# BIBLE STUDY HELPS

**TITLE: Godly Leaders Needed**

**TEXT: Micah 3:1-12**

## TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Ungodly leadership will lead to God's wrath.

## LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

**Ask (list on a markerboard):** What are the qualities you desire to see in a civil leader? What qualities do you desire to see in a church leader?

**Explain:** A secular business survey developed by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, co-authors of *The Leadership Challenge,* asked this question, "What do you most admire and look for in a leader?" The results have consistently indicated over the past several decades there were 5 top qualities a leader should possess: honest, competent, inspiring, forward looking, and courageous. (source: https://www.leadershipchallenge.com/research/five-practices.aspx)

**Discussion Options (Use with discernment):**

- We just finished choosing civil leaders through our mid-term elections. Would you say these qualities are still valued? Why or why not?
- What other reasons might motivate someone today to follow a civil leader?
- What other reasons might motivate someone today to follow a church leader?

The prophet Micah spoke to a time when neither the civic nor the spiritual leaders of Israel were godly leaders. Their motives and actions were ungodly, and what's even more alarming is that the people chose to follow and embrace the leadership of these ungodly leaders.

Micah was active as a prophet during the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722 BC. He was a prophet, primarily, but not exclusively, to the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the time when Hosea, Isaiah, and possibly Amos were active as prophets.

During his ministry, God directed him to deliver a message concerning the capitals of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Samaria), and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Jerusalem). That message focused on the judgment that was coming because of ungodly leadership and because people willingly followed those leaders.

After laying out his case like a prosecuting attorney in a courtroom, in chapters 1-2, God leads Micah, in chapter 3, to describe the results of ungodly leadership. Micah will describe three things that we should consider today as we lead and follow civil and church leaders.

1. Ungodly Civil Leadership Exposed
2. Ungodly Church Leadership Exposed
3. The Results of Ungodly Leadership

## LOOK IN: UPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### First, Micah exposes ungodly civil leadership– Micah 3:1-4

*[1] Then I said, "Now listen, leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel. Aren't you supposed to know what is just? [2] You hate good and love evil. You tear off people's skin 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." [4] Then they will cry out to the Lord, but he will not answer them. He will hide his face from them at that time because of the crimes they have committed.*

Micah indicates in verse 1 that he is specifically addressing the civil leaders of the Northern and Southern Kingdom. These were leaders who were supposed to uphold justice and defend the cause of the weak and oppressed. He lays out specific charges that revealed their ungodliness.

**Guide:**

- What were these civil leaders supposed to know? (What is just)
- What is the basis for knowing what is just? How does someone truly know what is just?
- What led these leaders to pervert what was just based on verse 2? (They hated good and loved evil.)

Micah describes how these ungodly civil leaders perverted the basic principles God expected from His covenant people. Instead of loving good and hating evil, they were doing just the opposite and leading the entire nation to do just the opposite.

Micah graphically describes these leaders by comparing them to bloodthirsty cannibals who meticulously devoured their victims. Notice the descriptions he uses to describe their ungodliness:

1. They skinned them.
2. They stripped their flesh from their bones.
3. They broke their bones.
4. They chopped them up like meat from a cooking pot.
5. They ate their flesh.

This description paints a repulsive picture of how these ungodly leaders treated people. These leaders totally consumed the weak and defenseless of their society for their own personal satisfaction. Notice also that these leaders didn't act independently of one another. These ungodly leaders worked together for their own common good as they devoured helpless people.

**Discuss Options (choose with discernment):**

- How can civic leaders today avoid becoming like these leaders?
- How might ungodly civic leaders mistreat people today?
- Many try to compartmentalize their Christian faith from what is taking place in civil government. While we know Micah is addressing a nation that was a theocracy and not a democracy, are the issues Micah lays out still relevant?

Notice how these ungodly leaders responded to God when there was a catastrophe or crisis in Micah 3:4. In their case it might have been the coming invasions by the Assyrian armies. Verse 4 tells us that they "cry out to the Lord."

**Discuss:** Why do you believe God responded the way He did when they cried out to Him in verse 4? Were they repenting or just wanting God to bail them out without changing their behavior?

Based on God's response to their cries for help, it's evident they weren't repenting but were only desiring God to bail them out.

**Discuss:** What can we learn regarding what we desire God to do in our own nation? How should this change the way we "cry out" to God?

**Next Micah exposes ungodly church (spiritual) leadership – Micah 3:5-8**

*[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. [6] Therefore, it will be night for you — without visions; it will grow dark for you — without divination. 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 be-cause 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.*

The spiritual leaders in Micah's time were the prophets. These prophets were supposed to be proclaiming God's message. They were authorized to speak on His behalf. Because of their ungodliness, they used their office for a different motive. Micah uses some interesting contrasts to describe their ungodliness:

- They were delivering false messages and claiming they came from God.
- They were misleading the people of God with the false messages.
- They intentionally led the people to turn away from God's instruction.
- "The false prophets prostituted their office by giving a favorable or unfavorable message based on how much people could pay them." (Source: ETB Leader Commentary)
- If someone paid well, they would turn a blind eye to their wicked ways.
- If someone couldn't pay them, they would "declare war" against them, most likely meaning they would pronounce curses on them.

**Identify:** How did Micah describe God's judgment for these ungodly spiritual leaders?

God's judgment would include:

- Micah 3:6—Darkness and silence. They would be unable to receive any answers from God when they sought Him.
- Micah 3:6—God would cause the "daylight to turn black over them." This indicates that these false prophets were at one time walking with God. However, these false prophets allowed ungodliness and greed to grip their hearts. Their choices would ultimately blind them so that they could no longer receive visions from God.
- Micah 3:7—These ungodly spiritual leaders would be humiliated and shamed because they could no longer speak on behalf of holy God. "Their shame is emphasized by the statement *they will cover their mouths.* The covering of one's mouth (literally "mustache" in Hebrew) was associated with the actions of an outcast from society (see Lev. 13:45;

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Ezek. 24:17,22). Therefore, not only would these prophets be cast out of God's service, but they also would mourn over the loss of their status in the eyes of the people." (Source: ETB Leader Commentary)

However, Micah reveals in Micah 3:8, the one thing that indicates someone is a godly spiritual leader. He uses his own life as the example.

**Identify:** What did Micah say indicates that someone is a godly leader? (Filled with "power by the Spirit of the Lord.")
**Discuss:** What are some indicators that would reveal a church leader today is striving to be filled with the Spirit? How can you, as the spiritual leader in your home and work, make sure you aren't drifting toward the compromise that overcame the spiritual leaders described in these passages?

When ungodliness is declared there is no avoiding the demand to take responsibility for the choices made. If civic leaders or spiritual leaders choose the path of ungodliness, the results will be devastating for them and those who follow them.

**The results of ungodly leadership—Micah 3:9-12**

*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. 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.*

All the leaders of the nation—civic and spiritual—abhorred justice and perverted "everything that is right." They twisted, perverted, and polluted everything God established to be right. They turned what was wrong into what was right and what was right into what was wrong.

The Explore the Bible Leader Commentary tells us that "these leaders celebrated and magnified themselves with magnificent building projects at the expense of others. They oppressed the weak by robbing them of their homes, their properties, and their lives. The civil leaders and magistrates, along with the religious leaders, were more concerned about getting rich than about rightly carrying out their responsibilities under God. In the courtrooms, judges were willing to help a person; if there was a religious issue, the priests were ready to take care of it; and if a person needed personal guidance, the prophets were more than willing to give a desired answer—as long as the money was right."

Yet, they lived in this delusional state of mind, thinking that God was good with how they were acting and would not punish them. Micah's message from God presented the reality that their assumptions were all wrong; disaster was coming upon them (See Micah 2:3).

Disaster would come upon both kingdoms because of them. They were the leaders who could have led differently, but they didn't. They were the leaders who could have honored God, but they didn't. Nothing would be spared. The farms, the cities, and the temple would be totally destroyed or laid to waste. The people would suffer at the hands of other nations.

In 722 BC, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and its capital, Samaria, would be laid to waste by the Assyrians. In 586 BC, the Southern Kingdom of Judah and it's capital, Jerusalem, would be laid to waste by the Babylonians, including the temple.

## LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

**Discuss:** What if Micah were alive today and was speaking to our leadership? How would leaders respond? How would people respond? How would you respond?

If believers consider pursuing public servant positions, these passages should remind them to protect themselves from following the path that leads to ungodliness. This is equally true for anyone who believes God is calling them to lead a local church. Additionally, all Christians are spiritual leaders to someone, and these passages should remind us all that we must protect ourselves from following the path that leads to ungodliness.

**Action:** In what ways can we encourage those in office to pursue the path of godliness? In what ways can we encourage our church leaders to pursue the path of godliness? How can we encourage one another to pursue the path of godliness?

As we conclude this session, we should remind ourselves of one more thing. It's been said that you know you are a leader if you look behind you and people are following you. However, if the leaders we are following aren't setting examples of godliness, then we are following leaders that will take us down the path toward destruction and disaster. If we follow ungodly leaders, we can't just blame the leaders when things go wrong.

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