

A Good Shepherd Sacred Story

What Does the Lord Require?

**Adapted by:
Brenda J. Stobbe**

**Illustrations by:
Jennifer Schoeneberg**

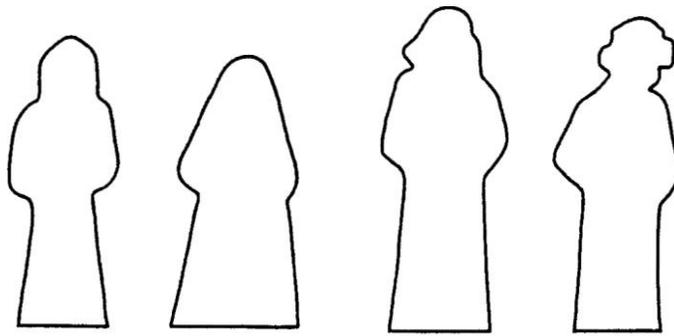
©Good Shepherd, Inc. 1991, 1992
Good Shepherd, a registered trademark of Good Shepherd, Inc.
All Rights Reserved
Printed in U.S.A.

WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE? ... MATERIALS

- small wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden Micah figure
 - 4 wooden people of God figures



Micah



People of God

WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE? ... MICAH 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the basket next to you.

Reverently stroke one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children during the silence.

Speak sadly and slowly emphasizing the words "very sad" and "very angry".

Nod once or twice as you speak of the prophets.

Place Micah in the center of the storytelling area.

Before you speak, place the four people of God a little distance to the right of center in a semicircle facing Micah.

Touch one of the people of God.

Shake your head firmly.

Place your hand, palm downward, over all the people of God.

Nod your head and smile as you speak.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to this story of God's people are inside of me. If you will make silence with me, I will find all of the words to this sacred story.

Long after David and Solomon were dead the people of God lived in ways that made God very sad and very angry.

God sent prophets to talk with the people of God and tell them how they should live.

One of those prophets was a man named Micah.

Micah called the people of God together and told them, "You are not living in the way Yahweh has wanted you to live."

"You pay judges money to say what you want. The government of Jerusalem treats people dishonestly. And the church leaders steal money from the church."

The people of God didn't like to hear what Micah said to them.

They told Micah, "Do not preach those words here."

They said, "Yahweh will stay with us and give us peace because this city is the city of Yahweh."

Touch another of the people of God.

Lift one hand, near eye level, palm up and open.

Move the Micah figure slightly to the right, closer to the people of God.

Touch each of the people of God as you speak.

Gesture to include all of the people of God, Micah also.

Lean forward and speak very intensely.

Move two of the people of God to the left side of Micah and rest your hand briefly on them.

Touch the remaining people of God and shake your head sadly.

Touch again, the two people of God left of Micah.

Take your hand and pantomime throwing something away from you.

Lean forward and emphasize the word ALWAYS.

But Micah asked them, "Do you think you make God happy when you sacrifice a thousand burnt offerings? Do you think pouring out all the expensive oil before God will make God happy?"

"Yahweh has shown us what is good. Yahweh has been good to us."

"Let me tell you what will make God happy. This is what God wants from you":

"God wants you to live justly and be fair. God wants you to love mercy and be kind. And God wants you to walk with God, knowing how great God is."

Micah told the people, "If you confess your sin and live as Yahweh wants, then you will be forgiven."

"Then all the swords will be made into plows to make the ground ready to be planted and all the spears will become tools to pick fruit. "

The people heard the words of Micah and some of them felt badly about how they had lived.

But others didn't care what he said because they believed God would never allow them to be hurt.

For those who heard and believed, Micah had a promise.

Micah promised that God won't always be angry and will throw away that anger into the ocean.

For God promised to ALWAYS love God's people and God keeps God's promises.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder why the people thought Yahweh lived in Jerusalem?

I wonder where God does live?

I wonder if God is in me?

I wonder how God wants me to live?

Carefully place all the wooden figures back into the story basket.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to the shelf. Then return to the circle and sit down.

Dismiss the children to the work/art response time ONLY after all have had an opportunity to choose their work.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away, so you will know how to handle them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where I return this story, so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will choose for your work today? Will you paint, draw or work with a story? Let's decide.

WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE? TEACHER HELPS

This lesson deals with the entire book of Micah. Since it is primarily poetry, it can be a difficult text to turn into story form. There is very little action, just the words of the prophet Micah. I firmly believe this text is one with which the children of God, in our churches, need to become familiar. Too many adults believe the prophets of the Old Testament spent their lives gazing into crystal balls to see what would happen in the future. Even more adults look back at the Old Testament and in retrospect see it predicting specific events in the new Testament. It is my belief that the prophets in the Old Testament were inspired by God's spirit to understand that the natural consequences of the actions of the people of God were bound to lead them to destruction.

The people of the south, the Judeans, did not believe they would suffer the same fate as the northern tribes had suffered when they had been destroyed, their land invaded and some of their people deported. They felt safe because they had Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, they understood that Yahweh had put Yahweh's name. And no god would destroy the place where

that God dwelt, especially Yahweh. So, even though Micah and his contemporary, Isaiah of Jerusalem, spoke out again and again against the injustices being practiced by the people of God, those very people went on as though nothing could happen to them.

It is difficult for us to understand the bond between church and state in the time of the Old Testament. There was no separation of the two, as we experience it today. If you were a Hebrew you worshiped Yahweh, if you didn't, you weren't a Hebrew. The law demanded justice be given to the poor, oppressed and downtrodden. It wasn't only a civil law, it was a religious law as well. Micah became very angry with the people of Jerusalem because they seemed much more interested in lining their own pockets than in caring for those who needed them. To make matters worse, these same people came to the temple to worship piously, offer sacrifices and sing Psalms. Micah 6:6-8 is crucial to the understanding of Micah's message. Here, Micah asks the people why God would want burnt offerings of year old calves, thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil. There is even a scathing denouncement of child sacrifice as Micah asks, "Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7) Micah had said this to show that the people of God had followed their pagan neighbors in offering their children as sacrifices.

The final word of what God wants is found in Micah 6:8. Older children can memorize this and hold tight to it. God wants us to do justice, act mercifully and be in right relationship with God. If we truly do all those things, our actions will bear out our faith.

The end of the book of Micah does not leave us hopeless, but looks to a possibility of God's people returning to Jerusalem after the punishment of exile in Babylon. The final three verses say that God does not hold onto God's anger forever, but throws it into the sea. For the children we finish this story by noting that God makes promises and God keeps promises. In a world of constantly shifting power it is important for children to understand that God will never stop loving them and will not, in the end, abandon God's people.

The first three questions wonder about where God lives and move from the general to the specific. We begin by wondering why the people of God believed that God lived in Jerusalem. Some of the children may remember the story of the ark of the covenant or the story of Jericho where God's presence was a very real being. Others may believe that it was just because the church was there. We continue by wondering just where God does live. Some children will say "in heaven" and some will say "in church." Then, I would hope we could move the children, ever so gently, toward the third question that wonders if God lives in them. The circle of light that we use in our Good Shepherd program reinforces this thinking so many of the children may be willing to accept that understanding. For concrete operational thinkers, however, it will be exceedingly difficult and should not be pushed, just introduced.

The fourth wondering question asks how God might want each of us to live. This would be a good time to help the children memorize Micah 6: 8. We can speak of justice as being fair, which nearly all children understand. We can address mercy as kindness to which, again, many children will relate. Being in right relationship with God may be best explained to the children

as understanding that they are not God, but are loved by God. To be humble is to understand that your very life is a gift from God.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

In today's story the prophet Micah gets very angry at what some of the people in the church were doing. Can you think of anything that has been done in the name of God that would hurt or anger God? What about wars?

The book of Micah says that God wants us to be just or fair in our lives. When is it the hardest for you to treat other people fairly? When is it the easiest?

What can you do that will make people want to follow the same God you follow?