



SMALL GROUP OUTLINES



MINOR PROPHETS

These Small Group Outlines are produced by the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit in collaboration with Kay Moorby (soulwithaview). They are available every month from our website.

For more information and other resources, visit salvationist.org.uk/resources/youth-ministry-resources

SESSION ONE:

JONAH – WHEN GOD DOESN'T PLAY BY OUR RULES!

The story of Jonah is full of opposites. Its main character, Jonah, purposefully does the opposite of what God commands. The pagan sailors do the opposite of what is expected. The brutal Ninevites become devoted followers of God. No one is following the path that we expect, and no one is more frustrated about this than Jonah. In today's session, we're exploring what it feels like when God doesn't play by our rules!

SESSION TWO:

AMOS – THE ART OF TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

This week our minor prophet is Amos. He's a no-nonsense everyday kind of bloke who speaks as he finds and tells it like it is ... or was! In the book of Amos, we see God's anger at the injustice and oppression of this world. Through Amos, God challenged the people of Israel to face their complacency and corruption and turn their hearts to him. The message of Amos is applicable to the Church today as we still need justice to 'roll on like a river' and righteousness to flow 'like a never-failing stream' (Amos 5:24).

SESSION THREE:

HOSEA – THE GOD WHO KEEPS ON LOVING

Hosea was called by God to speak to his people not just through words but through actions. His marriage to Gomer represented the troubled relationship between God and his people. In today's session we discover how God feels when we walk away from his path, how he longs for us to return to him, and how he keeps on loving us regardless of where we are on our journey with him.

SESSION FOUR:

MICAH – A PROPHET POINTING TO JESUS

Today we meet an Old Testament prophet who pointed to Jesus as the one to show us how to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly. In this session we will explore the message of condemnation and judgement Micah brought to the people of Samaria and Judah. Alongside these words of judgement we will discover the message of hope contained in this small Old Testament book.

Any text in italics represents notes for the leader. It gives more context around the Scripture/activity. You may choose to share verbatim, summarise or not share at all.

WELCOME

In today's session we start our series exploring the minor prophets of the Bible.


Watch the clip together and see how many questions the young people can answer. You can make it more competitive by offering the winner a prize. The total number of points available for each question is shown below.

 **Watch: What are the Major Prophets and Minor Prophets? – GotQuestions.org (stop at 1:48)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1bVkko85EQ>

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. Who are the major prophets? **Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel (4).**
2. Who are the minor prophets? **Jonah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (12).**
3. What are the minor prophets sometimes called? **The Twelve (1).**
4. How did the major prophets get their name? **Their books are longer and the content has broad, even global, implications (2).**
5. How did the minor prophets get their name? **Their content is generally shorter and is often more narrowly focused (2).**
6. Give two reasons why the major and minor prophets are among the least popular for Christians to read. **The use of unusual prophetic language; the constant warnings and condemnations (2).**
7. Why is studying the prophets in the Bible a worthwhile thing to do? **Decide whether the responses given are worthy of a point (1).**

Total possible points: **24**

 Have you ever studied the minor prophets before? If not, why not?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 Which minor prophet are you most interested in learning about? Explain your answer.

WORD

The book of Jonah is often reduced to a children's story, where the fish is often replaced with a whale, the 'naughty' prophet finally does as he is told, and they all live happily ever after. To recap the story and illustrate its usual childlike portrayal let's watch a clip all about 'Jonah and the Fish'.

 **Watch: Jonah and the Fish (2:58)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOSadLyqshg>

Before we explore Jonah's story, we first need to deal with the 'fish' in the room!


Read the extract together from the *Biblical Theology Study Bible*.

'Much discussion centres on how the book of Jonah should be understood. Does it report real historical events, or is it a fictional account created to teach an important truth? Those who support the latter understanding point to the series of miraculous events recorded in the book as evidence against it being factually accurate. Could Jonah have possibly survived inside a fish for 72 hours? Would the entire city of Nineveh, both people and animals, have repented at the preaching of a foreign prophet? Could the plant that sheltered Jonah have grown up in one day? Such questions need to be asked and carefully considered. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers. Many modern scholars are drawn toward explanations that avoid affirming the historical nature of the book of Jonah, suggesting that it could be a parable-like story that seeks to communicate a profound

truth through a fictional account. While this is a possibility, it cannot be overlooked that Jesus, in common with all the earliest readers of Jonah, assumed the historicity of the story (Matthew 12:39-42; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32)*. For Christians, Jesus' testimony ought to be viewed as decisive on this issue. To dismiss these exceptional occurrences as utterly impossible simply because they are miraculous automatically excludes belief in an all-powerful God. Yet such a God lies at the heart of the Christian faith, for we believe that this same God raised Jesus Christ to life, an even more miraculous event.'

— NIV BIBLICAL THEOLOGY STUDY BIBLE PUBLISHED BY ZONDERVAN

*Or at least he recognises that his hearers assume its historicity.

 Is Jonah a historical story?


 Does it matter whether it is historical or not?

Regardless of your standpoint about the historical nature of Jonah's story, most scholars agree that there are valuable lessons to be learned from this minor prophet. Jonah is a story of opposites, where characters behave in unexpected ways and God's mercy leads to unexpected responses. It's also about the radically universal nature of God's love which transcends racial boundaries.

Leader's notes: To explore the story of Jonah, use the audio version of the Bible taken from the New International Version. Follow the timings below and discuss the questions. Additional discussion notes are provided. Encourage the group to follow the Scripture in their Bibles.

 **Listen: The Complete Holy Bible – NIVUK Audio Bible read by David Suchet – 32 Jonah**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8LLvOyO37E>


LISTEN 0:00-2:53 -JONAH 1

 What did God ask Jonah to do in verse 2? What did he do instead?


This is our first example of an opposite. Directed by God to go one way, the prophet Jonah went as far in the opposite direction as he could.

 How was Jonah's response to the storm the opposite of the pagan sailors? v5


The pagan sailors cried out to their gods, but Jonah, a follower of the one true God, slept below deck.

 How are Jonah's words to the sailors the opposite to the way he is living his life? v9

Jonah told the sailors that he worshipped 'the Lord, the God of heaven' as he ran from the command of his God to go to Nineveh. But these were hollow insincere words.

 What did Jonah tell the sailors to do to make the storm stop? What did they do instead?

Again, we see contradictory behaviour from the characters in this story. The man of God asks to be thrown overboard to escape a trip to Nineveh. Instead of seizing this as an opportunity to save their own lives, the pagan sailors try and save Jonah's life.

 Who cried out to the Lord in verse 14 and what did they say? Who would you expect to be talking to God in this story?


It is the pagan sailors who cry out to Jonah's God, as Jonah continues to ignore his calling and asks to be thrown overboard. Showing their fear of God, they offered 'a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him'. (v16)

LISTEN: 2:54-4:21 – JONAH 2

Jonah prayed to God from the belly of the fish.

 What topics does Jonah pray about?

 Do you feel there is anything missing from his prayer? If so, what is it?

 What do you think the author Warren Wiersbe meant when he said that Jonah's prayer was 'born out of affliction, not affection'?

Jonah's prayer comes from a place of desperation and depression. He says, 'When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple' (Jonah 2:7). He is out of options, and at his lowest point he remembers God and prays to him.

- 🗨️ From what you have discovered about Jonah so far, how would you describe his character?
- 🗨️ What does God do in response to Jonah's prayer?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If your group would like to learn more about Jonah's story, watch and discuss the following clip together.

- 📺 **Watch: A Summary of the Book of Jonah – GotQuestions.org**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7t3u7SJUSbk>

WITNESS

Reflect on what you have discovered so far from Jonah 1 and 2.

- 🗨️ Why did Jonah run from God? What was his motivation?
- 🗨️ Is there anything in Scripture that supports your viewpoint?

There have been numerous sermons preached about Jonah's refusal to follow God's calling. Many focus on Jonah's determination to do the opposite of what God asked him to, but not as many explore in depth why he ran away. Jonah wasn't afraid to do what God asked; he just knew God wouldn't play by his rules.

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and an established enemy of the people of Israel. The Assyrians were known for their brutal and barbaric actions during battle. They would think nothing of slaughtering anyone who stood in their way.

Jonah ran away from God because he despised the Assyrians and everything they stood for.

- 🗨️ Now that you know how Jonah felt toward the Assyrians, how does it change your perspective of his actions and the way he ran from God?
- 🗨️ Do you understand why he did what he did? Explain your reasons.

Leader's notes: *Through discussion and questioning, bring the story of Jonah into a modern-day context. Today our world is very polarised with people taking a clear stance on many issues. There are parts of the world locked in conflict and destined to be enemies for ever. There are people with strong opposing political and religious ideologies determined not to find common ground. Place Jonah's calling from God into those situations and discuss it with the young people. What is the equivalent situation God could send them into, that would potentially raise the same feelings Jonah experienced?*

LISTEN 4:22-5:55 – JONAH 3

- 🗨️ What did Jonah say to the people of Nineveh?

Jonah kept his message to an absolute minimum:

'Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.'
— JONAH 3:4

Jonah offered no words of hope, like many other prophets did, and he didn't mention God at any point.


- 🗨️ How did the people of Nineveh respond?

After an eight-word sermon, the people of Nineveh immediately repented and followed God.

 **Read:**


‘When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.’

— JONAH 3:10

 How do you think Jonah responded when he saw God’s compassion for the people of Nineveh?

You don’t need to name them, but is there any person or group of people that you would struggle to share the hope of God’s forgiveness and grace with? This is what Jonah was being asked to do. God’s message of hope is for everyone – not just the people we like, or the ones who think the way that we do. God doesn’t play by our rules; his compassion extends to anyone who will repent and turn to him.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY


 What is your response to the following quote?

“ ‘As long as serving God fit into Jonah’s goals for Israel, he was fine with God. As soon as he had to choose between the true God and the god he actually worshipped, he turned on the true God in anger. Jonah’s particular national identity was more foundational to his self-worth than his role as a servant of the God of all nations. The real God had been just a means to an end. He was using the God to serve his real god.’

— TIMOTHY KELLER

WORSHIP

LISTEN: 5:56-7:59: JONAH 4

 Why was Jonah so angry with God?

 How did God respond?

In this final part of the story, we join Jonah in a vulnerable moment with God. It’s easy to be hard on Jonah, pointing out his petulant behaviour, but we’ve all been there. We’ve all had those moments where God doesn’t play by our rules. We’ve experienced times when he’s forgiven people we don’t feel deserve it. Just like Jonah, we can sometimes lose perspective and find ourselves more angry about our lost plant than the lost people of this world. In the kids clip we watched earlier, they missed this part out. They stopped at the ‘happy ending’ where the Ninevites repented and turned to God – but there was more to the story.

Leader’s notes: *Lead a time of reflection where the young people consider the lessons we can learn from Jonah’s story. Give them the opportunity to have an honest conversation with God about the people they struggle to share their faith with. How can they share God’s love with those they disagree with? Where do they need to ask for God’s guidance? As the music plays, they can spend time in quiet prayer or write their own prayer to use throughout the week.*

Using the discussion points from the session, bring your time together to a close with a prayer on behalf of the group.

 **Listen: Kevin LeVar – ‘A Heart That Forgives’ Official Music Video (5:01)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srb86MW4n8c>

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

“ ‘God is both too holy and too loving to either destroy Jonah or to allow Jonah to remain as he is, and God is also too holy and too loving to allow us to remain as we are.’

— TIMOTHY KELLER

As we go into this week, we ask you, Lord, to help us to grow in your love and see people the way you do. Don't let us remain as we are. Help us to follow you even when we feel like you aren't playing by our rules. Centre us in your will and help us to follow you only. Amen.

AMOS – THE ART OF TELLING IT LIKE IT IS


Leader's notes: *If you are into baking, you might like to prepare a fig-based dish to share with your group in honour of Amos who was a fig farmer! A few links are provided below, or you might have your own recipe. Alternatively, you could just buy a packet of fig rolls to share with the group. As you share food together, explain why figs are on the menu!*

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/uk/food/recipes/a535925/fig-and-apple-cake/>


This week our minor prophet is Amos. He's a no-nonsense everyday kind of bloke who speaks as he finds and tells it like it is ... or was!

For our starter today, you need to think of as many people as you can who could be described as unlikely heroes. They can be a real person living today, a historical character or a work of fiction. We're looking for everyday people/characters who had to step up.

Leader's notes: *If the group are struggling for ideas, then here's a modern-day example.*

 **Watch: Mr Bates vs The Post Office (1:59)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbXYQxDJQ4E>

 As you look at the list you have created, what are some of the common personality traits and characteristics they share?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 What do you know about the prophet Amos? Share it with the rest of the group.


WORD

Leader's notes: To help your group discover more about Amos, watch the following clip together using the timings and discussion prompts below.


 **Watch: Book of Amos Summary: A Complete Animated Overview (07:12)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGgWaPGpGz4>

WATCH: 0:00-1:05

 •Where did Amos live?

 Who was the ruler of the Northern Kingdom and how did he run his territory?

 What did God call Amos to do?

Amos was an everyday bloke, minding his own business herding sheep and growing figs. As he looked over the border to the Northern Kingdom, he felt God calling him to action. Times may have changed, but a Southerner travelling to tell a Northerner what to do has always been a bold move. Amos listened to God's calling and travelled to deliver a message of justice and righteousness.

WATCH: 1:06-2:26

Ask a member of the group to read Amos 2:6-8, preferably from The Message translation.

6-8 God's Message:

“Because of the three great sins of Israel

– make that four – I'm not putting up with them any longer.

They buy and sell upstanding people.

People for them are only things – ways of making money.

They'd sell a poor man for a pair of shoes.

They'd sell their own grandmother!

They grind the penniless into the dirt,
shove the luckless into the ditch.
Everyone and his brother sleeps with the “sacred whore” –
a sacrilege against my Holy Name.
Stuff they’ve extorted from the poor
is piled up at the shrine of their god,
While they sit around drinking wine
they’ve conned from their victims.
— (AMOS 2:6-8 MSG)

- How would you describe the society of the Northern Kingdom? How were they living their lives?
- The Israelites were living in a time of peace where they had plenty of food and wealth. How did this impact their behaviour and their relationship with God?

WATCH: 2:27-5:29

- In what ways were the Israelites disconnected from God?
- How were they treating people?

In Amos 4:1 the entitled wives of wealthy men are referred to as the ‘cows of Bashan’. This is not a flattering comparison as these cows lounged about eating luscious grass and gaining weight. Rather than noticing the injustice around them, these women lived off the corrupt money made by their husbands. If they were around today, they would probably have their own reality series!

- How would you define justice and righteousness? According to the clip, ‘*Righteousness refers to a standard of right, equitable relationships between people, no matter their social differences. Justice refers to concrete actions that we take to correct injustice and create righteousness.*’
- Having thought about the meaning of these two words, read and discuss Amos 5:24. How does God want his people to change? ‘*But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!*’ (Amos 5:24)
- Why was worshipping other gods such a big problem for the Israelites? What were the consequences?
- What did Amos predict would happen to the nation of Israel?

WATCH: 5:30-7:12

- What vision did Amos see and what do you think those visions meant?
- What glimmer of hope did God give to the people through Amos?
- What is the key message of the book of Amos?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If the group would like to discover more about the book of Amos, then watch and discuss the following clip together.

- Watch: A Summary of the Book of Amos – GotQuestions.org (stop at 4:02)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj2IZKWijQ0>

WITNESS

Leader’s notes: For the Witness activity the young people are going to explore three themes in the book of Amos and apply them to our modern-day context. Divide the group into three teams and give them one of the following handouts:

- * We are Chosen by God
- * God does not Tolerate Complacency
- * God does not Tolerate Corruption

Ask them to explore and discuss the content of their handout and make notes about how this theme can be applied to our church today. After they have completed the task, they can feed back their ideas to the rest of the group. Encourage the group to get creative in their feedback. Supply large sheets of paper and felt-tips.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Amos was an ordinary person who was convicted by God to do an extraordinary thing.

- 🗨️ What message do you think God has for you from the book of Amos?
- 🗨️ How will it change your behaviour and attitude in the future?

WORSHIP

Amos brought his message to the people of Israel during the 8th century BC. Everything about Amos's culture differs from life today, and yet God's message of justice and righteousness remains applicable to modern-day Christianity. According to theologian Bruce Birch, the message of Amos 'makes it clear the doing of justice and the living of righteousness means serving the whole family of God's creation and not just fellow believers'.

Throughout the book of Amos, we repeatedly witness God's anger about the injustice and oppression he sees in the world. He cares deeply about people who face mistreatment and wants his people to do something about it. Amos was a powerful voice for change, and we can be too.

Leader's notes: *During the Witness activity, the young people outlined three 'Tell it like it is' statements. Who were they directed at? Sometimes we can pass the responsibility of challenging injustice and oppression on to an imaginary 'them' when we are all members of Christ's body. As you discuss the three 'Tell it like it is' statements, encourage the young people to identify real situations where they could speak out against injustice as Amos did. The aim of this activity is not for the young people to feel guilty about what they are or aren't doing, it's more about seeing what is important to God and living our lives in line with his will for the world.*

After your discussions, spend time praying as a group about practical actions you can take going forward.

Christians today need to heed the message of Amos and bring God's message of hope to a broken world.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

The following song can be used to bring the session to a close.

- ▶ **Watch: 'Hope for the Broken World' (3:12)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KQG2BcNOX0>

Weekly church attendance in the UK has significantly declined in recent decades. Despite this, the Church still holds a position of influence, through its representation in Government, charities, and the faith school network. With justice and righteousness at the centre of the message of Amos, Christians today should consider whether that influence is used to promote equity or whether we are in danger of using it to protect our rights as believers. Although numbers have declined, research shows that people who do attend church increasingly go there because of a commitment to their faith rather than a feeling of obligation. We are chosen by God and should use our influence, no matter how limited, to care about the things and people he cares about.

Think about the following questions and jot down practical ways that we can live lives that reflect God's passion for righteousness and justice.



Are we more concerned about our own needs when we attend church rather than the needs of those facing injustice? If so, what can we do to change that?



How can we use our own platforms, whether big or small, to speak out on the things that matter to God?



How should being chosen by God influence the choices we make as believers?

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TELL IT LIKE IT IS

From what you have read and discussed today, what is your 'tell it like it is' message for the Church?

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GOD DOES NOT TOLERATE COMPLACENCY

complacency

Definition:

1. self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies.
2. an instance of usually unaware or uninformed self-satisfaction.
3. Israel demonstrated complacency in the way they handled their wealth, how they worshipped, and their level of awareness of God's judgement. They were very much in their own worlds, enjoying the good life, ignoring the poor and focusing on themselves.



What are the modern-day equivalents for each example?

Rich women lived off money made by their husbands from the oppression of the poor.

'Listen to this, you cows of Bashan grazing on the slopes of Samaria.

You women! Mean to the poor, cruel to the down-and-out!

Indolent and pampered, you demand of your husbands, "Bring us a tall, cool drink!"

Amos 4:1 MSG

Good people said nothing when they saw injustice.

'Justice is a lost cause. Evil is epidemic.

Decent people throw up their hands.

Protest and rebuke are useless, a waste of breath.'

Amos 5:13 MSG

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The people attended worship for show,
rather than dedicating their hearts to God.



**'I can't stand your religious meetings.
I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.
I want nothing to do with your religion projects,
your pretentious slogans and goals.
I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes,
your public relations and image making.
I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.
When was the last time you sang to me?
Do you know what I want?
I want justice – oceans of it.
I want fairness – rivers of it.
That's what I want. That's all I want.'**

Amos 5:21-24 MSG



What does Christian complacency look like today?

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The culture of complacency embedded within the Israelites' behaviour extended to the belief that God would withhold his judgement while the people continued to sin. We are in danger of thinking that our sin has no consequence today as well. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, grace is always available to believers, but it does not mean that he overlooks our deliberate choices to sin against him and others. We must guard against complacency in our churches.



TELL IT LIKE IT IS

From what you have read and discussed today, what is your 'tell it like it is' message for the Church?

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GOD DOES NOT TOLERATE CORRUPTION

corruption

Definition:

1. Dishonest or illegal behaviour especially by powerful people
2. Inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means
3. A departure from the original or from what is pure or correct.

Amos called out the corruption he saw in the Israelite community. He made it clear that God was not happy.

God's Message:

**'Because of the three great sins of Israel
– make that four – I'm not putting up with them any longer.
They buy and sell upstanding people.
People for them are only things – ways of making money.
They'd sell a poor man for a pair of shoes.
They'd sell their own grandmother!
They grind the penniless into the dirt,
shove the luckless into the ditch.
Everyone and his brother sleeps with the "sacred whore" –
a sacrilege against my Holy Name.
Stuff they've extorted from the poor
is piled up at the shrine of their god,
While they sit around drinking wine
they've conned from their victims.'**



Amos 2:6-8 MSG

**'People hate this kind of talk.
Raw truth is never popular.
But here it is, bluntly spoken:
Because you run roughshod over the poor
and take the bread right out of their mouths,
You're never going to move into
the luxury homes you have built.
You're never going to drink wine
from the expensive vineyards you've planted.
I know precisely the extent of your violations,
the enormity of your sins. Appalling!
You bully right-living people,
taking bribes right and left and kicking the
poor when they're down.'**



Amos 5:10-11 MSG

? What kind of corruption do we see in the world today?

? How is the Church used by powerful people to promote messages that aren't in line with the Bible's teaching?

? How is the Church impacted by politics? Do you think this presents a danger for corruption? If so, how?

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 **TELL IT LIKE IT IS**

From what you have read and discussed today, what is your 'tell it like it is' message for the Church?


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HOSEA – THE GOD WHO KEEPS ON LOVING

WELCOME

 Have you ever been to a wedding where something went wrong? What happened? Did the happy couple find it funny?

Watch this clip full of wedding mishaps.

 Which one is your favourite? Explain why?

 **Watch: Weddings – ‘You’ve Been Framed’ (2:27)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQy1h8vfba4>

Today we’re discovering more about the story of Hosea. He had a lot more to contend with than a wedding day mishap as his marriage was headed for trouble from day one.


ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 What’s the worst thing that you have seen go wrong at a wedding on a TV programme or film?


WORD

Leader’s notes: *To fully cover the story of Hosea, the Word section is longer than usual. The Witness section contains a shorter activity to balance out the timings of the session. If, as a leader, you are not familiar with the story of Hosea, it may be helpful to watch the Bible Project clip which will provide you with the historical and spiritual background.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE6SZ1ogOVU>

 What do you know about the prophet Hosea?

It could be argued that, out of all the minor prophets, Hosea had the hardest time. Many of the minor prophets faced opposition or had to deliver difficult truths to those who did not want to listen. Hosea’s situation was different. He was asked to live a life that represented God’s relationship with Israel.

 Hosea prophesied to the people of Israel around the same time period as Amos. What do you remember about the Northern Kingdom and its ruler at that time?

Around the time of Hosea, Jeroboam II was on the throne. The Israelites were enjoying a time of peace and prosperity and were becoming complacent in their relationship with God. Alongside diving into Scripture, we’re going to watch a modern-day depiction of Hosea’s story.


 **Watch: The Hosea Love Story by Irving Bible Church: Part One (3:32)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyWWXSwtPP0>

 **Read:**

¹ ‘The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel:

² When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.” ³ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.’

— (HOSEA 1:1-2)

 God asked Hosea to marry Gomer knowing that she would be repeatedly unfaithful to him. How would you feel in Hosea's position?

 How did this marriage reflect God's relationship with his people?

 **Watch: The Hosea Love Story: Part Three (2:54)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xAiLH-LDPO>

After her marriage to Hosea, Gomer continued her adulterous ways.


 **Read:**


⁴ Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. ⁵ In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel."

⁶ Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means 'not loved'), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. ⁷ Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them – not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the Lord their God, will save them."


⁸ After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. ⁹ Then the Lord said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means 'not my people'), for you are not my people, and I am not your God."

— (HOSEA 1:4-9)

 What was the significance of the names of Gomer's children?

 Hosea could not be certain that Gomer's children were truly his. How did this add to the story of betrayal God was trying to tell his people?

 **Watch: The Hosea Love Story: Part Four (3:07)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KHhOVApPns>

 If you were Hosea, would you have continued to give Gomer another chance? Explain your answer.

 How does Hosea's repeated forgiveness mirror the way God responds to us?

A theme of hope continues throughout this story. Just as Hosea refused to give up on Gomer, God refuses to give up on his people.

 **Read:**

¹⁰ "Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'children of the living God.' ¹¹ The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel."

— (HOSEA 1:10-11)

Leader's notes: Divide the group into two teams. Ask one to read Hosea 2:1-13 and the other to read Hosea 2:14-23. Giving examples from Scripture, ask each team to describe God's relationship with his people. What are they doing that is making him so frustrated and how does he respond to their betrayal? Give each team time to explore the Scriptures and feed back to the whole group.

 **Watch: The Hosea Love Story: Part Five (3:07)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rkq1Flcri_g

 How is the repentance of Israel represented in this part of the story?

As, in the video, she sits on the train, Gomer is reminded of all the mistakes she has made and recognises the power of Hosea's love. Just like Gomer, the Israelites were repeatedly unfaithful to God. In Scripture we read that God calls Hosea to reconcile with Gomer.


Read:

¹ ‘The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.”

² ‘So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. ³ Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you.”

— (HOSEA 3:1-3)


The sacred raisin cakes were eaten in pagan celebrations.

 What do you think God was trying to say about the behaviour of his people?

Read the following information,


‘A bride-price, paid in this case via silver and barley, signified a woman’s value to her family. It was a compensation paid in Old Testament times to the family a woman left when she married and went to live with her husband. It did not mean that her husband owned her like property, but it did symbolise her great worth both to the family she left and to her husband. Israel is very precious to God; his love for her is not casual.’

— BIBLICAL THEOLOGY STUDY BIBLE

 How does this information help you to understand how God feels about his people?

 **Watch: The Hosea Love Story: Part Six (3:10)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXvW6qywlP0>

 In what way does Hosea’s story send a powerful message about the way God feels about his people?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 In what way did the modern interpretation help bring the story of Hosea to life?

WITNESS

Hosea was called to be a living example of God’s relationship with his people. This is not the only example of a relationship in this book.

Read:

**1 ‘When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.**

**2 But the more they were called,
the more they went away from me....**

**3 It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;**

**but they did not realise
it was I who healed them.**

**4 I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.**

**To them I was like one who lifts
a little child to the cheek,
and I bent down to feed them.’**

— (HOSEA 11:1-4)

God also uses the idea of a wayward child to demonstrate his relationship with Israel. In Hosea 12:1 this wayward child grows into a teenager who is full of 'multiple lies and violence'. The teenager grows into an adult and is called back to God.

Read:


- 1 “Return, Israel, to the Lord your God.
Your sins have been your downfall!
 - 2 Take words with you
and return to the Lord.
Say to him:
‘Forgive all our sins
and receive us graciously,
that we may offer the fruit of our lips.
 - 3 Assyria cannot save us;
we will not mount warhorses.
We will never again say “Our gods”
to what our own hands have made,
for in you the fatherless find compassion.’
 - 4 “I will heal their waywardness
and love them freely,
for my anger has turned away from them.”
- (HOSEA 14:1-4)

Just like Hosea and Gomer, the relationship of father and child is used to represent the relationship between God and his people.

Leader’s notes: For the Witness activity the young people need to plan their own modern-day version of the father/child illustration of God’s relationship with his people. In the clips we watched earlier, Hosea and Gomer’s relationship was transported into the present day. The young people need to use this set of clips as inspiration to find a setting and plot line that reflects the father/child relationship described in Hosea 11-14. They could storyboard their ideas, create the perfect cast list, decide on places to film – anything to get their creativity going and bring this story to new life. Once they have planned out their modern-day film they can share it with the rest of the group.





ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Imagine yourself sat in the pictures as the final credits role for the premiere of your film.

-  What song is playing and why did you choose it?

WORSHIP

We are now on our third prophet in the minor prophets series.

-  What repeated mistakes do God’s people make?
-  What are the modern-day equivalents of these mistakes?
-  Which of these mistakes do you have a tendency to make?
-  What does the story of Hosea teach you about how God feels about the mistakes you make?


The final verses of Hosea remind us how to stay on track as we live our lives for God.

**‘Who is wise? Let them realise these things.
Who is discerning? Let them understand.
The ways of the Lord are right;
the righteous walk in them,
but the rebellious stumble in them.’**
— (HOSEA 14:9)

We serve a God who recognises our sin, calls us to repent and loves us deeply regardless of where we are in that process. We’re going to take a moment to reflect on our relationship with God and whether there are behaviours we need to turn away from so that we can turn to him. Listen carefully to the lyrics of the song and then share in a time of prayer together. We worship a God who keeps on loving us; let’s respond by turning to him and following his plan for our lives.

 **Watch: ‘Take Me Back’ – Anointed / Bp James Marques (3:41)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF61vWVfib8>


ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 What is the main message of the book of Hosea? How could you share this message with others?

MICAH – A PROPHET POINTING TO JESUS




WELCOME

Our Bible text for today starts in an imaginary courtroom. To get your mind in gear for this setting, watch this courtroom clip carefully and see how many of the observational questions you can answer.

 **Watch: Stung in Court – Bee Movie (2007) – Screen Bites (stop at 3:48)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdxQ-D4v-AY>

1. What book is the prosecution lawyer reading at the start of the clip? **The Secret Life of Bees**
2. What is the prosecution lawyer allergic to? **Losing**
3. What does the bee shout as he goes to sting the lawyer? **'I'm gonna pin-cushion this guy!'**
4. What can't Adam feel after he has stung the lawyer? **His legs**
5. What is in the drip at the hospital? **Honey**
6. What has been used to replace Adam's stinger? **A pink plastic sword**
7. What kind of sandwich did the plastic sword come from? **Tuna**
8. How do Barry and Adam realise that bees don't smoke? **When they spot two people smoking at the window**

Leader's notes: Go through the answers and see how many questions the young people got right. Discuss the following questions.


-  How observant were you?
-  Do you think you would make a good lawyer? If so, why?
-  Would you rather be the lawyer for the prosecution or the defence? Explain your answer.

In the book of Micah, we meet a prophet who shared a message of justice to the people of Judah and Samaria. God already had all the evidence he needed, but it was Micah's job to present it to the people.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If you could choose any person, historical figure or fictional character, to defend you in court, who would you choose? Explain your answer.

WORD

 What do you know about the prophet Micah?

 **Read:**

¹The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah – the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

— (MICAH 1:1)

In this first verse we discover that Micah lived in the south, but his message was for Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and for Judah, the centre of the Southern Kingdom. Micah was a prophet around the same time as Amos and Hosea, so as you discover more about him, keep in mind what you have learned about the other minor prophets so far.

 Read:

**² Hear, you peoples, all of you,
listen, earth and all who live in it,
that the Sovereign Lord may bear witness against you,
the Lord from his holy temple.
— (MICAH 1:2)**

Imagine a courtroom with God as the judge and the people of Samaria and Judah as the defendants.

Read and discuss the following Scriptures and build a case against the people of Samaria and Judah. What charges do they need to answer to? Encourage the group to think about what these Scriptures might mean, and then use the discussion notes to aid their understanding. What would these situations look like in a modern-day setting? To help the group remember what has been discussed, jot their ideas down on a large sheet of paper.

**⁷ All her idols will be broken to pieces;
all her temple gifts will be burned with fire;
I will destroy all her images.
Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes,
as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used.
— (MICAH 1:7)**

The people had built idols to other gods and turned away from God. Just as we saw in the book of Hosea, God's people are seen as his bride. These verses suggest that God's people were unfaithful and had engaged in prostitution by betraying God.

**² They covet fields and seize them,
and houses, and take them.
They defraud people of their homes,
they rob them of their inheritance.
— (MICAH 2:2)**

The law of Moses made it clear that land should remain within the family or tribe it belonged to. Those in authority found ways to work around this law and steal from the poor to gain wealth and land.

**⁶ 'Do not prophesy,' their prophets say.
'Do not prophesy about these things;
disgrace will not overtake us....'
¹¹ If a liar and deceiver comes and says,
'I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,'
that would be just the prophet for this people!
— (MICAH 2:6,11)**

The leaders and people of Samaria and Judah did not want to listen to what Micah – or Amos and Hosea – had to say. They tried to silence them as they saw themselves as God's chosen people. They believed that God would continue to keep his promises no matter what they did. Instead, they listened to prophets that only told them what they wanted to hear.

**¹ Then I said,
'Listen, you leaders of Jacob,
you rulers of Israel.
Should you not embrace justice,
² you who hate good and love evil;
who tear the skin from my people
and the flesh from their bones;**

³ who eat my people's flesh,
strip off their skin
and break their bones in pieces;
who chop them up like meat for the pan,
like flesh for the pot?




— (MICAH 3:1)

It is important to clarify with the group that Micah was not suggesting that the leaders were cannibals! Instead he was pointing out that the leaders, who should have been protecting the people, were taking everything from them for their own benefit.


⁹ Hear this, you leaders of Jacob,
you rulers of Israel,
who despise justice
and distort all that is right;
¹⁰ who build Zion with bloodshed,
and Jerusalem with wickedness.
¹¹ Her leaders judge for a bribe,
her priests teach for a price,
and her prophets tell fortunes for money.
Yet they look for the Lord's support and say,
'Is not the Lord among us?
No disaster will come upon us.'

— (MICAH 3:9-11)

In this passage, Micah was pointing out the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. They lived a life that went against everything God stood for and then looked to God to support them.

-  As you look through these verses, what modern-day examples of this kind of behaviour did you discover?
-  What can we learn from Micah's words to the people of Samaria and Judah?
-  What do we discover about God from these verses?

As you have studied the minor prophets over the past few weeks, you may have noticed a pattern in their message. So far, we have read words of condemnation where the failings of God's people were clearly stated by the prophet.

-  What usually comes after the passages outlining God's judgement?


 **Read:**

¹ In the last days
the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and peoples will stream to it.
² Many nations will come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.'
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
³ He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.
They will beat their swords into ploughshares

and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war any more.
4 Everyone will sit under their own vine
and under their own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid,
for the Lord Almighty has spoken.
5 All the nations may walk
in the name of their gods,
but we will walk in the name of the Lord
our God for ever and ever.
— (MICAH 4:1-5)

After laying out the case against the defendants, Micah brought a message of hope and peace.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 What is your response to the following quote?

“ ‘Any theology that makes it easy for us to sin is not biblical theology.’
— WARREN WIERSBE






Theology is the study of God and God's relation to the world.

WITNESS

Leader's notes: For the Witness section watch the following clip with the group. It brings the story of Micah to life and places it within the wider context of the Church today. Once the clip has finished, encourage discussion about its themes. A set of questions are provided to prompt discussion, but the group may want to explore and pose their own questions.

 **Watch: Micah: The Bible Explained (stop at 8:54)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ok2VvP34Lw4>

DISCUSS:

-  What are some of the injustices that we see in the world today?
-  What is the role of Christians in fighting injustice in the world?
-  What faulty beliefs within the Church do we need to challenge?
-  In what ways do we believe we can be our own protectors?
-  How does the prophet Micah point to Jesus?

Leader's notes: Incorporate the following Scriptures into your discussion. They remind us that Micah pointed to Jesus, the one who would 'tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities to the depths of the sea'.

² But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.
— (MICAH 5:2)

¹⁸ Who is a God like you,
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression
of the remnant of his inheritance?
You do not stay angry for ever
but delight to show mercy.
¹⁹ 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)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 What action does the message of Micah prompt you to take?

WORSHIP

One of the most memorable verses in the book of Micah reminds us how God wants us to live our lives.

 **Read:**

⁸ 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)

As we discussed before, Micah pointed to the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. As Christians today, we are able to look at the life of Jesus as an example of how to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. To bring our session to a close, we are going to create a piece of artwork to remind you of what the Lord requires of his followers.

Leader's notes: *This is a very messy activity, so you may want to bring some plastic sheeting and a bowl of soapy water. Each member of the group will need a sheet of watercolour paper or, depending on budget, a canvas. They will be creating a picture version of Micah 6:8. This will involve making a handprint, heart shape and footprint on their paper with poster paint. You will also need permanent markers or paintbrushes to write the words 'Act justly', 'Love mercy' and 'Walk humbly'.*

The example shown below is on three different canvases but demonstrates the aim of the activity.

<https://mycrazyblessedlife.com/2012/05/14/micah-68-painting-project>

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

The following song based on the words of Micah 6:8 can be used to bring the session to a close.

 **Watch: Micah 6:8 Songs – Sing the Bible Vol 4 Slugs & Bugs (3:39)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VH9VbRY_1n4