

Micah

#1: A Severe Mercy

Micah 1

Dr. Jeremiah Ebeling ---- October 4, 2026

Well, today we are starting a seven-week journey through the Old Testament book of Micah. It's going to be great. This is week one of seven weeks together. So, I've spent a lot of time in Micah recently, and I've got to tell you—it is a weighty and beautiful book about God's judgment, about the hope that we have in the Lord. It is a book about God's justice and His mercy and His faithfulness.

There's an Old Testament scholar, Bruch Waltke, and this is how he describes Micah: “Micah teaches us that God is just, but His mercy is greater.”

And so, as we dive into this book, we're going to see that it is chock full of God's judgment for the sins of His people. It's a heavy one. But Waltke says this: hope and “salvation, not judgment, will have the last word.” That's true in Micah. That's true in life—that hope and salvation, not judgment, will have the last word. This is a powerful book for understanding and enjoying the character of God and what He's up to in our lives. And we're going to see that via how He works through Micah in Israel and Judah both at that time.

This past summer you'll remember that we went through the Old Testament Walk Thru. And I what I love about that is that allows us and helps us to be able to place the prophet Micah in the biblical timeline. Micah prophesied during what is called [The Divided Kingdom](#). You can do it with me. *[Hold hands above head with the base of the palms together, forming a “V”.]* The Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom had already separated. Long ago that took place. And we know that in the midst of the Divided Kingdom there were what? [Mostly Bad Kings](#) *[point thumbs down]*. Almost all of them—not all of them, but almost all of them were mostly bad kings.

So, whom did God send? He sent prophets. [Prophets Speak](#)—right? *[Flap thumb and four fingers together with right hand to indicate someone speaking.]* He sent prophets to speak

and to call the people back to repentance, back to the Lord, and away from their sin. Micah is, of course, one of those prophets.

And then Micah is what you call a pre-Exilic prophet. That just means that he prophesied before the exile of his countrymen. So, he prophesied right before **Israel** was **Scattered** [*place hands together in front of body and then move hands out to either side*] and **Judah** was **Exiled** [*place hands together in front of body and then push hands together to one side*]. That's where you find Micah in the Old Testament biblical timeline.

Micah 1:1

The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

And then we have an important introduction to this prophet in verse one of Micah chapter one. It's going to be up here on the TV. You can open your Bibles there as well if you like. We find out a lot about this man whom God sent to Israel and Judah in that very first verse where Micah says, "The word of the Lord that came to Micah ..."---this is an introduction to what Micah is about to say—" ... of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem."

The first thing we find out about this man we've already said: the word of the Lord came to him. Micah was a biblical prophet. He held this office of a prophet, and that simply meant that the Lord spoke to Micah and gave him a message that he wanted him to deliver to whomever He said. In this case, Micah was sent as a prophet, not to Israel alone or to Judah alone, but to both Samaria (which was the capital of the Northern Kingdom, which was called Israel), and also to Jerusalem (the capital of the Southern Kingdom, which was also called Judah.) That's right. So, he's a prophet to Israel and Judah both, both the Northern and the Southern kingdom. And we discover these things about him.

Secondly, we also find out that Micah was from Moresheth. You probably haven't heard of that, but Moresheth was a very small town of probably a couple of hundred people. It was about twenty-five miles outside of Jerusalem towards the Mediterranean Sea. So, Micah is a small town boy. But he grew up to be a big city prophet.

For we know here that he prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, these three kings of Judah. We know that he held this office of prophet for thirty to forty years. He was a prophet for a significant amount of time. He spent a lot of that in the big city of Jerusalem, very likely. And again, he probably had this country drawl, being from that small town. And with the ears of those big city folks, they probably looked down on him a little bit.

But I want you to think about this man Micah. What would that experience have been like for him? We'll explore that a little bit more in just a moment.

We find out some really important things about him in verse 1. And what you see in chapter 1 and in the whole book of Micah are two main messages that we're going to cycle through a few different times.

1. A Message of Judgment

The first main message that you're going to see in this book is a message of judgment. God sends Micah to pronounce the judgment that's coming on Israel and Judah for their prolonged sin, for their unrepentant hearts. So, that's the role given to Micah. And we know that when Micah shows up, it is a dark time in Israel's and Judah's history. The vulnerable (as often is the case) are being taken advantage of by those who had power. The nation and the people were spiritually hollow. There was wealth, and certainly some affluence that some enjoyed. But there was a hollowness to the spirituality of the nation at that time, as there had been for some time. Corruption and violence were the norm. And we'll talk about the religious leaders next week, but they were cowards. And they said what the people wanted to hear, not what was true, not what God would have them say. And so, we discover these things. And by the time Micah shows up, it has been about 700 years since the Mosaic covenant when the people of God and YHWH come together and make this bilateral covenant with one another that Israel will obey and follow the Lord and experience and enjoy His blessings. Or they will choose to disobey and will walk in rebellion and sin and will be punished. They would receive the curses of the law. After 700 years of God calling out to His people to come back to Him, Micah steps onto the scene. And he has some very tough words of judgment that he's going to communicate on the Lord's behalf.

Again, just imagine what that experience must have been like for Micah for thirty or forty years of sharing this tough, weighty message of judgment. And he wasn't welcome, as you might

imagine. I mean, I'll bet the loneliness he experienced was intense. Think of the courage and the faith that it took to hang in there and speak on YHWH's behalf. I can't imagine what that must have been like for this man of God.

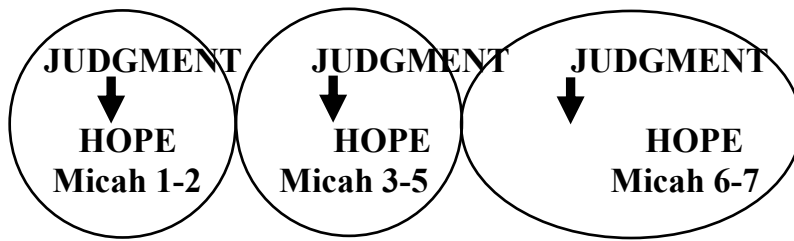
2. A Message of Hope

But we see this message of judgment throughout this book. The second message that we see is hope. Hope is this: it is faith that is forward looking. It is faith that is future facing. What you see Micah come back to several times is that there is a future hope for the people of God. In spite of the judgment that's coming, there is a future hope for the people of God. God is not going to be unfaithful to His Abrahamic Covenant that happened even long before the Mosaic Covenant; that God will remain faithful to His promises, to His people, the people of Abraham. So, you see this message of hope that God will not relinquish those covenant promises. He's going to carry them out no matter what His people have done. That's going to show up in two different ways in particular. First, there's what Micah called "the remnant." We're going to study more about that in the coming weeks. But the remnant is a small portion of the people of God whom God has preserved for Himself. It's this remnant of people who have stayed faithful to the Lord no matter what everyone else around them is doing.

The remnant is first, and second is the theme that there will be a future ruler, and this ruler will come to rescue His people. And we'll find out more about that ruler also in the coming weeks. But there's this message of hope as well. Because hope and not judgment will have the last word. It's true of Micah, and it's true in life.

And what you're going to see over the course of the seven chapters of this book are three cycles. There's this cycle of judgment and hope in chapters 1 and 2. And in chapters 3 through 5 you see judgment and hope. And there are these three cycles that you're going to see continue throughout the course of these seven chapters.

3 CYCLES IN MICAH:



And today we're going to be in the first chapter. We're going to land in Micah 1. And here's where Micah 1 lands: it is all about judgment. There's not much hope. There's no hope in Micah 1. It's a heavy, tough chapter. And yet, what I want you to see in our time together, where we're heading with this message, is that when it comes to God's judgment and His discipline of us as His people, His consequences that He brings into our lives for sin, I want you to see that that is something we absolutely do not like, but we desperately need.

We often protest the discipline of the Lord in our lives. But what I want to suggest is that, if we actually understand God's purposes and reasons for divine discipline, we can learn to appreciate and even enjoy the consequences that we experience for sin in our lives. It may be hard to believe, but I'll show you in our time together why I think that's the case; why I think that's important. So, that's where we're headed in our time in Micah 1 today.

So, let's jump in here. What you see in Micah 1 is that there is this cosmic courtroom that Micah sets up. And in the imagery of this cosmic courtroom where YHWH shows up, He plays three roles.

First, He is judge. He is prosecutor. And He is witness. And Israel and Judah are the defendants in this case.

And Micah writes a **summons**. He says for all inhabitants of the earth to come to this legal trial where God is going to be judge, prosecutor, and witness. Hear the charges that are going to be laid out against His people—against Israel and Judah.

Micah 1:2

Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple.

And so, you see this summons here in this second verse. Micah says, “Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple.”

So, everyone is subpoenaed, everyone is summoned to come and hear the case that YHWH the Lord is going to lay out against His people. That’s where we start.

Micah 1:3-4

For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. ⁴ And the mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.

And this is what it’s going to be like when the Lord comes. Micah says, “For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.”

When the Lord shows up, everybody will know it. Everybody is going to feel His presence. And one scholar says the imagery here in verses 3 and 4 is supposed to conjure up the imagery from Mount Sinai back in Exodus 19 and 20 when the Lord descends to make the Mosaic covenant with the people of Israel. And it’s this imagery of the Lord showing up, and there’s fire and smoke and an earthquake. The earth crumbles beneath it. It takes us back to that Mount Sinai experience. But in that case, the Lord came to make a covenant with His people; and now the Lord has come because His people have broken the covenant. God is not coming to make a covenant, but He’s coming in judgment because of how people have treated that

covenant. He has sent warning after warning and prophet after prophet. And now Micah says that the Lord is on His way. He's coming out of His place. He's coming, and He is showing up in the flesh. The Lord is going to show up. His presence is going to be here.

Micah 1:5

All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?

And then we see the charges that the Lord brings against Israel and Judah. This is what those charges are. Micah says, "All this is for the transgression of Jacob"—that's another way to say "Israel"— "and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?"

What Micah is saying is that the center of Israel's (first he starts with the Northern Kingdom) sin is their capital city, Samaria. And then he talks about the high place of Judah being in Jerusalem. And when he says "high place," what we're supposed to think of is anywhere another god other than the one true God was worshipped. And so, Micah is asking if we know where the high place of Judah is. It's this place where other gods, idols, gods other than the true God, YHWH Himself, are being worshipped. Do you know where that's happening? Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah. It's the center of Judah's idolatry. This is Judah not just going out there to worship other gods; this is Judah taking other gods and bringing them into the very house of God. In many places in Scripture idolatry is compared or likened to spiritual adultery. Judah is cheating on the Lord. And so, what you see in this second part of verse 5 is that Micah saying that Judah is cheating on YHWH in His very own house. Can you imagine?

These are the charges that are being brought against the people of Israel and the people of Judah. What had happened and what was taking place is not that the people of God had moved God out. It wasn't that they had stopped worshiping Him entirely. They didn't do that. They hadn't fully abandoned YHWH. No, they continued to pray to Him. They offered some sacrifices. Maybe they obeyed some here and there. But they took YHWH and sprinkled in some other gods around Him. They sprinkled in some other things and gods and idols that brought

them meaning, that they turned to for security, for significance, for comfort. And so, it wasn't this full abandonment of God. They kept Him there. *Sure, our lives are somewhat centered around Him.* But there were these other gods sprinkled in too.

Tim Keller writes about what Israel and Judah were doing. He writes about when we do this. And this is what Keller says: "The greatest danger, because it is such a subtle temptation which enables us to continue as church members and feel that nothing is wrong, is not that we become atheists, but that we ask God to co-exist with idols in our hearts."

What Keller is saying that most likely we're not going to abandon God altogether. No, we'll continue to talk to Him some and sing to Him here and there. But when we take these other things, these other objects or people that we also lift and worship, we just sprinkle those in around it. And we continue to go to Him, but we also go to these other gods, these other idols that we put our hope in, in one way or another.

In *The Screwtape Letters* do you know what C. S. Lewis calls this? He calls this "Christianity and." In *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape is training his protegee, Wormwood, who has been assigned to a Christian to try and get that Christian off the path of following the Lord. And this is what Screwtape says to Wormwood: "The real trouble about the set your patient is living in is"—the patient is the believer—"is that it is merely Christian. They all have individual interests, of course, but the bond remains mere Christianity. What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call 'Christianity And.'"

I like to think of this as this: "Jesus and ____" Christianity. I kind of like to think of it that way because we so often do what Judah and Israel were doing. It's not that we stop believing in God totally. It's that, sure, we're going to revere Him and honor Him in worship in some ways. But we're going to sprinkle in these other gods, these other things that we also put our hope in for security, for significance. It could be "Jesus and personal growth" or "Jesus and personal comfort" or self-esteem, or a boyfriend or a girlfriend, or your favorite band. It could be any number of good things, even, that we put alongside Jesus and just sprinkle into our worship.

And sure, we'll keep Jesus around in case we want Him or need Him. But He doesn't really have our hearts. Like Keller said, we have these other idols that co-exist with Him. And that's one of the great dangers.

And so, I think as we hit pause here in this part of chapter 1, a question for all of us to be asking is: *What's here for me? What do I slip in alongside Jesus as an object of my worship, an object of where I put my trust and my faith alongside Jesus? What does that look like?*

And I think there are some questions that could help you consider that. Think about where you go when you experience extreme or great disappointment. Maybe before you even go to the Lord, where do you take that disappointment? What do you go to first? That can tell you what's on the other side of that "and."

Where do you go when you've experienced some win or victory or success, the opposite of a great disappointment? Where do you go then, when you get a big promotion or that job or something wonderful happens in your life? Maybe that might tell you what's on the other side of the "and" for you. Because we all have this tendency to make it "Jesus and _____."

What is it that you talk about daily, that you maybe overreact to if you don't receive it? Those are some indications.

What Micah would invite us to do in this first chapter is to say, *Let's figure out what those things are in our lives. Let's get after them. Let's do what Israel and Judah didn't do. Let's get after them and root those things out so that it's just Jesus, and so it's not Jesus and something or someone else.* That's the invitation here.

But let's go back to our passage, because there's been a summons, and there's been charges that have been levied. And then there are sentences. There are two sentences that are given out, first for Israel, and second for Judah. And these come from YHWH through Micah.

Micah 1:6-7

Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. ⁷ All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, all her wages shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste, for from the fee of a prostitute she gathered them, and to the fee of a prostitute they shall return.

And sentence number one for Israel is the first sentence that's delivered. Micah says, "Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I

will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces, all her wages shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste, for from the fee of a prostitute”—here’s that adultery language— “she gathered them, and to the fee of a prostitute they shall return.”

This is the first sentence that’s handed down. And we find out a little later in the Book of Micah what is being referred to here. This sentence is the Assyrian army that is on its way for Samaria. It’s on its way for Israel. And the Assyrian army is going to level this great city of Samaria. Assyria is going to come in and take the nobles and the upper class and scatter them all across the empire. It’s going to take other conquered peoples and bring them into Israel and Samaria. And it’s going to take these other peoples and mix them in with the people who are left behind. Assyria is going to do that to dilute them and keep them from further uprisings and rebellions like the ones they had enacted against Assyria and, of course, against the Lord Himself. That’s what Assyria is going to do when they show up.

And you see how Israel is breaking the first and second commandment: no other gods, not graven images. They’re breaking the first and second commandment from that Mosaic covenant.

Micah 1:8

For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will make lamentation like the jackals, and mourning like the ostriches.

That is sentence number one against Israel. Then there’s a quick break before sentence two for Judah. We find out Micah’s response to this. And what we discover is that Micah is not this angry prophet that’s bringing this judgment with a smirk on his face. No, Micah is at a funeral for his people. Look what he says: “For this I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will make lamentation like the jackals, and mourning like the ostriches.”

Micah is saying he’s crushed. He’s broken-hearted for his people, that this is what it’s come to—that they haven’t listened, they haven’t repented. So, this the fate of the people of God. He is at a memorial service for his people, and he grieves deeply for them.

Micah 1:9-11, 16

For her wound is incurable, and it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem. ¹⁰ Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all; in Beth-le-aphrah roll yourselves in the dust. ¹¹ Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame; the inhabitants of Zaanan do not come out ... ¹⁶ Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair, for the children of your delight; make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they shall go from you into exile.

And then he goes on and shares the second sentence for Judah. This is what he says: “For her wound is incurable, and it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem. Tell it no in Gath; weep not at all; in Beth-le-aphrah roll yourselves in the dust. Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame; the inhabitants of Zaanan do not come out ...” And then we’ll skip ahead. He names a bunch of other towns that are going to suffer. And in verse 16 he finishes with “Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair ...” He says to mourn and grieve. “ ... for the children of your delight; make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they shall go from you into exile.”

And what you see him doing in verse 9 through 16 is the naming of nine different towns in Judah. In each one of those towns, once Assyria is done with Samaria, Assyria is coming for Jerusalem. And Assyria is going to take out all nine of these towns and many others as well. So, you see, this is the path that Assyria is on as it comes to the gate of Micah’s people, the gate of Jerusalem. Assyria is going to make it all the way to the gate of Jerusalem. It’s going to lay siege works around it. It’s going to try and choke it out so that Jerusalem will surrender.

And it’s a miracle story that it doesn’t take place. Jerusalem will be conquered more than a century later by Babylon. We’ll find out more about that later. But we see that those nine cities, three of which we mentioned today, are going to be wiped out by Assyria.

And Micah has really brilliant writing here. He takes the meaning of each of those nine towns, in this case the three that I will show you. He takes the meaning of each of these towns,

and it's going to be the highlight of their downfall. The suffering that they will endure is connected to the name of that town.

So, Beth-le-aphrah means "the house of dust." So, Micah says, "Roll yourselves in the dust" *because of what is coming your way*. He's saying to grieve and mourn. That's what it meant to throw yourself in the dust.

He talks about Shaphir, which means "beauty town." He says that "beauty town" is going to be naked and ashamed. It will be the opposite of that when Assyria comes through.

Zaanan means to "come out." And Micah says you're not going to want to come out. You won't be able to come out once God brings this judgment from Assyria your way.

Again, he's using this brilliant play on words to make this point.

DIVINE DISCIPLINE: A SEVERE MERCY

Here's what I want to do in this chapter. Let me just pause here for a moment and let's talk about this judgment that God is bringing to Israel and Judah. I want to talk about God's discipline and the consequences He brings, not just to Israel and Judah, but also to us, into our lives. And what I want you to see is that God's judgment, His consequences, the discipline that He brings into our lives, is severe. But it's a severe mercy. God brings discipline into our lives as believers when we're living in unrepentant sin, when we continue in a way of rebellion. He will discipline us. But I want you to see that there's mercy in that.

Let me share this caveat first. Pain and trouble and hardship can have many causes, many sources. It could be because we live in a broken world or because we exist in broken bodies or because of the sin of others towards us or just attacks of the enemy. There could be any number of reasons for pain in our lives. But specifically, I want to look at pain as a result of sin that's unaddressed in our life. What do we do with that? How do we understand that?

If you're a young person, divine discipline can come in the form of your parents' discipline. That's one of the ways God can bring discipline into your life. For all of us, that divine discipline may just look like natural consequences. You reap what you sow. When you choose to live and go against the grain of how God designed the universe and our bodies and relationships—when we go against that design, there will be natural consequences. We're going to reap what we sow. And God brings other consequences into our lives when we choose sin.

1. It Shows His Love for Us

But I want you to see two reasons why divine discipline is a severe mercy from the Lord. The first one is this. Divine discipline shows His love for us. You might have heard Hebrews 12, verse 6 in particular, that says, “God disciplines those He loves.” When we experience God’s discipline in our lives because of sin it’s proof that He loves us. It’s another way He is showing His deep care and concern for us.

The Lord parents us like we parent our children. How much do you have to hate your child to never discipline them, to let them do whatever they want whenever they want and not administer consequences as a parent? You’d have to hate your kid to do that. And God is a heavenly Father, so He’ll bring discipline into our lives because of His great love for us. It’s not because He hates us. It’s because He loves us.

But there is something that He does hate. One author put it this way: “Love detests what destroys the beloved.” One thing that God does hate is anything that would destroy us, anything that would annihilate us or would keep us from continuing to walk in His way. Anything that would keep us from Him is detested by the Lord. And that includes our sin. This is an awesome attribute about the Lord. He loves us this much, that anything that would destroy us, anything that would hurt us in that way must be hated and detested by Him.

That’s how we are with people whom we love, right? Love demands that we detest anything that would destroy those whom we love. This is true about our God.

2. Pain Accelerates Repentance

A second reason for this divine display and why it’s a severe mercy is this: that pain accelerates repentance. I should amend that: pain has the possibility of accelerating repentance. It doesn’t have to. The choice is up to us.

Benjamin Franklin said, “The things that hurt, instruct.” And I’ve found this to be so true in my life. Because I am quite stubborn. In fact, I think it may be a spiritual gift of mine. I’m very stubborn. And there has been no teacher in my life, maybe, like pain. Pain has taught me so much in my life. It speaks to me at a volume that few other things or people, even, can. Pain can accelerate repentance. What the pain of divine discipline does for us is that it creates this “T” in our lives where we come to this point in the road where we have to make a choice. We’re going

to go this way or we're going to go that way. And this way is: *I'm just going to continue in the way that I'm going. I don't care, God.* And the pain will just continue to increase as we walk in sin and rebellion. Or we get to that T in the road and it leads to repentance. We say, *God, I am so sorry. Would You please heal this sin in my life? I'm ready for that. God, I'm ready for You to come into my life and grow this area of my life.*

And when we choose that direction, what that does is draw us close to the Lord—through His discipline, through these consequences for sin. God draws us closer to Him.

So, pain accelerates repentance. It brings us to a point where we have to make a choice. Are we going to continue and let the pain increase? Or will we repent and be made right with the Lord and be made right with our fellow man if that's necessary. So, that's the hidden blessing of divine discipline.

Again, I think the question we have to ask as we look at this point is this: Is there a need for repentance in our lives right now? Is there a need for confession with the Lord, whether it's some god that you've sprinkled in and has coexisted in your heart alongside the Lord, or if there's some sin that you've continued to indulge and it's time to come clean with the Lord about it? Maybe you need to come clean with another person whom that sin has been directed against. You bring that to the Lord first, and then you bring that to that person second.

Just five days ago I had to gather my family into my living room, and I had to repent. I had to tell them that I was so sorry and ask for their forgiveness because of how I had spoken unkindly and harshly to two of them. They were all there for it, so they all needed to be there when the repentance happened, when the apology was given and forgiveness requested. I hated that pain, I tell you. I love that. Pain accelerates repentance if we allow it. I encourage you to consider that.

And then, what about others' consequences? What about when you see a brother or sister in Christ, maybe a son or a daughter or a grandchild, or another believer who is experiencing divine discipline? What about those? I want to say two things about that.

First, please don't rescue. When you see another believer and they're heading the wrong direction, and they decided to go this way, let's do all we can (the Lord's given us responsibility if we're in their life to speak up). But if they won't listen, if they continue to go that direction and make that choice and they want to, what I would say is to please don't rescue. And that's for all of us. Because it will hurt you so much to see them hurt because of the pain of

consequences, of divine discipline in their lives. And I would encourage you to not step into that. Because what happens when we step in and keep them from enduring the consequences of the decisions, what we're doing is standing in between this loved one and God.

Because this is what the Lord is doing: in discipline, God is pulling us closer. He's pulling that loved one of yours closer to Him. He's trying to draw them in, that they might have an intimacy and closeness in that relationship once again.

And so, when we rescue and we stand in between what God is trying to do with this loved one, we're keeping them from experiencing what God is trying to do in their lives by drawing them in. We've become a barrier to repentance when we rescue. We become a barrier to the possibility of repentance drawing them closer to the Lord as He's trying to do in their lives. So, please don't rescue them. Let's all heed that.

Then, second, is to borrow, don't buy. What I mean by that is when you see another believer who is experiencing this discipline, this judgment from the Lord, this consequence for sin, what I encourage you to do ... again, they won't listen, they're continuing down the path ... is watch and see how those consequences play out in their lives. And borrow what you learn from them so that you don't have to walk down that path of sin and consequences yourself. Don't buy your own consequences; borrow from theirs.

I'll bet many of you had a sibling growing up, and a lot of what you learned about life was by watching what that sibling did, and you did the opposite. You kind of watched them reap the consequences of what they sowed, if nothing else, as those things played out in that person's life.

I was that sibling for my siblings for a time in my household. But you probably learned that from a sibling. And I encourage you to borrow, don't buy. Watch and learn from the consequences others have endured because of their sin. You don't have to buy your own, so you don't have to go that route. I encourage you to consider that.

Now just to bring this to a close, one thing I want to share with you that's always been true about me in life is that I have always loved scaring people. It's this really sick part of my soul that I just love frightening people. I really do! I've never outgrown it somehow. And in His sovereignty God gave me two younger sisters that I grew up with and an older brother. And so, my older brother and I ... I don't know that the relationship with our younger sisters has ever fully recovered from all the times that we scared them to death.

I won't tell you any of those stories, but one time when my daughter Hope was four years old (I'm a very disturbed individual ... I think I already said that) she was coming home. And I decided that I was going to stand on the other side of our front door so that when she opened it, I would be behind it. (I know! This is horrible!) So, she opens the front door, and she closes it, and I jump out and yell, "Hope! Argghh!" or something along those lines. And Hope, my four-year-old daughter, screams louder than I've ever heard her scream before. And then do you know what she did next? She ran straight into my arms and gave me the biggest hug she has ever given me. See, it was for her good that I did this. Just the father-daughter bonding there was incredible. She ran straight into my arms and gave me an incredible hug.

Divine discipline is a lot like that. The reason is because discipline and consequences draw us into the arms of the very one who has afflicted us. God's consequences in our lives draw us to the very one who has brought that discipline. And the reason He has done it is because He's drawing us closer to Him so that we might enjoy a closeness and an intimacy in our relationship with Him. That's what He's doing.

Let's go now to the Lord in prayer. Let's thank Him that this is the kind of gracious Father that He is. And if there's any work that we need to do with the Lord, let's do that in this time right now. Talk to Him and share what you need to, what you want to in this time.

Gracious heavenly Father, I want to thank You for this Book of Micah and this first chapter that we've studied today and what it has revealed about Your character and how You operate in our lives and how You are absolutely just. And so, You bring judgment, You bring discipline and consequences into our lives when we are off on our own, when we are living in rebellion. But even that is a sign that this is because of Your mercy, because You are a caring, merciful, loving God. And even our discipline that we experience is an expression of that.

And so, I pray, Lord, that we would not run when we receive Your correction; that we would not run from You. But that it would draw us near to You, that we would enjoy the embrace of our Lord and our Savior when we experience those consequences for sin. We pray this same thing for those who we love, that we wouldn't stand in the way of the great work that You want to do in their lives when they're experiencing those consequences. We lift that up in Your Son's name. Amen.