

Micaiah: Speaking Truth to Power

**Bible Background • 1 KINGS 22:1-40 | Printed Text • 1 KINGS 22:15-23, 26-28
Devotional Reading • 1 JOHN 3:23-4:3; DEUTERONOMY 18:19-22**

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will IDENTIFY with Micaiah's boldness in declaring the word of the Lord, ASPIRE to be like Micaiah when speaking the word of the Lord, and COMMIT to tell those in power what the Lord has said.

In Focus

Martin Fairchild stared at the spreadsheet. There was no way around it, his family would not be able to go on a vacation this year. There just was no money for it. He thought about all the fun vacations they had had in years past and how much the kids looked forward to the week of adventuring. Even though they were teens now and too cool to admit it. But with the extra costs of college admission tests and application fees, plus a new transmission for the car, there just wasn't the extra money. He broke the news to his family at dinner. The kids quickly offered new ways of getting the money.

"What if we just borrow some money from Uncle Phil?" Raymond asked. "What if we skip just a week or two of tithing?" Denise asked. Mrs. Fairchild shook her head. "Your father has made the wisest decision he can in this situation."

Martin nodded to his wife, thanking her for the support. "We are not going into debt just to go someplace. And we are certainly not going to forget to give back to the Lord. I know it's not what you want to hear, but it's what God has provided for us this time."

How have you followed God's guidance even when others didn't like what God had to say?

***"And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak."
(1 Kings 22:14, KJV)***

KJV

1 Kings 22:15 So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD?

17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

18 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

26 And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

27 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

28 And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.

NLT

1 Kings 22:15 When Micaiah arrived before the king, Ahab asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should we hold back?" Micaiah replied sarcastically, "Yes, go up and be victorious, for the LORD will give the king victory!"

16 But the king replied sharply, "How many times must I demand that you speak only the truth to me when you speak for the LORD?"

17 Then Micaiah told him, "In a vision I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd. And the LORD said, 'Their master has been killed. Send them home in peace.'"

18 "Didn't I tell you?" the king of Israel exclaimed to Jehoshaphat. "He never prophesies anything but trouble for me."

19 Then Micaiah continued, "Listen to what the LORD says! I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven around him, on his right and on his left.

20 And the LORD said, 'Who can entice Ahab to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so he can be killed?' There were many suggestions, **21** and finally a spirit approached the LORD and said, 'I can do it!'

22 'How will you do this?' the LORD asked. And the spirit replied, 'I will go out and inspire all of Ahab's prophets to speak lies.' 'You will succeed,' said the LORD. 'Go ahead and do it.'

23 So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all your prophets. For the LORD has pronounced your doom."

26 "Arrest him!" the king of Israel ordered. "Take him back to Amon, the governor of the city, and to my son Joash.

27 Give them this order from the king: 'Put this man in prison, and feed him nothing but bread and water until I return safely from the battle!'"

28 But Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, it will mean that the LORD has not spoken through me!" Then he added to those standing around, "Everyone mark my words!"

People, Places, and Times

Ramoth-gilead. This border city between Aram (Syria) and Israel, modern Tel ar-Ramith, is located on the eastern side of the Jordan River. It is called Ramoth-gilead or Ramoth in Gilead to distinguish it from another city also named Ramoth, which was in the Negev (1 Samuel 30:27). It was declared a city of refuge by Moses (Deuteronomy 4:43) and provided pastureland for the Levites (Joshua 21:38). The city changed hands several times between Syria and Israel. Ahab notes that Syrians occupy the city, even though it belongs to Israel (1 Kings 22:3). He fails to recover it and the Syrians later cement their control of it (2 Kings 10:32-33).

Benhadad. This king of Syria adds to the tumultuous political intrigue of the time. King Asa of Judah bribes Benhadad to break his treaty with King Baasha of Israel and form a treaty with him instead (1 Kings 15:18-20). Later, he attacks Samaria, the capital of Israel. This attack and his attack the following year fail, as the Lord shows His might to defend His people (1 Kings 20). Finally, Benhadad falls ill and asks the prophet, Elisha, if he will recover. Elisha prophesies that he will not and the king's messenger Hazael brings this prophecy about by smothering Benhadad (2 Kings 8:7-15).

Background

In 1 Kings 22, we find the kings of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms having trouble accepting the Word of God from His prophets. The king of the North, the evil Ahab, now holds the upper hand, while the king of the South, the God-fearing Jehoshaphat, has become his vassal. By treaty, Jehoshaphat is under obligation to help Ahab in any way he asks. Syria was presently at peace with Israel and Judah but held a section of land called Ramothgilead. After three years of not receiving Syria's promised tribute, Ahab wants to go to war against Benhadad, the Syrian king. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat, "Will you join me in battle to recover Ramoth-gilead?" (1 Kings 22:4, NLT). Jehoshaphat has no alternative other than agreeing to help Ahab. But wisdom prevails and Jehoshaphat wants counsel from the Lord (v. 5). Ahab agrees to listen to a god but not the God of Abraham; instead, he listens to the prophets of his own state religion, prophets of Baal (v. 6). These men are false prophets who tell Ahab what he wants to hear. Jehoshaphat wants to hear from a true prophet of God, not these pseudo-prophets, so he asks Ahab if such a prophet is available (v. 7). Ahab then calls his officials to bring forth Micaiah, the son of Imlah (vv. 8-9). This passage is the only place Micaiah is mentioned in Scripture.

At-A-Glance

1. Micaiah's Prophecy (1 Kings 22:15-18)
2. Micaiah's Vision (vv. 19-23)
3. Micaiah Imprisoned (vv. 26-28)

In Depth

1. Micaiah's Prophecy (1 Kings 22:15-18) Once a true prophet knows the word of God, no one can prevent him from delivering the message. Micaiah did not avoid God's words even when they were unwelcome, discouraging, or negative. No matter if it cost him his life, Micaiah was committed to being true to God and His Word. When Micaiah sarcastically told Ahab to attack and be victorious, the king knew something was wrong because Micaiah never agreed with Ahab's prophets (vv. 15-16). Ahab knew his false prophets were only saying what he wanted to hear and he knew if the truth was to be heard, it was going to come from someone who really knew God. Ahab demanded the truth of Micaiah though he really didn't want to hear it. Micaiah reported the opposite of what the false prophets had been saying. He told Ahab that he would be killed and his army scattered. This battle, according to Micaiah who spoke on behalf of the Almighty God, would be a disaster. Although Ahab asked for a true word from

God, when it was spoken he pushed it aside and blamed the prophet for always being against him.

When you ask God in prayer for the truth about yourself, are you willing to accept His answers?

2. Micaiah's Vision (vv. 19-23) The prophet spoke about a vision. Micaiah saw the Lord sitting on His throne surrounded by a host of angelic beings. These angelic beings were not there to advise God; instead, they served as witnesses of God's omniscience and omnipotence. The Lord asks how He can persuade Ahab to fight Ramoth-Gilead. One spirit came forth with the plan to lie to the king through his prophets. Then Yahweh gave him permission to go and do so.

Ahab sought to suppress divine authority and truth. God in His omniscience affected His sovereign will by allowing this "lying spirit" to feed the king's own destructive ego through the untruths of his prophets. God gave Ahab what he wanted—his own wish instead of God's truth—and it led to Ahab's death. Our God is the God of those with pure hearts as well as those with perverse hearts. God can and will use any means necessary to carry out His sovereign will (John 12:40; 2 Thessalonians 2:11; Exodus 14:4, 8).

3. Micaiah Imprisoned (vv. 26-28) Ahab didn't like what Micaiah said so he did what all tyrants do. He put him in prison to shut him up. When a person or a nation stifles the truth by silencing those who speak out for the truth, it is denying a basic right. But also, it is halting the very flow of truth that might be its own salvation. Ahab did not see that Micaiah was warning him of defeat and death. Ahab was too bent on doing what he wanted. But killing a man who tells the truth does not change the truth. Truth will conquer and often with deadly accuracy. Micaiah was the kind of person who usually had the last word. His final warning to Ahab in verse 28 was, "If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me." Micaiah had real confidence in the accuracy of the message he received from God. There are times when we have to stand up for what is right and true, even if everyone else is playing loose with the truth.

Shall we follow the way of the crowd and serve ourselves or shall we wait on the word of the LORD however He chooses to send it?

Search the Scriptures

1. Did Micaiah yield to the pressure of the status quo or did he serve the Lord? (v. 15)
2. Can a prison cell stop the word of God from coming to fruition? (vv. 26-28) Explain.

Discuss the Meaning

1. Micaiah resisted the pressure to agree with the rest of those in his profession. He endured the rebuke of the king. He stood for truth at high personal costs. Discuss the reasons for standing firm for the truth. What are its dangers? What are its rewards? Can you cite examples of how being truthful has paid off well? Or, how lying has caused disaster? (The lies of Watergate illustrate how many people can be brought down by not facing the truth immediately.)

2. Micaiah's prophecy of the divine council shows us a spirit offering a plan of lying and Yahweh approves of this plan. However, we know from parts of Scripture that God hates lying tongues and outlaws false testimony as one of His chief laws. Can God ever be a liar or endorse lying?

Liberating Lesson

We live in a society that encourages excuses and glorifies lies. When someone tells the truth, especially biblical truth, most people do not want to hear it. People who want to live in lies and deception often lash out at the person telling the truth. Sometimes it hurts to hear the truth because then we might have to admit we are wrong or confess a sin. To stand for the truth in a difficult situation can be hard. Many times God is the only one pleased with our honest decision. Christians must always weigh the risks of being truthful against the consequences of getting caught in a tangle of lies and inconsistencies. Commit to stand for the truth and speak it in love, no matter the consequences. What statement would your church make to its community about the truths it stands for?

Application for Activation

Micaiah was called to deliver some hard truth. He spoke boldly but also spoke with love for the king and love for the people. Truth must be spoken, yet the Scripture exhorts us to speak “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). It is also necessary to pray and ask God for the best time to speak the truth. God directed Micaiah at this particular time to speak to these kings. When we decide to speak the truth, let’s make sure that God—not our flesh, our desire to get back at someone, or our need to dump on someone—is the motivation prompted by the Holy Spirit.

Is there something you’ve been holding back that God wants you to say? What’s your next step?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do?

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned?

Say It Correctly

Micaiah. mi-**KIE**-yuh.
Jehoshaphat. jeh-**HOE**-shaw-fat.
Ramoah-gilead.
RAH-moth-**GILL**-ee-add.
Benhadad. **BEN**-haw-**DOD**.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Elisha Prophesies Truth
to King Jehoshaphat
(2 Kings 3:9-17)

TUESDAY

Kings Propose Battle Against Aram
(1 Kings 22:1-6)

WEDNESDAY

Micaiah Resists Pressure
to Prophecy Falsely
(1 Kings 22:7-14)

THURSDAY

A Lying Spirit Brings Disaster
(2 Chronicles 18:18-22)

FRIDAY

King Ahab Suffers Fatal Injury
(1 Kings 22:29-40)

SATURDAY

Jehoshaphat Promotes Peace with Israel
(1 Kings 22:41-46)

SUNDAY

Prophet Micaiah Speaks the Truth
(1 Kings 22:15-23, 26-28)