

# Leaders Needed

Ungodly leadership will lead to God's wrath.

MICAH 3:1-12



272  
 and of  
 though the  
 Amorite.  
 for proph-  
 or (Nazarites,  
 dren of Israel?

rites wine to drink;  
 prophets, saying,

### ISRAEL'S SINS

I am pressed under you, as a  
*that is* full of sheaves.  
 fore the flight shall perish from  
 and the strong shall not strength-  
 force, "neither shall the mighty de-  
 himself:  
 Neither shall he stand that handleth  
 the bow; and *he that is* swift of foot shall  
 not deliver *himself*; "neither shall he that  
 rideth the horse deliver himself.

<sup>16</sup>And *he that is* courageous among the  
 mighty shall flee away naked in that day,  
 saith the LORD.

### GOD HAS SPOKEN

**3** Hear this word that the LORD hath spo-  
 ken against you, O children of Israel,  
 against the whole family which I brought  
 up from the land of Egypt, saying,

<sup>2</sup>You only have I known of all the fam-  
 ilies of the earth: "therefore I will punish  
 you for all your iniquities.

<sup>3</sup>Can two walk together, except they be  
 agreed?

<sup>4</sup>Will a lion roar in the forest, when he  
 hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of  
 his den, if he have taken nothing?

on  
 the  
 father  
 profane  
 down upon  
 every altar, and  
 condemned in

### FAITHFULNESS

the Amorite before  
*was* like the height of  
*was* strong as the oaks;  
 ed his fruit from above, and  
 beneath.



## How do we know if a leader has our best interests in mind?

Many children on playgrounds have played the game Follow the Leader. The designated leader designs a course and leads the way. Some leaders create courses that everyone can follow while other leaders take the group on a path few can finish. The same scenario gets played out in real life, with some leaders taking paths to safety while others take a dangerous path. God's people need godly leaders who help them stay on God's path.

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Micah was a prophet who preached to Judah between 730 and 690 BC. His name meant "Who is like Yahweh?" In Micah 7:18 he said, "Who is a God like you, forgiving iniquity and passing over rebellion for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not hold on to his anger forever because he delights in faithful love." This was a play on Micah's name. Micah's preaching took place during the reigns of Judah's kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This was a time of material prosperity for Judah, but it was also a time of spiritual drought for the nation.

Micah's prophecy contains several reoccurring themes. He affirmed the sovereignty of God (Micah 1:2; 4:11-13) in the sense that God is not a tribal deity who is limited in time and space. Micah also emphasized the judgment of God. The nation stirred up God's anger due to their sin (5:14). The sins of Judah included idolatry (1:7; 5:12), oppression of the poor (2:1-2), turning a deaf ear to those who needed help (3:1-4), lying (6:12), stealing (6:11), and murder (7:2). Mixed with the theme of judgment is the theme of hope. A remnant would survive and a Messiah was coming.

Micah began with a prediction of future judgment coming on both Israel and Judah (1:1-7). He lamented the coming destruction and encouraged all true followers of God to join him in sorrow (1:8-16). He reinforced that this judgment was not unwarranted but would fall on those who dream up wickedness (2:1). Their oppression of the poor did not go unnoticed by God, and He was planning a disaster for the nation (2:3). God promised to bring judgment, but He also promised to gather a remnant from among them and to serve as their Leader (2:12-13). It's this reference to God as Leader that turns the attention to the self-serving leaders who were leading Judah astray (3:1-12).

# MICAH 3:1-12

**1** Then I said, “Now listen, **leaders of Jacob**<sup>A</sup>, you rulers of the house of Israel. Aren’t you supposed to know what is just? **2** You **hate good and love evil**<sup>B</sup>. You **tear off people’s skin**<sup>C</sup> and strip their flesh from their bones. **3** You eat the flesh of my people after you strip their skin from them and break their bones. You chop them up like flesh for the cooking pot, like meat in a **cauldron**<sup>D</sup>.” **4** Then they will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. He will **hide his face**<sup>E</sup> from them at that time because of the crimes they have committed. **5** This is what the LORD says concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who proclaim peace when they have food to sink their teeth into but declare war against the one who **puts nothing in their mouths**<sup>F</sup>. **6** Therefore, it will be night for you — without visions; it will grow dark for you — **without divination**<sup>G</sup>. The sun will set on these prophets, and the daylight will turn black over them. **7** Then the seers will be ashamed and the diviners disappointed. They will all cover their mouths because there will be no answer from God. **8** As for me, however, I am filled with power by the Spirit of the LORD, with justice and courage, to proclaim to Jacob his rebellion and to Israel his sin. **9** Listen to this, leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert everything that is right, **10** who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with injustice. **11** Her leaders issue rulings for a bribe, her priests teach for payment, and her prophets practice divination for **silver**<sup>H</sup>. Yet they lean on the LORD, saying, “Isn’t the LORD among us? No disaster will overtake us.” **12** Therefore, because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become ruins, and the temple’s mountain will be a high thicket.

## Key Words

- A. The governmental officials of Judah (see v. 9).
- B. As governmental leaders they were called to love good, hate evil, and protect the vulnerable (Amos 5:15; Romans 12:9).
- C. A figure of speech that’s purposely shocking to describe the abuses the leaders inflicted on the people.
- D. The “cooking pot” (NLT, TLB) imagery comes from 1 Samuel 2:13-14, contrasting true leaders and these false shepherds of God’s people.
- E. Isaiah 59:2 says, “your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.”
- F. The false prophets had no genuine sense of justice, approving of what was done by those who paid them while condemning those who did not pay them (Leviticus 19:15).
- G. God would stop speaking to these prophets (Amos 5:18-20).
- H. Paul stated, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10).

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## 1. SELF-SERVING LEADERSHIP (MICAH 3:1-4)

Leaders of God's people are accountable to God for their actions.

**What is more hurtful, an ungodly leader or an inept leader? Explain.**

## 2. CORRUPT PROPHETS (MICAH 3:5-8)

God expects believers to stand for His truth.

**What role should religious leaders play in shaping culture?**

## 3. RESPONSIBILITY DECLARED (MICAH 3:9-12)

Believers can trust God to enact justice.

**How are the attitudes toward God expressed by the leaders seen in our world today?**

**How can godly leaders begin to take responsibility for godliness in the culture where they lead?**

## APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss as a group how believers can stand for God's truth in today's world.

**What role does the group play in making sure believers understand God's truth? How can the group encourage each other to stand for God's truth?**

### **KEY DOCTRINE: The Christian and the Social Order**

Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. (See Micah 6:8; James 2:8.)

### **BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about a feature of Israel's leadership.**

Use a Bible dictionary to look up the offices of "judge," "priest," and "prophet." Note your findings about these offices and their roles and importance in the life of Israel in the Old Testament. How does this information shed light on Micah's message?

# TALK IT OUT

**Focus on Micah 2:1. What would cause someone to be consumed with plotting evil against others?**

Three verbs characterize the land-grabbers: *plan*, *plot*, and *carry out*. Evil acts begin with evil thoughts. Two words for sin are used: *iniquity* and *evil*. *Iniquity* here refers to abuse of power in illegal and unethical schemes, resulting in social injustice. *Evil* refers to things that are wicked in God's eyes

**How does the use of the word *woe* point to how God views people who plan evil?**

The wealthy oppressors were so filled with greed that they were plotting their next move even before they got out of bed in the morning. But a better use of waking hours would have been to think about the Lord (Psalm 63:6). These wealthy oppressors could do it because they controlled the power structures of their society. The more they had, the more they wanted.

**Discuss ways of using time to plan, plot, and carry out God honoring actions. How does what a person think about impact what they do?**

Agree to text Micah 2:1 to each other as a reminder of God's view toward ungodly leaders.

## Prayer Requests

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# DAILY EXPLORATION

## Day 1: Micah 3:1-4

***Consider how the leaders were acting in this passage.***

Micah began with the political and judicial leaders of his day. The problem was not that the leaders were inept, but that they were ungodly. God had appointed leaders to guide His people in the right ways, but those leaders had neglected their responsibility and had incurred the wrath of God against their nation. The leaders were not acting in ignorance but in open rebellion to the calling God had given them to lead His people. The leaders of Micah's day treated the poor and oppressed as animals that were butchered and prepared to be eaten. Cannibalism was not widely practiced in Israel, but it was not unprecedented in rare occasions of famine or siege (see 2 Kings 6:26-29). The shock value of Micah's words exposed the self-serving attitude of the leaders who could not resist the temptation to use political power for their own gain. The rulers of Israel would not escape God's judgment. One day, the roles would be reversed and those leaders would face the injustice of their captors in Assyria and Babylon. In the day when the leaders no longer had the power they now held, they would *cry out to the LORD* but He would *not answer them*.

**What is more hurtful, an ungodly leader or an inept leader? Explain.**

## Day 2: Micah 3:5-7

***Contemplate the motives of the leaders.***

Prophets in Micah's day were proclaiming *peace*. They were declaring prosperity for the people of God while the Assyrians and later the Babylonians were being prepared to bring judgment against the injustices of Israel and Judah. The motives of the corrupt prophets were exposed by the revelation that they preached peace to the ones who fed them. The words *sink their teeth* referred to the bite of a serpent. The people listening to these prophets and providing for them didn't realize they were actually feeding the serpent. While the prophets preached about ease and prosperity, the enemies of God's people were preparing to overtake them. On the other hand, those who could offer the false prophets nothing were the people against whom they would *declare war*. The poor, the oppressed, and the downtrodden would serve as the source of these corrupt prophets' greed. As a result of their corruption, the prophets would lose their ability to receive revelation from God. It would be like *night* to them as the *sun* would set on the ministry of the prophets. Unable to hear God, they would continue to speak on His behalf but would be *ashamed* and *disappointed* when that message did not come true. They would be exposed as false prophets because there was *no answer from God*.

**How do false prophets invade our culture today?**

## Day 3: Micah 3:8

**Identify how Micah was different from the leaders he was discussing.**

In the strongest terms possible, Micah contrasted himself with the false prophets. He did not serve the people for what he could get from them but rather to preach the truth of God that led to justice and courage. Instead of always preaching peace and prosperity, he spoke against the rebellion of Jacob and the sin of Israel. A true man of God must not only speak about the hope of peace and prosperity but also of the dire consequences of sin. Those who do only one or the other of those things are not accurately preaching the truth. Micah preached the hope of Messiah and the judgment of sin because of two realities. First, he was empowered by the Spirit of the Lord. He did not speak his own words in his own power, but he spoke the Word of the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, Micah preached with justice and courage. Because he spoke in the power of the Spirit, His message was just; he cared about those who were experiencing injustice. He had the courage to confront sin and point others to the Messiah. We, like those in Micah's day, need church leaders who are willing to preach with a sense of divine justice. We need leaders unafraid to stand for the truth and who will speak up for those who do not have a voice.

**What role should religious leaders play in shaping culture?**

## Day 4: Micah 3:9-11

**Notice the assumptions the leaders make.**

Micah revealed that both Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. The leaders would bear that responsibility because they had disregarded *justice* and perverted *everything that is right*. The people of God saw both Jerusalem and the temple as signs of their irreversible right-standing with God. Micah revealed that this was not the case. In fact, he revealed that *Zion*, another name for the city of Jerusalem as well as the temple, was built *with bloodshed*. Both the temple and the city of Jerusalem, in all of their majesty, were built on the foundation of oppressing the poor. Corrupt leaders had taxed the people heavily and, in doing so, oppressed those who cried out to God in their injustice. Instead of hearing the cry of the oppressed, the *leaders* issued rulings *for a bribe*. They made decisions not on the basis of what was right or wrong but on who could pay the most. Bribery was prohibited throughout the Old Testament (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; Isaiah 1:23; 5:23). The priests also taught only for payment. This is not to say that it was wrong to pay the priest. God had set up the system that provided for the priests and the Levites. Rather, it was a condemnation of those who preached only for *payment*. The false prophets were motivated by greed. In spite of the unethical behavior of the leaders, they claimed: *Isn't the Lord among us? No disaster will overtake us*. They had a mistaken temple theology which claimed that because the temple was there, God would not judge their sin.

**How are the attitudes toward God expressed by the leaders seen in our world today?**

## Day 5: Micah 3:12

**Note the penalty for the leaders' sins.**

Micah declared: *Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become ruins, and the temple's mountain will be a high thicket.* These would have been shocking words to those immersed in temple theology. Before an area could be plowed and planted, it had to be cleared, and Micah revealed that God would clear the city of Jerusalem to replant it. Evidently one leader, King Hezekiah, heeded the words of Micah and it spurred him to great reform in Jerusalem (Jer. 26:17-19; 2 Kings 18:1-6; 2 Chron. 29:1-31:21). Though God judged the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, He did not at that time allow Jerusalem to face destruction. The leaders in the north did not respond to prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea. The leaders of the Southern Kingdom, however, took responsibility and were spared for the moment. God was just in judging the sin of Israel, and He was gracious in sparing Judah under the leadership of Hezekiah. That reprieve would not last forever. As God promised, Jerusalem and the temple would face destruction in 586/587 BC during another time of ungodly leaders.

**How can you begin to take responsibility for godliness in the culture where you live?**

### APPLY THE TEXT

Reflect on the responsibility you have to be a godly leader and example to others. What needs to change in your life for you to be more godly as a leader and example?

