing your own personal study. Answering the questions before the group meets enables you to remember what you discovered and to prepare for the group conversation.

Step 3.

As you read, consider what questions and thoughts you have.

You may write those down and bring them to the group to discuss.

You may include:

- questions that you would like to discuss with the group,
- topics that you would like to learn more about,
- and ideas from the passage that have made an impact on you.

Step 4.

Talk with others about what you have discovered, and enjoy hearing their ideas and perspectives.



Introduction

Who was Micah? Micah was one of the prophets who wrote down messages they received from the LORD. “Micah” is a short form of Micaiah, meaning “Who is like the LORD?” He was from Moresheth (1:1), likely in rural southern Judah. He perhaps lived among the poor and oppressed. As you read Micah, you might ask: **How might his name reflect his message? How might he see and respond to the oppression of his neighbors?**

What is prophecy? God sent many prophets to his people to bring his Word to his people. Some prophecy foretold the future, but much of it was God’s Word for his people’s present situation. The covenant plays a central role in the prophets’ messages. God had called the people of one nation, Israel, to be his representatives on earth to other nations (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:3-6). God formed a covenant with Israel. He promised to be their God, and they would be his special people. His people agreed to live according to his commands and to love him with all their hearts (Exodus 19:8; Deuteronomy 10:12-13). However, God’s people failed to keep their side of the covenant and repeatedly betrayed God. Thus the prophets brought to the people God’s heartfelt reminders of the covenant and warned of the consequences if they failed to keep it. As you read, consider: **How do we see God’s call to the people to remember their covenant with God and restore their relationship with him?**

One unique aspect of prophecy is that there can be **layers of fulfillment**. Many of Micah’s prophecies were fulfilled in his time – the first layer. A second layer is that many of his prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Yet there is a third level of fulfillment for which we still wait. His prophecies point to a final fulfillment – a final judgment, a final restoration, and a final reign of peace.

Micah is one of the twelve minor prophets whose messages can be found in the Bible. “Minor” does not mean they had a less important or shorter ministry. It just means they did not record as many messages as the major prophets.

Micah spoke to God’s people in the past, but the message is God’s Word for us today as well. Micah saw injustice, threatening international powers, and temptation and sin among God’s people. He spoke to these situations but also spoke of mercy, true worship, and hope. **How might Micah’s themes resonate with us today?**

Historical Snapshot

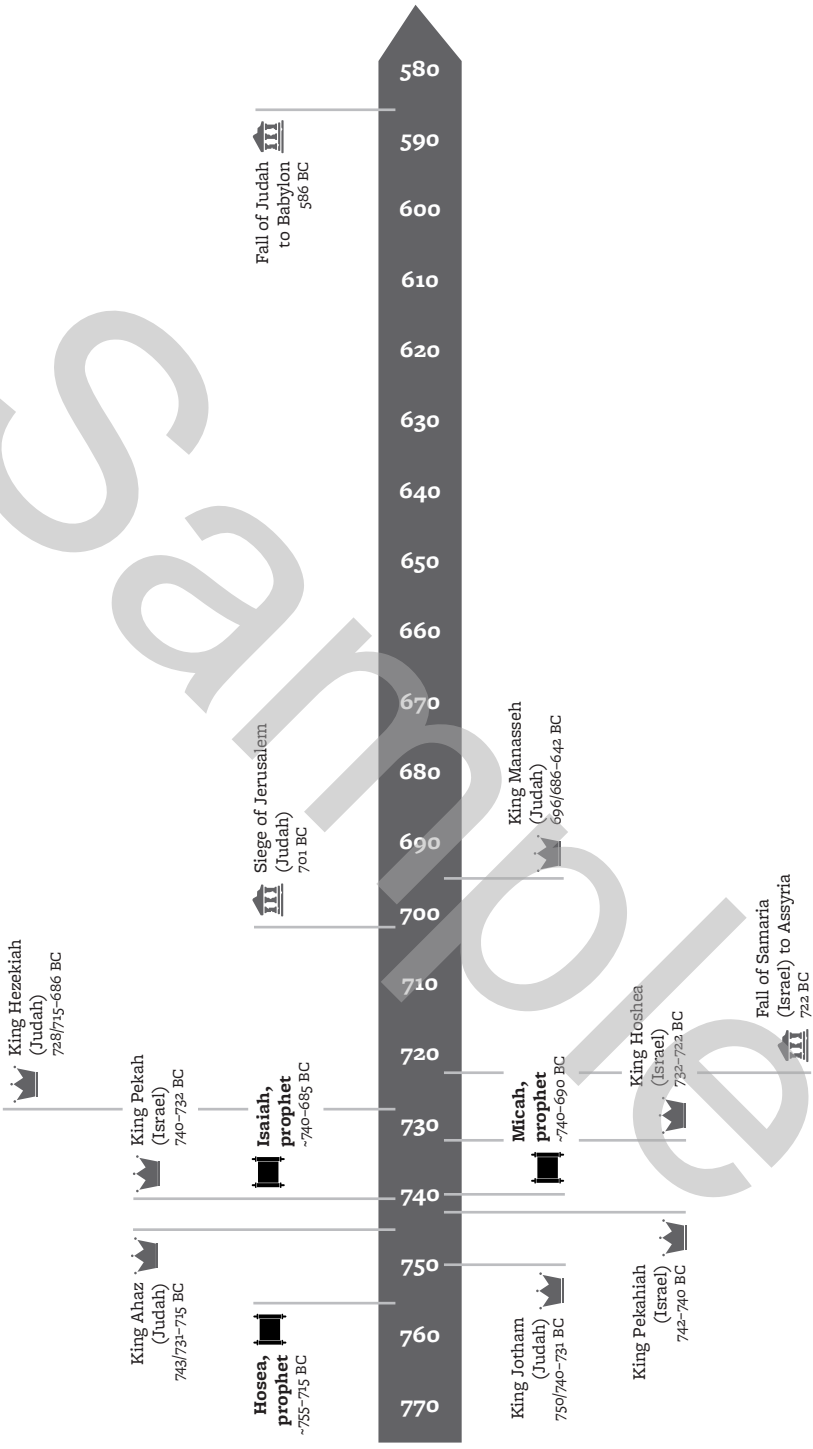
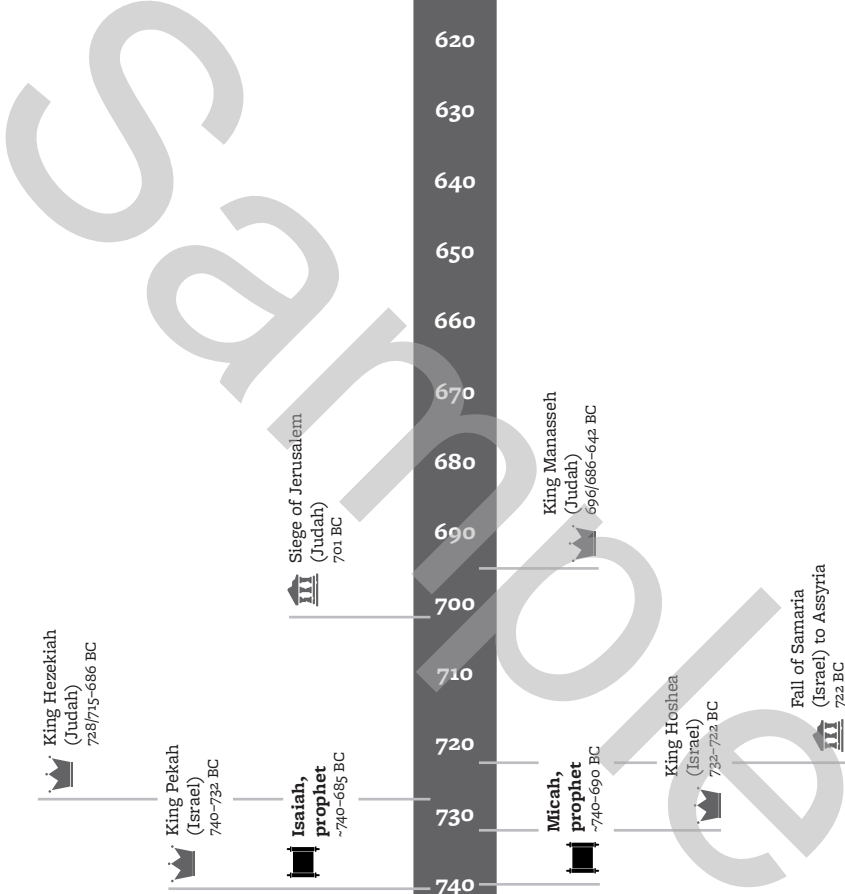
In Genesis, God calls the Israelites to be his people and his representatives on the earth. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy detail how God made a covenant with the Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. We learn in Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles that God's people, the Israelites, were unfaithful to him after they came into the Promised Land. They broke their covenant with him. Israel became a powerful nation under **King David** and his son, King Solomon, but by the time of David's grandson's reign the one nation had split. The **northern kingdom of Israel** had its own kings and swiftly followed a path of wickedness and idolatry. **Samaria** became its capital. The **southern kingdom of Judah** had kings who remained slightly more faithful to the LORD. **Jerusalem** was its capital and the location of the temple.

After centuries of unfaithfulness, wickedness, and God's patient warnings through his prophets, Micah steps into the scene. Micah's message is directed to Judah. He is likely speaking during the same period of time as two other prophets, Hosea and Isaiah.

God's words of judgment through Micah came true. Both Israel and Judah were eventually exiled to **Assyria** and **Babylon**. True to his Word, God restored his people and brought them back to the promised land (Ezra 1:1-4), but it fell short of a glorious restoration. Not until many years later were God's promises of a Shepherd-King fulfilled.

During Micah's time, the great kingdom of Assyria was Israel's primary enemy. Assyria was known for its cruel and brutal treatment of captives. In biblical prophecy Assyria also represented other enemies, such as Babylon, that would oppose God's people.

Israel and Judah had a unique covenant with God. They were a nation that was to be ruled by God. Today we are under a different covenant, the new covenant. Today God does not relate to a single nation like he did to Old Testament Israel. Today we have seen the fulfillment of promises greater than those in Micah's days. These differences will help us understand Micah.



GOD'S STORY

CREATION

FALL

REDEMPTION

God Creates:
Creation

The Fall

God Promises a
Rescuer: Adam & Eve

God Promises to
Preserve Creation: Noah

God Promises a Blessing
to All Peoples: Abraham

God Promises to Lead His People:
Moses, the Exodus, and the Law

God Promises an Eternal King:
David, Kings of Israel & Judah

MICAH

God Judges:
Warning & Exile

God Remains Faithful:
Return, Diaspora, & Waiting

GOD RESCUES: JESUS
Birth, Ministry, Death, Resurrection, & Ascension

God Sends the Holy Spirit:
Pentecost

God Sends the Church:
Acts & the Letters

God Restores All Things:
New Creation

NEW CREATION

Glossary of Terms

- Abraham:** The father of the nation of Israel. God called Abraham and his descendants to be God's people. God promised to bless nations through Abraham's descendants and curse those who cursed them (Genesis 12:1-3).
- Ahab:** A king of the northern kingdom of Israel who was even more evil than his father, Omri. Both kings practiced idolatry (1 Kings 16:29-33).
- Angels:** Supernatural beings created by God to be messengers, to carry out God's will in this world, and to serve and care for all who belong to God (Psalm 91:11-12).
- Altar:** A structure for making sacrifices to a god. God commanded that two altars be built for his temple: one for burnt offerings and a second for incense (Exodus 27:1-8; 30:1-10).
- Asherah poles:** Tree-like representations of the fertility goddess Asherah, often built near altars to her. For centuries God's people were tempted to worship her (Exodus 34:12-14; 2 Kings 16:33; 18:1-4).
- Bethlehem:** Meaning "House of Bread," it was the city that David, a great king of Israel, came from (1 Samuel 16:1, 12-13; Luke 2:4). Earlier it was known as Ephrathah or Ephrath (Genesis 35:19; Ruth 4:11; Micah 5:2).
- Burnt offering:** A sacrifice put on an altar and completely burned. The person making the sacrifice identified with the burnt offering; it was a sign of total devotion to God (Leviticus 1; Psalm 50:7-15; Psalm 51:16-19).
- Covenant:** A covenant is a mutually binding agreement between two (not necessarily equal) parties, often confirmed by a sign; usually both parties agree to accept certain responsibilities and have certain privileges (Exodus 19:4-8).
- Covet:** To desire what belongs to another (Exodus 20:17; Romans 13:9).
- Daughter Zion:** "Zion" is another name for Jerusalem and specifically the hill in Jerusalem on which God's temple was built. "Zion" may refer to either the place or the people of God (Isaiah 52:2; 62:11).
- David:** David was the second king of Israel. David sinned greatly in parts of his life, but God called him a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). God promised David that a descendant would always occupy the throne of Israel (2 Samuel 7:16). David's story can be found in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2:12 and in 1 Chronicles 10-29.
- Divination:** Gaining supernatural knowledge of the future through various means. This was practiced by other nations, but prohibited for the LORD's people (Leviticus 19:26; Deuteronomy 18:10) because

the LORD is our source of guidance (Isaiah 8:19-20). Diviners are people who have that supernatural knowledge.

Exile: An important theme in the Old Testament books of prophecy. The Assyrians took the northern kingdom of Israel into exile in 722 BC; the Babylonians took the southern kingdom of Judah into exile in 586 BC. Throughout the Bible, God uses the exiles of God's people because of their sin to bring them to repentance and restoration. These cycles of disobedience, exile, repentance, and restoration all point to the saving work of Christ that comes in the New Testament (Jeremiah 31; Hebrews 4).

Fear of the LORD: A reverence and respect for God. Fear of God emphasizes awe and a deep desire to not dishonor God through disobedience or indifference (Proverbs 1:7).

Glean: God commanded his people to leave some grapes or grain when they harvested. People in need could then pass through and pick up (glean) what was left to provide for their family (Leviticus 19:9-10).

High place: A place of idolatry and worship of other gods (1 Kings 11:6-8; 14:22-24).

Holy: Throughout the Bible, "holy" means separate, set apart, and distinct. There is no one holy like the LORD (1 Samuel 2:2); God is pure, faultless, and perfect. God's people are not holy because of their own doing, but because of what God has done on their behalf (1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 5:25-27).

Humbly: The Hebrew word *tsana`* can be translated as "humbly" but also can mean carefully, wisely, with sound understanding, and obediently (Proverbs 11:2; Micah 6:8).

Idol: An idol may be an human-made image or object that represents a god or spirit that is worshiped. In addition, an idol can be any desire, idea, or thing that a person makes more important than God in his or her life (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 13-14; Colossians 3:5).

Incense: A fragrance used by many ancient Near Eastern peoples to burn in worship of their gods. God also commanded Israel to use it when worshiping him in his temple (Exodus 30:1-8, 34-38).

Iniquity: Similar to sin, it is a violation of God's will. Iniquity, however, specifically means a wicked inner character or an intentional twisting of God's standards (Psalm 32:5).

Israel: In Micah, Israel refers to the covenant people of God and usually means both the northern and southern kingdoms (Micah 1:14-15; 2:12; 5:2; 6:3). "Israel" can also refer either to the northern kingdom (1:13) or the southern kingdom alone (3:1, 8-9; 5:13).

Jacob: One of the significant ancestors of the nation of Israel. God gave him the new name “Israel,” and his twelve sons became the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel (Genesis 32:28; 48:5; 49:1-28). In Micah, “Jacob” is used to refer to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Justice: Acting rightly and fairly and restoring what is due to another, helping and delivering the vulnerable and oppressed, and punishing the oppressor (Isaiah 58:6-7; Ezekiel 18:5-9).

Last days: The prophets spoke of the last days, which became associated with judgment (the Day of the LORD), a coming king and savior (a messiah or Christ), and restoration and peace (Joel 2:1-32; Acts 2:17; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

Law: The Ten Commandments and other commands God gave to the nation of Israel that are recorded in the Old Testament. These laws guided Israel in life and in holiness, and they revealed God’s character (Matthew 22:37-39). The demands of the law were fulfilled when Jesus Christ offered himself on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for our sin.

LORD: In English-language Bibles, “LORD” (in small capital letters) represents the Hebrew YHWH (Yahweh), often referred to as God’s covenantal and personal name.

Mercy: In Micah 6:8 and 7:18, the Hebrew word *hesed* is translated in English as “mercy.” *Hesed* “connotes at one and the same time faithfulness, love, mercy, and grace; it describes the unfailing love, the keeping of faith between related parties” (Waltke, 734). It is often translated as “love,” “steadfast love,” or “unfailing love” (Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 57:3, 10).

Messiah: Means “anointed one” in Hebrew. The Old Testament prophets promised a messiah, a special person appointed by God (anointed) who would save God’s people and bring in God’s kingdom (Psalm 110; Isaiah 61:1-7; Micah 5:2-6). The Greek word for “anointed one” is “Christ.”

Mountain of the LORD: The temple mount; see entries for *temple* and *Daughter Zion*.

Nations: In the Bible this word is often used to describe powers set against God and his people (Psalm 2:1-3). God’s desire always has been to rescue people from every nation. God is not ethnocentric. Jesus Christ came so that these powers set against God would be broken and that the gospel and God’s truth would go out to all peoples (Matthew 28:18-19; Revelation 5:8-10).

Nimrod: He was a powerful warrior whose descendants settled in Assyria and Babylon (Genesis 10:8-12).

Omri: In the northern kingdom of Israel, whose people were idolatrous, Omri was a king who “sinned more than all those before him” (1 Kings 16:25-28).

Peace: The Old Testament idea of peace (Hebrew: *shalom*) is wholeness – well-being in life, circumstances, and soul. It includes the idea of right relationships with God, others, and creation (Isaiah 32:16-18; Psalm 85:8-13).

Priests: A priest represents God to the people and the people to God (Exodus 28:1, 29). Israel was to represent God to the other nations as a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:4-6). In the time of Micah, priests were a powerful class of religious rulers in Israel from the tribe of Levi. They cared for the ark of the covenant, conducted worship, and oversaw sacrifices (Exodus 28:1, 29-30; Malachi 2:4-7; Revelation 1:5-6).

Prophecy: To give a message from God about the present situation or about the future. Old Testament prophecy often pointed people back to the Law and reminded people about their responsibility to God, God’s judgment if they did not repent, and God’s promises of restoration (Hosea 4:1; 14:1-9).

Prophet: God uses prophets to speak God’s Word to God’s people. Prophets also spoke to God on behalf of God’s people. Deuteronomy 13:1-4; 18:14-22 and Jeremiah 23:21-22 describe the qualifications of a true prophet.

Redeem: To buy back; to deliver or set free through a ransom payment or other provision (Exodus 6:6; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Remnant: A group of people who survive destruction. They are preserved by God and faithful to him (Isaiah 10:20-22; Zephaniah 3:8-13).

Righteous: Free from guilt or sin; in line with God’s will and moral standards; declared or made right with God (Isaiah 26:7-8; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

Sacred stones: Objects used in worship of foreign gods, such as Asherah (Exodus 23:24; 2 Kings 18:1-4).

Sacrifice: The act of offering something precious to God. In ancient Israel this was usually the best animal or the firstfruits of a harvest. In the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), God instructs people to offer sacrifices not only to celebrate and give thanks, but also to acknowledge and cover human sin. Later in the Old Testament, the prophets emphasize the kind of sacrifices that please God (Micah 6:6-8). In the New Testament, see Romans 3:25 and 12:1; 1 Corinthians 5:7; and Hebrews 13:15.

Seer: Another word for prophet (1 Samuel 9:9).

Seven: In ancient Israel, this number signified completeness.

Sin: Understood as “missing the mark” in thought and action – falling short of how God designed humans to act and be in relation to God, other humans, and creation (Romans 3:23; 4:6-8; 6:23; Colossians 1:13-14).

Shrine prostitutes: Many other nations used male and female prostitutes as part of their worship in their temples and shrines. The LORD clearly told his people they were not to worship in this way (Deuteronomy 23:17-18).

Sovereign: Holding supreme authority. All things are under the control of our sovereign LORD (Deuteronomy 3:24; Psalm 115:3).

Spirit of the LORD: In Old Testament times, the Spirit of the LORD was sent to certain people to equip them for a particular task (Judges 3:10; Isaiah 61:1-3; Micah 3:8). We now know the Spirit of the LORD is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who is sent to all who belong to Jesus. The other two persons of the Trinity are God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ). They are three persons in one being. For more on the Spirit’s work, see Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30; Psalm 139:7; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:1-2, 10-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; and 2 Peter 1:21.

Temple: The central place of worship and sacrifice in the time of Micah. It was located in Jerusalem. God directed the construction of the temple under King Solomon (1 Chronicles 3-7), and it was designed like a heavenly temple (Micah 1:2, 3; Hebrews 8:5).

Transgression: Rebellion or deliberate disobedience (Psalm 19:13; 32:5).

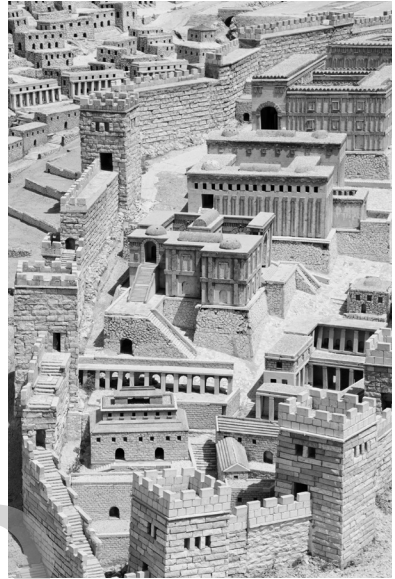
Vassal: A weaker nation, group, or person who serves and pays tribute to another nation, group, or person in exchange for some degree of protection.

**Micah 1:1; selected passages from 2 Chronicles 27-32
and 2 Kings 15:32-20:21**

1 Powers and Trust

Getting Started

God has spoken throughout history. God's Word deals with his people's lives in their time and place. Therefore, in this lesson we will spend time getting to understand the historical situation. There will be many strange names and places in these passages. You are not expected to know them. The study guide questions will help focus your attention on what is needed to help you fully enjoy your study of Micah. We will meet the kings and the international powers that ruled during the time of Micah's ministry. This will help us see God's people through God's eyes and will let the words of Micah thunder.



In addition, the “Historical Snapshot” should help you better understand Micah's context and message. This helps us avoid misinterpretation when we try to apply the words to our own lives.

Discovering Together

1. Micah 1:1

Who are the significant characters we see here?

2. 2 Chronicles 27:1-9

Glossary: David, LORD, temple

How are Jotham and the kingdom of Judah characterized spiritually?

3. 2 Chronicles 28:1-6

Glossary: high place, incense, sacrifice

How do verses 1-5 describe Ahaz and his walk with the LORD?

4. 2 Chronicles 28:16-26

Glossary: altar

What is King Ahaz's motivation for turning to Assyria?

5. 2 Kings 17:1-7, 13

Glossary: sin, vassal

Looking now at the northern kingdom, what happens to Samaria and why?

6. 2 Chronicles 29:1-3, 10, 31

Glossary: covenant

Returning to the southern kingdom, how does the author describe Hezekiah? What does Hezekiah start to do?

7. 2 Chronicles 32:1, 6-23

Glossary: angel, prophet

a. Contrast what Hezekiah says with what Sennacherib says.

b. How does the LORD respond in verses 21-23?

8. Micah 1:1

Summarize what changes and events happened during Micah's years of prophecy.

Invitation

Listen now to what God is saying to you.

You may be aware of things in your life that keep you from coming near to God. You may have thought of God as someone who is unsympathetic, angry, and punishing. You may feel as if you don't know how to pray or how to come near to God.

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:4-5). Jesus, God's Son, died on the cross to save us from our sins. It doesn't matter where you come from, what you've done in the past, or what your heritage is. God has been watching over you and caring for you, drawing you closer. “You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13).

Do you want to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord? It's as simple as A-B-C:

- **Admit** that you have sinned and that you need God's forgiveness.
- **Believe** that God loves you and that Jesus has already paid the price for your sins.
- **Commit** your life to God in prayer, asking the Lord to forgive your sins, nurture you as his child, and fill you with the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of Commitment

Here is a prayer of commitment recognizing Jesus Christ as Savior. If you long to be in a loving relationship with Jesus, pray this prayer. If you have already committed your life to Jesus, use this prayer for renewal and praise.

Dear God, I come to you simply and honestly to confess that I have sinned, that sin is a part of who I am. And yet I know that you listen to sinners who are truthful before you. So I come with empty hands and heart, asking for forgiveness.

I confess that only through faith in Jesus Christ can I come to you. I confess my need for a Savior, and I thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross to pay the price for my sins. Father, I ask that you forgive my sins and count me as righteous for Jesus' sake. Remove the guilt that accompanies my sin, and bring me into your presence.

Holy Spirit of God, help me to pray, and teach me to live by your Word. Faithful God, help me to serve you faithfully. Make me more like Jesus each day, and help me to share with others the good news of your great salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Evaluation



discover **Micah**

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1. Was this a home group ___ or a church-based ___ program?
2. Was the study used for
___ a community evangelism group?
___ a community faith-nurture group?
___ a church Bible study group?
3. How would you rate the materials?
Study Guide: excellent very good good fair poor
Leader Guide: excellent very good good fair poor
4. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the study?
5. What would you suggest to improve the material?
6. In general, what was the experience of your group?
7. Other comments

Your name (optional) _____

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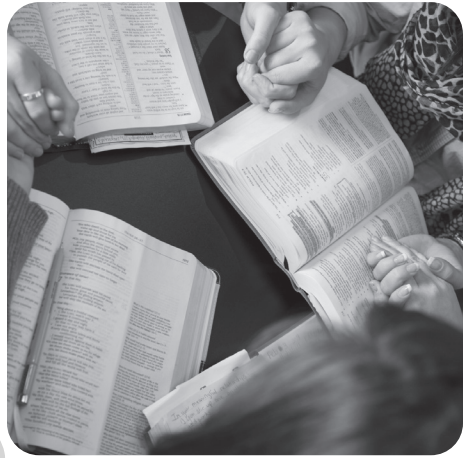
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Bible Studies for Small Groups

MICAH

Micah's world is in chaos. His nation is threatened by international powers. Cities are falling to enemies. Among his own people there is injustice and greed. How will God respond? How can God bring justice and give mercy at the same time? Micah invites us to learn how to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

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