



# Devotional

June 28 - Oct. 3

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## **August 9–15, 2020: Weekly Devotional by Jayne Cabigas**

*Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your hearts, with fasting, with weeping and with sorrow; tear your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, very patient, full of faithful love, and ready to forgive. Joel 2:12-13 (CEB)*

Reading the prophets can be a hard slog. The prophets rant about everyone going in the wrong direction and they make God sound so angry and vengeful. God, they say, will bring divine judgement, wrath, and punishment upon his people and their enemies alike. Many of us have trouble reconciling this merciless God with the God of love and forgiveness, so we avoid the prophets (until this year!)

Like the other prophets, Joel presents how we have strayed way off the path. Like a parent who is at her wits' end, God has given us rules and expectations, blessings and promises, but our response is to act like reckless teenagers leaving a wake of destruction and breaking God's heart. Joel invites us to repent--not with a big show, tearing our clothes and beating our chests--but with a torn heart.

Why a torn heart? Because when God mends a broken heart, it is stronger and more resilient. A mended heart can forgive because it has been forgiven. A mended heart can be patient because God was patient and full of faithful love toward us.

So here is God's invitation: Even now, return to me. Even now, it's not too late. Even now, God is merciful and full of love. Even now,

God is ready to forgive. So come with your whole heart, broken by all you have done, because God can mend a broken and repentant heart.

Gracious God, we test you to the limits with our reckless words and actions, cruel intentions and twisted self-righteousness. When we are called out by the prophets all around us, we get defensive and try to justify our intentions. Help us to return with a contrite spirit and broken heart, ready to accept Your mending ways. Amen.

### **WEEK EIGHT (AUGUST 16–22)**

**Day 229: August 16, 2020**

**Full Plan: Obadiah 1–21**

**Abbreviated Plan: Obadiah 1–21**

Obadiah reminds us that even though Jacob and Esau had reconciled thousands of years earlier, their descendants (Israel and Edom) never fully made peace. Sins of racism and nationalism linger; they require constant repentance and reconciliation.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 230: August 17, 2020**

**Full Plan: Jonah 1:1–2:10**

**Abbreviated Plan: Jonah 1:1–17**

Jonah's three days in the fish were a blessing, not a punishment. In three days, he went through three critical stages of spiritual transformation: 1) Disorientation/distress (2:1-5), 2) prayer, thanksgiving, surrender (2:6-9), 3) release to make a difference (2:10). What might those steps look like in your life?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 231: August 18, 2020**

**Full Plan: Jonah 3:1–4:11**

**Abbreviated Plan: Jonah 2:10; Jonah 3:1–10**

Jonah was mad that God forgave the enemy. He had come full circle: resistance to God's call at the start, then repulsion at God's grace at the end. God's circle of love is wider than our cycle of sin. It forgives our enemies around us, and it transforms the enemy within us.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 232: August 19, 2020**

**Full Plan: Micah 1:1–4:13**

**Abbreviated Plan: Micah 1:1–16**

In Micah 2-3, God is like a prosecuting attorney, and God's people are the defendants, accused of injustice, inequality, war-mongering, and religious hypocrisy. But in Micah 4, God turns into a compassionate judge, who offers redemption, not punishment. What difference should that make in you?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 233: August 20, 2020**

**Full Plan: Micah 5:1–7:20**

**Abbreviated Plan: Micah 2:1–13**

Micah 6:8: There are three things God requires of us: Do Justice. Love Kindness. Walk Humbly. These are not multiple choice. They are not mix-and-match. Fully living out each one is impossible without the other two.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 234: August 21, 2020**

**Full Plan: Nahum 1:1–3:19**

**Abbreviated Plan: Nahum 1:1–15**

Under Jonah, Ninevah repented and chose to follow God. But it didn't last long. When the prophet Nahum arrived, they had returned to their old ways. Repentance is not a one-time task. It is a daily choice to live as God intends and not to sin.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 235: August 22, 2020**

**Full Plan: Habakkuk 1:1–3:19**

**Abbreviated Plan: Habakkuk 1:1–13**

Amid all the heartbreak Habakkuk is experiencing, God tells him to stand tall, keep watch, and wait for hope, because the vision awaits the time (2:1-3). The book concludes with his response: Despite all that is going wrong, "yet I will rejoice," (3:18). How will you hope and rejoice today?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**August 16–22, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Mamie Wise**

*"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 our Bible Project journey so far has shown us, it is easy to become overwhelmed with the historical context in the Bible, the meanings seemingly lost in translation, and the sheer number of stories. We sometimes struggle to distinguish the foreign culture or context that does not directly apply today from the Biblical truths that should be guiding our daily lives. Our lives are worlds away from the Israelites'. Social issues change over time. As society bridges certain divides, new ones open. Political divides grow deeper and deeper. And economic pressures evolve, leaving Christians to wonder how God wants us to respond. Micah 6:8 distills God's teachings into something unchanging: justice, mercy, and humble reliance on God:

God calls us to seek justice – to treat others fairly and strive for social justice in our own community. Although the context may be different, we can all stand up for or reach out to the oppressed and marginalized where we live and where they are.

God asks us to be merciful to our brothers and sisters when they have wronged us. Sometimes even more challenging, we are called to show mercy to ourselves when we fall short of what God requires of us or what we expect of ourselves. We can forgive and reconcile.

Last, and most importantly, God urges us to walk with him, to rely

on his counsel and not our own. We should not charge ahead without consulting God, then inevitably turn to him to pick up the pieces. Nor should we stand back waiting for God to pull us along. Instead, we should build our relationships with him and walk with him. Just as he was with the Israelites, God is with us and will help us to follow his Word. We need only ask and listen humbly for his counsel.

Prayer: God, while our world changes, you stay the same. Help me to hear your word and listen quietly for your voice. Show me the opportunities that I may be an agent for justice and mercy in our world, and walk closer with you. Amen.

## **WEEK NINE (AUGUST 23–29)**

### **Day 236: August 23, 2020**

**Full Plan: Zephaniah 1:1–3:20**

**Abbreviated Plan: Zephaniah 3:1–20**

Zephaniah doesn't make many people's lists of favorite Bible books. It promotes faithfulness using fear and anger. Still, with everything wrong in the world today, it's comforting to think that God is as upset by it all as we are, and God refuses to sit still and let it happen.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 237: August 24, 2020**

**Full Plan: Haggai 1:1–2:23**

**Abbreviated Plan: Haggai 1:1–7; 2:10–30**

Haggai may be an obscure book, but it packs a timely punch: Get your priorities straight. You may seem to live a great life, but if your spiritual life isn't in order, then it's wasted energy. You are sowing much but harvesting little, eating but not being filled.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 238: August 25, 2020**

**Full Plan: Zechariah 1:1–4:14**

**Abbreviated Plan: Zechariah 1:1–6; 11:1–17**

To anyone who feels like they are living in exile, Zechariah promises that God will return with prosperity and comfort (1:16-17) and a forgiveness of sins (3:4-5). This won't happen because of human might or power, but by God's Spirit alone (4:6).

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life: