

LESSON 9

May 2, 2021

Unit III: Courageous Prophets of Change
Speak Truth Boldly

DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 John 3:23–4:3a; Deuteronomy 18:19-22

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 22:1-40

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Kings 22:15-23, 26-28

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

.....

Micaiah said, “As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me.” (1 Kings 22:14, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Identify with Micaiah’s boldness in declaring the word of the Lord.
- Aspire to be like Micaiah when speaking the word of the Lord.
- Commit to tell those in power what the Lord has said.

KEY TERMS

Jehoshaphat (verse 18)—Hebrew: *Yehoshaphat* (yeh-ho-shaw-fawt’): “The LORD has judged”; king of Judah, son of Asa.

Micaiah (verse 15)—Hebrew: *Mikayehu* (me-kaw-yeh-hoo): “Who is like Yah?”; son of Imlah.

Truth (verse 16)—Hebrew: *emeth* (eh’-meth): firmness, faithfulness; right; “that which is true” (KJV)

PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!”).
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- Please note that you have the option of using your subscription bundle supplements, i.e., Lesson Scenario, Student Activity Sheet, SSL-AAG.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Telling the truth to those who are in power can be difficult. How does one deliver a difficult message to powerful people? Micaiah resolved that he would tell King Ahab only what the Lord said to him.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

Few people know the name and significance of the prophet Micaiah. Few people have the courage of their convictions to stand as Micaiah did with a bold, unpopular truth. Few people are willing to compromise their own position and privilege by daring to deliver a difficult word from the Lord. Micaiah was a different kind of man. He did not follow the crowd or edit himself for the sake of

public opinion. Committed to his calling above his own convenience, Micaiah faithfully sought God's will in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, speaking the unadulterated Word of God to any who would hear him. Even at the risk of his life, Micaiah spoke the truth boldly and uncompromisingly to King Ahab and his fearful prophets.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

Ahab, king of Israel, had secured an alliance with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, through the marriage of his daughter to Jehoshaphat's son. After three years of peace between Israel and Aram (Syria), Jehoshaphat came to Samaria on a state visit. While there, Ahab invited him to go to war with Aram to regain territory that should have been returned to Israel earlier. Jehoshaphat agreed with the stipulation that they seek God's will before engaging Aram in battle. Ahab assembled his four hundred prophets and put to them the question of whether or not to proceed into battle. Unanimously, they all predicted another grand victory for Ahab. Jehoshaphat, perceiving that the prophets had only spoken what Ahab wanted to hear, asked if there was a true prophet of the Lord in Israel. Ahab identified the one known prophet who sought the Lord but admitted his hatred for the prophet because he never spoke anything favorable toward Ahab. Reluctantly, Ahab summoned Micaiah from prison and cautioned by messenger to agree with Ahab's prophets. Micaiah boldly declared that he would speak only what the Lord said or instructed him to say (see 1 Kings 22:1-14).

OPENING INQUIRY

(Choose from the items below.)

1. Why was Micaiah's first response to Ahab not to be taken seriously?
2. What might have prompted Micaiah's sarcasm?
3. Did Ahab really want to hear God's message?
4. What was the meaning of Micaiah's vision for Ahab and Israel?

INSIGHTS

In public life and even in the community of faith, there are those who will simply "go along to get along," saying or doing whatever is required just to please the "right" people. Fear of being punished, ridiculed, or left out prevents many from speaking out or taking a stand on the truth. Some have been intimidated by those in authority to deny or compromise their true convictions and remain silent instead of speaking an unflattering truth about a person, problem, or predicament. The decision to withhold truth in human relationships can cause more harm than good, especially when it involves the standards of God's Word. God will judge those who have been called to deliver His Word yet refuse to do so because they fear and reverence man more than God. Refusing to speak the truth of God's Word has eternal consequences. God is looking for those who trust Him enough to stand on His Word even if they have to stand alone.

EXPLORATION

This week's lesson challenges the students to consider their convictions and refuse to compromise God's Word even at the risk of disagreement, isolation, controversy, or conflict in our secular and spiritual relationships. Discuss current events or issues in the popular culture or the church community that would be improved by hearing what "thus says the Lord." Identify any potential "pushback" against those courageous enough to speak up and persevere in truth. Discuss why truth is sometimes so unwelcome. Use the Print Passage to identify Micaiah's decision to say to civil

authorities only what the Lord said. Open the discussion by asking the following: (1) Why was Micaiah able to refuse to compromise God's Word? (2) What spiritual character traits are suggested by the prophet's decision to speak the truth? (3) How can individual believers and local church communities prepare to be modern-day Micaiahs? Challenge your students to make a personal commitment to telling the truth by deepening their relationship with God, through prayer and studying the Word.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER

Commentary on 1 Kings 22:15-18

KJV

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?

NIV

15 When he arrived, the king asked him, "*Micaiah*, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or not?" "Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."

16 The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the *truth* in the name of the LORD?"

17 Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'"

18 The king of Israel said to *Jehoshaphat*, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"

Many believe that compromise and silence in the face of controversy is a safe space. The truth, however, is that the safest place for any believer is in the will of God. Every important decision should begin with seeking the will of God. In response to Jehoshaphat's inquiry for a true prophet of God, Ahab had Micaiah brought before them. When asked whether or not to fight against Aram, Micaiah sarcastically agreed with Ahab's four hundred prophets (verse 15). From his previous experiences with Ahab, Micaiah knew that Ahab did not want to hear a true word from the Lord. Accordingly, Ahab knew that Micaiah was being sarcastic and demanded the truth from him in the name of the Lord (verse 16). This demand was hypocritical because Ahab was no longer a follower of God. He depended on his prophets who were primed to say what pleased him for the sake of remaining in the king's favor. Ahab's actions were similar to those of many who profess trust in God but rely on the occult, psychics, and horoscopes to guide their lives. Ahab demanded the truth from Micaiah and the prophet delivered it to him. Micaiah described a vision of the battle and accurately predicted Ahab's death and defeat for Israel (verse 17). Instead of taking Micaiah's vision seriously and repenting as he had done on one other occasion, Ahab angrily treated the prophecy as another attempt to belittle him (verse 18). Ahab had set aside reverence for God and

given himself to Baal worship. When we fail to pray and study God's Word, our spiritual discernment diminishes. Because of his obedient relationship with God, Micaiah was able to hear the will of God and serve as God's spokesman at a time when Israel was sinking deeper into idolatry and apostasy.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

What are the risks of seeking important advice from people who tell you only what you want to hear?

- **Young Adult Question:**

Micaiah had the courage to deliver to Ahab bad news that he knew would anger the king. Can you recall a time when you stood firmly for an uncomfortable truth even when someone else preferred to believe a more pleasing untruth?

Commentary on 1 Kings 22:19-23

KJV

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.

NIV

19 Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left.

20 "And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' One suggested this, and another that.

21 "Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

22 "'By what means?' the LORD asked. 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.'

23 "So now the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."

Micaiah reported what he had seen: God on His throne, surrounded by the heavenly host—that is, God's angelic army (verses 19-20). Micaiah's vision that God gave him to convey His Word to Ahab has been interpreted figuratively and literally. However, since God is not a man and is incapable of lying, then the lying spirit Micaiah describes was not from God, but one energized or represented by Satan himself (verse 21). God had permitted Ahab's four hundred prophets to speak with a lying spirit to deceive Ahab and seal his doom (verses 22-23). On an earlier occasion, the

prophet Elijah had already prophesied Ahab's death. God's use of the false prophets proved His sovereign control of all things. God's judgment of Ahab was prompted by Ahab's wickedness and rebellious spiritual leadership in Israel. Ahab had freely chosen to forsake God and close his ears to God's prophets. After allowing space for repentance, God allowed Ahab to suffer the consequences of his own unrighteous decisions. By contrast, Micaiah daringly obeyed God despite the threat of capital punishment. Believers should guide their lives by the conviction that obedience brings blessings and life eternal with God; disobedience brings the loss of blessings and can lead to eternal separation from God.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

What can cause us to become "dull of hearing"?

- **Young Adult Question:**

Micaiah was bold and courageous. What are the fears that stop Christians from speaking God's truth?

Commentary on 1 Kings 22:26-28

KJV

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.

NIV

26 The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son

27 "and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.'"

28 Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

Paul wrote, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Romans 3:4). God's Word is truth and will remain so throughout eternity. Satan will use anyone or any means necessary to silence the Word of God or to deceive people into believing a lie. He used Zedekiah to symbolically and publicly challenge Micaiah's prophecy. Satan used Ahab to silence Micaiah by having him returned to prison to be fed only enough to keep him alive until Ahab returned to Samaria (verses 26-27). Ahab's reaction is further evidence of the spiritual blindness that can overtake those who deliberately disregard God's Word. Regardless of anyone's decision to accept or reject God's Word, the fact is that the Word will never fail; every word that God has spoken will always be fulfilled. Through His courageous prophet, Micaiah, God had the final say (verse 28). Ahab thought he could disguise himself and reverse the Word of God. This prideful attitude caused the king to miss his last opportunity to repent. Micaiah called on everyone present as

witnesses and told them to remember what God had said through him. After the battle's outcome, everyone knew that Micaiah was a true prophet through whom God had spoken. God's Word is eternally inerrant, infallible, and inexhaustible. This truth should encourage and motivate His people to boldly speak its truth in every situation.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

What are the possible consequences of telling an unpleasant truth to leaders who do not want to hear it?

- **Young Adult Questions**

Those whom God calls as prophets, teachers, and pastors have a different mandate for confronting others with the truth. Do you agree or disagree? What is the danger of confronting others without being authorized or led to do so by the Holy Spirit?

LIFE APPLICATION

- **Refer to Adult Book**

(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

—God expects every believer to have the courage to speak the truth. Doing so requires an intimate relationship with God and an understanding of His truth. Are you ready and willing to stand up and speak the truth without compromise or apology?

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

—We live in a time when people would rather "go along to get along" than risk being persecuted, criticized, and ostracized for speaking the truth. This attitude has also affected the church. This lesson challenges us individually and collectively to commit to being the courageous voice that will always speak the Lord's truth even when it is unpopular.

- **Refer to Young Adult Book**

(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

—There are many Ahabs in the world—people who turn a deaf ear to God's truth. This week's lesson is a reminder that even an angry unwillingness to receive the Word of God cannot diminish its truth or its power. Remember that God's Word is true, no matter how you feel about it.

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

—People frequently respond in anger when God's Word is spoken through a pastor or teacher, but that should never discourage the pastor or teacher from speaking the truth. Pray for your spiritual leaders for continued boldness to speak the truth of God's Word.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, May 9, 2021, is "Empty Rituals Are Useless." The Devotional Reading is Jeremiah 29:10-14, the Background Scripture is Isaiah 29, and the Printed Text is Isaiah 29:13-24.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Father, give us boldness to stand on Your Word and to depend on Your power to shield and defend us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(May 3-9, 2021)

Offering Hope for the Future

MONDAY, May 3	“Discipline the Immoral Person with Respect”	(1 Corinthians 5:1-5)
TUESDAY, May 4	“Uphold Justice for All Peoples”	(Exodus 23:1-9)
WEDNESDAY, May 5	“Seek and You Will Find Me!”	(Jeremiah 29:10-14)
THURSDAY, May 6	“Lip Service Is Not Enough”	(Mark 7:1-8)
FRIDAY, May 7	“Jerusalem Is Punished and Rescued”	(Isaiah 29:1-8)
SATURDAY, May 8	“Judah—Blind to God’s Ways”	(Isaiah 29:9-12)
SUNDAY, May 9	“Israel Will Enjoy a Bright Future”	(Isaiah 29:13-24)