

COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS FOR THE MINOR PROPHETS OF JUDAH JOEL, OBADIAH, MICAH, NAHUM, HABBAKKUK, & ZEPHANIAH

Read: Micah 6:8, Habakkuk 2:4, Zeph. 1:4-5, Joel 2:28-29

WARM UP

Imagine you live in a country that is being torn apart from the inside by injustice, oppression and wickedness, the leaders are corrupt and ungodly, and your nation is threatened by attack from other nations. Okay, maybe that isn't so hard to imagine. Rather than share your OPINION about what to do, as an ordinary, run-of-the-mill citizen, what does God say you should do? Knowing from history that "it has ever been thus", how can you have hope?

EXPLORATION

1. One of the most famous quotes from the Bible, even among secular people, is from Micah 6:8. In the secular world, it might appear on a plaque or poster as simply "...do justice, love kindness, walk humbly...", without actually mentioning of God. Similar commands are found in other books of the Bible (Is. 56:1, Is. 66:1-2, Jer. 22:3, Ezek. 18, 2 Chron. 7:14 and many, many other passages). Like Jesus summary of the Law in two commands (i.e., love God and love your neighbor), how is Micah 6:8 a summary statement about how God wants us to live? Why is it important to not leave God out of this verse?
2. Like Jonah, Nahum had a message about the city of Nineveh. Jonah's message (about 150 years earlier) resulted in great repentance among a Gentile people who were oppressors of Israel, much to Jonah's dismay. Nahum's message does not have the same effect and eventually, the great and beautiful city of Nineveh is turned into a ruin. The account of Judah's history during the times of the prophets is similar, with cycles of repentance then falling away from God. What do you think tended to happen over time with the people of these cities and nations? How would you describe this general pattern from faith to unbelief from generation to generation? Have you experienced this in your own family?

3. Habakkuk, like many other prophets, writes about his personal distress, emotions and questions regarding the message he has been given by God to deliver. Nestled in the initial conversation between Habakkuk and God, God's answer contains a central truth in all of scripture which we studied in a sermon series on Hebrews 11. Habakkuk 2:4 says, "The righteous will live by his faith." If we understand that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), how do the unseen and hoped-for things of your faith show up in daily life for you? How does Habakkuk express his faith in 3:16-19? How do you express your faith?

4. At the beginning of the book of Zephaniah (1:4-5), God condemns the fact that Israel worships Him while worshipping other gods, essentially "covering their bases" rather than putting all their trust in the Lord alone. Based on what was discussed in question #3 above, why is this a problem (Heb. 11:1)? Even though we don't tend to bow down to idols made of wood, stone, silver or gold today, how might we do this in our times?

5. These six prophets of Judah, before the exile, had a terrible message of punishment for sins committed: death by the sword, pestilence and famine, exile for Judah, vengeance on the nations around Israel and vengeance on the nations who would oppress God's people. But these prophets also had a message of hope and blessing in the future. See Joel 2:18-27, Joel 3:18-21, Obad. 15-21, Mic. chapter 4, Mic. 7:7-20 and Zeph. 3:13-20. By this point in our reading of the prophets, we really need a bit of hope and blessing. Pick one or two of these passages and read them out loud. What do we learn about God from these passages?

APPLICATION

God makes a promise to “pour out My Spirit” in Joel 2:28-29. This promise is not fulfilled at the end of the exile but starting on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) after Jesus’ resurrection and continues right up until today. Those who put their faith in Christ receive the Holy Spirit and as Joel says, it doesn’t matter who you are – young or old, male or female, sons or daughters, even servants. From what we learn from the New Testament writers, the Holy Spirit works in various ways in the lives of unbelievers and believers alike. In your group and in the coming week, spend some time talking about and praising the Lord for how the Holy Spirit (1) drew you to Himself, (2) has strengthened your faith and (3) has used the spiritual gifts He has given you (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4 & 1 Peter 4).