



devotion

# Micah

**Esther Hughes** shares a devotional to help us connect what we read in the Bible with our experience at work

*'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 6:8)

This is a well-known and well-loved verse among Christians, but I wonder whether we've dug into its context in the book of Micah?

Micah was a prophet around 700 BC, and his role was to speak for God. To warn God's people that judgement was coming for the ways they had broken their covenant with God – their idolatry, injustice, oppression, and empty rituals. It's a reminder that God is holy and cannot tolerate sin.

Amid this overwhelming prediction of destruction, Micah also gives hope and consolation as he describes God's love and mercy. He prophesies a Messiah who will be born in Bethlehem, be Israel's ruler, and bring peace.

The world we live in can feel very much 'in tension' can't it? I certainly feel the tension of the 'now and not yet'; of having new life in Jesus, yet still struggling with sin. I witness the world around me infused with and affected by sin – injustices far off or close to home. In healthcare, it can be obvious; we witness all kinds of suffering, discrimination, and unfulfilled promises. Across the world more widely, we know there are even greater inequalities in access to healthcare, lack of freedoms, war, and poverty. It is bleak, and we can feel helpless.

While we are this side of heaven, as we await Jesus' return, our redemption, and the full restoration of this world, we know we are in the pains of childbirth before deliverance (see Romans 8:22).

Micah also knows the discomfort of living in the 'labour pains' (Micah 4:10).

Books like Micah can make uncomfortable reading. It is a humbling reality check that sin does need to be judged. This is the tension that should come closest to home. The greatest injustice is that we don't have to experience God's judgement because Jesus

bore it for us! *'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'* (1 John 1:9)

This is mind-blowing and Micah concludes his book in amazement at God's mercy:

*'Who is a God like you,  
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression  
of the remnant of his inheritance?  
You do not stay angry forever  
but delight to show mercy.  
You will again have compassion on us;  
you will tread our sins underfoot  
and hurl all our iniquities into  
the depths of the sea.'*  
(Micah 7:18-19)

So, where does our well-loved verse fit in? The people of Israel responded to the warnings against them by trying to appease God with sacrifices and religious rituals. But these could never be enough. God wanted their heart attitudes to change, and he wants us to be changed inwardly too:

- to act justly. In a world that is unjust, we must strive to speak out and to do what is right

- to love mercy. In a world of selfishness and tough breaks, we must be merciful
- to walk humbly. In a world of pride and self-sufficiency, we must walk humbly with God

Questions to ponder:

- Do we have an intolerance for sin as God does? Do we tolerate idolatry, injustice, and empty rituals in ourselves and the world around us?
- How can we act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly from a changed and saved heart attitude while living in a broken world?

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