

Micaiah: Speaking Truth to Power

You're a great pitcher, Noland," said Chris Reynolds. "We need you on the team."

Noland worked in the accounting department at the community credit union. A team made up of his co-workers were in a local baseball league. The team had a long losing streak. Mr. Reynolds had been named branch manager two years ago, and the former college athlete desperately wanted this year's trophy.

Noland enjoyed playing baseball and was good at it. The problem was the name—the Victorious Demons.

"What's the big deal?" a co-worker had asked Noland earlier. "Do you have to be so religious about everything? This could be good for your career, if you get Reynolds to like you more."

"Listen, Noland," Mr. Reynolds was telling him, "I hear you're a religious guy. However, you do not believe in actual demons or the devil, do you? I mean, that is just fairy tale stuff. I thought you were college educated. Don't let a silly name keep you off the team and stop us from winning!"

"Mr. Reynolds," Noland began, "I appreciate your interest in me, but yes, I do believe in the devil, as well as the God I serve. The fairy tale is saying that the devil does not exist."

"I'm sorry you feel that way," Mr. Reynolds said. "You could have been a great asset to the team. But I won't let your stupid beliefs get in the way of us winning a trophy."

- 1.** *What kind of lies are most appealing to you? Why?*
- 2.** *Is it easier to defend or refute a lie? Explain your answer.*
- 3.** *Are all lies bad? If so, why is this so? If not, why are some lies not wrong?*

Truth Requested

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?

1 Kings 22:15-18, NIV

¹⁵When 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."

¹⁶The 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?"

¹⁷Then 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.'"

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

Among those thousands of people who remained faithful during the evil reign of Ahab and Jezebel was the prophet of God, Micaiah. Ahab, "the king of Israel" (vs. 18), had enlisted the assistance of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to fight against Syria. Jehoshaphat, who was still faithful to God, wanted to seek the Lord's guidance before proceeding into battle. So Ahab summoned about 400 prophets to his court. They told Ahab to go into battle because God would give him victory. The prophets' counsel did not sit well with Jehoshaphat, who then asked for another opinion. To honor his ally's request, Ahab had Micaiah brought to the court.

Ahab asked Micaiah whether they should go up to Ramoth

Gilead for battle or forbear going altogether. The prophet's immediate response was that they should go up, for God would give them victory. Whether it was the way Micaiah answered or if a positive answer was out of character for this prophet, the king did not believe the report. So he pressed Micaiah for the truth in the name of the Lord. Then Micaiah gave the true answer: if Israel went to battle against Syria, their army would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd, which was a veiled reference to Ahab's death.

Veiled though it was, the king of Israel understood the implication. He turned to Jehoshaphat and complained that Micaiah had only bad to say about him and never any good. To his own demise, Ahab ultimately rejected the message.

4. *How did Micaiah first answer the king of Israel regarding going into battle with Syria?*

5. *How did Ahab respond?*

6. *What was the real answer to Ahab's question?*

Truth Reported

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,

1 Kings 22:19-23, NIV

¹⁹Micaiah 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. ²⁰And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?'

"One suggested this, and another that. ²¹Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord and said, 'I will entice him.'

²²"'By what means?' the LORD asked.

KJV

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

" '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."

Despite Ahab's complaint, Micaiah continued telling the king what God had revealed to him. The prophet saw the Lord in His holy throne room with all the host of heaven gathered about Him. The Lord asked them who would go and persuade Ahab to enter into battle at Ramoth Gilead against the Syrians. Several made suggestions, but the Lord approved the plan of a spirit who volunteered to put lies into the mouths of Ahab's many prophets. Not only did God approve the plan, but He also put His blessing of success upon the spirit's efforts in enticing the king to go into battle.

Micaiah ended his message by warning the king as plainly that God had put deceit in the mouths of all the prophets for the very purpose of bringing about the king's demise.

7. *What did Micaiah see in the heavenly throne room?*

8. *What was the topic of divine conversation?*

9. *How would Ahab be convinced to go into battle against Syria?*

Truth Rejected

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;

1 Kings 22:26-28, NIV

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

KJV

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.

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

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

Ahab's response to Micaiah's warning is amazingly inconsistent. Instead of heeding Micaiah's warning, Ahab sent the prophet to Amon, the ruler of the city, to be imprisoned until the king's return.

Not only was Micaiah to be imprisoned, but this faithful man of God would receive only bread and water while there. This diet was often given specifically to magnify a prisoner's suffering. Ahab clearly resented this man of God and likely intended to have him executed when he returned from battle.

Knowing that he was speaking for God, Micaiah reiterated the truth of God's law: If Ahab did return alive, then the prophecy was not of God. Clearly implied, of course, was the opposite; if Ahab did not return alive, then Micaiah would be vindicated as a true prophet of God. He emphasized this point by challenging the people to mark and take special heed of his words. God's people can stand on God's Word as the standard of truth. Though we may find ourselves in the minority and facing strong resistance for standing on God's truth, we can know that one day we will be vindicated.

10. *After hearing Micaiah's dire warning, what did Ahab command to be done to him?*

11. *How would the people know whether Micaiah truly spoke for God or not?*

12. *How do God's people today know if someone is truly speaking for God or not?*

Incendiary Lies

It is extremely difficult to flee from a raging forest fire when you are near it. James wrote that lies are like a forest fire started by a spark (see Jas. 3:5). He went on to say that a lying tongue cannot be tamed—it is full of evil (see vs. 8).

There are several insights that James is conveying. First, a lie can become a raging fire by a mere spark. One little lie can ignite a series of other lies that can burst into an enormous falsehood, consuming an entire landscape of people. Second, evil is the source of lies. In fact, Jesus said the devil “is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Finally, James noted that those who lie and are given to evil cannot subdue their tongue. In other words, lying is who they are.

Sadly, we believe many of the lies the world tells us because they support our inclinations or appeal to our desires. Some of these lies we know are wrong; other lies fool us until God’s truth reveals these lies for what they are. Either way, there are always harmful repercussions.

Another consequence of believing a lie is that we tend to loath those who tell us what we believe is a lie. No matter how gentle and wise they are, they still aggravate us to the point that we either feel compelled to argue with them or seek to avoid them at all cost, thus making it even more difficult for the Lord to speak the truth to us.

What is the best way not to be burned by fire? Not to touch it. What is the best way not to fall for a lie? Not to believe it. But how do we recognize a lie in order not to believe it? Since Jesus said, “I am . . . the truth” (John 14:6), test all you hear by subjecting it to Jesus’ teachings.

13. *In what ways do lies corrode the soul?*

14. *Why is it increasingly difficult to refute a lie as the number of people who believe the lie increases?*

15. *How do the teachings of Jesus help you discern what is a lie and then address that lie?*

Lies Refuted

King Ahab refused to believe the warning of the prophet Micaiah because the warning displeased him. Instead, he listened to the false prophets whom he had installed at his court and who told him what he wanted to hear. After Ahab rejected God's message and harshly dealt with God's servant, the king died as Micaiah had said. God also tells us to heed and cling to His truths while rejecting the world's lies.

► *On an index card, write the following commitment statement: "I will vigilantly be on guard for lies this week about Jesus and God's messages." On the card, write any lies you hear this week so you can share them next week and tell why they are lies.*

KEY VERSE

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

But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me." —1 Kings 22:14, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of May 3 through May 9

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5—Discipline the Immoral Person with Respect.

Tues. Exodus 23:1-9—Uphold Justice for All Peoples.

Wed. Jeremiah 29:10-14—Seek and You Will Find Me!

Thurs. Mark 7:1-8—Lip Service Is Not Enough.

Fri. Isaiah 29:1-8—Jerusalem Punished and Rescued.

Sat. Isaiah 29:9-12—Judah, Blind to God's Ways.

Sun. Isaiah 29:13-24—Israel Will Enjoy a Bright Future.