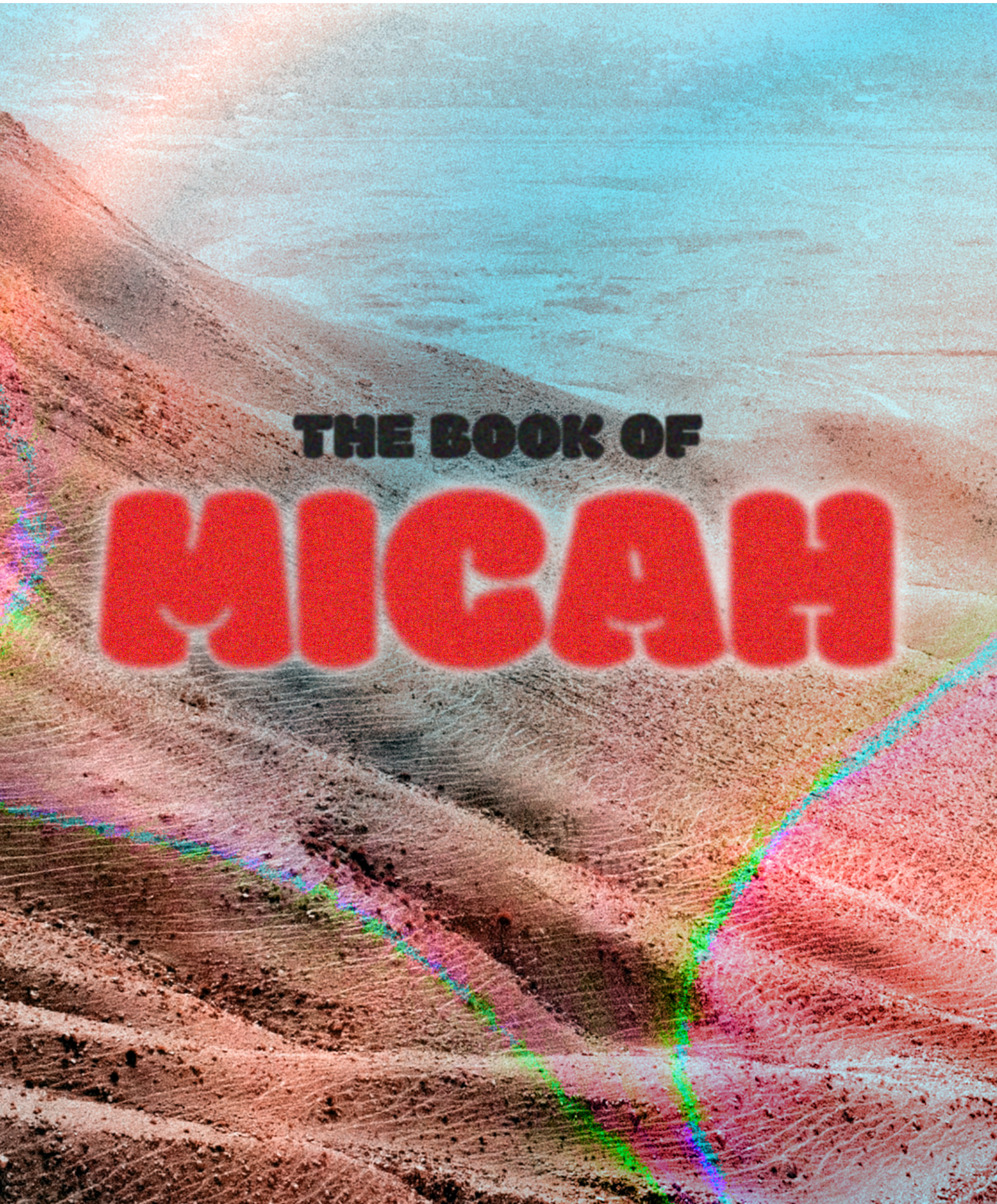


SMALL GROUP GUIDE

THE BOOK OF

MICAH



MICAH CIRCLE: **WHO IS LIKE THE LORD?**

What does your name mean? I'm sure you have looked this up once or twice. If you haven't, I would assume your parents did. Whenever a parent selects a name for their child, they materialize their hopes, dreams, and desires for their little one. It's a beautiful thing. If you go to any bookstore, you'll discover dozens of books dedicated to helping parents select a wonderful, meaningful, and beautiful name. That's why so many parents stress over name selection, because it sticks with you for your entire life. It even ends up on your tombstone when you're gone! A name is a big deal.

Noah means "peace and rest" in Hebrew.

Isabella means "God is my oath" in Italian.

Jacob means "trickster" in Hebrew.

Today, we will examine the words of a prophet named Micah. Micah's Hebrew name means "Who is like the Lord?" His birth certificate translates to a question, which I love.

"Who is like the Lord?" This was the exact question he wrestled with during his ministry. His entire life was dedicated to helping people understand and experience the true nature of the true God. As a prophet, he directly challenged false gods and corrupt religious leaders who misrepresented God. As a leader, he invited people to embrace a life that marvels at God and mirrors God's character.

Micah's goal for God's people was to help them live in a way that pleases God. So what does it look like to please God? And what does God expect of us? Micah lays it out for us in chapter six.

READ: Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 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.

Micah wrote to Israel and the surrounding empires during the 8th century. This was a time when sacrifice was as common as camels. It was an accepted part of religious traditions, both for our God and the false gods of near nations. Micah gives a long list of extreme sacrifices. You may not notice it, but he's using humor here in this section. These jokes would have resonated really well among his ancient audience. If someone had a thousand rams and ten thousand liters of olive oil, they'd likely be among the richest people on earth.

This exaggerated list represents the most lavish sacrifices imaginable. The writing goes from extravagant to morbid when he writes, "shall I offer my firstborn?" Extreme, yes.

Unheard of, unfortunately not. In this dark era, child sacrifice was an accepted part of the cultures surrounding Judea.

Micah challenges these practices by saying that God cares far more about your character than your rituals. It's about intention, not action. Verse eight sums it up. What does God expect of us? It's to "act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). God's not expecting the world's best worship service, nor is He looking for the biggest offering ever given. He's not looking for mindless rituals; He's looking for an intentional heart. This verse declares three expectations of God for His people.

Act Justly.

Micah condemns the corruption of the Kingdom. The leaders took advantage of the poor, chased greed, exploited the marginalized, lived for their own glory, and worked their way to the top in any way possible. Micah's heart broke for the injustice around him. They lived in a culture where classes were divided. The rich were really rich, and the poor were really poor. The extreme cultural divide was a symptom of a systematic problem. Since the leaders were the only people who benefitted from the system, the system was broken and needed repair. Unfortunately, our world is plagued with similar problems.

We should intently listen to the cries of Micah. God expects us to act justly. Some translations say it directly with "do justice." It's not a nice idea; it's a command. This passage reveals that God expects us to be initiators of justice. We often think of this exclusively in the political realm. When we think of justice, we imagine protests, lobbyists, and lawyers. While that's a piece of the pie, it's hardly the whole thing. How do we actively "do justice?" Give a voice to the voiceless. Stand up for those that society rejects. Volunteer in justice-driven nonprofits. God's heart beats for the marginalized and ostracized. Ours should beat to the same rhythm.

Walk humbly with God.

This doesn't mean "walk" in the context of a casual walk in the park. The word "walk" in Scripture is a common metaphor for our life journey. Thus, Micah expects every step on the pilgrimage of life to be humbly connected to God. God's presence should be part of your path. We aren't merely called to walk with God, though. We are called to "humbly" walk with God. The adverb is important. Humility is critical in your spiritual journey. Simply put, it's not about you. It's about Jesus. You could be the world's most skilled worshiper, but God is the star. You could give more money than others make in a year, but Jesus is the ultimate provider. You can have perfect church attendance every Sunday, but what good is that if you ignore a homeless person every Monday morning? Our knowledge of God should not lead to arrogance but humility.

Love mercy.

God expects us to "love mercy." Micah teaches that we must be imitators of God, meaning we should embody his attributes. One of the most common Hebrew words to describe God is "*hesed*," which is the word used here. It translates to kindness,

loving-kindness, mercy, or overall goodness. God is merciful, so we should be merciful. God is kind, so we should be kind. God is forgiving, so we should forgive. We aren't just supposed to show mercy. We're called to love mercy. It's one thing to forgive, but it's another thing to love doing it. We often forgive with clenched fists and hesitancy in our voices. I get it because I've felt that way too. Loving mercy is downright hard, which is why we need God's help.

Have you ever noticed how you begin to act like your friends? Maybe you pick up on their common phrases. Maybe you have fallen in love with an artist they suggested. Maybe you even start to dress like them. We begin to reflect our closest relationships. It's a natural part of life. Micah suggests that the same should unfold in your relationship with God. Growing closer to God means growing deeper in love, richer in mercy, and more active in justice-based causes. When we closely walk with God, we become more like Him.

The people that Micah preached to had a twisted view of their role in God's world. They made massive sacrifices but refused to live a life that followed God's guidance. Cling to the prophet's words. Micah's message serves as a beautiful call to true worship for both ancient Israel and us. How do we become more like the Lord? We walk with humility, love mercy, and seek justice for the people around us.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share your highs and lows from the past week (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week.)

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: What does Micah explain the Israelites are doing that is not pleasing to God?

Q3: What does Micah say pleases God?

Q4: How can we act justly in our everyday lives?

Q5: What does it take to "walk humbly with God?"

Application: What's one practical thing that you can do every day this week that is pleasing to God?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Micah 1

Micah 2

Micah 3

Micah 4

Micah 5

Micah 6

Micah 7

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.