

# Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

## God's Messages





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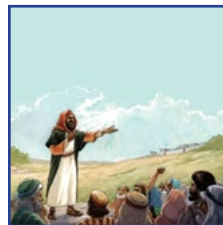
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The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at [www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum](http://www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum) or [www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum](http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum). Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

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# Connecting

## What Does God Want?

Micah 1:1; 4:1-4; 6:6-8

Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible, p. 144

**Goal:** To follow God's call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

### Connecting with the Biblical Text

“What does God Want?” is the title for the story for this session. What a great question for the people of Judah in the eighth century to think about as they heard from the prophet Micah. This prophet saw how people were being oppressed. He witnessed how the wealthy took advantage of people who had very little. He asked the leaders this question: “Isn’t it your job to know justice?” (Mic. 3:1, CEB). His prophetic words pronounced God’s judgment on the leaders because of their evil ways. Micah offered words of hope with the familiar words of peace about a time when there would be no more war (4:1–4).

Then we hear the voice of God speaking to the people of Israel. Read Micah 6:1–5 and notice what God is saying to the people about what God has done for them. In one of the texts for this story, Micah 6:6–8, a representative of the people responds to God with a question that turns into the title for this passage. And God’s people are reminded that what always pleases God and what God really wants is for humans to live faithfully by doing justice, loving and caring for others, and walking with God.

There are some additional resources online to help you explore the text. For a brief commentary on Micah, go to [bit.ly/MicahCommentary](http://bit.ly/MicahCommentary). For a podcast with professors from Luther Seminary, go to [bit.ly/MicahLutherSemPodcast](http://bit.ly/MicahLutherSemPodcast).

### Connecting with the World

What does God want from us today? If Micah were speaking to us today, what evils and injustices would he name? What are the places where God’s peace is needed? As you reflect on this prophet, this text, and this story, pause and name those places in your community that call out for justice, kindness, and

walking with God. In what ways is your congregation working with issues of justice and inequality? Become familiar with the ways your church is involved in your community and how children and youth in your congregation can participate in those efforts.

- Are there acts of peace needed in helping Muslims, Jews, and Christians learn from one another?
- How are inequities of wealth addressed? Are there opportunities for building homes in your community?

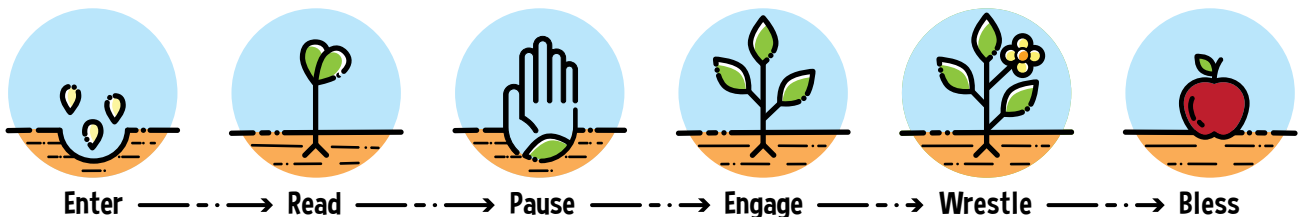
### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Children hear, see, and watch what we do. They know inequity when they see it. They have experiences of people being treated differently. They will be able to connect with Micah’s words to Judah by sharing things they’ve seen. When we live our faith with our children, helping them to make connections with what they see, hear, feel, and experience and with the ways that God wants us to live, then children grow spiritually. A child might ask, “What does God want from me?” The answer is the one we hear in this story: “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.”

### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

The larger question of “What does God want?” can be followed with the more personal question of “What does God want of me?” All our lives we live in response to that great question. Each day offers us the opportunities to turn and renounce the sin and evil we see. As important as naming and turning are, equally important are the actions we take and the things we do to act justly, with kindness and love. Children see what we do and how we live our lives.

*God of justice and kindness, help us find the paths of walking with you. Amen.*



## Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Pipe cleaners (several for each child)
- ✓ Three paper lunch bags
- ✓ Name tags
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ Card-stock copies of Resource Page 1

## Preparing to Lead

Read the verses from the Bible, Micah 1:1; 4:1–4; 6:6–8. Consider the question for yourself: What does God want from me? Spend some quiet time in prayer, asking God to help you clearly hear God's call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly this week. Which is most difficult for you to do?

Read the story "What Does God Want?" in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 144). When you imagine Micah speaking up, what do you see? Do you have a visual image? If you were to show it on film, how would you arrange the scene? Imagine you were to set the scene in your own hometown. Where would you film it?

As you plan and prepare to lead your group, pray for the children by name.



### Enter into sacred space together.

As children arrive, invite them to create shapes out of pipe cleaners. Give them the following challenges, with suggestions in parentheses for those who need help:

- ✓ A tree shape (*flat, 3-D*)
- ✓ A symbol of love (*heart, letters L-O-V-E, figures hugging*)
- ✓ A symbol of peace (*dove, peace symbol, figures holding hands*)
- ✓ Something from nature (*flower, butterfly, animals, leaves*)

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God's presence and pray:

Dear God, thank you for all that you give us: trees, flowers, and animals; love and peace. What do you want from us? Help us listen to and learn the words of your messenger Micah. Amen.



### Read a story of God's people.

Read the first paragraph of "What Does God Want?" (p. 144). Talk about prophets briefly, using the language in the story. Prophets help us to see what is going on, point out ways we can live as God wants, and understand how God wants us to live together.

Invite children to listen to the rest of the story about Micah the prophet and, as they listen, to create a shape with the pipe cleaners that connects with the story. It might be one small word that they want to illustrate or a bigger idea.



### Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Ask the children to spend a few moments in silence, finishing a shape with the pipe cleaners that connects with the story. Encourage them to think about the images Micah used and also the modern-day examples the story mentioned.



### Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Invite the children to share what they made as they were listening. Help the children make connections with the story of Micah. Wonder together:

- ✓ Who was Micah concerned about?
- ✓ What kind of future world did he imagine?
- ✓ What did Micah say God really wants?

#### ○ Swords into Plowshares

- ✓ Read the paragraph from the story on page 144 that starts, "When the world is filled with peace . . ." Now read Micah 4:3b–4 from the NRSV:



## Leading

*they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more;  
but they shall all sit under their own vines and  
under their own fig trees,  
and no one shall make them afraid;  
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.*

- What do you think a “plowshare” is? (*the main cutting blade of a plow*)
- What do you think a “pruning hook” is? (*a cutting tool used in gardening, with a hooked blade on a long handle*)
- How would the world be different if weapons were made into farm tools?
- ✎ Invite the children to change their pipe cleaner shapes into something else, like in Micah’s vision (*a sword shape changed into a spade and so forth*). Invite them to share their new creations.



### Wrestle with our place in God’s story.

Wonder together how doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly looks in our world today:

- ✎ What does it mean to do justice?
- ✎ What does it look like if someone loves kindness?
- ✎ How does a person walk humbly with God?

#### ○ Person, Place, Problem Skits

- ✎ Label three paper bags: “Person,” “Place,” and “Problem.” Invite the group to generate ideas as a group for the “Problem” box. What problems does God care about today? Try to include issues of justice or peace, such as “war,” “hunger,” “refugees,” and so forth. Write these on index cards and place them in the Problem bag.
- ✎ Then invite children to write an idea on an index card and add it to the Person and Place bags. Person can be someone famous or someone like “mom” or “friend” or “doctor.” Place can be something like “New York City” or something more general like “grocery store.”
- ✎ Make a few name tags that say “Prophet.”
- ✎ Form small groups, and then have each group draw one card from each bag and take one Prophet name tag. Allow a few minutes for the

groups to develop a skit using all three of their cards. At some point in the skit, a prophet must appear.

Have a small group? This exercise can be done with the group working as a whole instead of in groups. Save the boxes to use if you have extra time another week during this unit.



### Bless one another with God’s grace.

Invite children to pray, repeating each line after you:

Holy God, /  
help us to know what you want. /  
Help us to do justice. /  
Help us to love kindness. /  
Help us to walk humbly with you. /  
Amen. /

Invite older children to come up with a simple motion for each phrase: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Invite them to lead the motions as you pray the prayer above or sing the song below.

Try a musical blessing, and sing it in a round. Watch the YouTube video “Hilary Donaldson Leads What Does the Lord Require of You” ([bit.ly/WhatDoesTheLordSong](https://bit.ly/WhatDoesTheLordSong), 3:54) to learn the song, and then sing along with the video. This song can also be found in the *Glory to God* hymnal, #70.



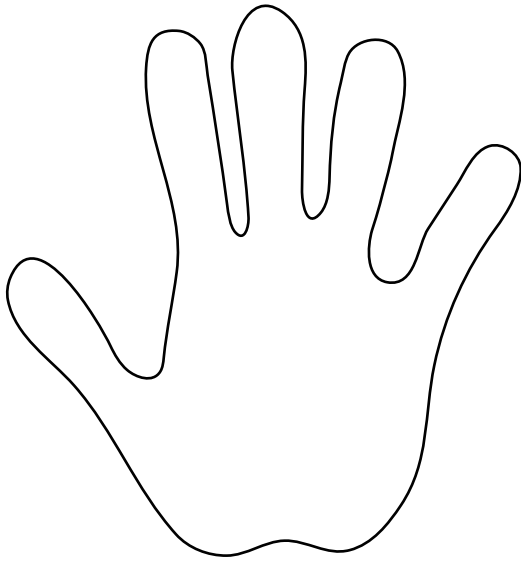
### Grow with more.

#### ○ Micah 6:8 Art

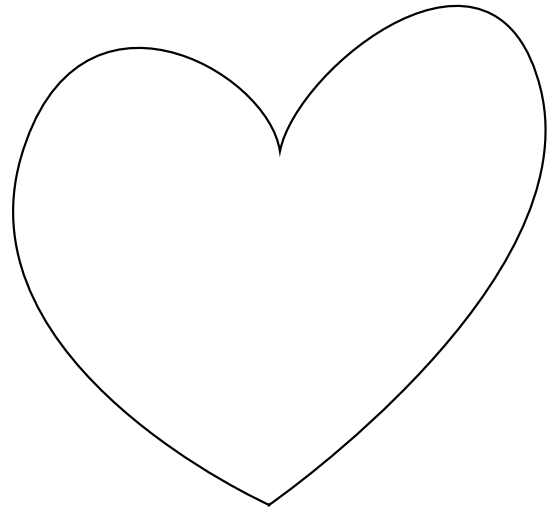
- ✎ Use Resource Page 1 to illustrate Micah 6:8. There are several options.
  - Individual posters: Each child can use the handprint, heart, and footprint to make their own reminder of the verse. They may color them and decorate the page to make a small poster, or they may color and cut out the shapes and then attach them to a piece of construction paper, writing the words by each shape to make a larger poster.

## Leading

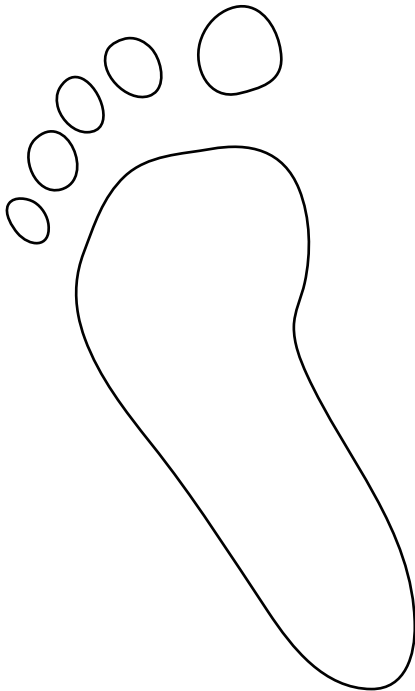
- Group banner: Use paint to make handprints and footprints of each child, paint heart shapes to illustrate the verse, and make a group banner. Use this opportunity to work together as a group when making decisions about the banner. Do they want everyone's handprints, hearts, and footprints to be together, or should they be randomly placed around the banner? Do they want the words by each corresponding shape, or should there be a set of words in the center of the banner with the shapes around them? What other creative ideas do they have for the banner?
- Our Church in Ministry
  - ✦ Engage with a ministry your church is involved in for peace and justice. Do you have a Habitat team or other homeless ministry? Is there a feeding ministry at your church or in your community?
  - ✦ Invite someone to speak to the group about the ministry. What can your group make or do to be a part of the ministry? Some ideas might be to make welcome home cards for new homeowners, make place mats for a feeding ministry meal, or make signs to encourage giving to a special offering for hunger or homelessness.



Do Justice



Love Kindness



Walk Humbly



