

THE EDIFIER

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CHURCH OF GOD 7TH DAY

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MICAH'S CHARACTER FLAW *THE INNER MAN*

Micah's story

Micah was from the mountains of Ephraim in Israel. He lived during the dark period of the Judges where there was no king in Israel and when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 17:6). Micah was no exception.

Micah stole eleven hundred shekels of silver from his mother, but later returned it. She then used some of it to make him a carved image. Micah not only had his own personal idols and shrine which he had made, he also consecrated one of his sons to be his priest. However, not being content with this, one day when he saw a Levite priest passing by, his eyes lit up. Such priests were known to be especially consecrated by God. Micah therefore, using the substantial means at his disposal, persuaded the priest to become his own personal priest. Now that he had a Levite for a priest, Micah was certain that the Lord would smile upon him (Judges 17:13).

However, things did not pan out as Micah had expected. Having a Levite for a priest did not turn out to be the key to the Lord's favour, or a good life. Five Danite men persuaded the priest to leave Micah and be a priest to a tribe and community of Israel, rather than to the household of just one man. The priest departed with Micah's dreams, not to mention his ephod, household images and the carved image his mother gave him.

Micah chased after the men of Dan and when they asked him what ailed him, Micah despaired saying, “You have taken away my gods, which I made, and the priest ... Now what more do I have?”

Are we like Micah?

Micah may seem like a very strange guy to us, but when we look closely at him, we may see that his ways are more familiar to us than we think. Micah thought he had it made with God because he not only had a great ephod, shrine, household idols and the costly carved image from his mother, but he now had the crème de la crème of priests – a Levite priest. Micah might be compared to the kind of person who believes that if they just have all the right “gear” or “stuff” or “connections” they will excel and stand out from the rest.

Focusing on externals is a significant problem in this world. There are many examples in people's everyday lives and in our spiritual lives where externals are given too much emphasis at the expense of internals. Sometimes we care way too much about how we look physically and about how we stack up against our peers in terms of our houses, cars, material possessions, jobs, lifestyles, and connections etc. As Christians we also need to watch our attitude in this area.

Christians might however go further and think:

. now I know the Lord's presence is powerfully in the church because we have a wonderful worship team and choir;

. now we have a great new pastor, or great new youth leader, God will bless the church;

. now I know our church will prosper because we have a beautiful church complex;

. now I have my Italian leather bound study/reference Bible I will be able to contribute in a far more meaningful way to church Bible studies;

. now I have a nice new jacket and tie just like the pastor I might get more respect;

. now that I go to church every week God will be pleased and smile upon me and all will know I am a Christian; or

. now I've been baptized properly by full immersion I'm saved and the Lord will be good to me. Note that even baptism is only an outward sign of hopefully an inward character change.



Consequences of trusting in externals

Micah was robbed of the things he valued so highly. He also lost his Levite priest who was stolen/

enticed away. He felt like he had nothing, and He despaired.

When we are trusting in externals, we're not trusting in God. We can be driven to despair when the externals we have valued are removed or lose their shine. We also lose out on God developing in us the precious character of Christ He wants to impart.

Being renewed day by day

Rather than focusing on externals we need to be renewed day by day in the inward man. Ephesians 4:22-32 and Colossians 3:5-10 support the understanding that being renewed day by day in the inward man is about putting off the works of the flesh and walking and growing in God's righteousness and holiness (which of course includes the fruits of the Holy spirit). Inner characteristics we need to be renewed in include forgiveness, joy, kindness, patience, courage, loyalty, obedience and the list goes on.

Two factors which are vitally important for us growing in these areas are being filled with the Spirit, and exercising spiritual disciplines such as regular praise and worship, prayer, fasting, Bible study, memorization, and meditating upon the Word. The Holy Spirit will renew us as we surrender to God each day and daily trust Him. It's also important to remember that we grow better in relationships rather than as loners. Therefore we need to cultivate relationships in and outside the church.

Jesus on externals

Our Lord had a lot to say about internals and externals. Matthew 23:25-28 provides just one example of His concern that we give much more attention to inner beauty than external beauty. He rebuked the Pharisees thus:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Conclusion

If we cooperate with God who desires to sanctify our inner being day by day, we will never need to cry as Micah did when his externals failed – “now what more do I have?” No one can take from us the priceless internal possessions of character we have from the Lord, and no one can steal our incorruptible eternal inheritance.

Written by David Kidd

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1. True (2 Corinthians 5:21)
 2. False (Hebrews 9:22, 26-28)
 3. False (Romans 4:3)
 4. True (Exodus 16:27-30)
 5. False (Romans 5:12)
 6. False (Romans 5:13)
 7. False (Galatians 3:24)
 8. False (Galatians 3:1-9)
 9. True (Romans 6:1-2; 15-17)

Test Your Knowledge



Surprise

We all like nice surprises. Who doesn't?

If someone told you that they "have a surprise for you", you would probably be tempted to enquire further as to what this surprise might be.

What about the surprise element in this true story:

The two criminal masterminds planned their heist carefully. They knew the courier would have a suitcase full of cash. They waited for his car to pass, then pursued him at high speed, shooting at the vehicle until the courier was forced to pull over.

Armed robbers made off with what they thought was a suitcase full of cash - they were in for a surprise. Back at their secret hideout, the bandits prepared to force the locks and spring the cash. That's when they noticed their plan had gone horribly wrong; instead of taking the money, they made off with a first aid kit.

Did you know that the Bible is full of surprises? That's right!

For most people in the Bible narrative, right when they might have thought they knew how the story might turn out, SURPRISE – it worked out in a way that the pro-

tagonists couldn't have possibly anticipated.

Imagine yourself as Abraham, for example, who fellowshiped with God and was known as God's friend. In his lifetime, Abraham could not have anticipated the peculiarities of his journey with his maker. Remember when God said to him, "Take your son, your only son whom you love, and go and sacrifice him on Mount Moriah..."

We have the benefit of hindsight in this, but Abraham didn't. All he had was faith! This could be said of most of the notable people recorded in the Bible, whether they be Noah, Moses, Jeremiah or Esther. Think of the stories and circumstances surrounding Hannah, Elizabeth or the young Israelite slave girl taken by Namaan the Syrian. Their lives were full of surprises, unexpected turns and twists, yet all under the sovereign care of God's divine will.

Fast forward to the messianic expectation leading up to Jesus' birth.

Everything about a coming Messiah was spoken of in the prophets, but when it actually happened, well – SURPRISE! You know the events.

A young Jewish woman was visited by the angel Gabriel. A baby boy was born in an animal manger, who grew into the man who was crucified by the Romans at the age of 33.

Everything about Jesus surprised his followers.

A good example of this was when Jesus prefaced his teaching on the two resurrections by saying, "*Do not be amazed at this, for the time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come forth...*"

Some translations even render this passage as saying, "Do not be surprised at this..." It seems that Jesus knew our sense of wonderment and startled amazement!

When Jesus ascended back to heaven, imagine again the disciples surprise. They had been expecting him to establish kingship right then and there. That is, wipe the Romans out and fulfill all those old prophecies. But, no, what actually happened they simply didn't anticipate.

Surprise! Some 2000 years have elapsed since then. And what's more, are you surprised that there are people today still awaiting his return!

We have all the prophecies in the scriptures – some quite detailed and others more general in nature, and guess what! Paul said that we only know in part and therefore only preach in part.

We can be sure that when they happen, it will probably happen exactly like the scriptures foretell, but not how we might envision it.

Expect to be surprised!



"I'll do it later"

Procrastination is to postpone doing something. It is an easy excuse and reasoning within you to do whatever it may be later or not at all. There are two typical excuses for doing this: laziness and fear.

Paul addresses the issue of lazy Christians in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13. By setting a living example of working hard and paying for all expenses himself, he commands lazy people to *"Settle down and get to work. Earn your own living"* (v.12). He warns against such people, advising others to *"Stay away from them so they will be ashamed. Don't think of them as enemies, but speak to them as you would to a Christian who needs to be warned"* (v.14-15).

We can learn from Proverbs 6:6-11 which gives us some very sturdy advice not to ponder around, wasting time, but rather to work hard: *"Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and be wise! Even though they have no price, governor, or ruler to make them work, they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter. But you, lazybones, how long*

will you sleep? When will you wake up? I want you to learn this lesson: A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber."

If it is fear or lack of courage you have, take heed to what it says in Jeremiah 17:7-8 *"But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit."* So keep your eyes on Jesus, upon whom our faith depends from start to finish.

(Hebrews 12:1-3)

Stop procrastinating and using excuses or being like those spoken of by Paul and Proverbs 6. Ask God to help you have the self-discipline and/or courage you need to accomplish the task at hand.

Written by Leah Anderson

(New Living Translation Used)



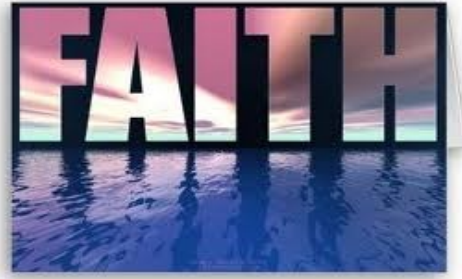


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

True or False

1. *We can be considered righteous in God's sight through Jesus Christ living in us. []*
2. *It is not necessary that blood be shed for the forgiveness of sins. []*
3. *The basic reason Abraham pleased God was because he was obedient. []*
4. *Breaking the Sabbath was known to be sin even before the Ten Commandments were given at Sinai. []*
5. *A man can "work out his own salvation" by living an exemplary life. []*
6. *Man was guilty of sin even before there was a law. []*
7. *Instead of being a teacher, the purpose of Moses' law was to limit the lives of Jewish people to spiritual slavery. []*
8. *The Galatian church was a dedicated group which accepted the teaching of faith in Jesus for its full value. []*
9. *Under the new covenant, salvation from sin is effected by the grace of God. Our lives then conform to God's will voluntarily. []*

Answers to these questions are on page 2



Hard is the pathway of training.

Stern is the way He may use
To take our dim eyes from the earth
things.

To make us His own will to choose.

How often our hands seem to cling to
The baubles and toys of this sphere,

But a wonderful wise overseer
Will give us of things far more dear.

He seats us in Heavenly places.
Enfolds us around with care.
Bestows on us gifts for His glory
That we may be used everywhere.

He lets us see failure in others,
Permits us to weep over loss,
And does all this while He is turning
Our eyes from this world to His cross.

Anonymous

It's the most significant characteristic of the Christian life. It's something so important that it's illustrated some 270 times throughout the Bible.

So, what is faith, and why is it important?

Jesus had been killed and although he told his friends that he would be resurrected in three days' time, they had a hard time believing it. Especially Thomas.

He said, *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."* (John 20:25b NIV)

Can you imagine what happened a week later when Jesus appeared to them and focused his attention on Thomas? Jesus has Thomas examine the wounds in his hands and side, and Thomas exclaimed, *"My Lord and my God!"* (John 20:28 NIV)

Then Jesus encouraged him, *"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* (John 20:29 NIV)

Those final words of Jesus echo down to us today.

Faith. You can't argue against it, nor can you deny it. It is the absolute building block of everything God want us to hold dear.

Written by John Klassek

Youth Vibe



We are living in a world where people choose to please themselves rather than The Almighty God. They choose darkness rather than light. As a result, the darkness has become so real to them they don't know what is light anymore. The wrong seems right. But in Isaiah 5:20-21, the consequences of such a lifestyle are shown:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (KJV)

Here are 13 lies that youth believe in today's world. The scriptures added after each false statement below reveal the actual truth. (These 13 statements were adapted from this website www.breakfreeyouthministry.com.)

1. There is no truth. John 14: 6
2. If I am good enough I will get to heaven. Ephesians 2:8-9
3. When I am on my own I can do what I want. Romans 13: 1
4. The things I do now are not important. I Cor 3: 12-13
5. My past determines my worth. Philippians 3: 13
6. The easiest way is the best way. Hebrews 12: 4-6
7. If it feels good do it. Hebrews 11: 25
8. My friends and family will be with me forever. II Cor 5: 10
9. I do not have to change friends to follow Christ. I Cor 15: 33
10. What I listen and watch does not affect the way I think. Philippians 4: 8
11. There is no consequence for my sins. Romans 6: 23
12. Premarital sex has no effect on my life. I Cor 6: 15-18
13. Serving God is boring. Psalms 34: 8

By Angella Kidd



Fun Bible Facts!

Moses threw a tree into bitter water to make it sweet.

(Exodus 15: 24-25)

Solomon had 12,000 horses.

(1 Kings 10:26)

The Jordan River was parted by Elijah with his coat.

(2 Kings 2:8)

Noah was also used for a girl's name.

(Joshua 17:3)

Moses and Aaron brought boils upon the Egyptians when they threw furnace dust into the air.

(Exodus 9:10)

The name "Jesus" was chosen by God. It means "the Lord saves".

(Matthew 1:20-21)

Maintaining Spiritual Health

Five Part Devotional

Keeping physically fit has its rewards: energy, reduced vulnerability to sickness and accident, better maneuverability, enhanced relationships, raised spirits, and sound sleep. Better health improves almost everything else.

Similarly, godly living is enhanced by wholesome spiritual activity. It establishes a relationship with God and assures we are part of eternity. It increases our appetite for what is good and gives eternal purpose to our existence. It makes and keeps us ready. All effort put into spiritual fitness is enhancing; nothing is wasted. Let the wise get started and keep active!

Please send for the free booklet

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Postal Address: P.O. Box 29, Tanunda SA 5352

Web Address: www.cog7aus.com