

Anchored in God, not Idols (Lesson 4)

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Words to Anchor Your Soul

“He has told you, O man, what is proper, and what the LORD really wants from you: He wants you to promote justice, to be faithful, and to live obediently before your God.”

[Micah 6:8](#) (NET)

Introduction

A former pastor of mine was forced to resign from his church when it was discovered that he had been having an adulterous relationship. The story behind the story was that this was not the first time he had been caught! The situation brought much grief and disillusionment to the church membership. Sadly, after many years some of them have never recovered.

What causes someone in leadership to take such a risk? What could be going on in his heart? He is likely worshipping an idol rather than God. Perhaps the idol is sex; perhaps it is the search for significance in the desire of women; it may be the thrill of having what is prohibited. Something means more than God's pleasure. Something other than God rules on the throne of his heart.

We will see in Micah that God detests idolatry and that He expects much from those who lead his people. We are responsible for our influence upon others. To anchor our souls we must put away the idols in our hearts.

Background of Micah

As [Micah 1:1](#) tells us, the prophet spoke God's message during the reigns of Jotham (750-731 B.C.), Ahaz (735-715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.), kings of the southern kingdom of Judah.¹⁹ He was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah. During Ahaz' reign the northern kingdom was destroyed (722 B.C.), as Micah had already predicted. He also warned the southern kingdom of impending doom.

Day One Study

Read [Micah 1:1](#)--2:11.

1. There is beautiful but somewhat scary poetic imagery for God's judgment in 1:2-4. Describe the picture.
2. What sins of the northern kingdom, represented by the name of the capital city Samaria, did Micah mention (1:5-7, 9, 13, 2:1-2, 8-9)?

3. What were to be the consequences of Israel's sins (1:6-7, 15-16; 2:3-4)?
4. Jeremiah began prophesying about sixty years after King Hezekiah's death, denouncing the idolatry of God's people just as Micah and previous prophets had already done. Read these passages and write down your insights.

a. [Jer. 2:9-13](#)

b. [Jer. 10:2-16](#).

5. *Sharing question:* Trusting in a handmade idol may sound foolish to us; how can a piece of wood carved by people help us? Instead of a physical idol, we often trust in other things to bring us happiness, significance, security, and peace; we may set up career, appearance, health, pleasing people, sex, entertainment, or family as idols in our hearts. In what things do you tend to trust? What idols have you set up in your life? What do you seek more than God?

Read [Micah 2:12-13](#), which brings hope beyond the promised judgment.

6. *Responding to God:* Write down your prayer for a friend or someone in your small group who is facing trials or even difficult consequences from her own choices. Pray for hope beyond today. Pray for a focus on God's kingdom plans for her. Write her a note to let her know that you have prayed for her to be encouraged.

Diamonds in the Word: This book seems to be a loose collection of Micah's speeches rather than a highly structured message. It may not be helpful to make a book chart, so read through the book and note the recurring themes.

Day Two Study

Read [Psalm 115](#), which deals with idolatry. We saw yesterday that Micah warned the children of Israel about idolatry in the land.

7. In what ways did the psalmist contrast the true God with idols?

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your resources about the culture that accompanied idolatry, the practices that went with the worship of Baal and other idols common at this time.

8. How did the psalmist call God's people to respond to the truths about God?

9. *Sharing question:* In what one area of your life today are you having trouble trusting God? Why? What aspect of God's character are you failing to believe in? Maybe it is His goodness, His power, or His wisdom.

10. *Sharing question:* Consider God's character trait that you mentioned in the previous question. Write down all the ways you can think of, in the time you have, that God has

shown Himself strong in the past in your life in that way. For example, if you are having trouble trusting His goodness, write down ways He has shown Himself good even in the midst of trials you did not understand.

11. **Responding to God:** Pray through this psalm. When you get to v. 9-11, insert your name and the names of others involved in the situation you mentioned in #9. Insert the same names into v. 12. Write down your thoughts after your time of prayer.

Day Three Study

Read [Micah 3:1-12](#).

12. The imagery in 3:1-3 is quite vivid. Micah painted a terrible picture of what the leaders of the nation were doing to the people. Read more than one translation of these three verses, and write down an explanation of the image and of Micah's point. (You can freely access the NET Bible online at bible.org.)

13. Contrast Micah and the false prophets (3:5-12).

Diamonds in the Word: Read [2 Peter 2](#) today, considering the false teachers of today and paralleling them with those of Micah's day.

God's harsh words for the nation's leaders parallel what we saw in [Micah 1](#) about Israel's influencing its southern neighbor Judah to sin (1:9, 13).

14. Consider Jesus' words in Mt. 18:1-7. How do they make you feel? Why is it so serious when God's people influence others to sin?

15. Read these verses and write down what you learn about your accountability for others before God.

a. [Romans 14:1-12](#)

b. [James 3:1](#).

16. *Sharing question:* In what ways do you watch yourself so that you don't become a stumbling block, especially to "little ones," whether children or the weaker believers?

17. *Responding to God:* You may be a leader in your home, in your office, in your neighborhood, in your extended family, or in the church. Think of those who look to you as a model. Express your desire to never cause them to stumble by writing a prayer or a poem, or by drawing a picture representing your heart in this area.

We can open ourselves up to stumbling because of the influence of other people when we look to others rather than God. I put Kathy's story in today's lesson so that the verses would be fresh in your minds!

Kathy's Story

Being married to a seminary professor has its marvelous benefits as you can imagine—training godly students for Christian ministry, meeting Christians from all over the world and becoming involved with them and their ministries, being constantly stimulated and challenged by students or visiting lecturers that we have the privilege of entertaining in our home, etc. But along with all the wonderful things associated with being married to such a man, there is also the heavy side.

Some students can and do idolize various Christian ministers and when one of these people fail in a significant way, these students are devastated. They feel like they will never be able to make it in ministry because their hero has fallen. At times like this my husband and I have had the privilege of reminding them that we all are frail and that there is no substitute for a personal, intimate walk with the Lord, for accountability in our lives, and for committed prayer on our part for each Christian leader ministering to us and our family.

We have seen the Lord's faithfulness through many of these situations, some after years of heartache, but through it all God has and is revealing Himself to His people in ways we did not expect. He alone is our perfect, Holy, righteous, loving, unfailing God. He wants us to take our eyes off men and placed them on Himself because He is GOD and there is none other!

Day Four Study

Review [Micah 3:12](#).

18. What did Micah say would happen to Jerusalem?

Read about King Hezekiah, the last of the kings under which Micah prophesied, in [2 Kings 18:1-8](#).

19. Why did God approve of Hezekiah?

Read [Jeremiah 26:1-19](#). These events probably occurred early in the reign of Jehoiakim, who ruled in Judah from 608-598 B.C.,²⁰ perhaps a hundred years after Micah's prediction in 3:12.

20. Why were the leaders upset with Jeremiah ([Jer. 26:1-11](#))?

21. Compare Jeremiah's defense ([Jer. 26:12-15](#)) with what Micah said in [Micah 3:8](#).

22. What argument did the elders give on Jeremiah's behalf (26:17-19)?

Dr. Chisholm has this insight: "This demonstrates that Micah's prophecy, though seemingly unconditional in tone, was implicitly conditional. Because of Hezekiah's repentance, the prophesied judgment was postponed."²¹ However, in 586 B.C. during Jeremiah's days, Micah's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled.

23. *Sharing question:* Has God ever graciously protected you from the consequences you deserved from your actions? Share the story with your group.

24. *Responding to God:* God doesn't always protect us from the consequences of our actions, even if we do repent. Sometimes we have irrevocably set events in motion; sometimes we need to live out the consequences in order to learn better. Thank God for loving you enough to do what is best. Ask Him for help in seeing places where you need to repent and turn the other way.

Diamonds in the Word: Read [Micah 4:1--5:15](#). There are some great prophecies in this passage about the future. I am sure you have heard [Micah 4:3c-d](#) quoted. [Micah 5:2](#) is a prophecy of Jesus' birth. Read carefully through these verses, considering when they have been or will be fulfilled.

Day Five Study

Read [Micah 6:1-9](#).

25. What insights do you gain into the heart of God from these verses?

26. *Sharing question:* God reminded the Israelites of some of the things that He had done for them (6:4-5). Take a minute of silence to concentrate on what God has done for you. Write down one great thing that God has done for you to share with your group.

27. *Responding to God:* Spend time praising God for both His heart and His work for you. Recognize how much it must hurt such a great God when we turn to other things to give us what we need.

Our *Words to Anchor the Soul* is [Micah 6:8](#). Work on memorizing this verse and reviewing those from the three previous weeks.

28. Contrast the two ways of entering the Lord's presence in 6:6-8.

29. *Sharing question:* Share one specific way in which you can apply [Micah 6:8](#) today in your life. What one thing will you do this week?

30. *Responding to God:* Pray [Micah 6:8](#) for yourself and for your church family. Ask for forgiveness for outward rather than inward worship.

Diamonds in the Word: Read [Micah 6:10--7:20](#) and write down any insights you gain into the sins of the people or into the future.

The people of Micah's day attempted to replace the true, living, and loving God with idols. We have two stories dealing with personal idols: one concerning career, etc., and the other concerning marriage.

Michelle's Story

My husband and I were both Christians when we began dating and actually grew up in the same church. When we were in college, our church attendance began to slip. Most Sundays I found it more convenient to sleep or study for the next day's class. God had slipped down my priority list behind academia and fun.

After we graduated and got married, my negligence only worsened. We were so busy with our careers that we couldn't fit God in anymore. We both worked long hours including most weekends. My husband went to school at night to get an MBA. Then I did the same. About this time our marriage, weak from little time with God or each other, began to unravel. This was the wake-up call we needed to see that major changes were necessary. I am happy to report that through much prayer and putting God first in our lives we were able to turn our marriage around.

It was really only after having children and quitting work that I realized that all those years I had been worshipping the idols of education, career and money.

B J's Story

Constructing an "idol" in one's life can be done ever so subtly. It was the Word of God, and I wanted to be a "doer of the Word." I was so zealous to be obedient; I was hungry to follow Him! But I had let the instruction on being a submissive wife (attending seminars, Bible studies and reading books) get all out of proportion and meaning. I thought that submission was "asking permission, seeking counsel on every move that I made" from my husband. There was some real error in teaching on the topic going around about thirty-five years ago. Some teachers on the topic were really hammering the concept to the point of subservient behavior. That is what happened with me.

My dear husband finally sat me down one evening. It still ranks as one of the most difficult nights of my life. He basically told me that I was "strangling him to death"; that he couldn't possibly "be all that I was asking him to be/do." Wow! What a major wake-up call that was! The Lord allowed me to get over my hurt feelings. I called out to the Lord for what went wrong with my desire to be obedient, to be a submissive wife. He impressed my heart with these words: "You put your husband into the place that is only reserved for Me. Remember the part about 'No other gods before Me?' I never made your husband to take my place. Your love for your husband has replaced your love for Me. It was easier to talk to him than to seek Me, wait upon Me. You made him an idol in your life. You have put him between you and Me. That is what an idol is/was/and always will be."

If you had asked me prior to this encounter if I had any idols in my life, I would have stated firmly, "Absolutely not!" It was this incident that taught me to be on the look-out for things that are in the Word but can be twisted by my flesh, the world, and the evil one to create an idol. Even something as wonderful and blessed as being a submissive wife can lead to idolatry. Through these ensuing years, I have continued to ask Him to reveal anything or anyone who is slipping in between Him and me; I don't want an idol in my life.