

CORRUPT LEADERS

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MICAH 3–6

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MICAH 3:1-3, 9-12; 6:6-8

Key Verse: What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

Micah 3:1-3, 9-12; 6:6-8 (NRSV)

Micah 3:1-3

1 And I said: Listen, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Should you not know justice?—

2 you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin off my people, and the flesh off their bones;

3 who eat the flesh of my people, flay their skin off them, break their bones in pieces, and chop them up like meat in a kettle, like flesh in a caldron.

9-12

9 Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob and chiefs of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity,

10 who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrong!

11 Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for a price, its prophets give oracles for money; yet they lean upon the Lord and

say, “Surely the Lord is with us! No harm shall come upon us.”

12 Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

6:6-8

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

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, 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 has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

VOCABULARY

- **Abhor** – Regard with disgust and hatred.

INTRODUCTION

In Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, he says, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." What does that really mean for us? It means that we are all connected. We are all linked to the people who are affected by the injustices in the world. For instance, migrant families from South America fleeing injustice, violence, criminal gangs, instability, poverty, and economic hardship in their own country find that it is even worse once they get to the U.S. border. Once they arrive to the U.S. to seek protection from the horrors at home, they are faced with another set of horrors at the border. These migrants found that the American government, in an effort to "protect the country," only made the situation worse, by exploiting the migrant's pain and holding them in detention camps, separating them from their children and drastically cutting the number of petitions for protection granted in the U.S.

Images of children in makeshift jails being torn from their parents have horrified American citizens and others around the world. Even though they did not cause the injustice, they are still affected by it. This is how injustice links us together. This is why we are to stand up against it. There are many more situations in our communities and throughout the world that indirectly affect us. That is why God requires us to *do* justice and *love* kindness.

Activity #1: Think Right! In groups, brainstorm and develop a list of current injustices that are happening in the world. Write them on a sheet of large post-it paper. Come together and share

your list, combining them together to make one big list.

THE BIBLE STORY

Micah goes in on the religious leaders, telling them that they, who are responsible for teaching the people right from wrong, know the laws and yet choose not to obey them, and therefore have become the worst sinners. Micah calls them out because they are taking advantage of the very people they are supposed to serve. These leaders don't have any compassion. Instead, they lead the people astray and treat them terribly to satisfy their own selfish needs. These leaders exploit the people by accepting bribes to high tithers who want to control the church. They remain silent when people are treated badly, when they really should speak up in order not to lose money or members in their churches. The church leaders were very corrupt, yet depended on God to be with them.

In the midst of all of this they still wanted to please God, so God informed the corrupt leaders of God's requirements of justice for all. There are only three requirements: love, kindness, and the desire to walk humbly before God. Leaders and rulers are told that demonstrating injustice yet saying that God is with them will lead to destruction.

LIFE APPLICATION

Have you ever wanted to get involved with a cause of injustice but didn't because of the time and effort that it would take, or even the financial commitment that it would require? What if it would take you out of your comfort zone? Often, when something happens that demands justice,

it's not at a convenient time and it may require you to get out of your comfort zone.

When Martin Luther King, Jr. pronounced a boycott on the Montgomery, Alabama bus system on December 20, 1955, it meant everyone involved had to find other means to get to where they were going. That meant that some had to get up earlier: carpool, take cheaper taxis, ride bicycles, and sometimes walk the distance to work and back. It meant that people had to work together to take care of everyday needs. It meant that folks had to speak up to get others involved who might have had excuses. Take note of the date—it was in December—one of the coldest months of the year. This was truly a sacrifice. The Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted 381 days, more than a year, and as a result the Supreme Court ruled in their favor.

This took planning, patience, and perseverance for more than a year to make this happen. Most of all, the people had to lean on God and walk by faith to endure. As a result, the bus boycott went to the Supreme Court and was ruled in their favor.

Activity #2: Plan Right! From the list created in **Activity #1**, develop a plan to be used to bring about an activity for justice in your community. Think about the time, place, resources, advertising, and support you will need to make it happen. From the list of spiritual attributes provided, which ones will you need to make sure you have mastered to make justice happen, and why?

Faith	Generosity	Endurance
Compassion	Humility	Reverence
Discernment	Kindness	Patience
Empathy	Love	Self-Control

SUMMARY

We have to be very intentional in the ways we try to please God, even when we are working on behalf of others who are being marginalized or unjustly affected by situations that are beyond their control. Micah has shown us that it is really simple. God’s requirements are clear: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. In our efforts to please God, we must be careful to examine these areas on a regular basis. We want to make sure that what we intend to do for others is not done out of selfish gain, and to honor God at the same time.

Activity #3: Do Right! With activities one and two complete, develop a “how to” list for future reference that will enable you to be examples of what justice really looks like.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Play YouTube video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5_7LEWnGaQ) “I Need You to Survive” by Hezekiah Walker. Have everyone face a partner or two and sing along to each other these words.

“I Need You to Survive”

By Hezekiah Walker

I need you, you need me.

We're all a part of God's body.

Stand with me, agree with me.

We're all a part of God's body.

It is his will, that every need be supplied.

You are important to me, I need you to survive.

You are important to me, I need you to survive.

I pray for you, you pray for me.

I love you, I need you to survive.

I won't harm you with words from my mouth.

I love you, I need you to survive.

It is his will, that every need be supplied.

You are important to me, I need you to survive.