

**OBADIAH, JONAH & MICAH
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

NAME: _____

OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

Lifegroup 12s

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

Lifegroup 3s

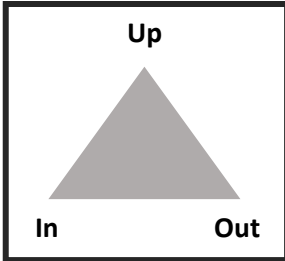
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.

INTRODUCTION TO OBADIAH

This book is one of the minor prophets, not because of importance, only because of its size. The Hebrew name Obadiah means 'Worshipper of Yahweh' or 'Servant of Yahweh'. Obadiah's prophecy is unique because he doesn't deal with Judah or Israel much at all. His focus is on the sin of Edom and the judgment coming upon them. The Edomites were people descended from Esau, the son of Isaac and Rebekah and the brother of Jacob. Esau was nicknamed Edom (which means 'red') probably because he had red hair.

To understand who the Edomites were and why God wanted them gone, one needs to know the story of Jacob and Esau, their ongoing tense relationship, and the hang-ups their descendants felt toward one another for generations, manifesting in several incidents over the ages.

This is the only prophetic book in the Bible addressed specifically to a Gentile nation. The fact that God revealed His plans to the Edomites through an Israelite prophet is both intriguing and effective. It is a very interesting little book.

So, Bible, journal, pen, and your wee brew at hand. This is short but good and profound ... enjoy!

Love and prayers,
Phil

Read

Obadiah

Live

Despite the type of language used against Edom, Obadiah is a prophecy of hope. Israel is encouraged that while they may be in exile, God has not forgotten His covenantal promises. Verse 21 encourages them to look towards the Day when the enemies of God are crushed and the people of God are vindicated. Obadiah provides ample ways to condemn the prideful acts of our lost world. We are, in many ways, living in a modern-day land of Edom. The parallels between then and now are striking. Yet, if we preach against Edom but fail to address Israel, we have missed the point. This text was given not to Edom but to the people of God. Therefore, we need to look at this through the lens of hope. The adversary may seem to have the upper hand, but our confidence in God will prevail.

Obadiah makes no open references to Jesus; however, the prophecy of God's coming Kingdom culminates in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. We can always be sure our final vindication is accomplished in the finished work of Jesus Christ and the coming of His eternal Kingdom. At that time, all His enemies, including Edom, will become a *"footstool for His feet"*, according to Psalm 110:1 and Matthew 22:44.

Verse 3 is the key, *"the pride of your heart has deceived you"*. This helps explain why God is bringing judgment against Edom. Pride is deceptive, making us think things about ourselves and others that are simply not true. Pride is a killer. God expelled Lucifer from heaven forever for it and it rages in our lives against God and all that is good. Examine your heart today in light of this little stand-alone prophet. May we cleanse our souls from all pride.

Pray

Father, no-one is quite sure who Obadiah was, yet You used him to warn all mankind through the ages about the danger of pride. You didn't suffer pride in Your own nation nor in any other, and I can be sure You detest it in me. May I root it out of my life today and boast only in You. Pride is the opposite of humility and You say that You oppose the proud but give grace to the humble. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

INTRODUCTION TO JONAH

Jonah has become known down through the centuries as ‘the reluctant prophet’. He chose to run away from God rather than face the size of the mission he was called to. After some pretty strenuous turning tactics, he finally did go on the mission. But then, amazingly, he huffed when the people repented and God spared the wicked city of Nineveh.

The prophet Jonah lived in the Galilean city of Gath-hepher (about four miles north of Nazareth) in 793-753 BC during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel (2 Kings 14:25). This was northern Israel’s most powerful king. During his administration, the borders of the nation were expanded to their greatest extent since the time of David and Solomon. Assyria, however, five hundred miles to the east, was a constant threat. Due to Israel’s progressive rebellion against God, the prophets Hosea and Amos (contemporaries of Jonah) had declared that Jehovah would use Assyria as an instrument of punishment against His people (Hosea 11:5; Amos 5:27). Any patriotic Israelite would have longed for Assyria’s destruction. It is easy to see how poor old Jonah could run from this commission and how he could respond in the way he did at the end.

I’d like you to think long and hard as you read and ponder this book. Think about your own experiences and heart levels for the lost in your community. This book is a clincher in teaching us some powerful principles. The sovereignty of God, God’s love for the world with all its brokenness, the power of repentance, and God’s supreme compassion are all found in the book of Jonah.

So, let’s get our Bible, journal, pencil, and our wee brew. You’re going to love this wee book.

Love and prayers,
Phil

Read

Jonah 1

Live

The prophet's brief declaration to Nineveh was one of judgment; nonetheless, Jonah was aware of the fact that Jehovah is a "*gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness*" (Jonah 4:2). Hence, it was certain that if the inhabitants of that great city were responsive to the message, heaven would spare them. Jonah did not want that.

Jonah went to Joppa where he boarded a ship bound for Tarshish, a Phoenician colony on the southwest coast of Spain some two thousand miles to the west. The expressed design of his trip was to flee from the presence of God. His plans were soon thwarted. Jonah is in a mess and we can think, "Well, he got himself into this," which, of course, he did. But maybe we shouldn't be too smug. A quick review of one's life will bring us to the realisation, who hasn't run away from God? Okay, maybe we haven't actually hopped on a boat to Tarshish, but we have all run from God, if not physically, certainly in our heart.

God gives Jonah to us not merely as a bad example to learn from but as a window into our soul; we're ALL fugitives on the run. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That means no one is outside the need of God's grace; not moral Jonah nor immoral Nineveh. No one is so good that they don't need God's grace, and no one is so bad that they can't get God's grace. God is saying to us today, as He does throughout the Bible, that our sin is uglier than we can imagine, and His grace is greater than we can hope.

What can we learn from Jonah in this chapter? One, your sin will find you out; and two, your sin will have consequences. We leave Jonah today being swallowed by a great fish (which, by the way, the Lord provided!).

Pray

Father, help me to be ready, just like a bride getting ready for her big day to look her most beautiful and glorious as she presents herself to her new husband. May I establish my heart today, setting my face and heart on You. I don't want to avail of the devil's slip ramp in any shape or form and do a runner like Jonah. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

We left poor Jonah in chapter 1 being swallowed by a God-directed fish. Jonah is now in its belly in the depths of the ocean. In this chapter, we read the desperate prayer of a man in utter seclusion. A very important observation about Jonah's prayer is that the vast majority of it focuses on the price he paid for his disobedience. Why is Jonah in the belly of the fish for three days? The answer is, he's learning, he's reflecting and, of course, he's rethinking. I once heard an old preacher say, "The belly of a fish is not a happy place to live but it is a great place to learn."

God needed to change Jonah's thinking. Jonah had got his eyes off God, he got his eyes off the value of people, and he got his eyes off the joy of submitting to Jehovah, the God of heaven and earth. His focus instead was 'my way, my plans, my agenda, my will'. Then, when a new ministry opportunity came along, because it was hard, because it went against his grain, the hardness of his heart moved his feet to run. Jonah needed to come to a place of recognising and admitting the truth about his heart. Then God gave the fish a bellyache and it vomited Jonah up on a beach.

It is interesting that, as we will see in the next chapter, God did not relent from what He wanted Jonah to do. The commission remained. That's God; He is relentless in His pursuit to save the world, even to the extent of sending His only well-beloved Son for you and me. Let the redeemed of the world say so!

Pray

Father, I am singing an old hymn today, *'Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Redeemed and so happy in Jesus, His child and forever I am.'* From the beginning, You never turned back in Your plan to restore and fix all that was broken as a result of sin. I love that about You, Lord. Thank You, Jesus, that You set Your face as a flint to go to Jerusalem where You would hang on a cross and bear my sin. I sing, *'I love You for wearing the thorns on Your brow and if ever I loved You, Lord Jesus, is now.'* In Your strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This city was huge. It would have taken an average of three days to cross, estimated thirty-six miles. That is a BIG city and Jonah came to declare a BIG message. He began a day's journey into the city, ushering judgment on them. Ordinarily, that kind of message would not get much of a reception but an amazing thing happens in this story. They repented. Yes, that's right, they all repented, every last one of them. The king called for national repentance. Not only did he want all people to fast and pray and call urgently on God, he even wanted the animals to fast. In the Ancient Near Eastern mindset, it was possible for animals to sin as well. The repentance here is genuine. It is not just 'we are sorry for what we have done', it is a determination to give up their evil ways and turn from their violence. Genuine repentance is to change one's way of living. Their hope is that God will yet relent and turn from His anger upon them.

We haven't heard much about Jonah in this chapter, but we have learned a lot about God. We have learned that He is compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love and patience. There comes a time, as it did here for Nineveh, that God says, "I have been patient enough. Now is the point of no return. Either you turn from your ways or I will pronounce judgment upon you. This is your last chance." Why did they listen to Jonah's message? In Luke 11:30 we read, "*For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be to this generation.*"

YOU are the sign to your city – your hands, your feet, your voice. What a challenge today. I am the sign to my neighbours and friends. To whatever extent God has already accomplished anything through us, we can affirm with Paul, it wasn't us, "*but the grace of God that was with me*". If we should gain any crown for our service, they're for casting at Jesus' feet not for balancing on our head.

Pray

Father, may Your grace have even greater effect in me and through me. May I love Your glory over my reputation and Your story of redemption over my feeble effort to establish my thing. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Jonah 4

Live

You might think the story was over in chapter 3. A great city in sackcloth and ashes repenting before God is any evangelist's dream. Jonah's response is shocking, "*he became angry*". God loved these Ninevites even though Jonah hated them. Around us are unsaved people, the lawless and the disobedient. We ignore them. We sing of God's tender grace, His mercy and compassion, but we avoid saying anything about it to them. What a challenge today, folks, to love the unlovable, believing God's redemption story can touch anyone.

We could outline the four chapters of Jonah like this: chapter 1, Jonah running away from the Lord; chapter 2, Jonah running to the Lord; chapter 3, Jonah running with the Lord; and chapter 4, Jonah running against the Lord. In this chapter, Jonah is forced to look at himself and it is not a pretty picture. He is more concerned with his own comfort than the souls of Nineveh. Self-centred and self-absorbed, he lacks compassion for the lost. Jonah learns, however (as we must), that God's love has no limits. God's people are to mirror His limitless love in their attitudes and actions towards others who need to hear the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. God's people need to understand that although they may try to run from and rebel against God's plan and purpose in their life, God will not give up on them. God is indeed the 'Hound of Heaven' who diligently pursues His children until He accomplishes His purpose in their lives and they come to see the world as He sees it.

The book ends with God questioning and even mocking Jonah. Jonah cares for the plant, but God cares for the cows and the people. God wanted to show Jonah the extent of His mercy and Jonah's small heart. Why? Because God cared for him! This chapter doesn't end with a proper resolution; we don't know how Jonah responded, but this chapter has been clear in showing us God's mercy in contrast to Jonah's small heart. We are not much different from Jonah!

Pray

Father, grant that I may feel like You, to have pity on those who are lost and finding life tough. I pray that my heart will reflect Yours, showing them Your love and compassion, declaring the message of truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

INTRODUCTION TO MICAH

Micah lived during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He lived in a little place called Moresheth which was located near Gath about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem. The theme of this little prophecy is found in the meaning of the prophet's name. Micah means 'Who is like God?' or 'Who is like Jehovah?' Some say that this may have been a nickname, surmising that everywhere this man went, he said, "Who is like Jehovah? Who is like God?" until people began to call him this. You can imagine people looking around as Micah comes up the street and saying to themselves, "Here comes old 'Who is like God?'"

Since Micah is talking about who God is like, the theme of this book is Godlikeness. The great message to the world today is how to be like God. A great thought, isn't it? You will also discover themes of oppression, perverting faith, pleasing God, and the Messiah, King of peace and wonderful Saviour running all through the seven chapters.

So, let's get going ... Bible, journal, pencil, your cuppa, and off we go.

Love and prayers,
Phil

Live

Do preachers impact the world? Can they change the direction of a nation? If we were to make a list of those who have, Micah would certainly be on that list. He was called to speak to one nation whose sin was too severe to recover from and to another that was going down the same road. His courageous preaching contributed to a hundred-year reprieve for the nation of Judah. Although Isaiah is considered to be the prophet who was personally alongside King Hezekiah, Micah, no doubt, influenced the reforms of his day.

We read in Jeremiah 26:17-19, *“Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Zion shall be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.”’ Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and seek the Lord’s favour? And the Lord relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them.”*

Micah became a symbol of fearless preaching. He addressed many of the same issues Isaiah did but whereas Isaiah worked mostly in Jerusalem among the elite of society, Micah worked in the country among the people. Micah has little to say about the politics of the day. He deals chiefly with the social and moral issues of the common people and the adverse effect the leadership was having on them. It was a turbulent environment for Micah as the Assyrian threat was at its peak and the temptation was for God’s people to trust in alliances with other nations rather than serve God. And yet, amidst this corruption there were signs of reform and a promise of righteousness. We see the worst and the best. This contrast is also evident in the message of the prophet himself: certain judgment, but not without the hope of renewal.

Pray

Father, show me more of Yourself and expand my capacity for knowing and marvelling at You. The joy from being pursued by You is immeasurable. The delight born from knowing You gave Your life for me, fulfilling the law, taking my judgment, and becoming my righteousness, such joy is incomparable. May I be a God-carrier today. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Micah 2

Live

In the first chapter, there is a magnificent picture of God striding forth in judgment against the nation of Judah. In this chapter, we see this is because of their utter failure to be godly even though God provided them with everything it takes to be godly. Sound familiar? Why are we not godly? We have all it takes in the Holy Spirit to be godly. This book comes home to us because we are in the same boat.

In chapter 1, Micah had complained in general terms about the sins of Samaria and Jerusalem. It is easy for people to acknowledge that they are sinners in general terms, or to suppose that the accusation refers to others, so Micah now specifies what those sins were. The outcome will be that those who have achieved worldly success will forfeit heavenly favour.

“They lie awake at night, plotting evil deeds.” Their crimes are not impulsive but premeditated. I love the prophetic awesomeness in Micah’s statement; he and the Lord God are fully aware of what is going on in the privacy of their homes, in the darkness of the night, in the secrecy of their hearts and in their daily business. These people were just plain greedy, the kind of greed that is never satisfied, never admitted to and often attempted to be justified. Most people involved in business wouldn’t have taken kindly to being told, especially by preachers like Micah, that their transactions amounted to fraud and plundering the poor. Fields were a sacred trust and a man’s life and freedom depended on owning them. Deprived of them, he might become at best, a day-labourer; at worst, a slave. Tough times call for some tough preaching and Micah certainly delivered that!

Pray

Father, I am so convicted by this little book. How alike I am to these people. I have all it takes to be godly and yet I live so far below my means in You. Forgive me for that. May I decide from this day forth to lift the sails of my life to the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit to be blown into the purposes You have written for me, according to Ephesians 2:10. For I AM God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for ME to do. May I now do them. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Micah 3

Live

Micah exposes the mess in Jerusalem. He says that the reason God is visiting judgment upon His people is that those who have been given authority to speak for God have forgotten that they are responsible to God. Whenever we are put in a position of authority, we need to remember that we also have an authority over us. The person who forgets this turns to use their power for their own advantage. The prophet sums it up for us in verse 11. *“Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money.”* I, just like you, will one day stand before my heavenly Father and give an account. We are told in verse 4 that because they have hidden their faces from the poor and needy and have not listened to the cries of the downtrodden, God will hide His face from them.

Micah can exercise proper authority because he isn't counting on his own understanding of the situation but on the wisdom and commandments of God. He is filled with God's power and justice and might. And what does he do with this God-given, Holy Spirit inspired power? He lovingly corrects the sins of Israel and Judah and works to lead them back to God's goodness.

I quote from 'A Peculiar People' by Rodney Clapp: "Within Israel the temple bore manifold social, spiritual, political, economic and cultural importance. Jerusalem, in a profound theological sense, was considered the centre of the earth, the hill Yahweh would defend against all attackers. At the centre of Jerusalem was the temple, in whose inner chambers the King of the Universe was known to dwell with an especially awesome presence." Micah, in verse 9, prophesies the destruction of the temple, that which they hold most dear, *“Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.”*

Pray

Father, I love and revere You. You are the One before whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. May I never forget whose I am and who I serve – it's not money, man or me; it's the eternal God, the One who inhabits eternity. Thank You for Your love and perseverance with me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love this chapter full of vision. The prophet looks across the centuries – past the rise of Babylon, past the Roman Empire and days of the Caesars, past the Middle Ages and the Lutheran Reformation, past the 1859 revival and even past this day ... to the coming of One who is Godlike. This is one of the most beautiful Messianic passages in the Scriptures, fulfilled in One to come. Thank Him today for that glorious day which we get to share. Exciting or what?

Consider the opening words, *“It shall come to pass...”* Micah is as bold in his proclamation of the coming days of grace as he has been in declaring God’s judgment. God is going to establish His throne upon the earth and the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established. Micah is speaking now about the Kingdom Age when Jesus will come and reign again. God will give Him the throne of David and He will order it and establish it in righteousness and in judgment from henceforth, even forevermore. The nations will go up to Jerusalem, for out of Zion will come the law of the Lord. They’ll say, ‘Come, let’s go to Jerusalem. Let’s sit at the feet of Jesus and just learn for a while.’

Verse 11 records that many nations will rise against Israel. This is actually what is happening in this day and age. So many nations are looking at Israel, their sights set on Jerusalem, calling for a holy war against Israel. Nations are gathered against her. Israel has that unfortunate distinction of being probably the most isolated nation on the face of the earth. Zechariah prophesied that if she didn't have the Lord on her side, she'd be in really big trouble.

Pray

Father, as I rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, so I rejoice in Your present reign. May I also rejoice over, and never fear, Your soon and long-awaited return. May the joy of this good news buckle my knees in humble adoration and empower my hands to serve relentlessly in love. As I am loved, so let me love; as I have been served, so let me serve; as I am encouraged, so let me encourage others as I long for the Day of all things new. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The big lesson from today's chapter is: set your eyes on Jesus. What does Micah do when the people of Judah are facing the destruction of their temple (chapter 2) and the promise of exile in Babylon (chapter 4)? He speaks to them of a deliverer. In verse 2, he tells them that out of the smallest and most insignificant of towns, one that doesn't even make it onto the map, a deliverer is going to come. Not much had come from this small town since the Lord said to Samuel, *"I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king"* (1 Samuel 16:1). Our God loves to use the weak and the small to overcome the big and the strong.

When the wise men came out of the East looking for the One born king of the Jews, they said to the rulers of Jerusalem, *"Where is He that is born king of the Jews?"* The chief priests replied, *"You will find Him in Bethlehem."* How did they know this? Because Micah had prophesied it: *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be ruler over Israel."* Seven hundred years back down the corridors of time Micah clearly perceived the One who would rise out of obscurity and fulfil these predictions, One whose goings-forth are from everlasting, the God-man, the King of kings, God manifest in flesh. This would have been shocking in Micah's day because Jerusalem's leaders were obsessed with their power and wealth. Micah was digging deep into their souls.

Thank God for this amazing prophecy that told forth the coming redeemer, the One who would deal with the sin of the whole world, particularly ours. If He dealt with us according to our sins, we would be lost forever.

Pray

Father, I thank You for the gift of Jesus, for His perfect life lived for me and His judgment-exhausting death on the cross. Though I remain broken, I cannot be more loved and You will finish the work You began in me. I have been saved, I am being saved, and one glorious day, I will be saved and like Jesus forevermore. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Such beauty as Jehovah pleads with His people, showing them the way of Godliness. Here Jehovah speaks out His controversy with His people. Then, in one of the most beautiful verses in all the Bible, He states plainly His simple expectation of them. Verse 8: *“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.”* That’s still God’s simple requirement of us today! God wants our undivided mind. We must be honest in all our dealings with other people. We must walk uprightly, settle it deep in our hearts to be a people of integrity and be on guard in the battle to do justly.

In other words, God is deserving of our heart, body, soul, and spirit. Because He created us in His own image, God rightly and justly deserves all of our worship and devotion. God wants our unreserved love. I love this! Both justice and mercy are foundational to God’s character. *“Love mercy”* means faithfulness to God and His people, reaching out to those in need and showing love and care for them. *“Walk humbly”* means God wants our unconditional obedience. *“Walk humbly”* is a description of the heart’s attitude toward God when people depend on Him rather than on their own abilities.

Of course, that covenant relationship with your fellow men and women, that desire to live and act justly, is going to be pretty well impossible if your relationship with God isn’t sorted out. God is our Creator; He knows best how we should operate. If we want to get the very best out of life, out of the world in which He has placed us, then we need to follow His instructions displayed in this single verse in the middle of Micah 6. Beautiful!

Pray

Father, once again I realise Your entire Word points towards the day You would send Jesus into the world to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. I need major forgiveness, for I constantly fall short of the law’s truth, beauty, and goodness. I also need a perfect righteousness for the very same reason. In Jesus, You have wondrously, generously, once-and-for-all given me both. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

As we conclude this little book, we are faced with the daunting question in verse 18, *“Who is a God like You?”* Who can approach a God like this? The one who walks in His ways, the one who puts their trust in Jesus. John, in 1 John 1:7, says that we should *“walk in the light as He is in the light”* (that is, walk openly and in honesty).

Micah’s basic message is that God is fed up with the way His people are living. There are certain things that set God off: idolatry and rebellion, obviously, but cheating and exploiting others, especially the vulnerable, is particularly intolerable in God’s eyes. God’s chosen people were perpetrating grave injustices, but in the midst of this, there is a promise. God will vindicate those who are victims of injustice, and will forgive those who seek Him. In other words, God will set right His relationship with mankind.

Micah presents three important lessons to us as we close this book. Firstly, look to God in the midst of darkness. Micah declares in verse 7 his intention to wait on God. God’s people may experience times of spiritual or physical or emotional suffering. There will be times we sit in darkness. We will experience what Saint John of the Cross called *“the dark night of the soul”*. But this is also a time in which we encounter God in deeper and more incredible ways. Secondly, Micah says remember who God is. Verse 18 reminds us that God is gracious and compassionate, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Thirdly, Micah reminds us that our sin and guilt are gone. Verse 19 proclaims that God has taken measures to trample down our sin and hurl it into the sea. The way of the cross is the way to freedom, it is the coastline from which our sin is hurled into the depths.

Pray

Father, thank You for this look into Your heart of love. Even though in faithfulness You must judge Your people to make them aware of their foolish ways, yet Your heart is ever pleading. Beneath all the thunders of judgment and darkness of destruction is that heartbeat of love and readiness to forgive and bring us back into fellowship with You. Help us to remember this question: *“Who is like God?”* In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

