

# MANual Lessons from the First Six Minor Prophets

In the last post with an Introduction to The Minor Prophets, we learned there twelve prophets each separated into short books in the Christian Bible, whereas, the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible) has a single, longer collection about prophets called the Nevi'im (the Book of Twelve).

In this post, I will cover "The First Six Minor Prophets (700 B.C. and Earlier)" which includes Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah. The next post covers the other six minor prophets and their books which complete the Old Testament.

As suggested in other posts, let's view the repetitive message of the prophets from a different angle. As you read the brief summaries of each in the next couple of posts, look for their message of the coming kingdom through the person of Jesus Christ, and how it applies to us today.

Here are the first six minor prophets, as grouped in The MANual, my NIV Bible for Men.

## Hosea

The first book of the Twelve (Minor) Prophets was written by Hosea, whose name means "salvation," or "deliverance." Hosea was the son of Beerī, sometimes identified as Beerah (1 Chronicles 5:6), who himself was considered a prophet in Judaism and considered holy by Muslims but only uttered a few insufficient words incorporated in the Book of Isaiah (8:19-20).

Hosea was a prophet between 753 B.C. and 715 B.C. who lived in the northern kingdom during the last years of the reign of Jeroboam II. This was the period of decline and ruin that followed a brief period of economic prosperity. The Assyrians

were threatening the land of Israel and its people acted as though they were oblivious to the covenant with God.

The 14 chapters of Hosea are a collection of oracles (wise utterances, insightful counsel, or prophetic predictions) composed and arranged by the prophet and his disciples. Hosea was a prophet of doom but spoke a message of hope to the people. Hosea said the Day of The Lord will contain not just retribution, but also the opportunity for renewal before the final fulfillment of the prophecies as God punishes evil and delivers His people.

Hosea's message against Israel's "spirit of harlotry" dramatically played out in his personal life. His book is divided into two sections: the relationship of his wayward wife, a prostitute named Gomer (chapters 1-3), and God's judgments against wayward people with the hope of forgiveness and restoration (chapters 4-14). The deeper symbolism is how the nation of Israel acted like a prostitute by turning against The Lord and worshipping other gods. Their infidelity emphasized their lack of trustworthiness of God and superficial worship ceremonies.

Hosea emphasizes two very significant theological terms: "Covenant love" and "knowledge of God." As you read his book, watch how the prophet submits himself to his Lord's direction. Grieve with Hosea over the unfaithfulness of his wife. Hear the clear warning of God's judgment and especially the offer of forgiveness for those who repent.

**MYTHS**  
**BUSTED**

## **You Can't Forgive An Extramarital Affair**

Even after an affair, we are called to reunite with our spouse

and remember our covenant of marriage. God gave us the example by showing us love, even when people crucified His Son. He continually shows us His love by offering to forgive us every time we turn away from Him. God restores us to Him each time we break our commitment and sin. He gives us chance after chance that we don't deserve.

If your goal is to have a godly marriage, God is the model we must follow.

- If you are divorced, have you completely forgiven your former spouse? Remember, there are always two sides to every story!
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## **Joel**

The Book of Joel is a short work of only three chapters. We know very little about this prophet – only that he was the son of Pethuel and his name means “Yahweh is God.” Some scholars believe the book is dated to the Persian period (539–331 B.C.) while others feel it was written soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Joel may have lived in Judah, the southern kingdom, which had become wealthy and complacent since they stopped relying on God and worshipped idols instead.

Joel begins by describing a terrible plague of locusts that covers the land and devours the crops. Some scholars believe that the plague refers to the armies of a foreign power of Babylonians. Joel's apocalyptic imagery predicts God's judgment of the nations but the offer that “everyone who calls on the name of The Lord will be saved.” (Joel 2:32)

As you read Joel, think about the devastation and tragic judgment of living in sin. But know that God's grace is available to you right now, and also on that coming day of The

Lord (though you may need to endure the locusts and other tribulations!)

## **Amos**

The third of the Twelve Prophets is Amos, one of the most significant and influential books of the Bible for us today. Comprising only nine chapters, it was composed during the age of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, from 786 to 746 B.C. During Jeroboam's reign, the nation received great economic prosperity; the rich were getting richer and the poor poorer. Social injustice ran rampant in the land. The economically weak tribes could find no one to champion their cause—until the coming of Amos, a shepherd from Tekoa in Judah.

Amos was not the son of a prophet, nor was he a son of a priest. He was just a humble shepherd and sycamore-fig tree grower, who spoke with brutal frankness. He collided with false religious leaders and was not intimidated by priests or kings.

The book opens as Amos receives a vision from God of what was about to happen to Israel. Like his contemporary Hosea, Amos was a prophet of doom, but also a great advocate of justice.

The book is divided into three sections: announcement of judgment against foreign nations and Israel (chapters 1–2); reasons for an indictment of Israel for her sins and injustices (chapters 3–6); and, visions and words of judgment (chapters 7–9). Amos' message is summed up in chapter 5 when he writes “Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of righteous living.”



## **Pride**

You can't keep your relationship with The Lord and keep your pride. God won't allow it. In fact, He's offended by your pride. If you make a point to grab attention and praise yourself, you're guilty of robbing God of His glory.

- Ask God to help remove areas of sinful pride in your life.
  - Does the pride of success keep you from seeing the needs of others?
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The book concludes with the message of hope that God will restore the fallen house of David and make His people great again (9:8-15).

As you read Amos, put yourself in the place of those Israelites. Have you become complacent? Do you ignore the needs of others less fortunate? Listen for God's call and do what he says, wherever it leads.

## **Obadiah**

The Book of Obadiah is the shortest book of the Old Testament with only one chapter of 21 verses. Little is known of this prophet, whose name means "servant" (or worshipper) of The Lord."

This book may have been written before the Exile, though many scholars believe that it was composed sometime after the Jews returned to the area after the Babylonian attacks of Jerusalem around 605-586 B.C. The prophet concentrates on the judgment of God against Edomites, who are descendants of Esau that constantly harassed the people of Israel. The Edomites refused to allow the Israelites to pass through their land as they journeyed to Canaan. They stood by watching when Babylon invaded Judah.

Like in Amos, this prophet also speaks about the sin of pride (1: 3,4). The Edomites were secure and proud of their self-sufficiency. This prophet announces disaster is coming to Edom and gives reasons for their judgment (1:10-14). He ends his prophecy with a description of the Day of The Lord when judgment will fall on anyone who harms God's people.

As you read Obidiah, see how God the Father responds to those who attack His children whom He loves.

## **Jonah**

The fifth book contains the well-known story of Jonah in the stomach of a fish for three days. This narrative of a reluctant prophet is unique in that it does not contain any oracles or predictions. There is a reference in II Kings 14: 25–27 to a prophet Jonah, which dates him during the early part of the reign of Jeroboam II, but the book was likely composed hundreds of years later.

In this short book of four chapters, Jonah is commissioned by God to preach repentance in Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, home for Israel's dreaded army. Jonah boards a ship, which is soon caught up in a storm. The frightened sailors drew lots to determine who was the cause of their unfortunate situation. Jonah draws the unlucky lot and is thrown overboard. He is swallowed by a large fish and stays in it for three days and nights. After he cries to the Lord to let him out, the fish spits Jonah out onto dry land. Though still reluctant, Jonah goes on to Nineveh to preach and awaits the city's destruction on a nearby hill.

Jonah's preaching to the people was successful. But it did not please him since he felt that the Assyrians deserved God's wrath. His anger about their living in "spiritual darkness" (4:11). In the end, Jonah realized that God is more merciful and forgiving than we can imagine.

As you read Jonah, see the full picture of God's love and

compassion. No one who repents and believes is beyond redemption. Look for ways to tell people about God.



## **Merciful**

Look for ways to tell people about God. God's mercy is available to everyone on a daily basis. Many guys present a facade, "Hey, I'm good!" and pretend they do not need anything from anyone. Truth be told, we all have "stuff" so turn to God and repent.

- Do you cover up the "real you" to your friends? If so, find a close friend and reveal your struggles.

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## **Micah**

The sixth book of the Twelve (Minor) Prophets is seven short chapters written by the prophet in the 8th century B.C. Micah was a native of Moresheth, near Gath, about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. He writes to the people of Israel (the northern kingdom) and the people of Judah (the southern kingdom).

Similar in many ways to Amos, Micah attacks the corruption of those in high places and the social injustice. He gives a brief summation of the messages of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, "and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (6:8). Micah paints a true picture of God – the Almighty Lord, Who hates sin but loves the sinner.

Most of the book is devoted to describing God's judgment on

Israel and Judah, and the leaders of those nations. Micah emphasizes the need for justice and peace. Throughout the book, he makes prophecies about the Messiah, who will gather the people into one nation. Micah makes it clear that God hates unkindness, idolatry, injustice, and empty ritual. He also reminds them that their true King will act mercifully and is very willing to pardon the sins of anyone who repents.



## God Buddy Focus

These first six Minor Prophets give us lessons that have a big impact with few words. These prophets teach us about humility and social justice. Find yourself a God Buddy to help keep you humble by pointing out when your pride wells up. Work side-by-side with them at a local mission organization that helps people in need.

This week, discuss these questions in your group:

- Why are the prophets grouped differently in Hebrew Bible than in the Christian Bible?
- Which of the Minor Prophets are you most familiar with? Which are you least familiar with?
- Why is it important to view all the prophets as truth-tellers and not just as fortune tellers?

Next week, I will provide lessons from the other six minor prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.