

## Micah-Nahum

Justice, Love and Humility

Focal Verses: Micah 6:3-8

### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will **EVALUATE** how to honor God gratefully by exhibiting the character traits that God require; **EXPRESS** feelings about living up to God's expectations for us to be just, loving, and humble; and **LEAD** the community into making God's requirements a reality.

### In Focus

Lamar has owned and operated his restaurant for decades. What started as a small diner in a strip mall has grown to three successful locations in their city. But over the past few years, the stress of running his restaurants has begun to wear on him. He has also been very short and less forgiving with his staff. Just last week, he yelled at a waitress because she was five minutes late for her shift. Employees began to fear his angry outburst. One night, an old friend of Lamar walked into the restaurant; Quincy Tipp, who had been Lamar's partner at his first location. Lamar's face brightened and he smiled broadly, "Hey, Tipp!" Man, it's great to see you!" He gave Quincy a handshake, a big hug, and ushered him over to their best table. Over dinner, and for several hours after, the two friends laughed and reminisced about old times. They had sacrificed and worked long hours in the hopes that someday the restaurant would be a grand success. Most of all, they had wanted to honor God with their business. Lamar realized that he had been led astray from their initial purpose in opening the restaurant.

***As Christians, when we remember all that God has done for us, we can extend His love and mercy to others. In today's lesson, we'll discuss how God desires that we would respond to His blessings in our lives.***

### Keep In Mind

*"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)*

### Lesson Text

Micah 6:3-8

**3** O My people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against Me!

**4** For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servitude; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

**5** O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.”

**6** With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

**7** Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

**8** He hath shown thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

### The Lesson The People, Places and Times

**Balaam:** Balaam was an example of one of the ancient Near Eastern prophets who did not serve the Israelite God. Rather, he worshipped the many other false gods in the region. Balaam was highly regarded among the Midianites and possessed a great deal of power and influence. King Balak of Moab tried to get Balaam to curse Israel as the Israelites traveled through the Moabite countryside. While traveling to meet Balak, God spoke to Balaam through his donkey, commanding him to only deliver God’s message to King Balak (Numbers 22:21-30). Instead of a curse, God used Balaam to speak a blessing on Israel.

**Human Sacrifice:** There is evidence of child sacrifice in ancient Syria-Palestine and Carthage. The nations surrounding Israel also worshipped fertility gods who demanded a portion of what they helped produce: crops, animals and children. The child sacrifice was usually the firstborn son because he would be the most precious thing to a family as the heir to all the family’s wealth and possessions. This practice was a temptation for the Israelites and forbidden by the Lord (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 3:27, 23:10). Although the firstborn of every man and animal belonged to the Lord, Israel was given specific commands for redeeming the firstborn (Numbers 18:15-17). This was Israel’s way of distinguishing itself from the different nations around them.

### Background

Micah’s prophecy began with a general announcement to Samaria and Jerusalem that God had a case to present against the nations of Israel and Judah. He then laid out the first of two series of judgments against Israel and Judah. Micah described the sins they had committed against God as well as their fellow man.

Israel had allowed the worship of idols and other gods to take root in their religious practices. Pagan practices became part of Israel's worship to Yahweh. For example, they engaged in the pagan ritual of temple prostitution. They presented the money earned by prostitutes to God as an offering (Micah 1:7, cf.) Deuteronomy 23:17-18).

The wealthy had oppressed the poor to gain more wealth and power. They laid awake at night devising how they would collect more land by defrauding others (Micah 2:1-2). In their greed, they stole from poor women and children. Under the appearance of punishment for their sin, their possessions were taken, and the takers would humiliate them.

Israel's leaders neglected their duties and led the people astray. Rather than protecting and instructing their citizens, they exploited and misled them. Micah used image of cannibalism to describe how the leaders fed off those they were called to protect. Jerusalem's leaders were accused of increasing their power by using violence and oppression, similarly, the prophets chose to seek after money, rather than speak God's truth to the people. They prophesied according to how much money their words might bring them. Israel's leaders were not directed by God; their actions were driven by greed and ambition (Micah 3:11).

Micah's first series of judgments was followed by a hopeful look to a distant future when Israel would be restored. God would eventually redeem His exiled people once again. He would lift Israel up above all other nations.

It was against this backdrop that Micah's second series of Judgments began in chapter 6. This second series of judgments also concerned the issue of social justice in Israel.

### **In Depth**

**1. God Reminds Israel of His Benevolence (Micah 6:3–5)** Through the prophet Micah, God questions why Israel has turned against Him. Why have they turned to false gods? What did God do to deserve their indifference? He recounts how He delivered Israel from the slavery of Egypt. It would seem that Israel has forgotten the significance of their freedom from Egypt and His hand in delivering them. God has done nothing to provoke their negative attitude toward Him. He graciously rescued them from a life of cruel slavery and provided leaders to guide them.

God has also acted on their behalf with those who sought to harm them. He recounts how He disrupted King Balak's plot to have Balaam curse Israel. God's intervention resulted instead in a blessing over

Israel. He has rescued Israel and acted to assure their continued freedom. He has maintained His commitment to the Israelites. These accounts are a reminder of what God has done for them in the past, as well as a reminder of His continued presence among them.

**2. God Requires Justice, Love, and Humility (Micah 6:6–8)** What can Israel do to correct their broken relationship with God? Their immediate response is to offer sacrifices to God. They first suggest reasonable sacrifices of calves and burnt offerings. However, they exponentially increase their offer of sacrifice to ridiculous levels. They ultimately offer the human sacrifice of a firstborn child, which was customary of pagan sacrifice but prohibited by the covenant law (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2–5). The ridiculous nature of their offers seems to imply that there might be no pleasing Yahweh. However, Micah’s prophecy, in keeping with other Israelite prophecies, clearly indicates that the inward condition of one’s heart is of more concern to God than outward religiosity. God doesn’t require outrageous sacrifice; He has already told them what He requires. As communicated earlier in Micah’s prophecy, God requires that His people would once again be a just society that loves mercy. He desires protection for the oppressed and poor. He desires that His people would act mercifully toward one another. He requires that they continue to walk in covenant fellowship with Himself.

#### **Liberating Lesson**

The slogan on our money reads, “In God, We Trust.” To trust in God means to seek and obey His wisdom when making decisions. Do you believe our leaders really seek God’s guidance in matters of state? Do you believe that God should be left of Government decisions?

#### **Application for Activation**

Is there something that you know God wants you to do and you are not doing? Perhaps you are carrying a grudge, and God wants you to demonstrate real love or submit to your spouse. Whatever the case, submit yourself to God and do whatever He wants you to do without worrying about the outcome. Be prepared to share your experiences with the class next week.

#### **Take Aways**

#### **Closing Prayer**

**Week of 25 February 24**

**Daily Bible Readings**



**Monday** – Psalm 66-69

**Tuesday** – Psalm 70-73

**Wednesday** – Psalm 74-77

**Thursday** – Psalm 78-79

**Friday** – Psalm 80-85

**Saturday** – Psalm 86-89

**Sunday** – Psalm 90-95